

## PART THIRTEEN

# THE WATCHDOGS HAVE BEEN SILENT AND COMPLICIT IN THE EROSION OF AMERICAN ELECTION INTEGRITY



The old watchdogs have lost their teeth when it comes to election defense. The Democratic Party prefers to concentrate on voter turnout, while the mainstream American media refuse to investigate the possibility of election fraud. The major networks all get their exit poll numbers from the same source, and the data are adjusted to match the electronic vote counts, leaving American voters with no objective standard against which to judge the validity of their votes. PHOTO: [Rachel Maddow Show](#) (CC).

In the weeks following the South Carolina spectacle, the press engaged in round after round of analytic Twister, avoiding the most obvious question: Had another extremist just gained federal office on the basis of a rigged election? Their silence, however, was nothing unusual.

In his 2011 paper “[To the American Media: Time to Face the Reality of Election Rigging](#),” Jonathan Simon accuses the press of maintaining a Mafia-style omertà on the subject. “The gruesome truth,” he writes, “is that American elections can be rigged, and are being rigged, because the American media treats election rigging as something that—all evidence notwithstanding—could never happen here.”

Few people know this better than NYU professor Mark Crispin Miller, whose books *Fooled Again* and *Loser Take All* document a wide assortment of GOP vote-stealing tricks in every major election from 2000 to 2006. When the books were published, he told me, “I got no interviews and almost no reviews, despite the wealth of evidence I’d gathered. The corporate media was silent. But the left-wing press was hostile.”

Indeed, his colleagues on the left seem most reluctant of anyone to grapple with the concept of large-scale election tampering. “I know Michael Moore, Noam Chomsky, Rachel Maddow,” Miller says. “I’ve tried for years to get them to concede that possibility, but they won’t do even that. There’s clearly a profound unease at work. They just can’t go there.”

Why? No doubt the fear of being branded a conspiracy theorist inhibits many—that term having long served as a cudgel to suppress discussion of all sorts of crimes against democracy. As Miller puts it, “There is no more exquisite method of silencing dissent, or shutting down inconvenient inquiry, than to charge someone with conspiracy theory.”

“

Like their counterparts in the media, Democrats in office today appear unwilling to defend what matters most.

Like their counterparts in the media, Democrats in office today appear unwilling to defend what matters most. They stand in complicit silence as improbable results are spat from the innards of unaccountable voting machines.

“For Democratic legislators and candidates, openly questioning the integrity of American democracy feels like committing political suicide,” says Ben Ptashnik. A former Vermont state senator, Ptashnik ran for office in 1996 specifically to spearhead the state’s Clean Elections Act—whose provisions were largely struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court nearly a decade after its passage.

Ptashnik believes that election rigging remains an untouchable phenomenon in American politics. “Very few leaders are willing to fight it, which is probably why Kerry backed off in 2004. But the evidence is piling up. Democrats have to get their heads out of the sand and realize we’re looking at our worst nightmare: Karl Rove’s projected forty-year GOP dynasty.”

Ptashnik speaks with particular bluntness about the state of American democracy. “Today, Karl Rove and the Koch brothers are pushing a corporatist, anti-union agenda,” he says, “cynically allying with anti-immigrant nativists and Christian fundamentalists.” He compares the situation to that of Germany during the 1930s, when anticommunism drove industrialists and much of the working class into the arms of fascism.