

About that MLK quote

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

May 5, 2011

A friend posted this to Facebook the other day:

"Burial at sea is a weird choice, and only invites suspicion, but I really don't want to have to see the photographs, either." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Another friend reposted it, and there followed a long and silly series of invented quotations: Sarah Palin on her vegetarian diet, Ayn Rand on how great it was to be on Medicare, Abraham Lincoln on the unreliability of online quotations, Mother Teresa on how much she was enjoying this Facebook mini-meme.

The impetus for this thread and others like it was of course the following alleged quote from King, which went viral following the news that [Osama bin Laden had been killed](#):

I mourn the loss of thousands
of precious lives, but I will not rejoice in the death of one, not even an enemy. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

The problem is that the first sentence of this quote didn't come from King. It's by a woman named Jessica Dovey, who [posted it](#) Monday along with the other three sentences, which she (correctly) attributed to King. A prominent Twitter user misread the post before [tweeting it](#), at which point we all started seeing the fake quote on our Facebook walls.

It's interesting that so many people reposted this without noticing that the first sentence's relevance is oddly specific. If that raised suspicion, 30 seconds and some [intermediate Google skills](#) would have

confirmed it. Yet some people [got pretty upset](#) about the initial tweeter's inaccuracy, as if one person's mistake or license can be blamed for others' credulity. Nobody tell them about [pseudo-Paul](#), okay?

While this incident couldn't have happened even ten years ago, putting words in the mouths of beloved and influential people is nothing new. And the frustrated reactions seem particularly odd given that in this case--unlike many others--there's little question that the quote represents the attributed source in spirit. Along with "[Loving Your Enemies](#)," "[The Death of Evil Upon the Seashore](#)" is always worth another read.