

# GABBY GIFFORDS WON'T BACK DOWN



BRIARCLIFF ENTERTAINMENT AND CNN FILMS PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH TIME STUDIOS A STORYVILLE FILMS AND LISA ERSPAMER ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION "GABBY GIFFORDS WON'T BACK DOWN"  
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**JOURNEYS IN FILM**  
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**Media  
Responsibility  
Lesson**



## DRIVING QUESTION

Do you know how to check if a media source is accurate?  
If you do, how often do you check that reporting is accurate or complete?

*Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down* highlights the media's role in educating and mobilizing the public as well as the harm that can occur when the 24-hour news cycle presents incorrect or biased information. Even though professional journalists are supposed to abide by a code of ethics that requires they verify information before releasing it, media outlets erroneously reported that Gabby died after she was wounded in a mass shooting.

Since 2011, increased social media use has exacerbated the problem of false or misleading news reports; **MIT scholars have found that false news stories are 70% more likely to be reshared than true stories.**<sup>4</sup> As technology evolves, our society faces new ethical questions regarding how we tell and share stories.

## Useful Terms

**Social media** includes websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

**Mass media** refers to mass communication, such as broadcasting, publishing, and the internet, considered collectively.<sup>5</sup>

**Media bias** refers to the selection of events and stories reported by journalists and news outlets within mass media and how those stories are covered.<sup>6</sup>

## Personal Reflection

Have you ever listened to or heard of someone else telling your story (through gossip or other “behind your back” discussions)? Were details omitted or added that changed your story? How did it feel to have your life “reported” by others?

## Discussion Questions

1. Frustration due to the ongoing American gun violence epidemic has sparked a debate amongst academics, journalists, and the public on how to cover high-profile mass shootings. Some advocate for releasing graphic images to mobilize the public, arguing that reporting is often “sanitized.” Others fear that “sensationalizing” coverage will encourage copycat shooters.<sup>7</sup> Do you think *Gabby Giffords Won’t Back Down* sanitized or sensationalized (or presented a balanced approach to) gun violence?
2. The NRA has said the only way to combat a “bad guy with a gun” is a “good guy with a gun.” *Gabby Giffords Won’t Back Down* tells the story of the “good guy with a gun” who mistook an innocent person for the shooter. (Thankfully, he never opened fire.) How did the presentation of both perspectives affect your thinking on the issue?
3. What parts of the storytelling in *Gabby Giffords Won’t Back Down* resonated with you? Did any elements of the storytelling inspire you to take action?

## Extension Activities

1. Poll your group (or your friends and family) to see what each member believes is more important: information given to the public in real-time or accurate information presented after the story has developed and settled.
2. Create a bar graph reflecting the news sources your group members primarily use to receive their news. Or, if you are completing this activity on your own, poll friends and family and graph the results. Reflect upon or discuss why you trust your news source. What other news sources could you seek out to widen your perspective?

## Additional Resources

Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics: <https://www.spj.org/pdf/spj-code-of-ethics.pdf>

Article by staff writer at *Vanity Fair*, Charlotte Klein: [bit.ly/3hsaFVM](https://bit.ly/3hsaFVM)

“Fake or Real? How to Self-Check the News and Get the Facts” via NPR: [bit.ly/3teaFLJ](https://bit.ly/3teaFLJ)

Websites for Fact Checking from College of New York Staten Island: <https://library.csi.cuny.edu/c.php?g=619342&p=4310783>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.aap9559>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lexico.com>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mccneb.edu/Current-Students/Current-Students-Resources/Library/Web-Sites/Media-Bias>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2022/05/news-media-considers-breaking-grimly-routine-cover-age-of-mass-shootings>

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