

## **Mental Health and The Hypocrisy of #BellLetsTalk**

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, January 29, 2014

<http://politicsrespun.org/2014/01/mental-health-and-the-hypocrisy-of-bellletstalk/>

Bell didn't actually start any conversation about mental health, despite their PR.

So now that Bell has enjoyed PR-pimping mental health as a self-aggrandizing excuse to give money to Canadian mental health programs, I didn't actually expect to see #MentalHealth trending in Twitter like #BellLetsTalk did yesterday, and to a lesser extent today. However, there are huge problems with this kind of charitable activity:

1. If Bell had simply donated \$5.4 million to mental health programs, quietly, even with the tax advantages, they could stand firmly in the face of criticism that this is in part a PR stunt designed to improve brand reputation, its customer base, and revenue. But they didn't. This is how they operate. They're a corporation out to maximize shareholder wealth.
2. There is [virtue](#) in charitable giving without self-aggrandizement: "So when you give to the needy, **do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do** in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret." But then, Bell isn't a human being in any moral sense, just in a legal/economic sense, so we shouldn't expect moral behaviour from them. Too bad that we let corporations rule the world.




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### 3. Don't buy PR definitions of

"beauty," while you buy Dove beauty products?

Dove has co-opted feminist issues for a decade now with their [Campaign for Real Beauty](#), in order to sell more beauty products, and undermine women's need to obsess about beauty products. Sigh. We are truly in a post-irony era.

4. Yesterday I tweeted: "Ok. Tomorrow, once [#Bellletstalk](#) has stopped PR-pimping [#mentalhealth](#), can the rest of us spend every day working on stigma and treatment?" Bell [claims](#) to have "started a conversation about mental health." I know that's just marketing copy, but it's also quite arrogant. They didn't start it. They have certainly stimulated it for a day or so, once a year, but until we see long-lasting stigma reduction, mental health topics will remain taboo.
5. Every little bit helps, but frankly when corporations have been floating in the gold dust swimming pool of tax cuts, taxpayer-funded health ministries across the country who are already working hard to address mental health issues, are increasingly underfunded. We should fund our medical system better so that actual, real, qualified, mental health professionals can do a better job addressing the pandemic of mental health disorders in our world. I don't want the price for mental health destigmatization to be constant inundation with Bell's brand. Or anyone else's. Why should a corporation get to financially benefit from improving a public health crisis? Who designed this system anyway? Why are we letting them define our social issues for us?

So. If you care about mental health and are not interested in corporations co-opting social change for their PR and revenue goals, follow [#MentalHealth](#) in Twitter, look into [PTSD issues](#), and don't let Bell define which day we all get to "start" talking about this. To destigmatize something, we need to do something every day to understand the issue and embrace the change necessary to help people--and our society--heal.

And even while people of significant integrity like [Matthew Good](#) and [Clara Hughes](#) support destigmatizing mental health issues, Bell and Dove as corporations are not primarily in it for us. If they were, private, secret contributions to change agents would be the norm and the word "Bell" wouldn't be in the hashtag.