



The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth from 9/11 to Katrina

Frank Rich

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New York Times op-ed columnist Frank Rich examines the trail of fictions manufactured by the Bush administration from 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina, exposing the most brilliant spin campaign ever waged

When America was attacked on 9/11, its citizens almost unanimously rallied behind its new, untested president as he went to war. What they didn't know at the time was that the Bush administration's highest priority was not to vanquish Al Qaeda but to consolidate its own power at any cost. It was a mission that could be accomplished only by a propaganda presidency in which reality was steadily replaced by a scenario of the White House's own invention---and such was that scenario's devious brilliance that it fashioned a second war against an enemy that did not attack America on 9/11, intimidated the Democrats into incoherence and impotence, and turned a presidential election into an irrelevant referendum on macho imagery and same-sex marriage.

As only he can, acclaimed New York Times columnist Frank Rich delivers a step-by-step chronicle of how skillfully the White House built its house of cards and how the institutions that should have exposed these fictions, the mainstream news media, were too often left powerless by the administration's relentless attack machine, their own post-9/11 timidity, and an unending parade of self-inflicted scandals (typified by those at The New York Times). Demonstrating the candor and conviction that have made him one of our most trusted and incisive public voices, Rich brilliantly and meticulously illuminates the White House's disturbing love affair with "truthiness," and the ways in which a bungled war, a seemingly obscure Washington leak, and a devastating hurricane at long last revealed the man-behind-the-curtain and the story that had so effectively been sold to the nation, as god-given patriotic fact.

The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth from 9/11 to Katrina Details

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From Reader Review The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth from 9/11 to Katrina for online ebook

Evan Casey says

While certainly a book that may appeal a bit more to Democrats and those that lean to the left, his approach in tackling the Bush administration's is a reasonable, well-researched, and meticulously crafted one that few rational people could argue with. It was a joy to read not only because I strongly agree with the politics of it, but also because Rich is such an excellent writer that the story itself becomes interesting to read. In addition to that, I learned so much about the events of the past six years that I did not know before, by reading this book. Through the elegant use of words, good humor, and a great many facts and footnotes, Rich crafts an eloquent argument (that I wish I had the knowledge to develop and put forth myself) in dismantling the Bush administration's facade of deceit.

Jimbonk says

This is a very good book. Eye opening on the whole "Bush is a fucking jerk-off retard" mindset. It gives you a list of all the shit this asshole (and his friends) have put the mindless country through, and why, and how. The author is of course a lefty, liberal, democrat, or what have you. But he manages to tell this story as fact and not bias. It is not a book used to rile people up to hate our current government. It is simply a chronological recount of the things that actually happened, that these people actually did. Rich simply says, "Hey, look at this! Can you believe this actually happened? These people are incredible!" From the almighty 9/11 to Katrina, this book shows how Bush and his cronies got us stuck in a quagmire in Iraq, and why. Read it. Be inspired. Vote.

Rajesh Kurup says

Halfway into the Obama presidency and I remember why I said I'd rather vote for a shrub over Bush after reading this book. The level of deception and manipulation that occurred during the Bush administration was truly astounding. What's unbelievable is reading about people who are joining "Miss me Yet" groups on Facebook. I really wish that voters could read this book when they go to polls in November 2012.

Ok, this is a book review, not the opportunity for a rant. But, I suspect that one's reaction to this book will be purely based upon one's politics. Rich has thoroughly researched his subject and does a solid job of laying out his case. His case is that the purpose of the Bush administration was to serve the Bush administration. As he says, had 9/11 never occurred, Bush was setting out to be a very non-descript President. He got to power and went about handing out jobs to undeserving candidates whose sole achievement was helping get Bush elected. Which would be fine had 9/11 and Katrina never happened. But they did and the American public paid the price for the gross incompetence of the Bushies. And we will pay for a long time. 2 unfunded wars, massive tax cuts for the wealthy and an unfunded Medicare prescription later, and the economy is in shambles. Not to mention the where the poorly handled wars has left our foreign policy and reputation.

Central to his case was the media compliance early into the post 9/11 world. The media, including respected newspapers such as the New York Times gladly went along for the ride as Bush, Rumsfeld and Cheney laid out the case for the Iraq war. It was only after the weapons of mass destruction never materialized that they

began to actually investigate. The same also holds true for Congress. BOTH sides of the aisle played along and approved the war and it's crazy funding (outside of the budget), the tax cuts, the deregulation of Wall Street, the expansion of Medicare, etc.

So here's to hoping that we Won't Get Fooled Again. But, I doubt it.

Alison says

Just when you thought you'd been furious with the Bush administration for the last time, another book comes along to get your blood boiling all over again. Rich concentrates on the "selling" part of everything from the wars to Katrina, with emphasis on the complicity of the media. Compelling reading. And there's even a "final word" on why we went into Iraq--which is more cynical than any I had heard before but pretty convincing when you've read the whole saga. And the man can write.

Jim says

Every thirty pages or so I put this book down to keep my blood from boiling.

Beginning with 9/11, President Bush was given leeway by congress and the press to pursue a "war on terror". Watching events unfold on TV, or in the newspapers, it is difficult to get a longer perspective on the marketing, and selling, of the Iraq war as a part of the war on terror. This book provides perspective, drawing on public information to provide a richly detailed account of an administration that sold a bad idea.

Iraq war planning dates to days after Bush #43's first inauguration. A former cabinet member confirmed the fixation on Iraq began in the first national security meeting, months before 9/11(1). Early ideas included goading Hussein into attacking first.

After 9/11 Orwellian machinations began. The Bush team rewrote, or made up, history, emphasizing shaky 'evidence' such as yellowcake uranium from Niger, vague, unsubstantiated meetings in Prague, photographs of mobile biological weapons labs (aka port-a-potties being trucked to a construction site) and other misleading, or misinterpreted, 'evidence'. The hope was that repetition would lead to belief that Iraq had WMD and was tied to international terrorism.

For this plan to work, the administration had to prevent the United Nations Weapons Inspectors from finishing their job, since there was not only no credible evidence of WMD, there were none – but facts would not interrupt war plans. Inspectors were fired, impossible deadlines were set, and once the UN was stopped the alternative story could be shaped and sold in prime time as a cause for war.

Many people don't remember Dan Rather's interview with Saddam Hussein two months before the war.

Rather pressed on WMD, and Saddam said I don't have any and haven't been since the first Gulf War.

Hussein was a truthful government spokesman in the whole sordid run up to war.

The three overriding government principals in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four are:

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

I reread Nineteen Eighty Four last year during banned book week. The Nineteen Eighty Four Ministry of Truth and the current administration's PR machinery tried to remake or rewrite history to suit ill conceived notions. Fortunately, we have an independent press, and government officials that spoke out about the decision process. Too much wasn't adding up; journalists did their homework, dug out the truth, exposed manufactured 'evidence'. Even slavish early Bushs followers are turning on the administration, having been

duped and taken for fools. One thing we have relearned is, the emperor has no clothes. If your heart can stand it you should read this one.

1. Page 113, paraphrased from Paul O'Neil's book

Rating 4.5 of 5

Niki says

Rich's book traces the latticework of lies built by the Bush (II) administration to guide the nation into war with Iraq. He focuses not only on the administration's public relations techniques to sell the war, but the press's complicity. But why the press choose to abdicate its investigatory role goes relatively unexamined. (Or rather, it's examined, but not as deeply as I would have preferred.)

If you hadn't lived through the build-up to the Iraq war and only had Rich's book as a guide, you would never know that there **was** quite a bit of skepticism over the administration's claims, and that even on the eve of war, plenty of people were not only against it, but clear about the administration's motives and its deception. That those things were known and didn't have any effect seems to be a fascinating and troubling part of the story that future works on this question should analyze in greater detail.

A good book, though, for people who were outside the political debate surrounding the Iraq war. There's a handy timeline at the back that juxtaposes what the administration said and what it was actually doing.

Samantha says

I expected a lot more from this book because Frank Rich wrote it. I had seen him on some news programs about current and cultural events and knew he had written for the NY Times. I just wanted it to be more. I felt like it was a laundry list of events without detailed explanation and analysis. I thought Mr. Rich was going to give his take on events and actions, but he chose to just present them in the order that has now been discovered that they happened in. He's looking back on things that happened anywhere from 2 to 7 years ago and I thought he could tell us about the why instead of just the when or how. I would recommend this book to anyone just wanting to see the order that the Bush administration did things in and what happened before and after.

Henry says

I learned most of what I know about '80s American politics by watching SNL reruns on Comedy Central; fortunately, future generations won't have to suffer that show to know what's going on right now because they'll be able to read the breezy, current events sum up that is Frank Rich. Putting everything that's happened lately (ca. 2000-2006) in context leads to some valuable insights, especially with Rich's background as a theater/pop culture critic. Exceptional sentence structure, a large vocabulary, and a good sense of humor are a big plus, too. (He's a good writer!) Not the sort of book that will be remembered and reprinted for centuries, it will at least remind you, with dazzling prose, of how clear the case is that Bush & Co. are homicidal liars and the press their servants. It even comes with a valuable timeline that shows you when the Administration specifically lied and how.

Travis Kirk says

A quality Bush/Media bashing book, though not quite as good as Al Gore's "The Assault on Reason". This book focuses on the media's complicity in feeding lies to the public rather than pointing out the ignorance of the masses as the blame.

Phillip says

I listened to the audiobook in my car. This book is a chronological (literally, it follows a strict timeline) account of the Bush Administration through the publishing of the book. It starts with W's upbringing and why he's so insecure of himself and rolls right into the war planning (or lack thereof). I have to admit that this was depressing as hell. I had forgotten many of the scandals and foul-ups over the last few years (since there were so many fresh ones to replace them), so to have them all retold and expounded upon via hindsight was a little frustrating. You just end up scratching your head, saying to yourself, "really, America, really?" So if you don't want to do that to yourself, you may want to skip it. However, if you need something to motivate you to make sure someone like W is never elected again, you must have this in your collection.

Jon says

This is a very interesting read. Most people know the media bends the facts and skew things to fit some agenda. But what happens when a government does this? Hires people to fake news? Fake truth? And how do they get away with it? Anyone of any political persuasion should read this book. Just because this is a critique of a Republican administration doesn't mean they are the only ones to have done this. People need to develop a healthy skepticism and NOT buy into the Limbaughs and O'Reilly's of this world... or people from the opposite side. Find out who is behind the so called "news", the "experts" who appear on TV. People will be surprised who pays whom to say what and for what reason. Follow the money.

Karen says

Are they really so manipulative? Are they really willing to put appearance and salesmanship over substance and responsible governing? Do they really have so little regard for their country's citizenry? Do they really lie that much? Do they really think we're that stupid? Do they really think they can backtrack and cover every mistake?

Well, apparently they are and they do. This book clinches it: I have no doubt that if George Bush could run again, his minions could once again manipulate the masses into voting for him.

This book traces Bush's forays into foreign and domestic affairs and his complete disregard for fact while developing his response. Most interesting is Bush's use of the media, so effectively at first and then with growing disdain as questions about his motives arise.

It's all in here - Bush's problems over the lack of WMD, his disinterest in Osama bin Laden and 9/11, his

vastly delayed response to Katrina, the Valerie Plame case, and the growing unrest in his own party, who slowly, latently, is beginning to see exactly what kind of person they've championed.

Eminently readable and entertaining in its style, I still found I could only take this book a chapter at a time. Sometimes it's easier to read a book that is forthright about its political bias. This one is so factual and concrete, with so much evidence to support its theme, with such far reaching consequences, it transcends the political. It's just sad.

Will Byrnes says

The subtitle tells it all, "the decline and fall of truth from 9/11 to Katrina." This book is about how the Bush administration, with their willing accomplices in the media have made a casualty of truth. It is not, as one might expect it to be, a compilation of his NY Times op ed pieces, but a well ordered, easy to read overview of what lies were told, when, by whom and to whom. Good stuff. I doubt that any Republican would get past ten pages though. Although Rich offers plenty of concrete examples and reasons for his views, he allows his scorn of these evil gnomes to shine through a bit too obviously. There is a lengthy, 70 pages or so, section at the back end with two columns. On the left, are the actual events in a timeline. On the right are the statements (lies) that were told and when. A nifty piece. Although I enjoyed the book and it never hurts to get information reinforcement for my challenged memory, it did strike me that Rich was preaching to the choir, as I doubt many who are not already clued in to the current white house crowd would plunk down their cash for the book.

Barbara says

everyone was starting to salivate over bush last week as he opened his library so i read this book to recap his tenure in office. anyone who had someone killed or injured in iraq or, for that matter, any iraqi, should be irate that bush, cheney, rumsfeld, rice, wolfowitz, feitz, powell and rove are not rotting in jail for their crimes. i followed all this in real time but seeing it all presented in one book made it stunningly clear how dangerous it is to elect a shallow-thinking ambitious person to the presidency. its amazing that the u.s. survived him.

Jeremy Lyon says

If you're a member of that dwindling population of American citizens who sees George Bush, President, as anything other than disaster incarnate, don't read this book (or this review). And please don't vote in November.

For the rest of us, there's nothing in this book that you don't already know. But by packing all of the administration's incompetence, distortions, manipulations and outright lies of the last eight years into a single volume, Frank Rich brings home how completely destructive the Bush White House has been for so many things most of care about.

I wouldn't read this book if you're trying to motivate yourself to do something about it all: it's kind of like trying to light a barbecue with liquid oxygen. You're more likely to ignite a flare of righteous indignation that reduces everything to ash than end up with a tasty grilled steak.

But hey, if you need a reminder why you should vote in November, this is it.
