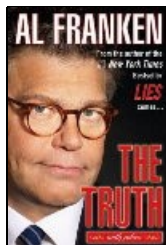


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Book Review
The Truth (with Jokes)
by [Al Franken](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: November 22, 2005

You don't really expect a book called *The Truth* to be as entertaining as *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*. It's natural to expect more self-righteousness and less humor. In the end, *The Truth* is not as funny as Al Franken's last book — but it's still damn funny, and it cuts deeper.

Unlike Greg Palast, Mark Crispin Miller, and other critics on the left, Al Franken doesn't believe that George Bush stole the 2004 election from John Kerry. (He does believe that Bush stole the 2000 election — and writes that since Bush has only been elected once he could legally run again in 2008!)

That's not to say that Franken thinks the 2004 election was clean. He offers an easy-to-remember phrase to summarize how Bush won: fear, smear, and queers. *Fear* was the fear of terrorist attack that Bush and Cheney did so much to whip up through alarmist speeches and strategically timed color-coded alerts. (Funny how we haven't been to code orange since the election — except for those of us here in New York, which is on a permanent orange alert.) *Smear* was largely about the well-promoted lies of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, aimed at making a war hero look like more of a wimp than the guy who couldn't be bothered to show up for his Air National Guard duty. *Queers* was about the hysteria over gay marriage that (at least in the conventional wisdom) got the fundamentalists to the polling booth.

This is familiar territory, but Franken provides strange and funny details you may not have seen before. And elsewhere in the book he uncovers stories that even news junkies may not be aware of.

For example, despite a lot of rhetoric about corruption, you may not know why Tom DeLay is such a bad guy. He was indicted for moving money around in an inappropriate way, but it's hard to get too worked up about that. But did you know that Tom DeLay and his entourage enjoyed a lavish all-expense-paid Christmas vacation to Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, paid for by manufacturers who ran sweatshops on the island? And that he used his position in Congress to block investigations of those sweatshops, where young women were sexually exploited and forced to have abortions if they became pregnant?

Though Franken's anger sometimes overwhelms his sense of humor, there are enough good jokes in *The Truth (with Jokes)* to make it one of the most painless ways to delve into the painful realities of life under the Bush regime.

About the Reviewer

[Geoff Wisner](#) is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



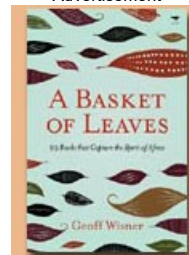
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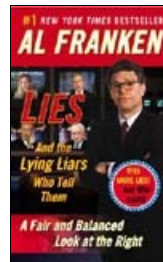
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