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**PRACTITIONERS FORUM**  
**ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING AND**  
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COALITIONS for CHANGE



# Evaluation and Transformation: It's the Politics stupid...

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# The Argument in a Nutshell



- 1. Evaluation is inherently political***
- 2. Ignoring this, or wishing politics away is dangerous***
- 3. There are tried and tested ways of embracing politics which the evaluation community should explore if it wishes to remain relevant***

**Evaluation is inherently political: it effects people's jobs, reputations and lives**



# Evaluation is also inherently political COS....

*Power relations between stakeholders involved are unequal and some voices will hold more sway than others*



# Evaluation is also inherently political cos....

*Evaluators also have interests, prestige and the next contract to worry about...*





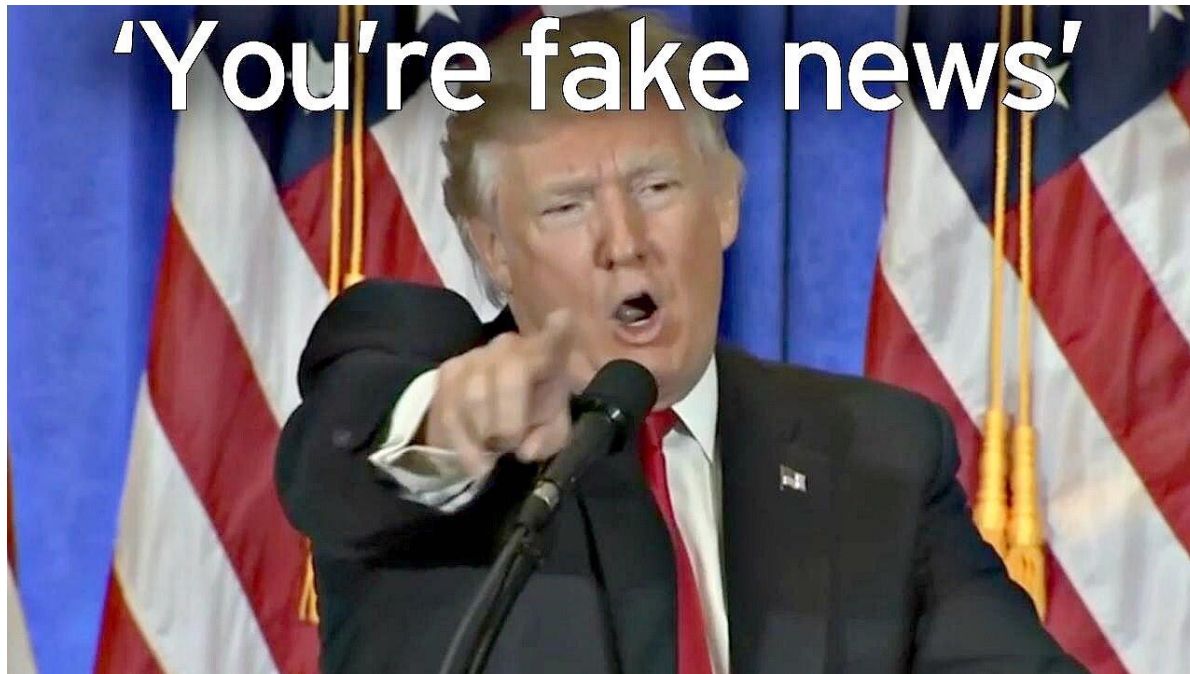
# Cos evaluation is inherently political...

..this contributes to determining:

- what gets researched and how,
- who pays for it,
- the type of evidence sought,
- as well as the likelihood of whether findings will or will not be accepted

# Ignoring this, or wishing politics away is dangerous for five reasons:

- 1. Evidence and knowledge generated by evaluation is located within a political context which will determine if anyone listens/acts*



**Ignoring this, or wishing politics away is dangerous cos...**

***2. Politics at its best is ultimately a battle of ideas about what society we want, how goods are distributed and how we treat each other.***



**IDEOLOGY**  
**THE WAR OF IDEAS**



**Ignoring this, or wishing politics away is dangerous cos**

***3. Transformational change comes from collective action to delegitimise one set of ideas, and legitimise another set***



# Ignoring this, or wishing politics away is dangerous cos

***4. It is this process of negotiation, dialogue and contestation which leads to processes and institutions being seen to be legitimate in the eyes of the public;***



**Ignoring this, or wishing politics away is dangerous cos...**

***5. Legitimate institutions are 'sticky': they tend to last longer than illegitimate ones. This is what makes transformations last***



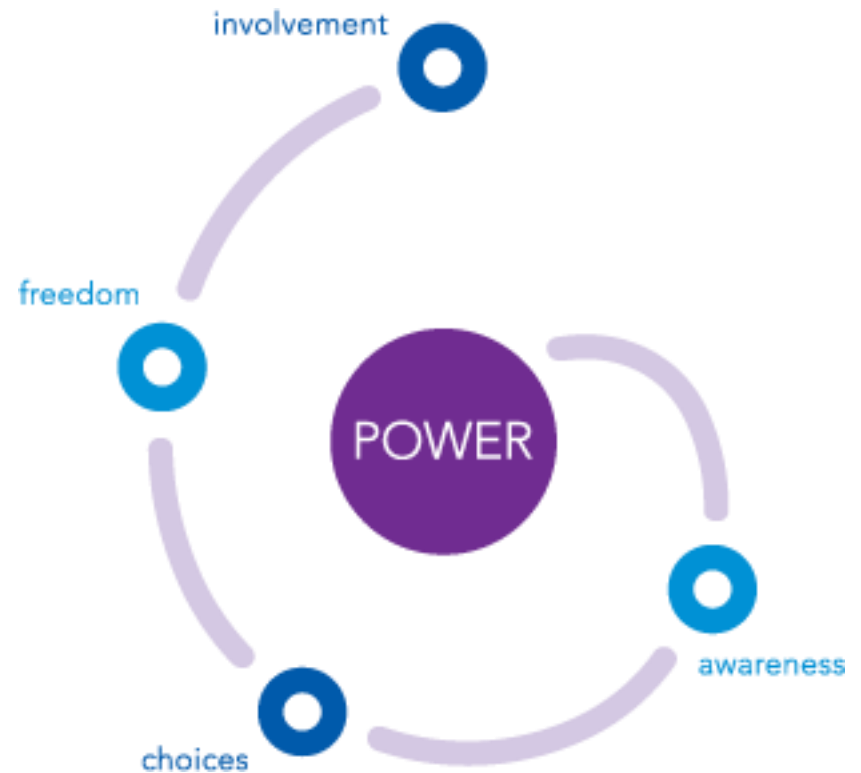
# So what are the implications for evaluative practice?

*1. As all development programs are increasingly required to do: undertake an analysis of the political economy of the context and stakeholders*



# So what are the implications for evaluative practice...

***2. Develop a Theory of Change for your evaluation which factors in politics and power relations and the messiness that this brings***





# So what are the implications for evaluative practice? ...

- 3. Analyse carefully how the evaluation team & the methodology is cognisant of power inequalities and balances the voices of more and less powerful actors*



# So what are the implications for evaluative practice? ...

- 4. Think carefully about how the process of the evaluation might create spaces for negotiation, contestation and bargaining between stakeholders and which might generate new knowledge and collective action*



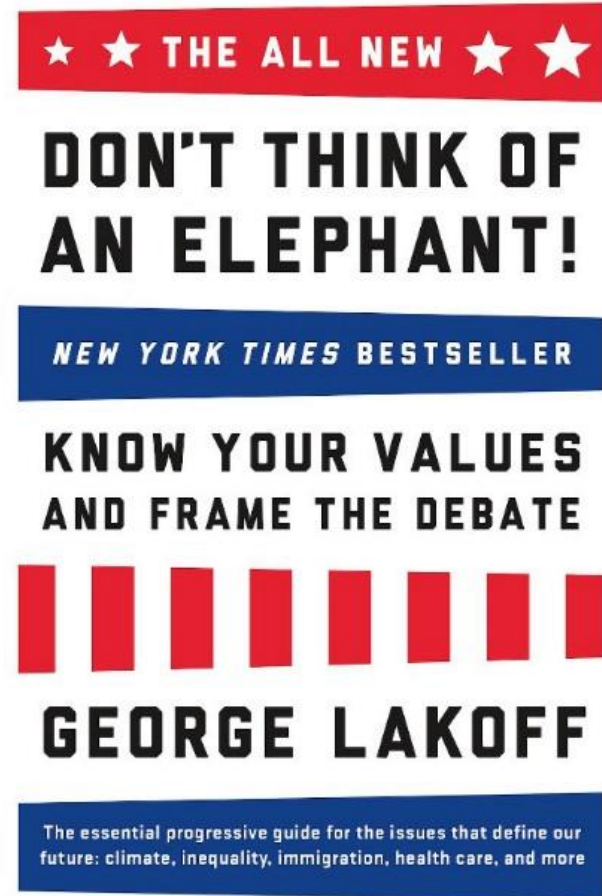
# So what are the implications for evaluative practice? ...

- 5. Investigate if a skilled broker, facilitator or convenor needs to be part of the evaluation team or process*



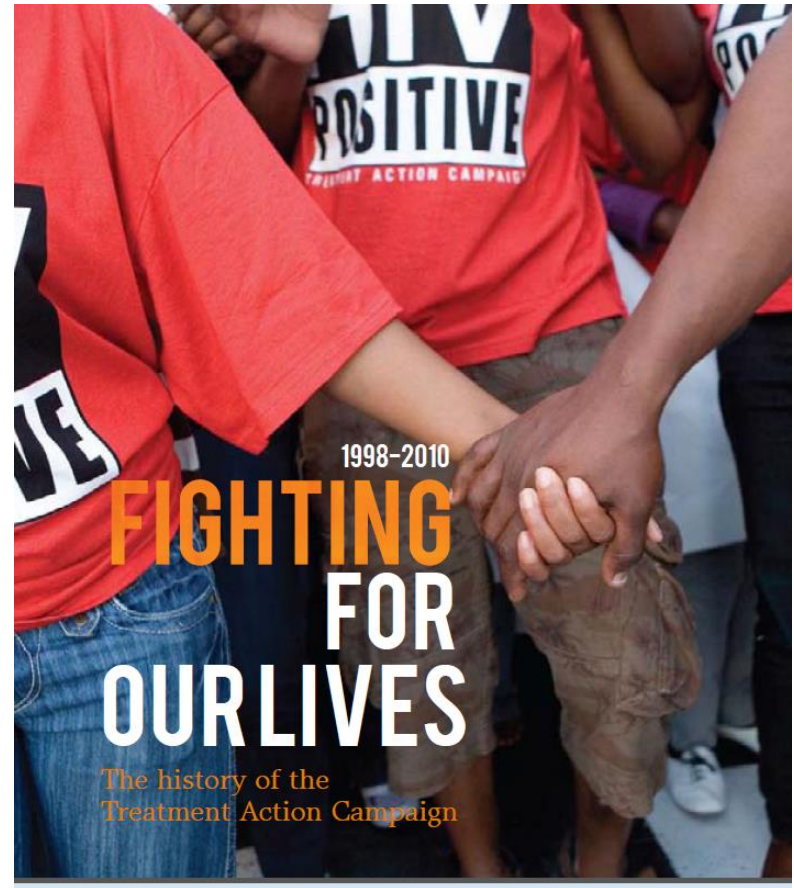
# So what are the implications for evaluative practice? ...

***6. Explore how the framing and policy narrative of the findings of the evaluation might make uptake more likely through their political salience to different stakeholders. Populism won't be beaten by spreadsheets***



# So what are the implications for evaluative practice? ...

7. **Make sure your results and findings are made available in an accessible format so that others might 'draw them down' in ways that lead to further ripples of change**





## So to repeat

*a) evaluation is inherently political and ignoring this, or attempting to somehow remove politics from evaluation, is liable to undermine the potential to support transformational change..*

## So to repeat

*b) There are tried and tested ways of embracing politics which the evaluation community should explore if it wishes to remain relevant*





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