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Don?t quote me on that

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I have never understood the practice of quoting famous people and reprinting the words as if one person's phrase is so profound we should all live by it.

Wouldn't you rather make up your own profound saying or pass on some wisdom from your own grandfather?

Lately, I have been getting a lot of these on my Facebook feed. For some reason, there's a recent trend of quoting famous actors. Half the time the quote isn't even really attributed to the actor, there's just a photo and a quote underneath.

Tom Cruise is known as being a pretty nice guy and a well-known actor, but I'm not sure he's known as a profound thinker. Yet, the other day there's a photo of Tom with a quote underneath.

Actor Morgan Freeman pops up with quotes quite often as well. He's a likable person known for his smooth vocal delivery but does being born with a great voice qualify a person as a noted intellectual?

Quoting a famous politician is about as phony as you can get.

The famous quotes from well-known political figures aren't their words of wisdom - they are the words of some backroom writer or team of writers who have spent days, maybe weeks, or sometimes longer, working on a speech for the politician to deliver at some notable occasion.

JFK's famous ?ask not what your country can do for you? speech is quoted quite often. However, he didn't think that up ? his team of speech writers thought it up. He just had the opportunity to say it in public.

With all that being said, I did find a quote on my Facebook page the other day that really did ring a bell of sanity and common sense that can be applied to modern society ? even though it was written over 150 years ago.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American essayist, lecturer, and philosopher who became a notable figure in his own time, and his reputation continues 141 years after his death. Emerson is widely quoted. His words are in his own hand, written in his journals and essays.

The Emerson quote is: ?Let me never fall into the vulgar mistake of dreaming that I am persecuted whenever I am contradicted.?

Our society has fallen into a trap described in this quote. It is a trap fueled by media, special interest groups, and organizations with an agenda to promote ideologies of their own design.

There seems to be a ?one way' means of thinking among many groups, where discussion, contradictions, other opinions, and even facts are not allowed or considered.

Being open-minded has become wrong in many groups and organizations. It has become a ?we are right' situation, no matter what other input or information is available.

I saw a group in the U.S. whose way of dealing with other opinions was to scream as loud as they could every time another person spoke. Instead of dealing with a contrary opinion with intelligent dialogue, they reduced themselves to looking like idiots rather than considering another opinion.

The national and international media is largely responsible for this one-sided push of opinion.

The recent coronation of King Charles was obviously a big news story earlier this month. As I followed the news feeds about this historic occasion, I noticed a trend. There were more stories about groups, people, and organizations against the monarchy than about the coronation itself.

This included stories from the U.K. as well as other Commonwealth countries.

One story focused on a group that opposed the monarchy and planned to disrupt the event. The story went into great detail about why the monarchy should be abolished.

It didn't take much searching to find out that this group was less than 20 people holding cheap cardboard signs, yet the story overshadowed the actual coronation story by the same media outlet.

A person with a different opinion doesn't mean they are wrong. More likely, it means the person who thinks they are absolutely right hasn't considered all the information and is too closed-minded to accept other options as valid.

Emerson was saying you should never consider yourself right all the time. If you do, you will miss out on some great opportunities.

As far as other great quotes, I always liked: ?A computer once beat me at chess, but it was no match for me at kickboxing.?

You gotta love Emo Phillips.