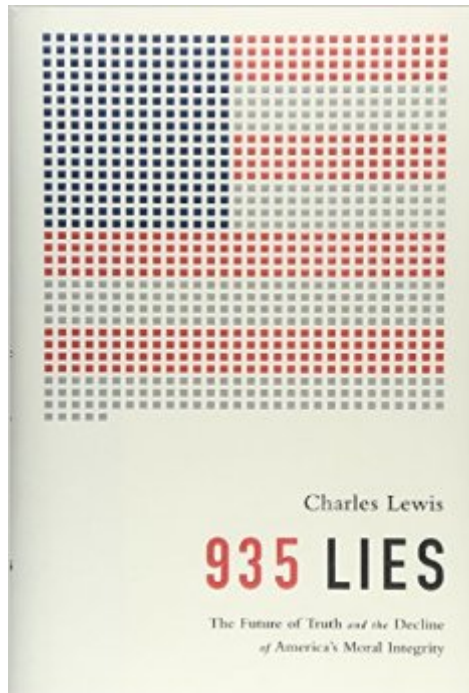


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935 Lies: The Future Of Truth And The Decline Of America's Moral Integrity



Synopsis

Facts are and must be the coin of the realm in a democracy, for government of the people, by the people and for the people, requires and assumes to some extent an informed citizenry. Unfortunately, for citizens in the United States and throughout the world, distinguishing between fact and fiction has always been a formidable challenge, often with real life and death consequences. But now it is more difficult and confusing than ever. The Internet Age makes comment indistinguishable from fact, and erodes authority. It is liberating but annihilating at the same time. For those wielding power, whether in the private or the public sector, the increasingly sophisticated control of information is regarded as utterly essential to achieving success. Internal information is severely limited, including calendars, memoranda, phone logs and emails. History is sculpted by its absence. Often those in power strictly control the flow of information, corroding and corrupting its content, of course, using newspapers, radio, television and other mass means of communication to carefully consolidate their authority and cover their crimes in a thick veneer of fervent racialism or nationalism. And always with the specter of some kind of imminent public threat, what Hannah Arendt called "objective enemies."

An epiphanic, public comment about the Bush war on terror years was made by an unidentified White House official revealing how information is managed and how the news media and the public itself are regarded by those in power: "You journalists live] in what we call the reality-based community. [But] that's not the way the world really works anymore. We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. . . we're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do." And yet, as aggressive as the Republican Bush administration was in attempting to define reality, the subsequent, Democratic Obama administration may be more so. Into the battle for truth steps Charles Lewis, a pioneer of journalistic objectivity. His book looks at the various ways in which truth can be manipulated and distorted by governments, corporations, even lone individuals. He shows how truth is often distorted or diminished by delay: truth in time can save terrible erroneous choices. In part a history of communication in America, a cri de coeur for the principles and practice of objective reporting, and a journey into several notably labyrinths of deception, 935 Lies is a valorous search for honesty in an age of casual, sometimes malevolent distortion of the facts.

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Customer Reviews

I'm not thrilled with the title because it implies to the browser that the book is about the 935 now-documented lies that led to the war in Iraq, and that is not the case -- those lies are simply one of many evidentiary cases spanned a much broader spectrum. As the author himself outlines early on, the book is about a retrospective review of the struggle for truth from the lies that led to Viet-Nam to date (less 9/11); a concurrent review of the corruption and diminution of commercial journalism; and finally, the future of the truth. Start at the end -- on a whim I did, reading the 8th and final chapter first, and what I found not only persuaded me that this author is an intellectual and moral giant, but that he may yet have his most important work before him, the astonishing depth and breadth of his past 20 years notwithstanding. Returning to the beginning, I appreciated the first seven chapters with the benefit of the author's own concluding perspective. I would quibble with the author in starting with Viet-Nam, but it makes sense in the context of his focus on the Constitution as the first casualty, and the long march from giving the President war powers for Viet-Nam to letting Dick Cheney get away with 935 lies leading to Iraq. For me, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and the Warren Commission cover-up are a more logical starting point. That was the point at which presidents ceased being president, and the start of what Matt Taibbi would later immortalize with a new word: Griftopia: A Story of Bankers, Politicians, and the Most Audacious Power Grab in American History.

I just saw an Internet comment alleging that Hillary led us into Iraq! While I don't excuse her voting for the invasion, such an allegation is incredibly malicious - and indicative of the need for '935 Lies' to help reaffirm, clarify, and set the record straight. Author Lewis found that the Bush administration made 935 false statements in the two-year period prior to our invading Iraq. On at least 532

occasions they ominously declared that Iraq had WMD, was trying to produce or obtain them, and/or was significantly linked to al Qaeda. President Bush led with 259 false statements (231 about WMD in Iraq and 28 about Iraq's links to al Qaeda), followed by Secretary of State Powell (244 false statements about WMD in Iraq and 10 about Iraqi links to al Qaeda. Also adding to the non-stop din - V.P. Cheney, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and White House press secretaries Ari Fleisher and Scot McClellan. AND the Pentagon recruited and coached 75 retired military officers to be 'independent' paid consultants and media analysts to make the case for war in Iraq; many also had large, undisclosed ties to defense companies. Another surprise - Halliburton, along with its subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root, were overwhelmingly the largest financial beneficiaries of our invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. (Turns out Cheney, while CEO of Halliburton, had doubled its lobbying, campaign contributions, and federal government contracts prior to becoming V.P.) And what about our much-vaunted 'Fourth Estate?' Instead of critically investigating these false claims, they mostly uncritically simply relayed and repeated the administration's lies. Worse yet, a few reporters (eg. Judith Miller) even added to the lies.

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