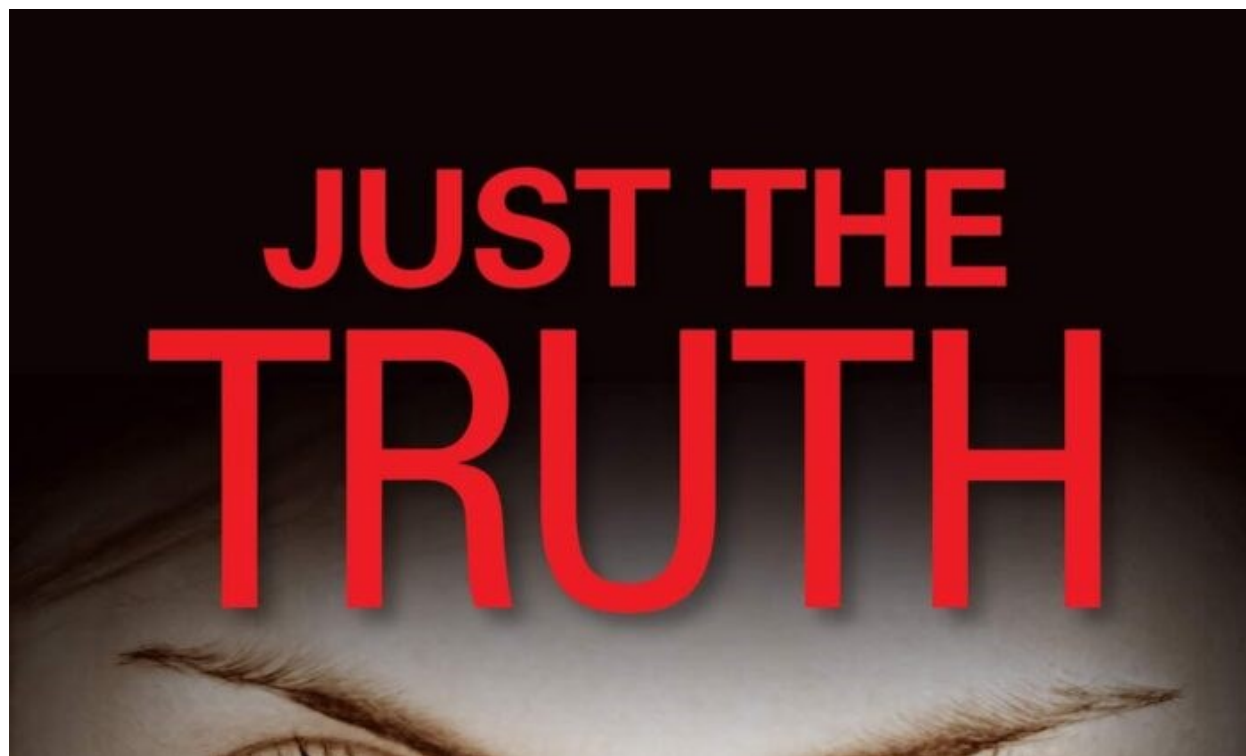


Book Review of *Just the Truth*: The Epoch Times, Aug. 3, 2020

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## LITERATURE

# Book Review: Gen LaGreca's 'Just the Truth': A Mirror for Our Time

BY JEFF MINICK

August 3, 2020 Updated: August 3, 2020

Meet Laura Taninger.

Laura is the heroine of Gen LaGreca's political thriller "Just the Truth," an investigative reporter and president of the news division of Taninger Enterprises.

Founded as a newspaper nearly 70 years ago by Laura's grandfather, Julius Taninger, the paper and the other media outlets of Taninger Enterprises have always abided by the motto engraved in stone over the entrance to its headquarters: "Find the truth wherever it hides." Laura's grandfather exemplified those words in his actions, his reporting, and his editorials, and passed that ideal of truth-telling, no matter the consequences, to his children and to Laura.

## Truth Versus Lies

But changes in politics and journalism have brought Laura and her firebrand sister, Kate, editor of a conservative college newspaper, into conflict with their father and two siblings. All of them sit on the board of Taninger Enterprises. Under the threat of advertisers lost because of controversy and a behind-the-scenes government crackdown, Clark and two of his children, Irene and Billie, want Laura to retreat from her investigation of a major story.

And the story? Laura has become suspicious about the Voting Fairness Act, which gives the federal government the power to take the place of states in tabulating votes for federal elections and to use an electronic system for counting those votes. As she digs into financial discrepancies of the money budgeted for this system, one of her sources is murdered, various divisions of Taninger Enterprises come under federal investigation, and Kate is the victim of threats both from a mob on campus and from college officials.

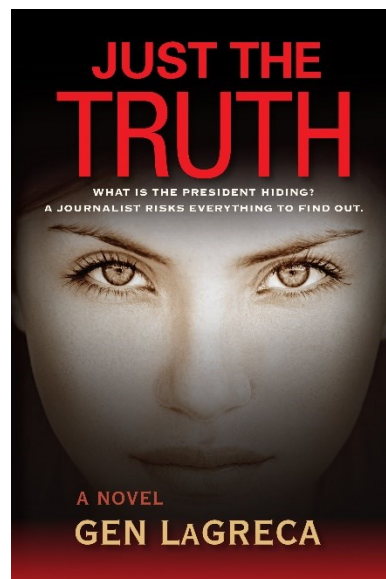
On her nightly news broadcast, “Just the Truth,” Laura refuses to back down and continues to air the evidence she uncovers revealing possible fraud in the new voting system. Harassed by the government and other news media, Clark, Irene, and Billie eventually demand that Laura either abandon the story or step down from her positions as broadcaster and news division president.

## A Mirror for Our Present Unrest

Meanwhile, young Kate Taninger is undergoing her own trial by fire. When Kate publishes an editorial in her college newspaper defending her sister’s investigation, she finds herself set upon by violent protesters. These radicals are paid by a private group, but with the connivance of deep-state employees linked to the administration of Ken Martin, the United States president.

Collier University’s other student newspaper, joined by mainstream news media, also launches an attack on Kate and Laura. Like her sister, Kate soon finds herself facing a life-changing choice: either retract and apologize for her editorial or risk being booted out of the university.

Given the pandemic and the socialist mobs that today dominate our news, we must wonder what crystal ball LaGreca consulted while writing her novel. The plot and themes of “Just the Truth” could not be more pertinent to that news and our current unrest. Here we see the corruption of our politics, the machinations of the “deep state,” the growing threat of federal agencies to private enterprise, and the constant calls to change our way of voting. Here too we see the means by which mobs “spontaneously” appear out of nowhere to attack free speech and American liberty, and the misinformation and sometimes downright deception provided to us via “fake news.”



Gen LaGreca's latest book.

## The Breitbart Doctrine Add-On

By now, some readers may be scratching their heads and thinking: “OK, Jeff Minick, we get the gist of this novel, written by an author unfamiliar to many of us, but what on earth does this book have to do with Arts & Culture?”

Let’s take a look.

Andrew Breitbart, a well-known conservative writer now deceased, was famous for his Breitbart doctrine, the notion that “politics is downstream from culture.” By this he meant that our politics are shaped by popular culture. The culture of Weimar Germany helped bring about Nazism; the American culture of the 1960s and 1970s is the grandparent of our current political disorder.



The unrest of the cultural revolution in America in the 1960s is the tide that informs today’s events. Anti-Vietnam protesters surround a police car outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

But Breitbart’s doctrine fails to recognize another development. To employ a different metaphor, let me suggest that when politics gains the saddle and seizes the reins, culture becomes the horse and not the rider. For the past century, whenever dictatorial governments came to power, culture has acted as a handmaiden of the state. In Hitler’s Germany, Stalin’s Russia, Mussolini’s Italy, Castro’s Cuba, and elsewhere, art and culture became tools of propaganda used to glorify the ruling party. In these cases, culture is downstream from politics.



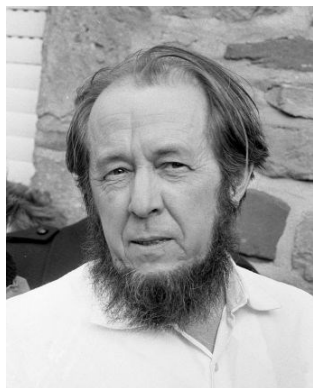
Iconic poster of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin with a little girl named Gelya. The poster was used as propaganda to show the dictator as a father to his people. In fact, Stalin most likely had both of Gelya's parents killed. (Courtesy of William Vollinger)

In some instances, politics has sought to eradicate culture. The Chinese Cultural Revolution attempted to erase thousands of years of traditional Chinese arts and social practices. In the 1970s, the Khmer Rouge instituted the “killing fields” and tried to wipe out traditional Cambodian culture. In

America today, we are witnessing “cancel culture” along with mobs intent on toppling statues of historic figures and wiping out wholesale certain men, women, and events from our history.

Cancel Culture: A Chinese poster in late 1966 showing how to deal with a so-called enemy of the people during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. (Jean Vincent/AFP/Getty Images)

When politics governs culture, ordinary citizens become afraid to speak their minds. The Soviets imprisoned and then banished Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Thomas Mann fled Hitler's Germany, and millions of others in the last hundred years, most of them ordinary people, died in camps at the hands of fascists and communists, often for dissident viewpoints or “incorrect” thinking.



Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn lost his Soviet citizenship because he spoke out against the evil empire. (Public Domain)

Here in the land of the free, we have created an American way to shut people down. The barbed wire and iron bars of our gulags are electronic, and we keep our fellow citizens in line through the threats of doxing, cancel culture, and savage mob attacks on platforms like Twitter. According to a recent Pew poll, 62 percent of Americans now practice self-censorship while at work or on social media, afraid to speak their minds for fear that assaults by others may cost them social status, friends, and even their jobs.

## It Can Happen Here

Which brings us back to “Just the Truth.”



In LaGreca’s tale, we see what happens when investigative journalists bring their political prejudices rather than objectivity to a story; we see how the left uses words like “bigot” and “racist” as weapons; we see the evil that occurs when truth goes out the window, when corrupt politicians arbitrarily exercise their power, and when citizens are bludgeoned into silence by the politically correct.

Surely, few of us ever believed that America could become a leftist dictatorship. Even now, when some of our governors and mayors issue rules and regulations as if they were all-powerful potentates, or allow riots to continue unchecked in places like Portland, many of us think it can’t happen here.

But it can happen here. It is happening here.

Author Gen LaGreca.  
(Courtesy of Gen LaGreca)

And we need more real-life Laura Taningers to find the truth wherever it hides and to keep the spotlight of that truth shining brightly on those out to destroy our culture, our country, and our liberty.

### ‘Just the Truth’

Gen LaGreca  
Winged Victory Press  
227 pages, paperback

*Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.*

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