



A Convenient Truth

Reel Reviews by Randall Unger

In 2006, Al Gore unloaded on us *An Inconvenient Truth*, a documentary film that hoped to enhance the public's knowledge of global warming and stir change from us all. It was a very important film which shed light on a topic many of us don't really think about. The film was a wake up call for many and it did shift people's perceptions of Earth climate change and what can be done to save the planet. The new film *A Convenient Truth* takes a cue from the Al Gore film but this time, rather than being a documentary of supreme importance, it is a ludicrous "mockumentary" that aims to fulfill one mission: to make audiences laugh.

Much like *The Office*, *A Convenient Truth* is shot in documentary style but with actors portraying "real" people. The man of the hour throughout the film is Coleman Burleson (Alan Berman), a California Assemblyman who has figured out a "revolutionary" way to generate electricity in an efficient manner. His proposal is to have illegal Mexican immigrants ride stationary bikes to create energy to power electrical devices. In Burleson's mind, this plan will not only boost energy efficiency but it will alter dependence on foreign oil, combat obesity, decrease unemployment and correct illegal immigration. Burleson is oblivious to the cons and in his ignorance does his very best to promote his ridiculous plan.



Much like Jonathan Swift's asinine 1729 *A Modest Proposal*, which suggested poor Irish immigrants sell their children to the rich to be eaten, *A Convenient Truth* is almost as insane. Burleson doesn't seem to realize the utter silliness of his proposal but as the film goes on, his idea doesn't seem that bad. Perhaps it's the politician's goofy charm but his bike "solution" does warrant some merit.

Newcomer filmmaker Dominick Bagnato has presented audiences with an appealing comedic take on the documentary film style. A satire in every sense of the word, *A Convenient Truth* is a humorous look at the power that can go to a politician's head. Al Gore meant well with his documentary and *A Convenient Truth* is occasionally hilarious in that it is mocking something so serious. The mockumentary format is genius here and it is something fans of dry subtle humor can certainly find appealing.

Random B-actor Alan Berman (*Amityville 1992: It's About Time*, *The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones: Hollywood Follies*) knocks it out the park as Burleson, the politician who seems to have an answer to all of society's problems. His obliviousness is on par with Steve Carell's Michael Scott and his devotion to his ideas is similar to that of Bob Odenkirk's Saul Goodman of *Breaking Bad*. While he may seem a tad slimy, Burleson wants nothing more than his fellow Americans to be healthy and content. His stationary bike idea may be flawed but Burleson himself is an effective leader. He may not be perfect and his plan has many holes but he is a family man simply looking out for others. *A Convenient Truth* is silly, funny, with a sharp wit that is downright refreshing.

TrustMovies

A CONVENIENT TRUTH: Dominick Bagnato's new mockumentary tackles energy and immigration

Obviously stepping off from that popular and Oscar-winning doc of nine years ago, *An Inconvenient Truth* (note not only its title but its poster art), this new, very hit-and-miss but sometimes surprising and funny mockumentary by first-time/full-length filmmaker Dominick Bagnato will soon have you questioning exactly what and who his film is actually satirizing. My guess is practically everyone and everything about our currently clueless and far-too-entitled nation. As the movie begins, we are introduced to a California congressman, Coleman Burleson, who has recently recanted his earlier campaign against the idea of global warming only to come up with a brand new "proposal" on this subject -- slowly unfurled -- that he insists will solve a number of current problems.

I am not going to tell you what this proposal is (not to worry, it's neither modest nor Swiftian) -- most of my peers will no doubt spoil it for you, anyway -- because much of the fun arrives precisely at the moment (and via the music) with which Mr. Bagnato, shown at left, unveils his idea. Unfortunately, this very idea has already been presented to us alert viewers who have seen the fine British TV series *Black Mirror*. There, it was handled in a dark and serious way. Here, it's mostly a hoot.

Because Congressman Burleson is from California, a state that has a certain amount of illegal aliens arriving consistently from Mexico, his idea not only impacts the environment but also everything from immigration to energy, racism and obesity.

How all this is explained proves a little too catch-as-catch can. Some of the sections are funny and work well -- the Congressman and his gosh-I-didn't-know-he-was-illegal gardener and our politician's wife, ever helpful, hopeful and getting tipsier with each new glass and scene -- others fall a bit flat due to over-reaching and not enough clever ammunition.

But as the film lasts only 82 minutes, it passes relatively quickly and every time you grow a little tired of it -- boom -- you find yourself laughing again, whether it's from the scenes with America's new Minute Men or the just-folk interviews with various people, most of whom offer a happy, utterly naive attitude to just about everything in their world. How American!

Though he occasionally nudges a bit hard, Bagnato's humor is more often of the quiet and subtle type, never more so than in the funny, clever moment on which he concludes his little film.



"Bagnato's actors are game; Alan Berman in the chief role in particular delivers all the preposterousness with an appealing smirky poise."
-Daphne Howland, *The Village Voice*



"Delivering an admirably committed straight-faced comic performance, Alan Berman, plays the central role of Coleman Burleson..."
-Frank Scheck, *The Hollywood Reporter*