

FEAR  
NO  
TRUTH

HELLO

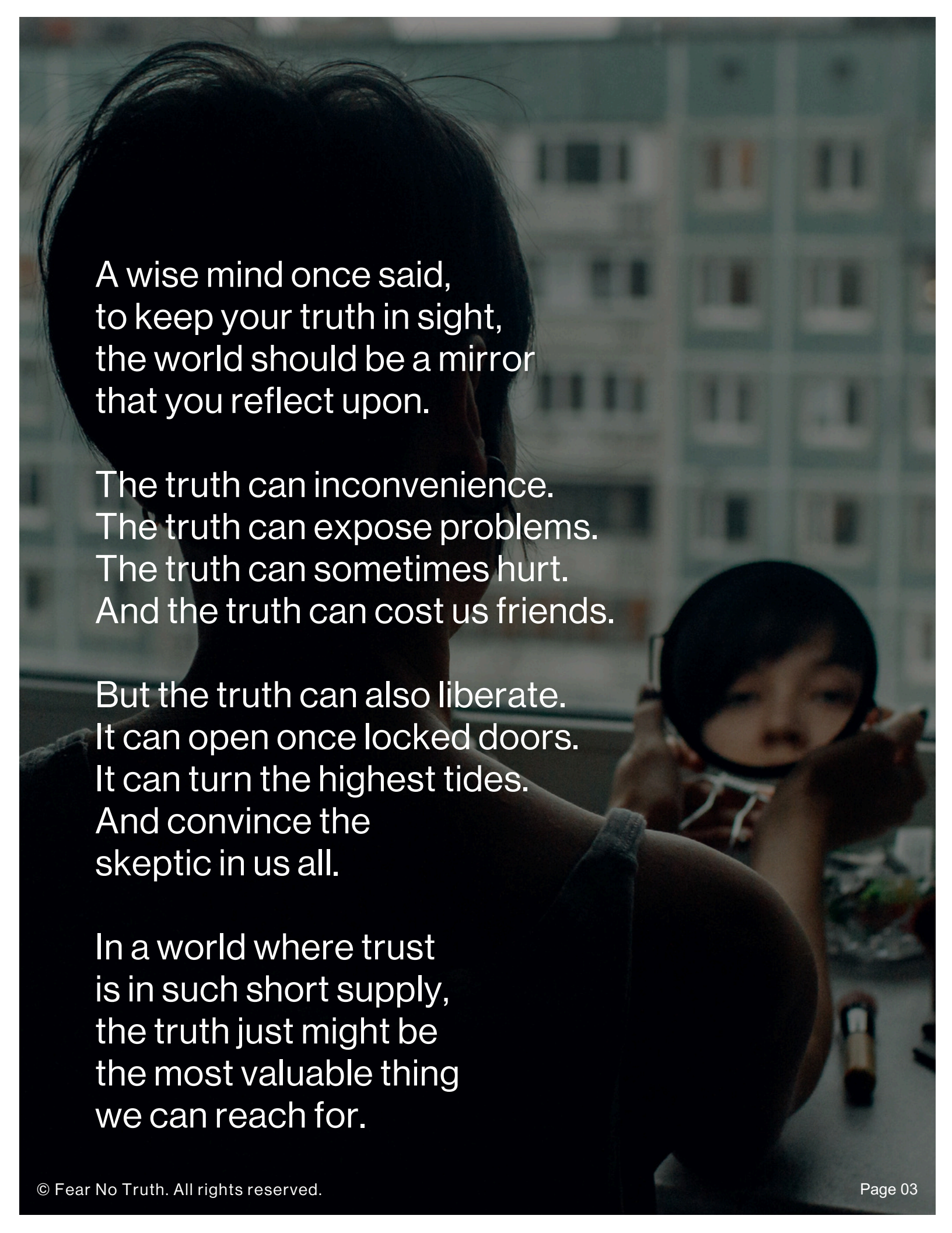






# Prologue



A person with dark hair is seen from behind, looking out a window at a multi-story building with many windows. The person is holding a round mirror in their right hand, and their reflection is visible in it. The scene is dimly lit, with the light coming from the window.

A wise mind once said,  
to keep your truth in sight,  
the world should be a mirror  
that you reflect upon.

The truth can inconvenience.  
The truth can expose problems.  
The truth can sometimes hurt.  
And the truth can cost us friends.

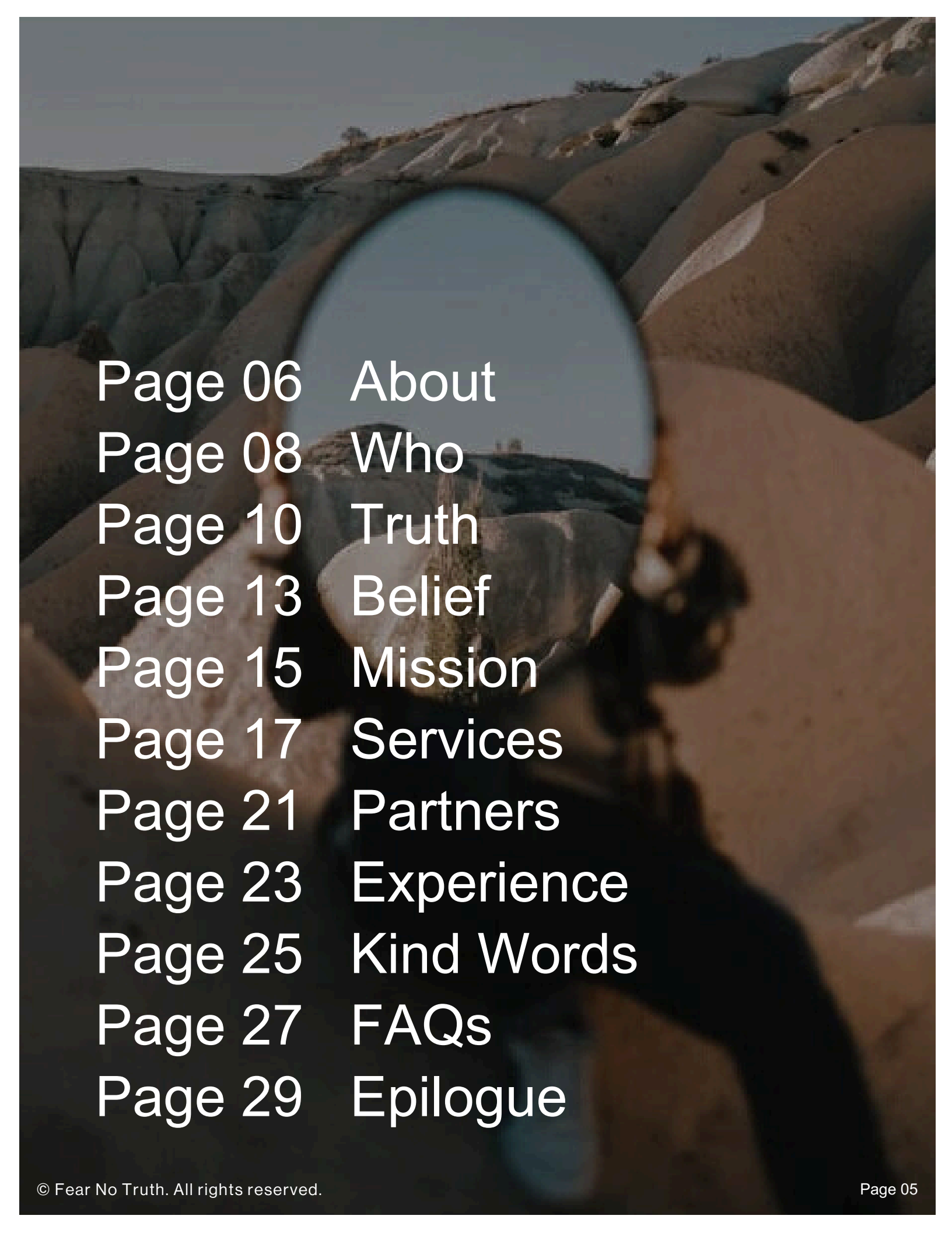
But the truth can also liberate.  
It can open once locked doors.  
It can turn the highest tides.  
And convince the  
skeptic in us all.

In a world where trust  
is in such short supply,  
the truth just might be  
the most valuable thing  
we can reach for.



# Contents



A person is holding a magnifying glass over a desert landscape. The magnifying glass is positioned over a small, dark, rocky area in the distance, making it appear much larger and more detailed. The background shows rolling sand dunes under a clear sky.

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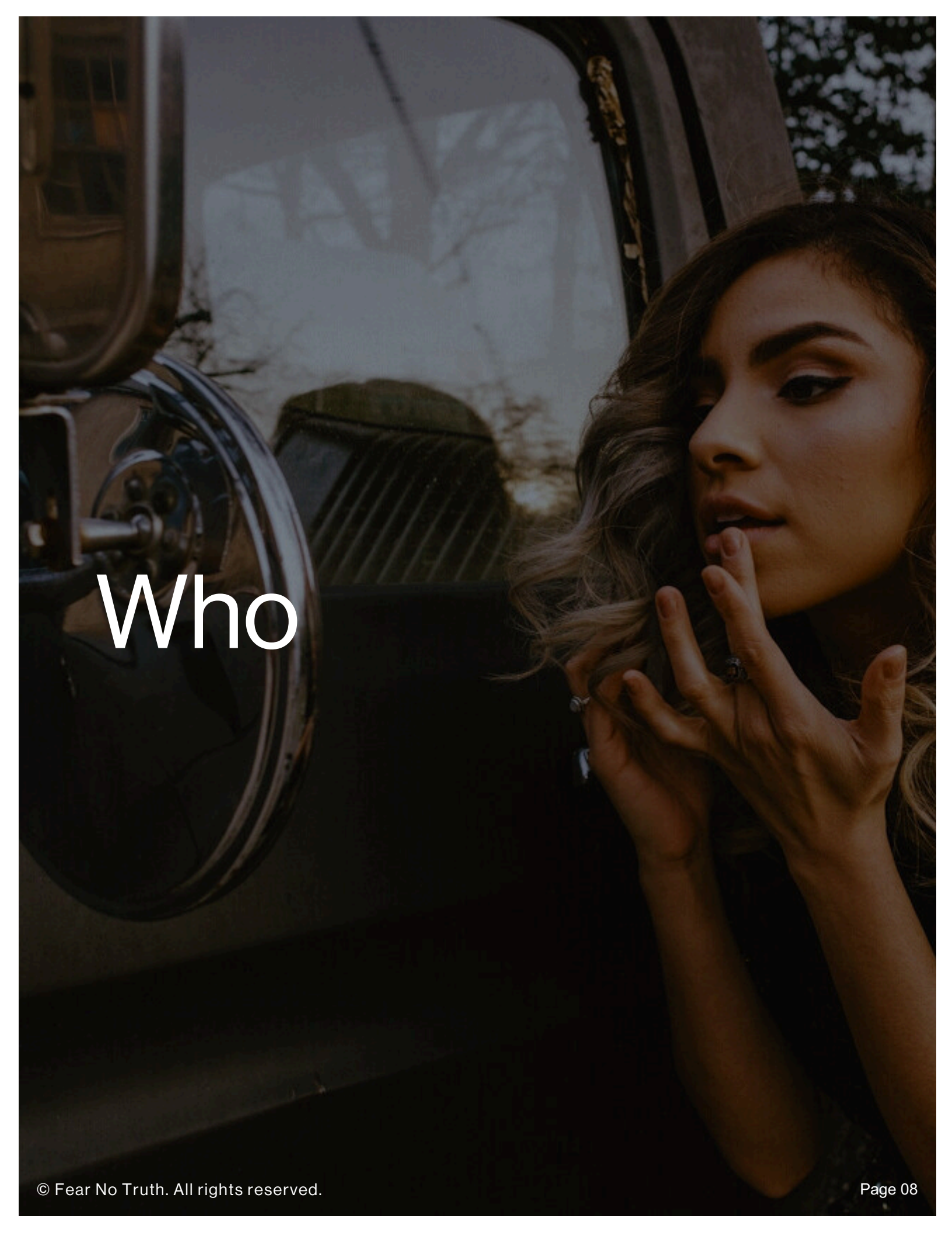


# About



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white patterned cardigan over a dark top and dark pants, stands barefoot in a vast desert landscape with rolling sand dunes under a clear blue sky. She holds a large, rectangular mirror vertically in front of her. The mirror reflects her face and upper body, but the background within the reflection is a different, slightly darker shade of blue, creating a surreal effect. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Based in LA,  
Fear No Truth is an  
independent strategy  
practice, that helps  
agency, start-up, and  
marketing leaders  
everywhere to find,  
tell and manage their  
brands' true stories.

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is looking out of the window of a vintage car. Her hand is raised near her face, with her fingers slightly spread. She is wearing a ring on her ring finger. The car's interior, including the steering wheel and dashboard, is visible through the window. The word "Who" is written in large, white, serif font over the image.

# Who





## Gordon Gerard McLean

So I'm the one behind the mystery moniker. Here's a bit about me. I've spent 20+ years as a brand strategist in a variety of creative companies, in Sheffield, London, Istanbul, New York, and Cupertino, CA.

I'm fortunate to have helped launch, build and reinvent some of the world's best brands; including Apple, Bacardi, Bank of Scotland, Bing, Bombay Sapphire, EA Games, GE, Gillette, Grey Goose, Guinness, Halifax, Hilton, Holiday Inn Express, HSBC, Perfect Day, Radisson, Sandy Hook Promise, SAP, ServiceNow, Vodafone, Wells Fargo, and Yerba Madre.

I've also been lucky enough to lead a body of work that's been recognized for its commercial impact by the IPA and Effies, for its strategic thinking by the Jay Chiats and ARF, for its cultural impact by the MoMA, Emmys and TED, and for its creative excellence by The Clios, One Show, Cannes Lions, D&AD, and others.

Now based in LA, I fly solo under my nom de strat, Fear No Truth, helping agency, start-up, and marketing leaders, wherever they are, to find, tell and manage their brands' true stories.

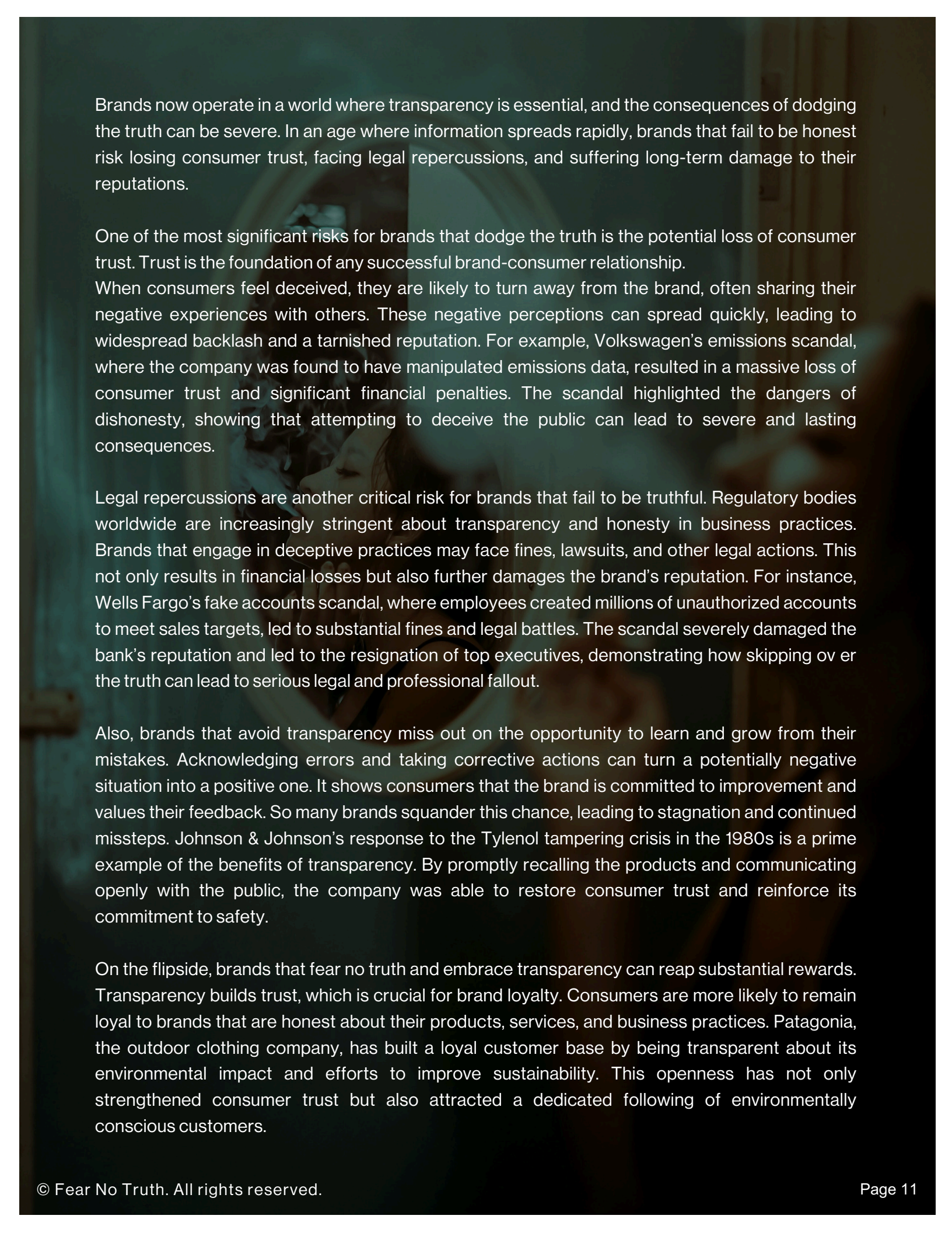
Connect on [LinkedIn](#).



A woman with dark, wavy hair is seated, looking slightly upwards and to the right. She is wearing a mustard-colored, long-sleeved dress with a high collar and a small brooch at the waist. Her hands are clasped near her neck. To her left is a large, oval mirror that reflects her back and the side of her face. The background is a textured wall with soft, blue and white light patterns. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

# Truth



A woman holding a baby, with a blurred background.

Brands now operate in a world where transparency is essential, and the consequences of dodging the truth can be severe. In an age where information spreads rapidly, brands that fail to be honest risk losing consumer trust, facing legal repercussions, and suffering long-term damage to their reputations.


One of the most significant risks for brands that dodge the truth is the potential loss of consumer trust. Trust is the foundation of any successful brand-consumer relationship.

When consumers feel deceived, they are likely to turn away from the brand, often sharing their negative experiences with others. These negative perceptions can spread quickly, leading to widespread backlash and a tarnished reputation. For example, Volkswagen's emissions scandal, where the company was found to have manipulated emissions data, resulted in a massive loss of consumer trust and significant financial penalties. The scandal highlighted the dangers of dishonesty, showing that attempting to deceive the public can lead to severe and lasting consequences.

Legal repercussions are another critical risk for brands that fail to be truthful. Regulatory bodies worldwide are increasingly stringent about transparency and honesty in business practices. Brands that engage in deceptive practices may face fines, lawsuits, and other legal actions. This not only results in financial losses but also further damages the brand's reputation. For instance, Wells Fargo's fake accounts scandal, where employees created millions of unauthorized accounts to meet sales targets, led to substantial fines and legal battles. The scandal severely damaged the bank's reputation and led to the resignation of top executives, demonstrating how skipping over the truth can lead to serious legal and professional fallout.

Also, brands that avoid transparency miss out on the opportunity to learn and grow from their mistakes. Acknowledging errors and taking corrective actions can turn a potentially negative situation into a positive one. It shows consumers that the brand is committed to improvement and values their feedback. So many brands squander this chance, leading to stagnation and continued missteps. Johnson & Johnson's response to the Tylenol tampering crisis in the 1980s is a prime example of the benefits of transparency. By promptly recalling the products and communicating openly with the public, the company was able to restore consumer trust and reinforce its commitment to safety.

On the flipside, brands that fear no truth and embrace transparency can reap substantial rewards. Transparency builds trust, which is crucial for brand loyalty. Consumers are more likely to remain loyal to brands that are honest about their products, services, and business practices. Patagonia, the outdoor clothing company, has built a loyal customer base by being transparent about its environmental impact and efforts to improve sustainability. This openness has not only strengthened consumer trust but also attracted a dedicated following of environmentally conscious customers.

A woman is holding a large, round mirror in front of her face, reflecting her features. She is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved top. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with greenery and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

In industries where competitors may be less forthcoming, a brand that is open and honest can stand out. For example, Everlane, the clothing retailer, has earned a competitive advantage by practicing “radical transparency.” The company openly shares information about its supply chain, production costs, and pricing. This level of honesty resonates with consumers who value ethical practices and are willing to support brands that align with their values.

Satisfied customers who appreciate a brand’s honesty are likely to share their positive experiences with others, effectively becoming unpaid ambassadors. This organic promotion can be incredibly powerful, as recommendations from friends and family often carry more weight than traditional advertising. Brands that are transparent about their operations, even when things go wrong, can turn customers into loyal advocates who spread positive messages about the brand.

Another reward for transparent brands is the ability to build stronger relationships with stakeholders, including employees, investors, and partners. When a brand is honest about its challenges and successes, it fosters a culture of trust and collaboration. Employees feel more engaged and motivated when they know they are working for a company that values integrity. Investors are more likely to support a brand that is open about its financial performance and strategic direction. Partners appreciate the clarity and reliability that come with transparent business practices.

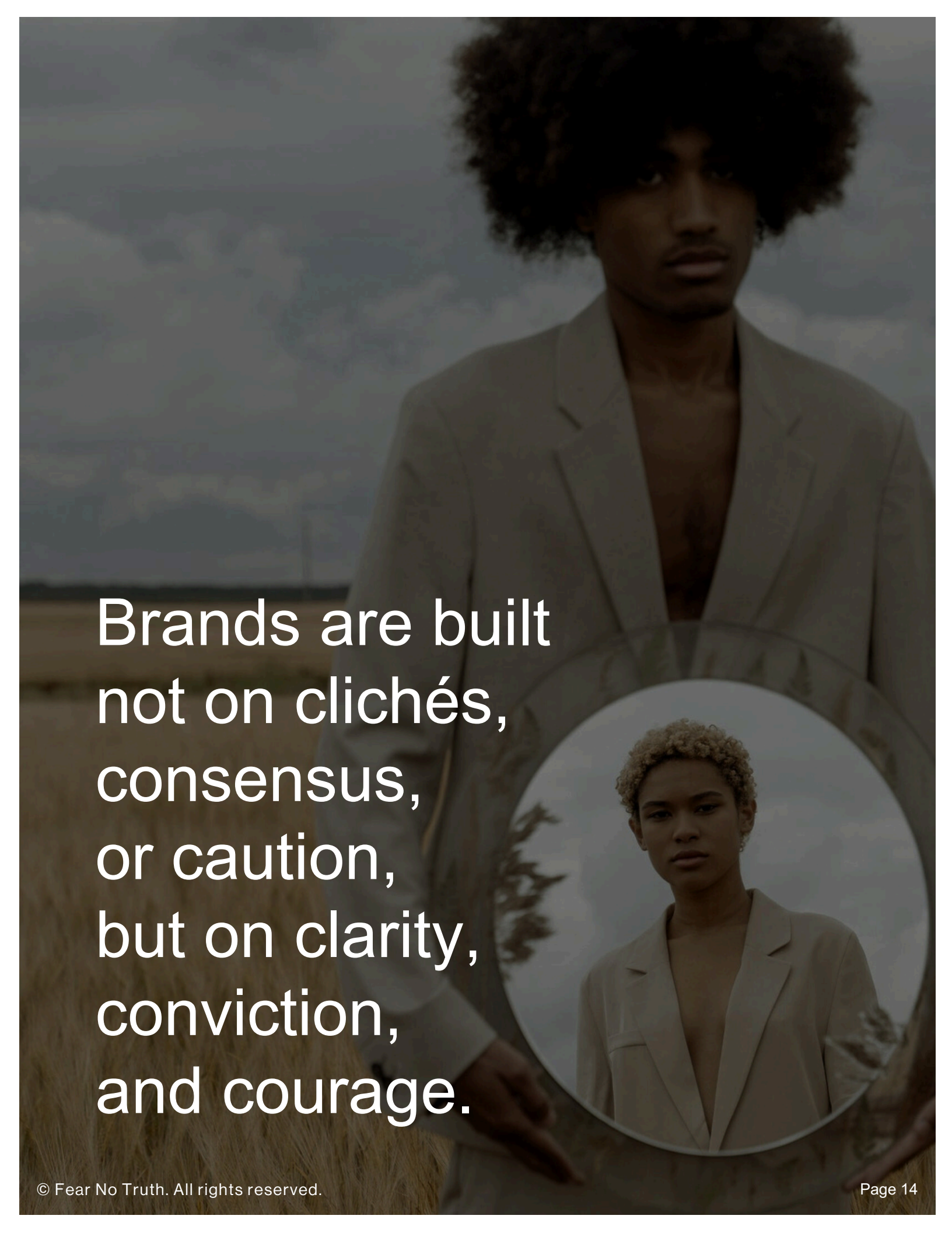
Brands that consistently practice honesty are better positioned to navigate challenges and adapt to changing market conditions. They build a solid reputation that can withstand scrutiny and emerge stronger from crises. Transparency also aligns with the growing consumer demand for corporate social responsibility. As consumers increasingly seek out brands that prioritize ethical practices, transparency becomes a differentiator that can drive long-term success.

In short, the brand that fears the truth is a brand that risks a lie. And the dangers of dodging the truth are myriad. Conversely, the potential rewards for those that embrace transparency are substantial. Brands that prioritize honesty can build trust, differentiate, and foster stronger relationships with their stakeholders. By facing the truth head-on, brands can navigate challenges more effectively, learn and grow from their mistakes, and achieve greater, more sustained success over the long term.





# Belief


A man with a large, dark afro is standing in a field of tall grass under a cloudy sky. He is wearing a light-colored, open blazer. He is holding a large, circular mirror in front of him. The mirror reflects a woman with short, curly blonde hair, also wearing a light-colored blazer, standing in the same field. The overall tone is artistic and contemplative.

Brands are built  
not on clichés,  
consensus,  
or caution,  
but on clarity,  
conviction,  
and courage.



# Mission

A young man with dark hair and a black t-shirt stands in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. He is holding a large, white rectangular board in front of his face, which is partially visible. The background is a clear, deep blue sky. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

A circular mirror is placed on a sandy, reddish-brown desert floor. The mirror reflects a man with dark skin, wearing a patterned headwrap and a dark garment draped over his shoulder. He is looking off to the side with a serious expression. The background within the mirror shows a cloudy sky and distant desert hills. The text is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the mirror's reflection.

To help brands  
grow by embracing  
the truths they're  
too comfortable,  
or too scared,  
to see, say,  
or act on.



A close-up, low-key photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by vertical blinds. The person has dark, curly hair and is looking down. Several geometric paper ornaments, including triangles and rectangles, are hanging from the blinds, some of which are positioned over the person's face. The lighting is dim, creating a moody atmosphere.

# Services

# Finding Your Brand's True Story

This is about more than just crafting a clear, compelling narrative; it's about uncovering the truth at the core of the brand. It involves deep introspection and a thorough understanding of the brand's origins, its mission, and its values. This process often requires digging into the company's history to explore the founder's motivations, the problems they were trying to solve, and the impact they hoped to have. It's about finding those human elements that people can relate to and care about. Sometimes, this can be a founder's personal struggle or a unique insight that led to the brand's creation. Other times, it could be the brand's consistent commitment to certain values or community. Importantly, the true story of a brand is always rooted in authenticity; it's not a fabricated narrative but rather the honest truth that defines the essence of the brand.

## Example Outputs:

Brand Narratives

Brand Purposes

Brand Positioning

Value Propositions

Talent Propositions



# Telling Your Brand's True Story

Once the brand's true story is crafted, the next step is telling that story. This is perhaps the most critical step, where creative expression plays a significant role. The brand's story needs to be communicated in a way that resonates with its audience, using a tone and style that reflects the brand's personality. It's important that the story is told consistently across all platforms, whether on the company's website, through social media, in advertising, or even through packaging. Each touchpoint with consumers is an opportunity to reinforce the brand's narrative and deepen the consumer's connection to the brand. Visuals, tone, language, and medium all play crucial roles in how effectively the story is told. For instance, a luxury brand may use elegant imagery and seductive language, while a brand built on sustainability might focus on transparency and community-based storytelling.

## Example Outputs:

Brand Books

Design Briefs

Creative Briefs

CX Journeys

Brand Blueprints

Connection Plans

Customer Comms

Content Strategies

Campaign Playbooks



# Managing Your Brand's True Story

What you can monitor you can measure, and what you can measure you can manage. Managing the brand's story is an ongoing process that requires vigilance and adaptability. As markets evolve and new competitors emerge, the brand may need to adjust its narrative without losing its core identity. This management involves continuously monitoring how the story is received by the audience and making adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances. It also means keeping the story alive and fresh, finding new ways to retell it, and new platforms to tell it on. Importantly, as the brand grows and potentially diversifies, it's crucial that the story evolves in a way that remains true to the brand's core values and origins. This might mean highlighting new achievements or innovations, or perhaps revisiting and reinforcing the foundational elements of the brand's narrative during a major anniversary or ahead of a significant launch. What's more, managing a brand's story is not just about external communications but also about internal buy-in. Employees at every level should understand and express the brand's story. This internal alignment ensures that the brand's values and messaging are consistently reflected in every aspect of the business, from customer service to product development and beyond.

## Example Outputs:

Brand Architectures

Measurement Plans

Learning Agendas

Brand Health Studies



A person is sitting on a large, textured log in a forest. They are wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, a dark skirt, black tights, and black boots. They are holding a large, ornate, gold-colored mirror behind their head, with their hands visible on the sides of the mirror. The mirror's frame is highly decorative with a central crest. The background is a blurred forest with trees and fallen leaves. The word "Partners" is written in large white letters across the middle of the image.

# Partners

## Capuchin Behavioral Science

Capuchin offers brands a range of new ways to address their markets, using a suite of advanced behavioral scientific methods; including implicit testing, psychometrics, facial coding, EEG, eye-tracking and others, to deliver clients more measurable business impact.

Click [here](#) to find out more.

## Public-Library

Public-Library is a cross-disciplinary design studio in Los Angeles, California & Portland, Oregon. Founded in 2011 by Ramon Coronado and Marshall Rake as a space to create work that translates thought and intent into meaningful resolutions.

Click [here](#) to find out more.

## System1

















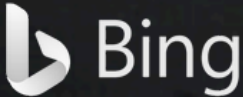



System1 draws on the principles of behavioral science to truly understand how real people really buy. And they use this understanding to help many of the world's best brands make confident creative decisions, that lead to transformational business results.

Click [here](#) to find out more.



A person is looking into a circular mirror. The entire image has a strong green tint. The person's face is visible in the reflection, looking directly at the camera. The word "Experience" is written in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

# Experience

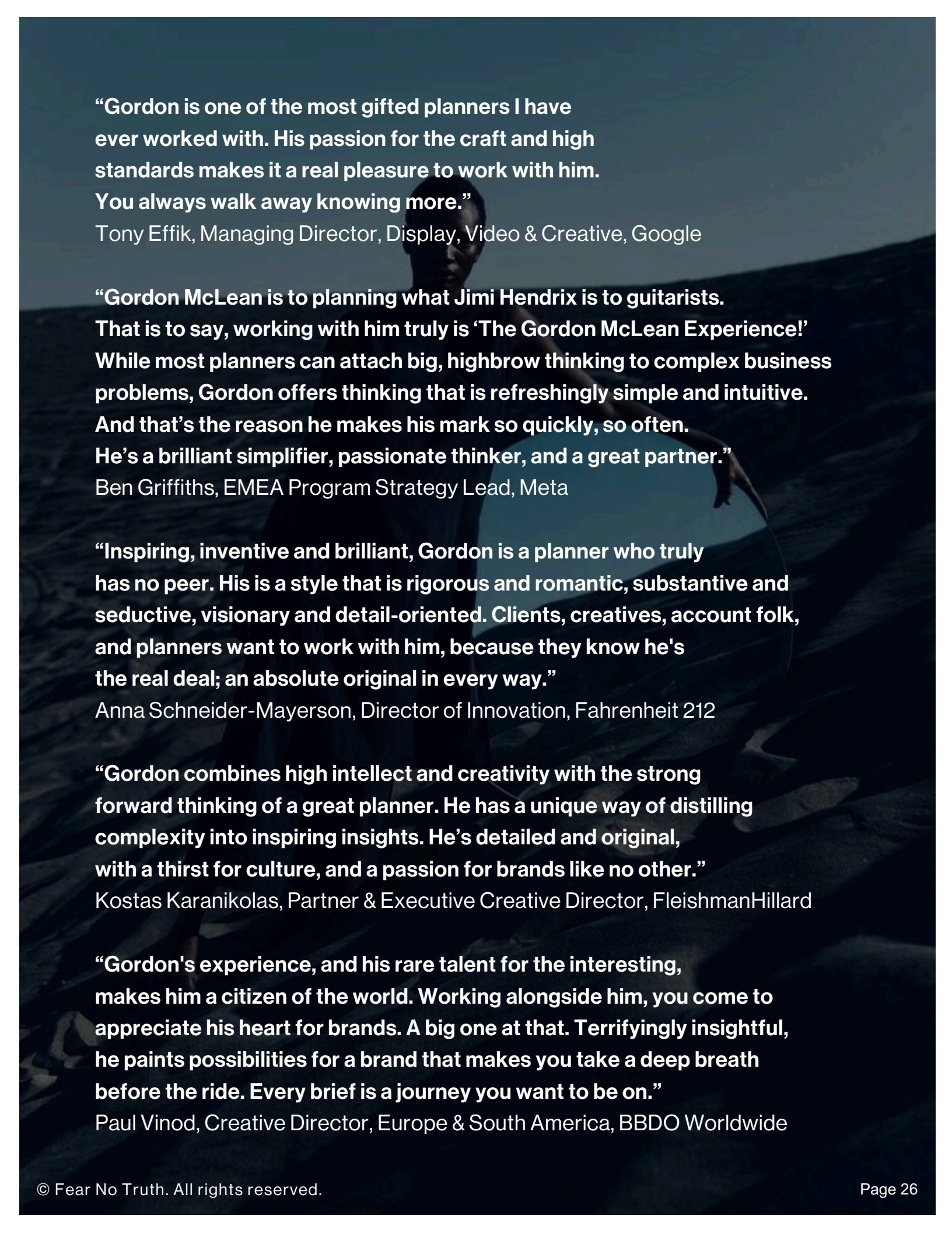
			
			
			
			
			



A person with long, flowing hair, wearing a white, short-sleeved dress, stands on a sandy beach. They are holding a large, ornate, oval-shaped mirror in front of their face. The mirror reflects the ocean and a clear blue sky with some clouds. The background shows a beach with some vegetation and a utility pole in the distance. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# Kind Words



A person is standing in a desert landscape, holding a large, reflective sphere. The sphere reflects the surrounding environment, including the person and the desert. The background shows rolling sand dunes under a clear sky.

**“Gordon is one of the most gifted planners I have ever worked with. His passion for the craft and high standards makes it a real pleasure to work with him. You always walk away knowing more.”**

Tony Effik, Managing Director, Display, Video & Creative, Google

**“Gordon McLean is to planning what Jimi Hendrix is to guitarists. That is to say, working with him truly is ‘The Gordon McLean Experience!’ While most planners can attach big, highbrow thinking to complex business problems, Gordon offers thinking that is refreshingly simple and intuitive. And that’s the reason he makes his mark so quickly, so often. He’s a brilliant simplifier, passionate thinker, and a great partner.”**

Ben Griffiths, EMEA Program Strategy Lead, Meta

**“Inspiring, inventive and brilliant, Gordon is a planner who truly has no peer. His is a style that is rigorous and romantic, substantive and seductive, visionary and detail-oriented. Clients, creatives, account folk, and planners want to work with him, because they know he's the real deal; an absolute original in every way.”**

Anna Schneider-Mayerson, Director of Innovation, Fahrenheit 212

**“Gordon combines high intellect and creativity with the strong forward thinking of a great planner. He has a unique way of distilling complexity into inspiring insights. He’s detailed and original, with a thirst for culture, and a passion for brands like no other.”**

Kostas Karanikolas, Partner & Executive Creative Director, FleishmanHillard

**“Gordon's experience, and his rare talent for the interesting, makes him a citizen of the world. Working alongside him, you come to appreciate his heart for brands. A big one at that. Terrifyingly insightful, he paints possibilities for a brand that makes you take a deep breath before the ride. Every brief is a journey you want to be on.”**

Paul Vinod, Creative Director, Europe & South America, BBDO Worldwide





# FAQs

## **01. What does it mean for a brand to fear no truth?**

It means embracing the brand's impact, values and imperfections.  
It's standing firm in what's real, even when the truth is tough.  
It's transparency over polish, depth over spin.  
It's listening deeply to culture, not hiding from it.  
It's building trust by being unapologetically human.

## **02. Why is it important for brands to fear no truth?**

Because credibility is the currency of modern brands.  
Consumers can sense spin; truth matters now more than ever.  
Brands that tell the truth earn deeper loyalty, not just attention.  
Culture moves fast and brands must be honest to stay relevant.  
Avoiding truth creates cracks that compound over time.

## **03. Is it harmful for brands to fear the truth?**

Yes, fear of truth leads to bland messaging and shallow impact.  
It distances the brand from its audience, who crave realness.  
It creates a fragile image that breaks under scrutiny.  
It stifles creativity and stops growth at the root.  
Fear of truth turns brands into followers, not leaders.

## **04. Why should brands fear no truth?**

Because honesty is a magnet in a world full of bulls\*\*t.  
Because culture respects brands that are brave and grounded.  
Because truth sparks meaningful change and connection.  
Because denial never creates transformation, truth does.  
Because future-fit brands are built on clarity, not illusion.

## **05. How can a brand start to fear no truth?**

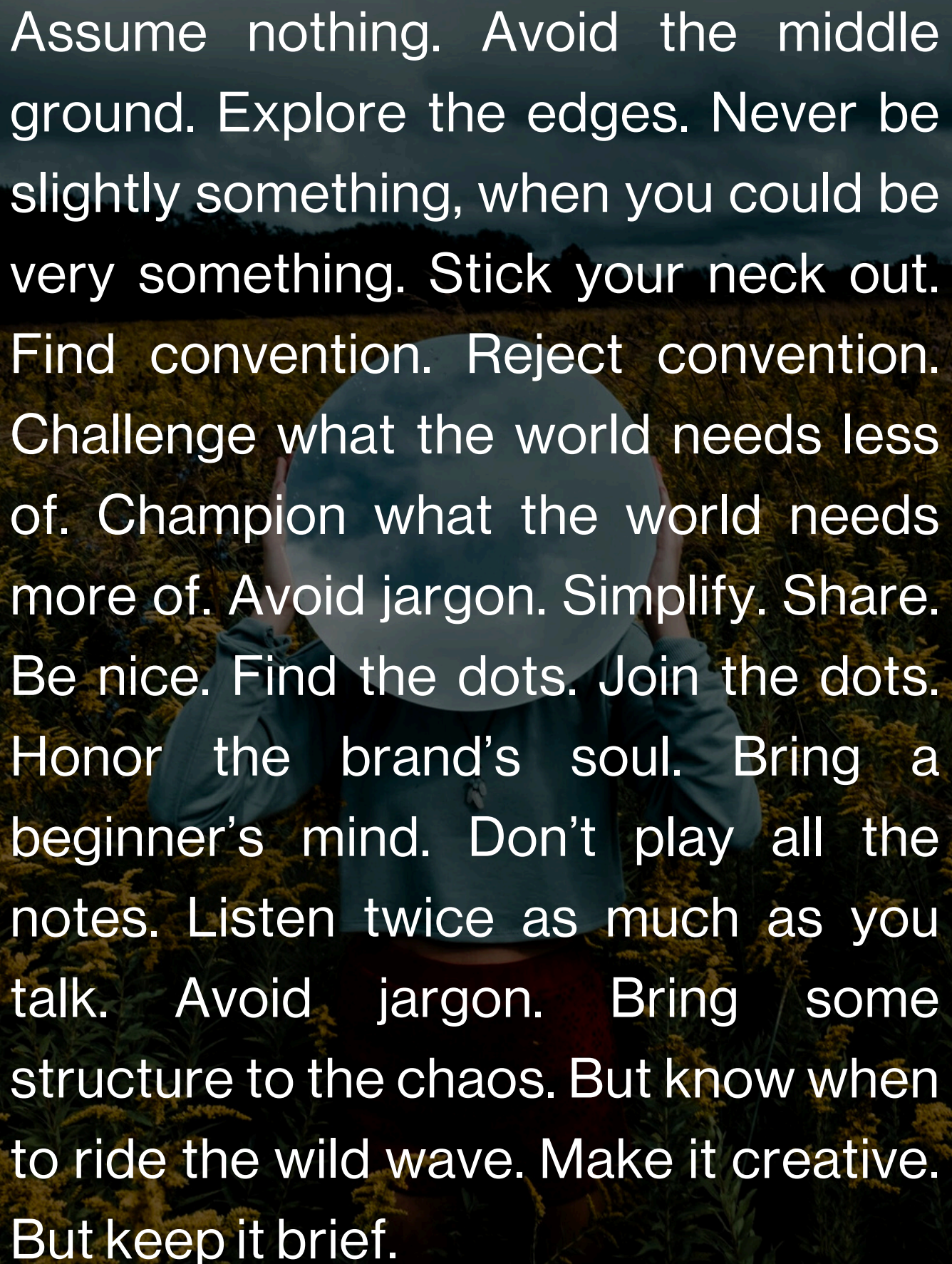
Begin by asking hard questions, then listening to the answers.  
Audit what you often say, versus what you really do.  
Empower internal voices, not just external narratives.  
Share the journey, not just the highlight reel.  
Turn vulnerability into creative fuel, not something to hide.





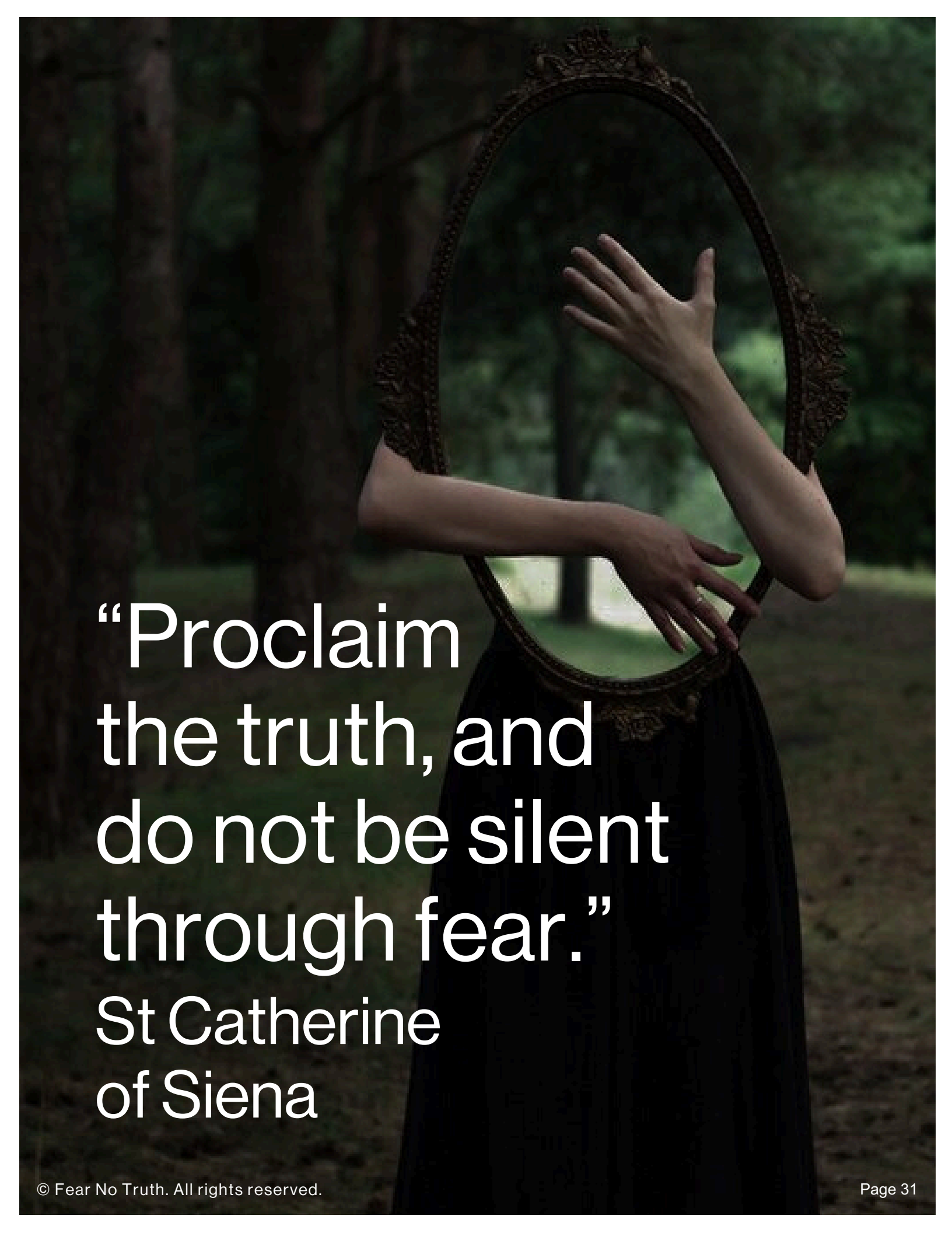
# Epilogue



A person is standing in a field of tall, yellow wildflowers. They are holding a large, circular mirror in front of their face, which reflects the sky and clouds. The person is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The background shows a line of trees under a dark, overcast sky.

Assume nothing. Avoid the middle ground. Explore the edges. Never be slightly something, when you could be very something. Stick your neck out. Find convention. Reject convention. Challenge what the world needs less of. Champion what the world needs more of. Avoid jargon. Simplify. Share. Be nice. Find the dots. Join the dots. Honor the brand's soul. Bring a beginner's mind. Don't play all the notes. Listen twice as much as you talk. Avoid jargon. Bring some structure to the chaos. But know when to ride the wild wave. Make it creative. But keep it brief.



A woman in a black dress is holding a large, ornate oval mirror in a forest. Her hands are placed on the mirror's frame, and her reflection is visible. The background is a dark, wooded area with trees and foliage.

“Proclaim  
the truth, and  
do not be silent  
through fear.”  
St Catherine  
of Siena



# Get In Touch

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