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Book Review
What Went Wrong in Ohio
The Conyers Report on the 2004 Presidential Election
by [Anita Miller](#), Editor

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
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"Fool me once, shame on you," as the current occupant of the White House once said. "Fool me twice, shame on me." Or that's what he would have said if he hadn't gotten a little confused.

In 2000, George W. Bush and his team fooled us once. By hiring a private company to purge voter rolls of thousands of qualified voters, Katherine Harris tipped the Florida election — and the presidency — to George Bush. In a cowardly nondecision, the Supreme Court let the clock run out on any effective challenge. Anyone who reads the newspapers has known for a long time that Al Gore was the rightful winner of the 2000 presidential election. Recently former president Jimmy Carter said there was no doubt in his mind that Gore won the election. He said the election process "failed abysmally" — strong words from someone who has been involved in monitoring elections around the world.

Did we get fooled again? Did George W. Bush steal a reelection campaign that should have been Al Gore's to fight in the first place? Again, if you read the newspaper and the blogs you will have seen many troubling reports during and after the election last year, most of them coming from Ohio. Precincts that never voted Republican went for Bush. Precincts reported more votes than there were voters. Democratic voters who cast ballots for minor officials somehow "forgot" to vote for President. Voters using touch-screen machines saw their Kerry vote changed to a Bush vote before their eyes. Republican precincts had plenty of voting machines while Democratic voters stood in line for hours, sometimes in the rain, as unused voting machines sat in storage. And in one precinct after another, exit polls predicted a Kerry victory while the "actual" vote count went the other way.

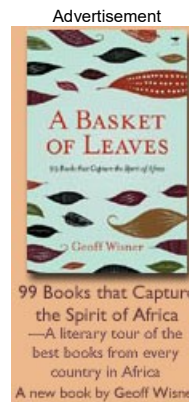
Watching the post-election coverage was maddening. I remember watching one panel of pundits ask themselves how the exit polls could have gotten it so wrong this time. Maybe there was something wrong with the exit pollsters, they said. Maybe exit polls in general just weren't accurate in this day and age. Not one of them asked the obvious question: What if the exit polls were right and the votes were wrong? Even more quickly than in 2000, those of us who smelled something rotten were told to "get over it."

Black members of Congress — familiar with voter fraud and intimidation from the days of the civil rights struggle — were among the few people to protest the hijacking of the 2000 election. It's telling that John Conyers, an African American Congressman from Michigan, led the Congressional investigation of the 2004 election. This book is the report of his findings, produced despite consistent stonewalling from Republican officials in Washington and Ohio. It contains a detailed catalogue of the many tricks that were used to give Ohio — and the presidency — to Bush. They range from the use of "cheat sheets" to help election officials decide what the vote count "should" have been to the decision by Attorney General Blackwell to reject voter registration forms based on the weight of the paper they were printed on.

Congressman Conyers never says that all these tactics added up to a stolen election in Ohio, or a stolen presidency. But I urge you to read this book and draw your own conclusions.

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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