

Licensed to Lie: Exposing Corruption in the Department of Justice

Sidney Powell

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Powell has done the law and every citizen a great favor by calling out an unholy practice of government attorneys.

Licensed to Lie: Exposing Corruption in the Department of Justice, by defense attorney Sidney Powell, is a lurid tale of deceit and amoral behavior on the part of government prosecutors. It is so well written and researched that the story makes for a stunning read.

Powell is an experienced trial and appellate court attorney. She has an ability to make complex legal and related factual issues clear to the most casual reader and has applied these skills to revealing the practice of US attorneys deliberately suppressing evidence that reflects the innocence of a defendant. This practice is rampant, Powell argues, despite the prosecutors' constitutional duty to disclose such evidence. As examples of the havoc this practice wreaks, Powell discusses the prosecution of former Alaska senator Ted Stevens and the work of the Federal Special Task Force appointed in the wake of the financial collapse of Enron in 2001, among other cases. Powell pulls no punches. She calls out by name the prosecutors she believes engaged in unethical and deceitful behavior. She is adept at keeping several plots moving in parallel worlds. When necessary, she provides direct quotes from trial transcripts and court orders to support her arguments.

This sad story also reveals how Powell lost faith in the justice system she served, having represented an individual she believed was wrongly convicted in matters relating to the Enron scandal. In a spectacular epilogue, Powell outlines what has become of the various players involved in the proceedings she chronicled in the book. Several of the miscreants escaped punishment and, in fact, were promoted.

As a US attorney, Powell has prosecuted about 350 criminal cases. During her career, she had the utmost faith in the criminal justice system and particularly the US Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in Texas. In a candid admission at the end of the book, she notes, "As for me, I question deeply whether I can continue to practice law. I have lost trust and faith that most of the Fifth Circuit judges will do the tedious work, keep an open mind, put ideology aside, rule based solely on the law, and ferret out the true facts in the most difficult cases if it means ruling against the government. If one can be heartbroken by a court, I am."

JOHN SENGER (Summer 2014)

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