

WE ARE BECOMING A NATION OF LIES.

My response to the Washington Post Hit-Piece on January 22, 2020

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On December 16, 2019, the Washington Post reported that Donald Trump, the President of the United States of America has told over fifteen thousand lies within his first three years in office. It is becoming apparent that as a nation and society we are beginning to conform to a culture of telling lies to attain every objective, and as long as we win or get what we want, it does not matter, since the truth may no longer be that relevant. This emerging culture may pose a greater threat to our society than Russia, China and Iran combined.

On January 22, 2020, the same Washington Post did a takedown and hit-piece on me based on lies. I do not understand why a highly respected news organization will allow their international reputation and platform to be used to propagate lies about an American who has sacrificed so much to make a difference in the lives of other Americans. A whole lot has been written and published to establish the truth and facts about my life and work since 2002 including the "League of Denial", "Concussion" and my memoir "Truth Doesn't Have a Side". In fact, a major Hollywood motion picture, "Concussion" was produced by Sony Pictures to document the true story of my life and work. Another major documentary film, "League of Denial" was produced by PBS to document the true story of my life and work. Anyone who needs to know the truth about Bennet Omalu should read my memoir "Truth Doesn't Have a Side", read the books "League of Denial" and "Concussion", or watch the movie "Concussion", and the documentary "League of Denial".

The statement by Will Hobson in his hit-piece that "Omalu did not discover CTE, nor did he name the disease" is blatantly false. When I discovered CTE changes in the brains of football players beginning in 2002, I was rejected, ridiculed and dismissed by the NFL, NHL, WWE, and by established and pre-eminent doctors across the United States. However, since my preliminary work there has been nothing that I hypothesized or propounded that has been proven to be wrong, rather they have all been successfully and independently validated, reproduced and confirmed by researchers and scientists across the world.

There were no neuropathologic guidelines for the diagnosis of CTE in 2002 because there was no disease called CTE. I examined the Mike Webster brain in 2002 and 2003, submitted and published the paper on Mike Webster in August 2004 and February 2005 respectively. I published more papers on CTE after the Mike Webster paper. It was only in 2016, eleven years after the Mike Webster paper was published that the National Institute of Health published what they called "The first NINDS/NIBIB consensus meeting to define neuropathological criteria for the diagnosis of chronic traumatic encephalopathy". If CTE was not a newly identified disease how come this was the first time diagnostic criteria were being presented and published? Dr. McKee and Dr. Pearl were both members of this consensus meeting and authors of the published paper. I was not deemed worthy by the National Institute of Health to be invited to or even informed of this meeting. I do not understand why Dr. McKee and Dr Pearl would viciously ridicule and attack me that I did not adhere to the neuropathological criteria for the diagnosis of CTE when these criteria did not exist. Where were all these doctors when a

foreigner like me who knew nothing about football discovered a disease in football players, America's most popular sport?

When I performed the Mike Webster autopsy, there was no disease called CTE in football players. All we knew then was a disease in boxers called Dementia Pugilistica. Mike Webster was not a boxer and the changes in his brain did not resemble the changes that had been described in the brains of boxers. I did not know what I was seeing in Mike Webster's brain. It had not been described in the literature, especially in a football player. I showed the slides to other doctors, they confirmed what I was seeing and further confirmed that there was no such disease ever reported in football players. I was advised and believed that we should give this disease a name whatever it was. When I saw these changes in the brain of Mike Webster and then in the brains of Terry Long and Andre Waters, the first three cases of CTE in football players, the changes were not those of Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia Pugilistica, which were considered to be primary amyloidopathies. What I saw was a primary tauopathy and the topographic distributions in these brains were distinctive and different from what had been described in Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Pugilistica. I realized I had encountered something new.

I engaged in a very well-established scientific method called "Epidemiological Methods" and reported the Mike Webster case as a sentinel case, followed by the Terry Long case, which I again reported as a sentinel case. However, when I encountered the Andre Waters case, I had a case series, which I reported and published. I do not understand why Washington Post was so fixated only on the Mike Webster brain. There were at least twelve other brains of football players with CTE I had examined following the Mike Webster brain in the early years of CTE. Going by the standards of practice of "Epidemiological Methods" I reported my findings to the general public so that other physicians will test my hypothesis and validate or invalidate them. Obviously, they were validated, and the science moved forward.

I had my doubts about what I was seeing in these brains as an objective scientist should, but my belief was greater than my doubts, and I chose the name Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy for three reasons. It sounded very erudite and had a very good acronym, CTE that was very easy to say and remember. The name was not too specific or definitive since it literally meant a bad brain associated with trauma, which had been present for a long time. I was afraid that I may be proven wrong down the road, and if I did, the name CTE, which was non-specific, would give me some room to explain myself. Finally, the name obeyed the Daubert principle of law in the United States since the terminologies chronic, traumatic and encephalopathy were already existent and published in the literature. If I had given it a completely novel name, it would not stand the test of the Daubert principle and would not be accepted in the court of law in the United States because it would have been deemed novel. And I had other names like Dementia Footballitica, Football Dementia and Mike Webster's Disease. All these would have been novel names and would not have stood the Daubert principle test if challenged in the court of law. In addition to being a neuropathologist, I am also a forensic pathologist so I was very aware of the medico-legal consequences CTE may face in the court of law.

Since the Mike Webster case every theory I proposed about CTE has been successfully validated and reproduced by scientists and physicians across the world including by Dr. McKee and Dr. Pearl. CTE has become a widely recognized and generally accepted disease by all specialties of medicine and science and has in fact become a house-hold name. I do not therefore understand the stale ridicule and attacks that have been rejuvenated again by the Washington Post, unless there are other hidden agenda and motives that have nothing to do with me. After discovering

and describing CTE in football players, I also identified it in wrestlers, mixed martial artists and in military veterans diagnosed with PTSD. I successfully published all my work even when many other doctors were refuting and denying my work. In fact, I am currently working with other physicians to identify ways of diagnosing CTE in living patients using PET scan. Any physician who would deny this historical narrative is simply lying.

While I am not comparing myself to Albert Einstein, but when he formulated the theory of relativity, he was not the first to discover the laws of physics, acceleration, speed of light, vacuum or mass of the universe. The words theory and relativity were already existent and published in the literature. He simply advanced the frontiers of science and he was credited with his work and lauded. My work advanced our understanding of traumatic brain injury and has really instigated a broad body of research into a better understanding of the long-term effects of traumatic brain injury. Why the Washington Post will choose to denigrate, diminish, ridicule and dismiss the work of a black immigrant physician like myself I do not know. I have really been bruised and burnt repeatedly because I examined Mike Webster's brain. I lost it all at some point and ran away from Pennsylvania to California to begin a new life with nothing but my courage and faith in Christ. Yet the attacks continue almost 20 years after I met Mike Webster. Therefore, I still maintain that I wish I never met Mike Webster. My life would have been much better and simpler without vexations like staying up all night to write this response.

It is very pertinent to note that when I discovered CTE in the brain of football players, the NFL and other professional leagues made a very calculated attempt by using other physicians to deny my work, reject my work and even suggest that I was a fraudulent doctor who was synthesizing bogus data. The truth prevailed for almost 20 years and I was proven right. The NFL and other doctors who denied my work for reasons best known to them, have been proven wrong. It is therefore very shocking to me that some of these same doctors and organizations are recycling the same lies and accusations against me 18 years later to revise history. For example, Dr. Peter Davies, although he was not a physician, was the person hired by the NFL to review and refute my work. Today again, he has stepped forward 12 years later to continue to ridicule me with the Washington Post. Will Hobson ironically chose to exclude this piece of information in his hit-piece that Peter Davies worked with the NFL.

At some point in the United States I was about the only physician yelling out in the wilderness at the top of my voice about the dangers of playing football especially in children. In fact, at some point the NFL queried why I was the only physician diagnosing CTE in the early days of CTE. One of my colleagues at a professional meeting advised me to propose diagnostic criteria for CTE to enable and encourage other doctors to diagnose CTE. The NIH and these doctors who are now ridiculing me and denying my work, were nowhere when I fought the NFL to get the truth out to the public. In fact, Dr. McKee and the NIH accepted millions of dollars from the NFL and other sports organizations and joined the NFL in attacking me, denying my work and dismissing me. If you may recall this was why they did not invite me to the consensus meeting to determine the diagnostic criteria for the diagnosis of CTE. Is that not puzzling why the NIH will choose not to invite the man who started it all? Will Hobson chose not to tell the public the truth about this. He also failed to tell the public that I have never accepted even one dime from any sports organization. I believe accepting such money will taint me and my work. My truth cannot be bought with money or influenced by money.

In order to do my part to guarantee that the truth of CTE was told, I put together a scientific paper proposing novel diagnostic criteria for the diagnosis of CTE which I published in a

scientific journal, which I submitted in October 2009 and was published in February 2011. This paper was titled "Emerging Histomorphologic Phenotypes of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy in American Athletes". I was a no-name Nigerian doctor who was not part of the establishment, so the establishment deemed me a threat and referred to me as dangerous. I have always published my papers in scientific journals and not on the pages of newspapers. I believe it was my proposed guidelines published in 2011 that finally compelled the NIH five years later to wake up and propose diagnostic criteria published in 2016. Since the NIH criteria were published, I have adhered to these criteria and have applied them to papers I have published after 2016. Any doctor who does not agree with my proposed guidelines should not go to the pages of a newspaper to attack me. That is not the way medicine or science is practiced. Differences in opinions and perspectives are what make science thrive. Since the NIH and the so-called established doctors were not forthcoming in the early days of CTE for so many years, I had to do what I had to do as a one-man army fighting for the truth to guide and encourage other doctors to diagnose CTE and spread the word to parents and their children about the inherent dangers of playing high-impact, high-contact sports. I was doing what I was trained to do as an Epidemiologist with a Masters Degree in Public Health.

Science should not be practiced on the pages of a newspaper. As scientists, we should have varying opinions, which should be respectfully discussed on appropriate scientific platforms. For example, the Washington Post article stated that "In recorded medical literature, there are no documented cases of someone developing CTE from a single concussion". This statement is false. There are published papers, which have shown that following one episode of traumatic brain injury a patient can develop CTE and a patient can actually die from a concussion as an underlying or a contributory factor to death. In fact, another scientific paper reports about a 12% prevalence of CTE in the general population outside sports.

The science of CTE evolves like every other subject in science. I believe Dr. McKee, Dr. Pearl and Dr. Davies have erred critically as licensed physicians and scientists by aligning themselves with a sports reporter to propagate falsehoods and misrepresentations about another physician and his work on the pages of a newspaper. Can every physician out there imagine what our profession would be turned into if physicians go to the pages of newspapers and magazines, collaborate with journalists to ridicule and attack other physicians whose positions and papers they may not like or agree with? Like I said in my very first paper on CTE, scientists should continue to work on CTE and advance the science. The goal is to develop a cure for CTE, and I believe we can do it soon. And it does not matter who does it. What matters is as physicians and scientists, we are collectively serving and enhancing humanity.

In the hit-piece, the Washington Post sports writer, Will Hobson ridiculed me for working as an expert witness and performing medico-legal consultations. He further stated that the bulk of my income comes from working as an expert witness. This is false. I am a physician, I have a Masters in Public Health and a Masters in Business Administration from Carnegie Mellon University, one of the top business schools in the world. I also have five board certifications in forensic pathology, neuropathology, anatomic pathology, clinical pathology and medical management. As a forensic pathologist, it is part of my routine duties and work to testify in court and work as an expert witness. I was already a board-certified forensic pathologist before I performed the Mike Webster autopsy and began my work on CTE; and I was already working as an expert witness and performing medico-legal consultations. Therefore, with or without CTE I would still be working as an expert witness and medico-legal consultant because I am a forensic pathologist. That is what forensic pathologists do. By design Will Hobson failed to tell the truth

about the good work I have done and continue to do when it comes to the administration of criminal justice in the State of California and across the United States of America as a forensic pathologist. This is because he wants you to see only his prejudiced perspective that I am a black villain, an uncivilized thug who should not have had the intelligence to be a doctor or discover a disease his preferred American doctors could not discover.

In an e-mail Will Hobson sent me, he ridiculed me for living in a one-million-dollar home and for being successful. To state the facts straight, I live in a home that is worth a lot more than one million dollars. The down payment I made on the home, in part, came from the contractual payments I received for the movie "Concussion". I did not come to the United States as a physician, to obtain two graduate degrees and five professional board-certifications to live under a bridge. I do not know what is wrong with an American becoming successful and living in any home of his or her choice.

Will Hobson stated that I have withdrawn from CTE research. This is false. I am still working on CTE. In fact, I was part of a working group and research team that recently had a meeting with the Food and Drug Administration researching and working on ways to diagnose CTE in living patients using PET-scan. I am currently working on publishing some of my new findings on CTE as well as writing papers and book chapters on CTE. They want to shut me up and knock me out. The question we must ask ourselves is why? What is their objective? What have I done wrong?

Will Hobson stated that the state of CTE remains that of uncertainty. This is false. Just like global warming, there will always be a minority of scientists who will deny the obvious especially physicians and scientists associated with the sports industry. Beginning with the time of Hippocrates around 400 BC we have known that there is no safe blow to the human head and brain, and traumatic brain injury is a permanent brain injury. May be Will Hobson, a sports writer, and his so-called panel of doctors who do not have names, believe that football players do not suffer any form of traumatic brain injury. It is interesting on how Will Hobson, quotes the names of scientists and doctors who have said things without mentioning their names. The page of a newspaper is not the platform for the practice of science.

The irony is that the Washington Post is recycling the same propaganda the NFL and other contact sports leagues leveled against me with my discovery of CTE in the brain of Mike Webster in the early years of CTE. The NFL presented the same bogus arguments, attacked and vilified me, falsely believing that I was their problem. In fact, the NFL requested that my paper on Mike Webster be retracted so the world would not know about CTE. Luckily the truth prevailed as it always does. They are coming back 18 years later for a re-match, but now with greater vitriol and rancor. No, I am not worthy to be their problem. I am not worthy to fight with these very powerful organizations and doctors who are highly connected. The truth is their problem. I do not understand how the Washington Post can do such a sloppy job and not research on the recent historical narrative on CTE and not recycle the same NFL narrative, unless the Washington Post and the NFL both believe that Omalu is their problem and not the truth.

Let the truth be told. If you read the Washington Post article it becomes vividly clear that Will Hobson wanted to portray the Boston University and Dr. McKee in good light while making me the black villain, an evil, uncivilized and marginal person who should not be regarded as a good scientist or a good doctor. I do not understand this depth of anger, rancor, bitterness, vitriol and hatred leveled at one person. Can somebody please tell me what I have done wrong?

Since I began receiving national attention for CTE, Boston University, represented by their researchers especially Dr. McKee have created this false narrative and alternative truth to diminish, dismiss and ridicule my work while elevating their work so they can position themselves as the leading authorities in CTE. They have made countless misrepresentations and lies about me on different platforms across the years. In my perception it seems to them that the only way they can become the leading authorities in CTE is to take me out of the picture. This is not necessary. I am in no competition with anyone. My work speaks for itself independently and their work should speak for itself independently. There is enough space in the world for all of us to exist together and serve humanity. My prayer has always been that other researchers will carry on the good work I did in the early years of CTE, advance our understanding of CTE and serve humanity. I am only but one person. This is not about any one person.

At some point in my CTE quagmire, if we can all remember, I lost my job in Pittsburgh, I took my brain samples home with me because no university, institution or organization believed in my work or gave me the space, opportunity or platform to do my research. I had to pay for the tissue analysis I needed to perform with my own money. I was vindicated when my papers were all published in scientific journals and the world learnt about CTE, which was what the NFL has referred to as "my bullshit theory".

Medicine is not an absolute science so anyone can quote one or two papers to support whatever biases they may have to make these biases seem like the alternative truth. This is what Will Hobson has done in his hit-piece. But if we pay closer attention you will notice that in 1957, eleven years before I was born, the American Academy of Pediatrics published a position paper in the Pennsylvania Medical Society journal and affirmed that 'body-contact sports, particularly tackle football and boxing, are considered to have no place in programs for children. In 2011, the same American Academy of Pediatrics together with the Canadian Pediatric Society, advised that physicians vigorously oppose boxing in children and encourage children to participate in alternative sports in which intentional blows to the head are not central to the sport.

In an editorial in 1976, The Lancet journal warned that "doctors do have a duty to convince the controlling bodies and participants in sports where concussion is frequent that the effects are cumulative and that the acceptance of concussion injury, though gallant, may be very dangerous". The editorial concluded that "There are so many ways that irretrievable brain damage can happen by accident or through disease; it seems a pity to add to the number on purpose" through intentional exposure of children to brain damage in high-impact, high-contact sports. Brain damage has no cure, once it has occurred all that a physician can do is to mitigate further damage, treat and control symptoms as they emerge. The best cure is prevention, just as Hippocrates had admonished a very long time ago, first do no harm.

As a nation and society, we should have the courage to tell the truth no matter how difficult, painful or inconvenient it may be. This is the only way we can excel to become the best of ourselves as a people. There is only one truth. Truth does not have a side, perspective or prospective. There is no alternative truth. The truth sometimes can be very inconvenient, but we shall not deny the truth for its inconvenience. But come what may the truth will always prevail, it may take a long time to come, but since the truth will always prevail, it is a smarter thing to do to seek the truth and be on the side of the truth. A society that lives by the truth shall survive by the truth. A society that lives by lies shall die by lies. We are better than this.