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Michael Moore's Making Fictitious Documentaries about "Fictitious Times"

By [Brian Carnell](#)

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In accepting the Oscar for his "documentary" *Bowling for Columbine*, Michael Moore delivered an anti-war speech claiming that "We live in fictitious times." Well at least we live in times when fictitious documentaries can win Oscar's.

David Hardy has a [lengthy look](#) at the way that Moore selectively edited his documentary to distort reality in order to make his argument. The two most egregious examples involve two speeches given by Charlton Heston. The first is of Heston speaking in Denver just 10 days after the Columbine killings. Hardy summarizes the documentary,

Weeping children outside Columbine, explaining how near they had come to death and how their friends had just been murdered before their eyes;

Cut to Charlton Heston holding a musket over his head and happily proclaiming "I have only five words for you: 'from my cold, dead, hands'" to a cheering NRA crowd.

Cut to billboard advertising the meeting, while Moore in voiceover intones "Just ten days after the Columbine killings, despite the pleas of a community in mourning, Charlton Heston came to Denver and held a large pro-gun rally for the National Rifle

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Association;"

Cut to Heston (supposedly) continuing speech... "I have a message from the Mayor, Mr. Wellington West, the Mayor of Denver. He sent me this; it says 'don't come here. We don't want you here.' I say to the Mayor this is our country, as Americans we're free to travel wherever we want in our broad land. Don't come here? We're already here."

Hardy points out there are numerous problems with this account -- not the least of which is that Moore has here edited together two speeches that occurred roughly a year apart. Heston did not hold a musket over his head and give the "from my cold, dead hands" line when he was in Denver. Rather that footage is from a speech that Heston gave a year later in North Carolina. As Hardy puts it,

Bowling leads off with this speech, and then splices in footage which was taken in Denver and refers to Denver, to create the impression that the entire clip was taken at the Denver event.

Even the portions of the speech that Heston did give are heavily edited by Moore to sustain the impression that the NRA came to throw a huge rally in Columbine. For example, Heston actually said,

I also want to applaud your courage in coming here today. Or course, you have a right to be here. As you know, we've cancelled the festivities, the fellowship we normally enjoy at our annual gatherings. This decision has perplexed a few and inconvenienced thousands. As your president, I apologize for that.

Moore conveniently edits out Heston's sentence about canceling events at the NRA's annual meeting because, of course, it doesn't fit with the version of Heston that Moore is trying to create (Hardy has a nice side by side comparison of the speech that Heston gave vs. the speech that appears in Moore's documentary [here](#))

Similarly, Moore lies about a speech that Heston gave in Flint, Michigan. In Moore's fiction, Heston comes to Flint after a school shooting. Moore narrates, "Just as he did after the Columbine shooting, Charlton Heston showed up in Flint, to have a big pro-gun rally," and then shows Heston giving a fiery speech. But as Hardy points out, the speech in question was given by Heston more than 8 months after the school shooting for a

get-out-the-vote effort in Michigan prior to the 2000 election.

Hardy points out that Moore can't even be relied upon to accurately inform viewers of minor details. For example, *Bowling for Columbine* features a long shot of a B-52 at the Air Force Academy which features a plaque underneath it. The documentary doesn't show the plaque close enough to read it, but Moore narrates that,

. . . proudly proclaims that the plane killed Vietnamese people on Christmas Eve of 1972.

The actual text of the plaque, however, is,

Dedicated to the men and women of the Strategic Air Command who flew and maintained the B-52D throughout its 26 year history in the command. Aircraft 55,003, with over 15,000 flying hours, is one of two B-52's credited with a confirmed MIG kill during the Vietnam conflict.

Flying out of Utapao Royal Thai Naval Airfield in southeast Thailand, the crew of "Diamond Lil" shot down a MIG northeast of Hanoi during "Linebacker II" action on Christmas Eve 1972.

Fictitious America indeed.

Sources:

[Bowling For Columbine: Documentary or Fiction?](#)
David T. Hardy, March 2003.

[Michael Moore booed as he slams Iraq war at Oscars.](#)
AFP, March 24, 2003.

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