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SOLOMON, THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SOLUTION TO AMERICAN JURISPRUDENCE IS A HOAX

New York - January, 1996. Social-political satirist and hoaxer Joey Skaggs has struck again. Over the last three months, Skaggs, posing as Joseph Bonuso, research scientist and Founding Director of The Solomon Project, publicized a revolutionary computer program called Solomon that utilizes artificial intelligence (fuzzy logic) to deliver swift and equal justice for all. Whether for civil or criminal cases, all witnesses, attorneys and judges are subjected to voice stress analysis and other forms of lie detection testing. All the facts, including the testimony of verified witnesses, are input into Solomon. Solomon then deliberates, having access to all case law known to civilized society. A verdict is delivered and a sentence pronounced. All findings are binding.

This provocative concept is Skaggs' satirical answer to what he perceives to be a crisis of jurisprudence in American society. "Our legal system was created by guys with buckles on their shoes and curly, powdered wigs. It just doesn't work any more," said Skaggs. "I am personally outraged by the fact that criminal and civil court cases are played out before our very eyes as though they are sporting matches. The truth no longer provides the key to justice."

Solomon was conceived to do away with well-intentioned but possibly biased jurists; grandstanding prosecuting and defense attorneys; fallible witnesses; and all-too-human judges. Skaggs regrets that Solomon is not a real technological advance...yet. He said, "If it were possible to determine the truth via artificial intelligence, why not? Wouldn't it be great, if through technology, we could arrive at a system where justice is real and affordable to all?"

Newspaper, radio, and television news across the nation reported the story as news, including the San Francisco Chronicle, New York City's WCBS News 88 radio, CNN TV news and Internet coverage, and numerous law journals.

The Solomon Project was launched in October of 1995. Letters announcing the new research and soliciting support and/or commentary were mailed to over 3000 lawmakers including legislators, supreme court justices, deans of law schools, law enforcement officers, and computer and legal publishers. The response was immediate and Skaggs logged hundreds of phone calls, letters and faxes from curious, sympathetic, and in some cases, outraged judges, lawyers and reporters.

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In November, a press release announcing a 15 city tour to demonstrate the computer's capabilities was sent to the press. The objective of the tour was to introduce the American public to the superiority of neutral computer analysis. Not only were controversial trials such as the O.J. Simpson trial to be re-tried by Solomon, but local law professionals were invited to provide controversial cases of their own for re-trial.

In December, a second press release announced that at a pre-tour demonstration in New York City, Solomon had found O.J. Simpson guilty. Results of the re-trials of other highly controversial cases were also announced. Solomon found Mike Tyson not guilty; William Kennedy Smith, guilty; the Menendez brothers, guilty; Claus Von Bulow, guilty; and the police in the Rodney King case, guilty.

When CNN took the bait and requested its own demonstration of Solomon, Skaggs enlisted the support of over 25 designers and computer programmers. Members of Skaggs' own theater troupe were on hand to help stage the elaborate performance. Together they created a headquarters for the Solomon Project.

Faked computer graphics and bogus computerized voice recognition demonstrations were creatively presented by the team. Award winning producer/director Frederick Marx (*Hoop Dreams*), flew in from Chicago to document the performance. They posed as a second news crew as CNN covered the story. (Marx is shooting a feature documentary on Skaggs). The results of CNN's coverage aired internationally on Friday, December 29.

Joey Skaggs, a New York based conceptual performance artist, has been creating outrageous news headlines for thirty years. Skaggs uses the media as his medium, as a painter uses a canvas. His work targets the mass media and the public's gullibility. He coaxes the media into reporting provocative, sensational, sexational or downright ridiculous stories he has contrived. This affords him a world-wide audience for his elaborate satires. Skaggs forces reporters and the public alike to question and to enter into dialog on issues he perceives to be vital concerning morality and ethics, truth in news reportage, sensationalism, the effect the media has on public opinion and taste, and vice versa. Running throughout his work is a constant message to both the media and general public to question authority in all its forms and not to ever trade critical judgment for wishful thinking.

"I use satire to be provocative. My ultimate goal is to create dialog and hopefully have a few people gain some personal insight regarding important issues. Humor and controversy are the ideal combination to accomplish this," said Skaggs.

His work is done in three stages. The first stage is the conceptualization and production of the hoax, using advertising and public relations techniques such as brochures, letters and press releases, as well as actors, props and convincing locations to fool the media. The second stage is the documentation of the entire process. Skaggs records the media and the public's responses, and collects the print, audio and video news clippings as he monitors the evolution of the piece. He observes what happens, who does what with the story and how it gets changed. The third stage is the revelation of the truth and the discussion about

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the issues underlying the performance. Frequently this involves observing how the media have changed the intent, the content and/or the meaning of the message for it's own purposes, either by accident or by design -- and documenting how the media deal with revealing the truth. This phase of the work inevitably offers significant insight into issues of media ethics and responsibility and the potential for the media to misuse power.

Skaggs' previous media hoaxes include:

- The Cockroach Hormone Cure, the promotion of a wonder cure extracted from cockroach hormones that was to be a panacea for the ills of mankind
- The Bus Tour to Queens, where bearded, beaded camera toting hippies took a Greyhound sightseeing tour of suburban Queens
- The Celebrity Sperm Bank, where the sperm of famous rock stars was available for auction
- The Fat Squad, through which, for a fee, commandos would restrain dieters from breaking their diets
- Comacocoon, where Dr. Schlafer (German for sleeper), anesthetized his clients with the help of computers and subliminal programming to create better vacations with better drugs
- SEXONIX, a sexual virtual reality company catering to the sexually perverse
- Portofess, the portable confessional booth Skaggs pedaled to the 1992 Democratic convention in New York
- Hair Today, Ltd., a company offering the total cure for baldness -- scalp transplants from cadavers
- Dog Meat Soup, a Korean company that bought unwanted dogs for human consumption
- Baba Wa Simba, a new age therapist who healed the wounded animal in us all through roarings and other lion-like behavior
- The Bad Guy Talent Agency, a bogus agency which became a reality, specializing in venomous vixens, burly bouncers and slimy sleazers
- Fish Condos, satirical working aquariums depicting condominiums for upwardly mobile guppies.
- The world's first and only windsurf voyage from Hawaii to Los Angeles

Skaggs has been an instructor of media communications at New York's School of Visual Arts and Parsons' The New School. He lectures at universities and colleges around the country about culture jamming and media activism; disinformation, propaganda and media responsibility; and his performance art. He is currently working on an autobiography and the Voyager Company is publishing a CD-Rom retrospective on his work which will be released later this year.

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