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Forbes finds more falsehoods in Moore's "Bowling" (11/25)

By [Ben Fritz](#)

As more observers take a critical look at Michael Moore's "Bowling for Columbine," the number of lies and distortions found in the film keep piling up.

In addition to the deceptions [I chronicled](#) last week, [Dan Lyons of Forbes magazine](#) has noted four lies or distortions, three of which have not been previously reported. They continue two patterns of Moore's: relying on old news reports that simple research would reveal to be wrong and altering reality in order to make a point that he believes is valid.

The distortions begin with the film's title. Lyons reports that, contrary to the title of the film, the two boys who committed the massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., did not bowl the morning before the shooting. Although early news reports did state that they had attended a bowling class in the morning, police told Lyons it's simply not true. This is similar to Moore's continued repetition of the lie that the U.S. gave millions of dollars in aid (\$43 million last year and \$245 million in total) to the Taliban government of Afghanistan when, in fact, that aid consisted of food aid and food security programs administered by the U.N. and non-governmental agencies to relieve a famine. Los Angeles Times columnist Robert Scheer [did assert](#) that the money was given directly to the Taliban, but his claims directly contradict [this statement](#) by Secretary of State Colin Powell and have been debunked by numerous articles (including [our own](#)).

In two other cases, Lyons found that Moore blatantly misconstrued the facts in order to make a point. The film makes reference to "weapons of mass destruction" being manufactured in Littleton, questioning whether there is a connection between that activity and the Columbine

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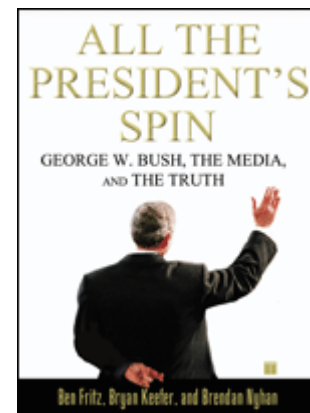
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[All the President's Spin](#) -- recommended by Jon Stewart of "The Daily Show":



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[Upcoming appearances](#)

-Sept. 22, 5:15 PM EST: Bryan Keeler will appear on MSNBC's "Lester Holt Live."
 -Sept. 23, 1-2 PM CST: Ben Fritz will appear on WILL Urbana, Ill.'s "Afternoon Magazine."
 -Sept. 28, 7 PM PST: Ben Fritz will appear on KXLU's

shooting. In fact, the Lockheed Martin plant in Littleton makes space launch vehicles for TV satellites.

And in a distortion of reality that is comparable to the altered Bush '88 campaign commercial that I noted, Lyons found that the scene in a bank in Michigan that that opens the film was staged. Customers who open long-term CDs at the bank actually have to go to a gun store to pick up the weapon after a background check. Yet the film clearly indicates that the bank itself stores and hands out guns to customers and Moore even jokes as he walks out, "Here's my first question: do you think it's a little dangerous handing out guns at a bank?" (This clip from the film can be viewed [here](#) in clip 3.)

Lyons also notes a previously reported but striking omission in Moore's film. In it, he tells the story of a young boy who shot and killed a classmate after his mother was forced to leave him with her brother while she took a job, a tragedy Moore blamed on the requirements of a Michigan welfare-to-work program. But he fails to mention that her brother kept drugs and guns in his home and, according to previous article for the Weekly Standard's website by [Matt Labash](#), his home was "a crack house, where guns were often traded for drugs."

When the most popular documentary of the year is riddled with blatant lies and distortions, it's a cause for concern. When the film is part of a pattern by one of the nation's most prominent political celebrities, it's disturbing. And when the media gives Michael Moore free reign to spread his lies and distortions with very little critical analysis, it's a sad comment on our democracy.

Update (12/4):As some readers have noted in this post's comments, Moore attempts to explain some of these discrepancies in a [FAQ on the film's website](#). While he says the bank that gives out guns is real, he doesn't address Lyons' claim that guns are not actually distributed at the bank itself and that Moore staged that scene. He admits that the Lockheed Martin plant in Littleton now makes rockets to take satellites into space (as well as "top secret Pentagon projects"), but doesn't explain how, given that fact, he can justify his reference in the film to "weapons of mass destruction" being made there. Finally, on [a separate page](#), Moore admits that the U.S.'s aid to Afghanistan was for humanitarian purposes, although he ignores the fact that the aid was distributed through the U.N. and non-governmental organizations. He criticizes the aid on

"Centerstage".

-Oct. 3, 5 PM EST: Bryan Keefer will take part in a panel discussion after a performance of "Nobody's Lunch" at the [PS 122 theater](#) in New York City.

-Oct. 4, 7 PM EST: Brendan Nyhan will give a book reading at Regulator Bookshop in Durham, NC.

-Oct. 13, 8:30 PM EST: Brendan Nyhan will take part in a panel discussion of the presidential debate at Duke University's Griffith Theater.

-Oct. 19: Bryan Keefer takes on Joe Scarborough in a debate sponsored by the [Smith Family Foundation](#), CUNY Graduate Center, New York City.

-Oct. 21: Bryan Keefer will appear on KGO San Francisco's "The Pete Wilson Show."

-Oct. 21: Bryan Keefer will give a book reading at Books Inc. in Mountain View, CA.

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-Bryan Keefer publishes [an article](#) on media coverage of campaign 2004 from a young person's perspective in the Washington Post Outlook section.

-[Great reviews](#) of [All the President's Spin](#) appear in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Tampa Tribune and the Los Altos Town Crier.

-Altnet publishes [an excerpt](#) from [All the President's Spin](#) as well as [an interview](#) with the authors about the book.

-[All the President's Spin](#) reaches #14 on the New York Times bestseller list for paperback nonfiction!

-A Publisher's Weekly Online [review](#) calls [All the President's Spin](#) a "lucid critique" and a "passionate indictment" that is "[w]ell organized and heavily referenced."

the basis that other countries, such as Bangladesh, got less, suggesting there may have been shady dealings. But on the central issue of whether the money actually went to the Taliban government of Afghanistan, Moore once again dodges the question.

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Myth of Gore single payer hypocrisy spreads (11/24)

By [Brendan Nyhan](#)

Another political myth about former Vice President Al Gore is circulating rapidly.

This time, pundits are claiming Gore is a hypocrite in the wake of his recent announcement of support for a single payer health care plan, which they say contradicts his attacks on former Senator Bill Bradley (D-NJ) for supporting one during the 2000 Democratic presidential primaries.

However, as the ABC News political unit recently [recounted](#), Bradley actually "disappointed many of his own supporters [in 2000] by not coming out for single-payer," in which the government pays for universal health care coverage for all citizens. He instead offered [a plan](#) that would have tried to achieve universal coverage using government subsidies and tax deductions.

It is true that Gore opposed single payer in the past, but this does not excuse the factual error about Bradley's plan, which was first made by [the Washington Post's Michael Kelly](#) and [National Review Online's Jonah Goldberg](#) on Nov. 20, as [we showed](#) last week.

Since then, it has continued to spread in [Goldberg's syndicated column](#) and reprinted Kelly columns as well as numerous other sources:

[CNN's Bruce Morton](#) ("Inside Politics", 11/21)

MORTON: On health care, [Gore] told the

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Associated Press, "I think we've reached the point where the entire health care system is in crisis. I have reluctantly come to the conclusion we should begin drafting a single-payer national health insurance system." But didn't he attack Bill Bradley for that during the primaries in 2000? Yes.

GORE: Well I hope we would never adopt the kind of plan he has proposed, because it doesn't make sense.

MORTON: Now, he says Bradley's plan was bad but not all single-payer plans are.



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[WashingtonPost.com's Terry Neal](#) (11/22):

[Gore has] said repeatedly this week that he's come to the conclusion that the health care system is irrevocably broken and that he now supports a single-payer national health care system, even though he ravaged Democratic primary opponent Bill Bradley for supporting the same in 2000.

[Salon's Anthony York](#) (11/23):

YORK: When can we expect details of your single-payer healthcare plan?

GORE: Next year. There are a lot of different ways to do it. I favor a plan that's privately run and one that provides choice to Americans.

YORK: And yet you criticized Bill Bradley during the 2000 campaign for embracing single-payer healthcare as his central issue.

GORE: My plan will be completely different. His plan is not what I'm proposing, nothing like it. His recommendation was to give a cash subsidy so that people could go buy plans from insurance companies without any limitation of what the insurance companies could charge or what they were required to offer. I don't want to get into criticizing his plan all over again, but it was sure as hell different from what this is.

[New York Newsday's William Douglas](#) (11/24):

In a dramatic reversal from his 2000 campaign position, Gore says he now favors a single-payer health care system, where the government finances health care while keeping delivery mostly private, over the current system.

Gore ripped his 2000 Democratic primary opponent, former Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.), for his single-payer plan, claiming that it would be too radical a change for the nation's health care system.

So far, not one of these outlets has set the record straight. It's time to put an end to this myth.

Update 11/25 10:07 AM EST: Bob Somerby [points out](#) that Adam Nagourney [repeated](#) this myth in the Nov. 22 New York Times: "The other area [in which Gore has changed positions] is his coming out in favor of single-payer health care insurance, a concept that he aggressively derided the last time he ran for office."

Update 12/4 10:09 PM EST: Kelly corrected his error in [a column](#) today:

Correction: In my column of Nov. 20, I wrote that Al Gore, in his drive to embrace the politics of yesterday's left, had declared himself "reluctantly" in support of nationally subsidized "single-payer" health care, such as is enjoyed by the citizens of Canada, most of whom can be found getting medical treatment in Michigan. This, I noted, represented quite a switch for Gore, who had savaged his 2000 primary opponent Bill Bradley for his support of a single-payer plan. That was not quite right. Bradley's plan was not the straight single-payer approach, rather a compromise.

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