

Robert Scheer

# Now Powell tells us

THE PRESIDENT played the scoundrel — even the best of his minions went along with the lies — and when a former ambassador dared to tell the truth, the White House initiated what Special Prosecutor Patrick J. Fitzgerald calls “a plan to discredit, punish or seek revenge against Mr. Wilson.” That is the important story line.

If not for the whistle-blower, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, President Bush's falsehoods about the Iraq nuclear threat likely would never have been exposed.

On Monday, former Secretary of State Colin Powell told me that he and his department's top experts never believed that Iraq posed an imminent nuclear threat, but that the president followed the misleading advice of Vice President Dick Cheney and the CIA in making the claim. Now he tells us.

The harsh truth is that this president cherry-picked the intelligence data in making his case for invading Iraq and deliberately kept the public in the dark as to the countervailing analysis at the highest level of the intelligence community. While the president and his top Cabinet officials were fear-mongering with stark images of a “mushroom cloud” over American cities, the leading experts on nuclear weaponry at the Department of Energy (the agency in charge of the U.S. nuclear-weapons program) and the State Department thought the claim of a near-term Iraqi nuclear threat was absurd.

“The activities we have detected do not, however, add up to a compelling case that Iraq is currently pursuing what INR would consider to be an integrated and comprehensive approach to acquire nuclear weapons,” said a dissenting analysis from an assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research (INR) in the now infamous 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq, which was cobbled together for the White House before the war. “Iraq may be doing so but INR considers the available evidence inadequate to support such a judgment.”

The specter of the Iraqi nuclear threat was primarily based on an already-discredited claim that Iraq had purchased aluminum tubes for the purpose of making nuclear weapons. In fact, at the time, the INR wrote in the National Intelligence Estimate that it “accepts the judgment of technical experts at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) who have concluded that the tubes Iraq seeks to acquire are poorly suited for use in gas centrifuges to be used for uranium enrichment and finds unpersuasive the arguments advanced by others to make the case that they are intended for that purpose.”

The other major evidence President Bush gave Americans for a revitalized Iraq nuclear program, of course, was his 2003 State of the Union claim — later found to be based on forged documents — that a deal had been made to obtain uranium from Niger. This deal was exposed within the administration as bogus before the president's speech in January by Ambassador Wilson, who traveled to Niger for the CIA. Wilson only went public with his criticisms in an op-ed piece in the New York Times a half year later in response to what he charged were the administration's continued distortion of the evidence. In excerpts later made available to the public, it is clear that the Niger claim doesn't even appear as a key finding in the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate, while the INR dissent in that document dismisses it curtly: “[T]he claims of Iraqi pursuit of natural uranium in Africa are, in INR's assessment highly dubious.”

I queried Powell at a reception following a talk he gave in Los Angeles on Monday. Pointing out that the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate showed that his State Department had gotten it right on the nonexistent Iraq nuclear threat, I asked why did the president ignore that wisdom in his stated case for the invasion?

“The CIA was pushing the aluminum tube argument heavily and Cheney went with that instead of what our guys wrote,” Powell said. And the Niger reference in Bush's State of the Union speech? “That was a big mistake,” he said. “It should never have been in the speech. I didn't need Wilson to tell me that there wasn't a Niger connection. He didn't tell us anything we didn't already know. I never believed it.”

When I pressed further as to why the president played up the Iraq nuclear threat, Powell said it wasn't the president: “That was all Cheney.” A convenient response for a Bush family loyalist, perhaps, but it begs the question of how the president came to be a captive of his vice president's fantasies.

More important: Why was this doubt, on the part of the secretary of state and others, about the salient facts justifying the invasion of Iraq kept from the public until we heard the truth from whistle-blower Wilson, whose credibility the president then sought to destroy?

In matters of national security, when a president leaks, he lies.

By selectively releasing classified information to suit his political purposes, as President Bush did in this case, he is denying that there was a valid basis for keeping the intelligence findings secret in the first place. “We ought to get to the bottom of it, so it can be evaluated by the American people,” said Sen. Arlen Specter, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I couldn't have put it any better.

CREATORS SYNDICATE

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## OPEN FORUM | On Immigration

Photographs by Damaso Reyes



Telling their stories: Sheryl Oring types postcards for passers-by as they dictate.

# Having their say

By Sheryl Oring

At first glance, the immigrant rights rally held at City Hall Park in New York City on Monday seemed like a typical protest: police blocked off nearby roads hours before the event began, journalists mulled about with their cameras, and participants streamed by with handmade signs and various rally cries.

I was there with my typewriter, offering to type up postcards to the president as part of an ongoing public performance, called “I Wish to Say,” which began in San Francisco in 2004 and has since been presented in dozens of locations across the country. “I Wish to Say” began as a way to give voice to those not typically heard in the media. And the stories that people whispered in my ear as Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N. Y., and other dignitaries, took the stage on Monday underscored the importance of this simple act of listening. The words of the people who have chosen this country as their home — and the way their voices quivered with emotion as they spoke them — also showed that this was anything but a typical protest: The issue at hand was one of life or death for at least some of the participants.

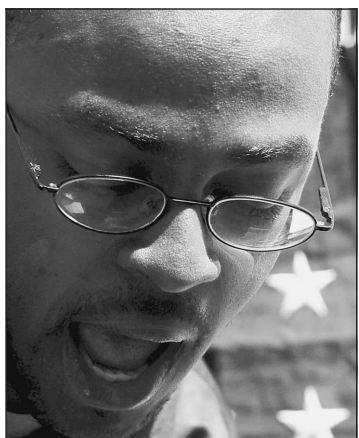
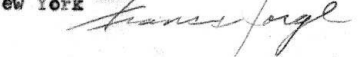
Sheryl Oring (oring@iwishtosay.org) is an artist and writer who lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. For more information on “I Wish to Say,” visit the project Web site at www.iwishtosay.org



Dear Mr. President, I believe every immigrant who's here should be legal, just like the people who came 100 years ago are. They should have the right to work and become citizens, and be able to help themselves. They are very hard-working people. They should be able to get education, and medical care and a job to support their families. They should be as legal as Laura Bush.

Sincerely,

Frances Jorge  
New York



I no longer desire to be president. At first, I wish to be the president of the United States of America. But now, like any immigrant, I'm willing to settle for my basic rights. As and as go to waste because my future is uncertain in a country where I am told I'm not wanted. I love the United States with all my heart and as much as I complain and criticize it, it really is the only place I know on Earth where I can truly achieve my heart's dream.

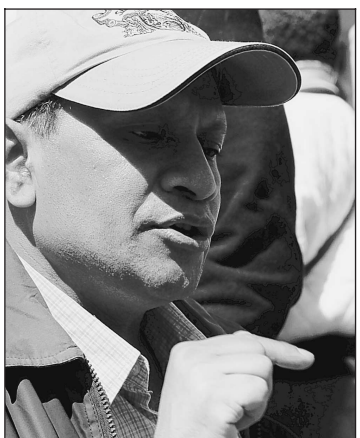
Orin Abl  
New York



Dear President Bush, I'm a U.S. citizen, but I was an immigrant. It's very sad that you want to support a law that is against immigrants. May I remind you, that when he English came here in 1600, they took the Indian's land and they Indian's didn't pass a law making them criminals. So right now you want to pass a law making us criminals when we are good citizens and pay taxes. I'm very glad to be here and I thank you for giving me a chance to go to school and everything else that I can do because of this beautiful country. However, it doesn't mean that because I'm grateful that I will support a law that isn't just.

Thank you,  
Sincerely,

Yudelka Cepeda  
New York



Hello Mr. President, how are you today? A lot of people are waiting for your amnesty bill. We hope that you will sign the bill.

Mahbub Bebul  
New York



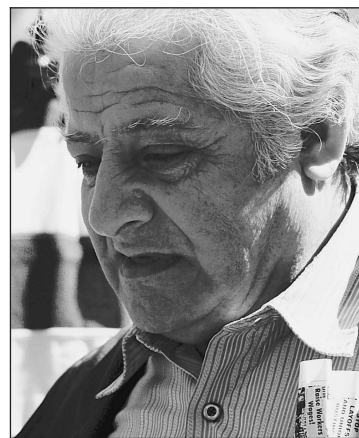
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**RUSH**



APR 10 2006  
Dear Mr. President, even though I wasn't born in this country, my parents are immigrants. This country was started by immigrants. What makes you think that by throwing out immigrants you'll make this country better? weren't your ancestors immigrants? Please, President Bush, do the right thing and don't pass that law. In early yours,  
Luis Encero  
Age 11  
New York

URGENT



Dear Mr. President, I came from Lebanon in 1988. You know what happened in Lebanon. Civil war. I didn't come here to get rich, I came for my safety, to escape danger. They killed my brother and my members of my family. I applied for asylum, but it was denied. I need to be legal. I paid tax for 18 years and Social Security. I'm 69 years old and I need to work. Mr. President, know that not all immigrants come here for the same reasons. We have different reasons. I wish that I will get my legal documents from here because I have a right to the Social Security. I paid for 18 years. If I don't have documents, Social Security won't pay me. Please help me. This is not a worm welcome.

A New York resident,  
Edmond Salame

201 W 87 ST  
New York NY 10012



Dear Mr. President, I migrants do not come here to wreak havoc. They come here to survive. If you are a Christian and a human being, you know that one of the most important rules to live by is to love the neighbor as thyself

Sincerely,  
Aristen Desinto  
Stony Brook University

Masha DeBrito



Dear President, I came to this country 15 years ago. I left my family, my 2 kids. One was 1 1/2, and the other one was 6 months. I got married here and I have 2 other children born here, but I still have one of my children in my country. Due to the immigration law I haven't been able to bring my child, who is 15 now, here. I urge you to change the law so I can be with all my 4 kids together. This is something that I know you will never feel since you have your kids with you.

There are thousands of families in this situation because the arrangement to be legal in this country takes forever. I'm a resident of Long Island, NY, and I wish you sign full rights for all immigrants.

Sincerely yours,  
Lourdes Quintanilla



Kathleen Parker

# How do you say 'pandering' in Spanish?

WASHINGTON  
WALKING AMONG thousands of friendly Latino protesters in the nation's capital Monday, I couldn't help getting caught up in the group-hugness of the occasion.

What with red tulips sprouting everywhere, temperatures hovering near a perfect 75 degrees, and spring-green sprouts coaxing creatures to do-si-do, ¡Yo quería a todo el mundo!

“Oh golly, Mr. Noah,” my inner Pollyanna exclaimed, “can't we just build a bigger ark?”

And then Rep. James P. Moran, a Virginia Democrat who apparently was channeling Che Guevara, startled me from my dream state. His voice, ragged from the strain of sustained high-volume rhetoric, thundered platitudes as a woman translated into Spanish.

“You do not become American because you're lucky enough to be born of wealthy parents,” he hollered unnecessarily as his voice was amplified through several speaker towers erected along the National Mall. “You become an American by working hard and providing for your family. By that definition, you are true Americans.”

“¡Sí se puede!” roared the crowd. Moran and others who spoke, including Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., and a raft of religious leaders of various denominations, gave the crowd what they wanted to hear. And the people were appeased.

The unmistakable, if largely inferred, message of the day was that Americans who want a secure border and a strict immigration policy are selfish nativists. And the Latino immigrants, many of whom are here illegally, are noble souls who want only a fair break.

Moran was on a roll: “Do they (law-and-order citizens, presumably) not understand that America didn't become great by building walls around its borders? Do they not understand that American did not become great by creating another underclass? . . . You are shaping America's destiny. . . .”

And then he launched into the someday-your-grandchildren's-grandchildren fairy tale of how the United States became a great nation, thanks to the Latinos who demanded amnesty on April 10, 2006.

(Never mind those white guys who wrote the Constitution and created the most prosperous nation on Earth.)

Despite Moran's fiery entreaties to rouse the rabble, the crowd was notably polite, while the event more closely resembled a Fourth of July picnic than a protest. I haven't seen so many American flags since Sept. 12, 2001.

And while most chanted “¡Sí se puede!” (“Yes we can”) in response to trigger phrases, the spirit of the day was palpably optimistic, cooperative and, at least outwardly, patriotic.

Even if the protesters' allegiance to the republic were only strategic rather than sincere, it is nonetheless difficult to think about these mostly decent, hard-working, well-intentioned people in terms of deportation or criminalization, two elements of the House bill Monday's rallies were organized to protest.

The bill (HB4437), sponsored by Reps. F. James Sensenbrenner Jr., R-Wis., and Peter T. King, R-N.Y., and passed last December, also calls for building a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

While solid arguments can be made in favor of a fence — national security being foremost — arguments against can be as easily made. As opponents keep insisting, where there's a will, there's a way around, over or under a wall.

There are, of course, ways to make a border impenetrable. Anyone who crossed into East Berlin while The Wall was in place vividly remembers how effective razor wire and rifles were. But are we really ready to start shooting neighbors at our borders? Please, consider that a rhetorical question.

Creating an immigration policy that is both humane and pragmatic is proving to be not so easy, especially as politics hinders rational discourse. Most of the rhetoric from both sides of the debate is insulting to intelligent Americans, who, though fair-minded, are realistic.

As nice and well-meaning as most illegal immigrants seem to be — and as much as most Americans want to help the less fortunate — no country can afford to allow itself to be overrun by all who want to take up residence there.

There are countless millions of poor people in the world, many living in more poverty-stricken areas than Mexico or other parts of Latin America. If we hope to help them while continuing to sustain our own nation's prosperity, we have no choice but to draw a line and enforce our policies.

Ultimately, our solution needs to be an instrument of tough love — neither Pollyannaish nor Draconian, humane but not personal. The ark, after all, is only so big, and even Noah couldn't save everybody.

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