



This is the print version of the [Skeptical Science](http://sks.to/gore) article '[Al Gore got it wrong](http://sks.to/gore)', which can be found at <http://sks.to/gore>.

## Is Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth accurate?

### What The Science Says:

Al Gore's film was "broadly accurate" according to an expert witness called when an attempt was made through the courts to prevent the film being shown in schools.

### Climate Myth: Al Gore got it wrong

"Al Gore's Oscar-winning documentary on global warming, An Inconvenient Truth, was [...] criticised by a high court judge who highlighted what he said were "nine scientific errors" in the film.

Mr Justice Barton yesterday said that while the film was "broadly accurate" in its presentation of climate change, he identified nine significant errors in the film, some of which, he said, had arisen in "the context of alarmism and exaggeration" to support the former US vice-president's views on climate change." ([The Guardian](#))

Al Gore, certainly the most vilified proponent of climate change anywhere in the world, earned most of this enmity through the success of a film he presented called An Inconvenient Truth (AIT). The film was a staid presentation of climate science to date, a round-up of research, science and projections, with many cinematic sequences employed to harness the power of the medium.

The majority of the film, covering issues like Himalayan Glaciers, Greenland and Antarctica losing ice, the severity of hurricanes and other weather phenomena, was accurate and represented the science as it stood. Since the release of the film, considerably more evidence has been found in support of the science and projections in the film.

One claim was in error, as was one attribution of a graph. The error was in the claim that climate change had caused the shrinking of Mount Kilimanjaro, although the evidence that the shrinkage was most likely caused by deforestation did not appear until after the film was made. The error of attribution was in reference to a graph of temperature and attributes it mistakenly to a Dr. Thompson, when it was actually a combination of Mann's hockey stick and CRU surface temperature data.

### The Legal Case

The film is also subject to attack on the grounds that Al Gore was prosecuted in the UK and a judge found many errors in the film. This is untrue.

The case, heard in the civil court, was brought by a school governor against the Secretary of State for Education, in an attempt to prevent the film being distributed to schools. Mr. Justice Burton, in his judgement, ordered that teaching notes accompanying the film should be modified to clarify the speculative (and occasionally hyperbolic) presentation of some issues.

Mr. Justice Burton found no errors at all in the science. [In his written judgement](#), the word **error** appears in quotes each time it is used - nine points formed the entirety of his judgement - indicating that he did not support the assertion the points were erroneous. About the film in general, he said this:

17. I turn to AIT, the film. The following is clear:

*i) It is substantially founded upon scientific research and fact, albeit that the science is used,*

*in the hands of a talented politician and communicator, to make a political statement and to support a political programme.*

22. I have no doubt that Dr Stott, the Defendant's expert, is right when he says that:  
*"Al Gore's presentation of the causes and likely effects of climate change in the film was broadly accurate."*

The judge did identify statements that had political implications he felt needed qualification in the guidance notes for teachers, and ordered that both qualifications on the science and the political implications should be included in the notes. Al Gore was not involved in the case, was not prosecuted, and because the trial was not a criminal case, there was no jury, and no guilty verdict was handed down.

Note: the vilification of Al Gore is best understood in the context of personalisation. When opponents attack something abstract - like science - the public may not associate with the argument. By giving a name and a face and a set of behavioural characteristics - being a rich politician, for example - it is easy to create a fictional enemy through inference and association. Al Gore is a successful politician who presented a film, his training and experience suitable to the task. To invoke Gore is a way to obfuscate about climate science, for which Gore has neither responsibility, claim nor blame.

Basic rebuttal written by [GPWayne](#)

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Skeptical Science explains the science of global warming and examines climate misinformation through the lens of peer-reviewed research. The website won the Australian Museum 2011 Eureka Prize for the Advancement of Climate Change Knowledge. Members of the Skeptical Science team have authored peer-reviewed papers, a [college textbook on climate change](#) and the book [Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand](#). Skeptical Science content has been used in university courses, textbooks, government reports on climate change, television documentaries and numerous books.



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