

Simon Singh's weird idea that might just work



From Simon Singh:

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Dear Friends,

I've had an idea – an unusual idea, but I think it might just work.

As you know, England's chilling libel laws need to be reformed. One way to help achieve this is for 100,000 people to sign the petition for libel reform before the political parties write their manifestos for the election. We have 17,000 signatures, but we really need 100,000, and we need your help to get there.

www.libelreform.org/sign

My idea

My idea is simple: if everyone who has already signed up persuades just one more person each week to sign the petition then we will reach our goal within a month!

One person per week is all we need, but please spread the word as much as you can. In fact, if you persuade 10 people to sign up then email me (simon@simonsingh.net) and I promise to thank you by printing your name in my next book ... which I will start writing as soon as I have put my own libel case behind me. I cannot say when this will be, but it is a very real promise. My only caveat is that I will limit this to the first thousand people who recruit ten supporters.

When persuading your friends remember to tell them:

- (a) English libel laws have been condemned by the UN Human Rights Committee.
- (b) These laws gag scientists, bloggers and journalists who want to discuss matters of genuine public interest (and public health!).
- (c) Our laws give rise to libel tourism, whereby the rich and the powerful (Saudi billionaires, Russian oligarchs and overseas corporations) come to London to sue writers because English libel laws are so hostile to responsible journalism. (In fact, it is exactly because English libel laws have this global impact that we welcome signatories to the petition from around the world.)
- (d) Vested interests can use their resources to bully and intimidate those who seek to question them. The cost of a libel trial in England is 100 times more expensive than the European average and typically runs to over £1 million.
- (e) Three separate ongoing libel cases involve myself and two medical researchers raising concerns about three medical treatments. We face losing £1 million each. In future, why would anyone else raise similar concerns? If these health matters are not reported, then the public is put at risk.

My experience has been sobering. I've had to spend £100,000 to defend my writing and have put my life on hold for almost two years. However, the prospect of reforming our libel laws keeps me cheerful.

Thanks so much for your support. We've only got one shot at this – so I hope you can persuade 1 (or maybe 10) friends, family and colleagues to sign.

Massive thanks,

Simon

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The Libel Reform Campaign is a coalition of English PEN, Index on Censorship and Sense About Science.

So far, 188 MPs have signed our Parliamentary Early Day Motion calling for libel reform and the Justice Secretary Jack Straw has formed a working party that the Libel Reform Coalition is represented on.

Please also considering donating to keep our campaign going: www.libelreform.org

Sharing is caring!



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