

ANOTHER POV

Truth is Binary

The truth is binary. A thing is, or it is not. The truth is black and white. There is no grey in the true, the real truth, or at least there shouldn't be.

In March of 2003, the United States invaded Iraq due in part to intelligence reports that Iraq had purchased or attempted to purchase uranium yellowcake from the African country of Niger. Four months later Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV, who had been Senior Director for African Affairs on the United States National Security Council, provided information to the New York Times that, based on his knowledge of intelligence in Africa, Wilson had concluded that the George W. Bush administration twisted intelligence to "exaggerate the Iraqi threat." Coincidentally, the week after the article's publication, Robert Novak disclosed Wilson's wife's classified covert CIA identity as "Valerie Plame" in his syndicated *Washington Post* column. The timing of it all was rather coincidental.

The administration was saying Wilson was incorrect in his intelligence analysis, and they had nothing to do with the outing of his wife's CIA identity. On the other side, Wilson said the outing was directly related and part of the Bush administration's attempts to discredit his report and his integrity. How could this be? Was the report not clear? Was it not real? How can a report, a report so vital to justifying one nation's armed aggression against another, not be so clearly accurate that it would stand all scrutiny? Certainly, a document such as this would easily stand on its own merit, and no false accusations need to be made by its backers to protect or shore up its meaning or content.

Enter now the shades of grey. A Special Counsel was authorized to investigate allegations of the administration's role in "Plamegate" as it came to be called. Two years, five months later, in October 2005, as a result of that investigation, Lewis "Scooter" Libby was indicted for lying to a federal grand jury and obstruction of justice. In March 2007, after one year and five months after being indicted and after the government's spending of \$2.8 million, Libby was convicted of four federal felonies. Three months after that, in June 2007, President Bush commuted Libby's sentence.

Enter more grey. Three years after Valerie Plame was outed (March 2003) and 18 months after Libby was indicted (October 2005), Scott McClellan, White House spokesman and President Bush's press secretary, announced his resignation on 19 April 2006.

Now, nine months after President Bush commuted Libby's sentence, on April 21, 2008, Scott McClellan published his recollections while in the Bush White House from 2003 to 2006 entitled, What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception. According to Mr. McClellan the White House was involved in the leaking of CIA operative Valerie Plame's identity to the news media in the summer of 2003.

McClellan says he was ordered to say that White House aides Karl Rove and Lewis "Scooter" Libby were not involved in leaking Plame's identity.

Two years after resigning from his post in the White House, Scott McClellan has written of what he knows of the White House's involvement in "Plamegate." But from July 2003, when this happened until April 2008, McClellan said nothing. For five years, he was silent, and now, all of a sudden, he is willing to testify before Congress. Was it an epiphany that caused him to suddenly find the courage to speak the truth? Or was it that his book hit number one on the best-seller list, and more press would cause more book sales? My guess is it was the latter—just like George Tenet. Gutless bureaucrats who hid under the veil of secrecy while they were on the job said nothing, walked away, and when the mindset of the public was clear—that is, find those responsible—they suddenly stepped forward and said, "Look at me. I'm the brave one standing up for the truth." I don't know about you, but that doesn't wash for me. I think we all know that it's all about the money.

In October of 2007, Valerie Plame Wilson released her book entitled Fair Game: My Life as a Spy, My Betrayal by the White House. She received over \$2 million for the book (George Tenet got \$4 million).

It is a sad commentary when one person in a group casually says about politicians, "They all lie," and none of us disagrees. Politics and politicians are anything but binary.

By the way, my new book Very Public Data was released last week, and I didn't get a \$4 million advance.

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