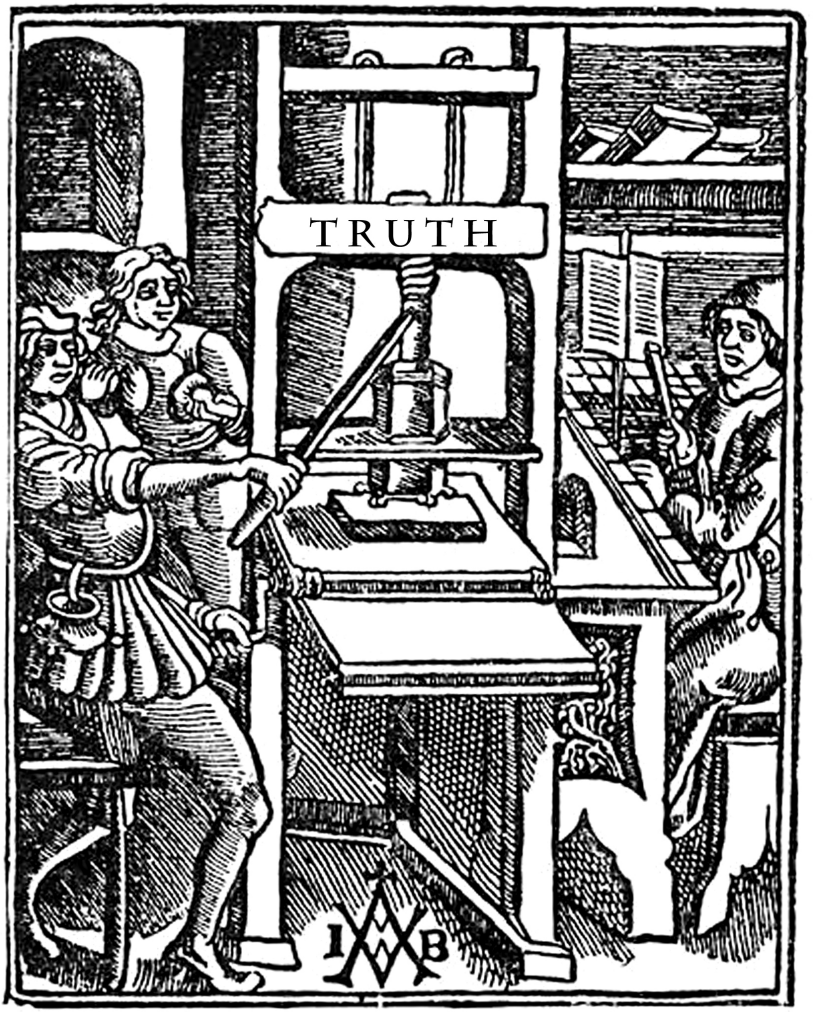
The Truthagandist Primer



An activist's guide to making signs, giving speeches, and convincing others they should support your cause.

By The Rad Cat Press *** September 23, 2015

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Introduction

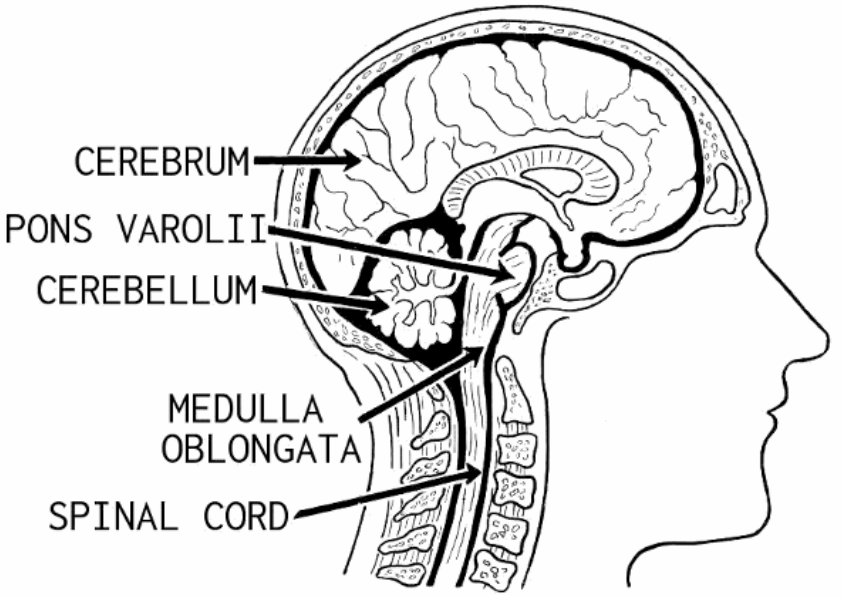
This guide is written in response to a very common problem that we have seen within the activist community – bad fliers, bad advertising, bad speeches, and bad knowledge about human psychology and how to appeal to people. If you can't convey information to people effectively, or if you can't get them to attend your events, you're not going to convince anyone to join in your movement, let alone care about it.

This booklet is also written in response to media bias. A mixed blessing of modern media is the pure amount of diversity it contains. On one hand this allows for many different types of information and perspectives to be available. On the other hand it allows the viewer to be biased in what they see, especially with the corporatization of news media. Viewer bias creates a situation where the information many should learn is not viewed at all. This is why distributing 'alternative' information in the form of fliers, speeches, stencils, and other forms of physically present information that the viewer cannot ignore is very important.

This guide mostly covers the psychology behind advertising, the activist mindset, and basic reminders and pointers for presenting information. There are many books and online tutorials available on graphic design and giving speeches, so please seek those out for specifics in the art of information distribution.

This is the first edition of this work and we would love your feedback. Please e-mail RADCATPRESS@RISEUP.NET with questions, comments, and additions. Thanks!

Human Psychology and Reception of Information



Knowledge

- New knowledge sticks best to already existing knowledge. When presenting information, relate it to commonly known concepts, beliefs, pop-culture, or images.
- The brain remembers sexual or humorous information better than it does other types.
- Different people learn better with different senses. This is explained later in 'Giving a Presentation.'

Appeal Emotionally to People

Let's face it: People are often selfish when dealing with strangers They care a whole lot about themselves, their friends, and their family, and not a whole lot about you and your movement. This is why it is essential that while trying to convince a person to support your movement, that you connect it to their wants and needs in some way. How does it impact them, their health, money, land and loved ones?

A common assumption activists make is that their strong emotions toward a cause will be shared by everyone else. They believe this to the extent that they think yelling or aggressively attacking others will win allies. What these activists forget is that it took themselves a very long time to arrive at their current set of beliefs. Perhaps it was growing up in a certain environment such as the forest or city. Perhaps it was being the black sheep within a family. Perhaps it was facing oppression growing up. Whatever it was, realize that convincing people that your movement is worth their time is an involved task and takes time.

Non-Violent Communication

Yelling, or speaking violently, rarely, if ever, convinces a person that they are wrong in an argument. Try your best to call people in, not out. Positive reinforcement is more effective than negative reinforcement. Rewarding a person for good behavior gives them a reason to exhibit a new behavior, whereas punishing someone for a bad behavior does nothing toward showing them an alternative. A person who enters into an argument with you in anger or violence should first be mediated with. Your goal is to calm them down by openly listening to their needs without reacting in argument, criticism, or judgment. Ask questions. You can state your side once they have calmed down.

If you do need to call a person out, do so speaking from your needs and observable facts, not with guilt, humiliation, shame, blame, coercion, or threats. Know exactly what you want to say to them, and say it calmly and politely, “When you said/did _____, it made me

feel _____ because I needed _____." Or, "It makes me uncomfortable when you _____, could you _____ instead?" You can also frame questions, "What was your aim when you _____?" Or, "Could you explain more about what you said the other day about _____?" Questions are good because it shows that you want to understand the other person and makes it less likely they will go into a staunchly defensive mode of speaking. Many times people are unaware of how their actions impact others, and just need a friendly wake up call. Those who ignore or mock your desire for change probably will not alter their behavior. It may be best to not waste your time on these individuals. Read Marshal Rosenberg's book, *Nonviolent Communication*, for a detailed explanation of this communication style. Many videos can also be found online.

Logical Fallacies

"Fallacies are defects that weaken arguments (Writing)" The Writing Center at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill published this guide regarding logical fallacies:

[See online for relevant examples]

Hasty generalization:
Making assumptions about a whole group or range of cases based on a sample that is inadequate (usually because it is atypical or too small). Stereotypes about people ("librarians are shy and smart," "wealthy people are snobs," etc.) are a common example of the principle underlying hasty generalization.

Missing the point:
The premises of an argument do support a particular conclusion—but not the conclusion that the arguer actually draws.

Post hoc (also called false cause):
Assuming that because B comes after A, A caused B. Of course,

sometimes one event really does cause another one that comes later—for example, if I register for a class, and my name later appears on the roll, it's true that the first event caused the one that came later. But sometimes two events that seem related in time aren't really related as cause and event. That is, correlation isn't the same thing as causation. This fallacy gets its name from the Latin phrase "post hoc, ergo propter hoc," which translates as "after this, therefore because of this."

Slippery slope:
The arguer claims that a sort of chain reaction, usually ending in some dire consequence, will take place, but there's really not enough evidence for that assumption. The arguer asserts that if we take even one step onto the "slippery slope," we will end up sliding all the way to the bottom; he or she assumes we can't stop partway down the hill.

Weak analogy:
Many arguments rely on an analogy between two or more objects, ideas, or situations. If the two things that are being compared aren't really alike in the relevant respects, the analogy is a weak one, and the argument that relies on it commits the fallacy of weak analogy.

Appeal to authority:
Often we add strength to our arguments by referring to respected sources or authorities and explaining their positions on the issues we're discussing. If, however, we try to get readers to agree with us simply by impressing them with a famous name or by appealing to a supposed authority who really isn't much of an expert, we commit the fallacy of appeal to authority.
s biased.

***Ad populum*:**
The Latin name of this fallacy means "to the people." There are several versions of the ad populum fallacy, but what they all have in common is that in them, the arguer takes advantage of the desire most people have

to be liked and to fit in with others and uses that desire to try to get the audience to accept his or her argument. One of the most common versions is the bandwagon fallacy, in which the arguer tries to convince the audience to do or believe something because everyone else (supposedly) does.

A*d hominem* and *tu quoque*:

Like the appeal to authority and *ad populum* fallacies, the *ad hominem* ("against the person") and *tu quoque* ("you, too!") fallacies focus our attention on people rather than on arguments or evidence. In both of these arguments, the conclusion is usually "You shouldn't believe So-and-So's argument." The reason for not believing So-and-So is that So-and-So is either a bad person (ad hominem) or a hypocrite (tu quoque). In an ad hominem argument, the arguer attacks his or her opponent instead of the opponent's argument.

Appeal to pity

The appeal to pity takes place when an arguer tries to get people to accept a conclusion by making them feel sorry for someone.

Appeal to ignorance

In the appeal to ignorance, the arguer basically says, "Look, there's no conclusive evidence on the issue at hand. Therefore, you should accept my conclusion on this issue."

Straw man

One way of making our own arguments stronger is to anticipate and respond in advance to the arguments that an opponent might make. In the straw man fallacy, the arguer sets up a weak version of the opponent's position and tries to score points by knocking it down. But just as being able to knock down a straw man (like a scarecrow) isn't very impressive, defeating a watered-down version of your opponent's argument isn't very impressive either.

Red herring

Partway through an argument, the arguer goes off on a tangent, raising a side issue that distracts the audience from what's really at stake. Often, the arguer never returns to the original issue.

False dichotomy

In false dichotomy, the arguer sets up the situation so it looks like there are only two choices. The arguer then eliminates one of the choices, so it seems that we are left with only one option: the one the arguer wanted us to pick in the first place. But often there are really many different options, not just two—and if we thought about them all, we might not be so quick to pick the one the arguer recommends.

Begging the question

A complicated fallacy; it comes in several forms and can be harder to detect than many of the other fallacies we've discussed. Basically, an argument that begs the question asks the reader to simply accept the conclusion without providing real evidence; the argument either relies on a premise that says the same thing as the conclusion (which you might hear referred to as "being circular" or "circular reasoning"), or simply ignores an important (but questionable) assumption that the argument rests on. Sometimes people use the phrase "beg the question" as a sort of general criticism of arguments, to mean that an arguer hasn't given very good reasons for a conclusion, but that's not the meaning we're going to discuss here.

Equivocation

Equivocation is sliding between two or more different meanings of a single word or phrase that is important to the argument.

So how do I find fallacies in my own writing?

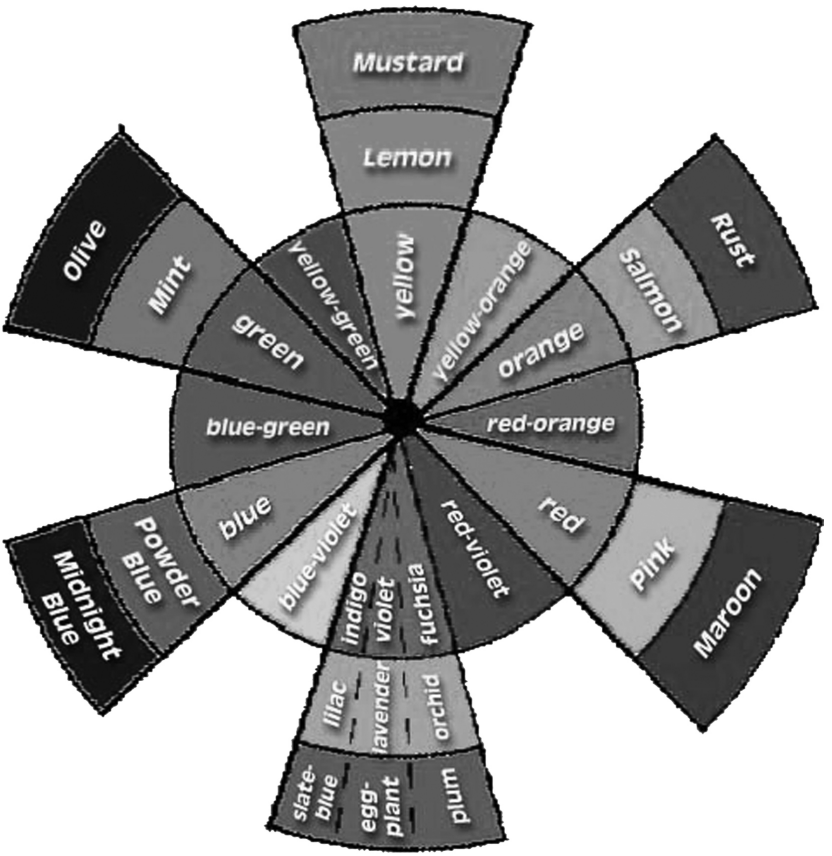
- Pretend you disagree with the conclusion you're defending. What parts of the argument would now seem fishy to you?

What parts would seem easiest to attack? Give special attention to strengthening those parts.

- List your main points; under each one, list the evidence you have for it. Seeing your claims and evidence laid out this way may make you realize that you have no good evidence for a particular claim, or it may help you look more critically at the evidence you're using.
- Learn which types of fallacies you're especially prone to, and be careful to check for them in your work. Some writers make lots of appeals to authority; others are more likely to rely on weak analogies or set up straw men. Read over some of your old papers to see if there's a particular kind of fallacy you need to watch out for.
- Be aware that broad claims need more proof than narrow ones. Claims that use sweeping words like "all," "no," "none," "every," "always," "never," "no one," and "everyone" are sometimes appropriate—but they require a lot more proof than less-sweeping claims that use words like "some," "many," "few," "sometimes," "usually," and so forth.
- Double check your characterizations of others, especially your opponents, to be sure they are accurate and fair.

Color Psychology

Colors influence our emotional, physical, and behavioral states. They are a powerful tool as shown in corporate advertising, and should be used consciously with their effects in mind.



	Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
Red	Passion, Love, Strength, Anger	Raises Blood Pressure and Heart Rate, Stimulates Appetite	Hot, Aggressive, Danger, Stop
Orange	Happy, Energetic, Pleasant, Social	Encourages Movement, Provides Energy, Vigor	Movement, Fast Food
Yellow	Warm, Cheerful, Solitary, Irritable	Poor Skin, Reflection, Bright, Reflective	Lively, Secure, Caution, Slow
Green	Friendly, Calming, Neutral, Balanced	Concentration, Focus, Attention	Jealousy, Envy, Money, Avarice
Blue	Isolated, Peaceful, Cool, Distant	Lowers Blood Pressure, Decreases Appetite	Calm, Conservative, Loyal Trusting
Purple	Spiritual, Enlightened, Creative, Artistic	Calming, Relaxing, Helps Insomnia	Surprise, Magic, Regal, Royal, Rare
Brown	Reliable, Seriousness, Warm	Trust, Nature Connection, Heaviness,	Solid, Genuine, Lack of Humor, and Sophistication
Black	Powerful, Prestige, Non-Emotional	Thinner Look, Timeless, Stylish	Power, Authority, Submission, Independent
White	Neutral, Spiritual, Enlightened, Cold, Unfriendly	Strains Eyes, Heightened Perception of Space, Cleanliness	Innocence, Stop, Untouchable

(Susan)

Respect Culture:

Many activists have their own culture separate from the mainstream identity. This difference in culture can create a level of disapproval between parties which immediately weakens your argument. Be sure that when making an argument for your cause, you are communicating in respect to the other party's cultural identity. As much as many people might not like it, your appearance and choice of words are BOTH part of your argument. Some people simply should not be a spokesperson for a group, and some words and images should simply not be used when spreading information. Part of a person receiving information you impart to them, or communication, is that person's ability to listen to and relate to what is being said. If you have a mow hawk and are wearing a tutu, you probably won't have good communication with a politician in a business suit. Divisions do exist in this world. People feel more comfortable and trusting of others when they appear and act similar to themselves. While not always necessary to follow strictly, here are some things to be aware of:

Clothing: Match the occasion. If you are speaking with politicians, dress formally. Avoid any clothing that can be stereotyped as alternative, hippie, anarchist, dirty, or poor. Avoid political statements through clothing. Do not wear clothing depicting images unless they are formally designed for a specific cause. Intention is key.

Tattoos: Hide tattoos, or at least any that are visually distracting.

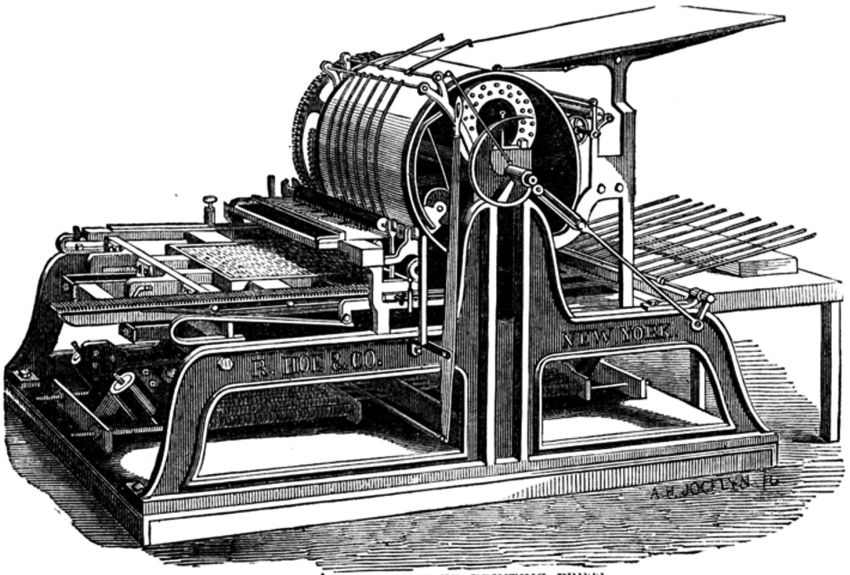
Piercings: Remove piercings except for single earrings.

Hair: Wash it! Get a hair cut! Braid it! Comb it!

Words: Use language that is grammatically correct and fluent. Silence is better than 'ummm' or 'like.' Have your speaking points rehearsed so you don't fluster up.

Making a Flier

The most important factor in making information aesthetically pleasing and effective is time. Take it slow. You can't make a Mona Lisa in five minutes. If possible have someone with an art background work on the aesthetic parts, or at least give you pointers. ALWAYS have someone else familiar with the group or event double check and critique your work. Don't be offended if they tell you to redo it or to hand the project over to someone else. It is better to have a good flier than for no one to look at it. It can also be a good idea to look at other fliers you find appealing. Get inspired, or even copy the basic design. This is a great way to learn what works and what doesn't.



HOE'S ONE-CYLINDER PRINTING PRESS.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is it visibly eye-catching from 10 feet away?
- Is there a good balance of text to images?
- Do the images used provide information to the viewer?
- Are there any assumptions about the audience made?
- What audience does the flier's images correspond with?
- If you are trying to get people to do something, are there positive incentives for them to do it? Food, coffee, laughter, health benefits, happiness, or whatever else.
- Does the flier conjure emotions? Excitement? Sadness? Hardship? Happiness?

Symbols and Images

Some symbols, like the anarchist A, are extremely confusing and simply should not be used. This is because they don't convey any solid information to the viewer, and therefore are just a waste of space. Think of how else you can convey a symbol in a form that creates information without confusion. For instance, anarchy might be better represented with gardens, community, worker collectives, and the like.

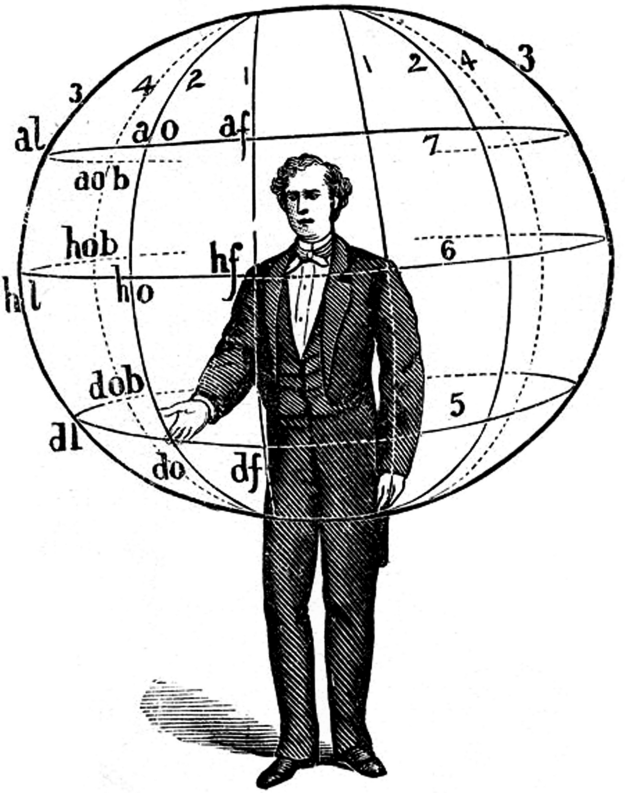
Furthermore, images should resonate with the audience's interests and culture. You are trying to create comfort, trust, and familiarity to win them over.

Audience

Keep in mind the pool of people you are drawing from within your location, as well as what you want these people to do. If you are throwing a benefit show/party, have a strong emphasis on the party and bands playing. Unless your activist group or cause is very popular already, most people just don't care. Period. Again, directly connect what you want people to do with how it will affect them positively. Draw them in with incentives they care about, like, social interaction, drinking, dancing, laughter, good music, food, entertainment, and the like. Also only use symbols and images that your audience can relate to.

Giving a Presentation

There are auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners (Learning). A truly effective presentation will appease all three learning styles through narrative, visuals, and hands-on activities.



Auditory (Hear)

A good public speaker uses their voice and memory effectively. They memorize part of, if not all their speech. Memorizing a speech can be a lot of work, but just go through it, from start to finish, preferably in front of a mirror, a couple of times. Be familiar with the information you are going to present. Alternate the emotions and vocal tones you present to listeners as well. If appropriate, use humor or imagery to give the audience a break in technical or dramatic information. Just be careful with the type of people in your audience and the humor you try to use. Their age, culture, and sobriety makes a difference in what is and isn't funny to them.

Visual (See)

To appease visual learners create signs, handouts, power point presentations, or even just an outline of your talking points. Use hand and facial gestures, and have paper and pencils available for people to take notes.

Kinesthetic (Touch)

"Hands-on" learners need to actively do something to learn. Make your speech "hands-on" by asking your audience questions, allowing them to ask you questions throughout the presentation, breaking into groups for discussion, or by playing a game.

Conclusion

Society is changed through information that creates awareness. So get out there and make some truthaganda!

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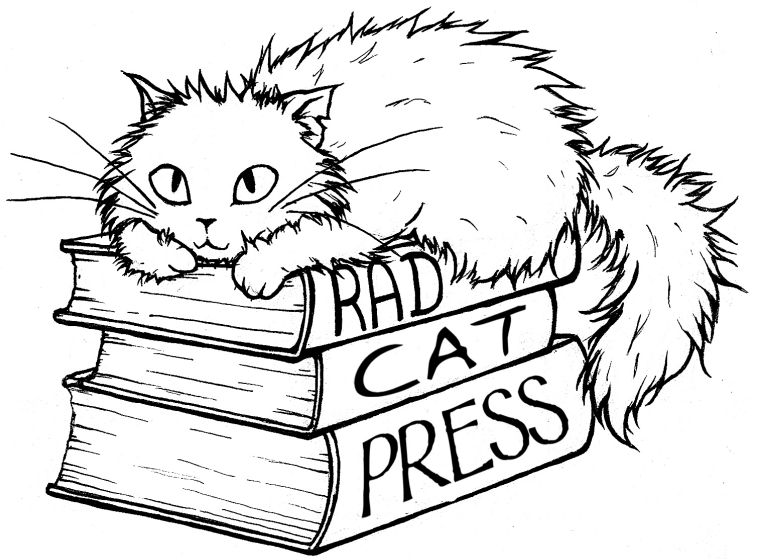
In an age of media bias
and over-stimulation,
a call for a revolution in
information distribution.



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