

# Lies and Spies [1]

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If you're reading *The Wake*, chances are the government has already tapped your phones and is currently digging through your emails, trying to collect enough evidence to break out some "enhanced interrogation techniques" on your ass. With the Patriot Act in place and working splendidly (terrorism-free since 2001!), and legions of super spies equipped with high-tech gadgetry spanning the globe, the American people can rest assured that the government knows what it's doing. Between *Team America*, *Splinter Cell*, and *Tom Clancy*, there should be no lack of accurate, reliable intelligence in the American government's decision making process...right?

If the American people were given raw, unbiased intelligence that hasn't been handed down through a filtration of politics, censors, and news anchors, they could take a more informed position on global events. Unfortunately, for the safety of the country, not all information can be in the public domain. There is an elite few who have caught a glimpse behind the folders labeled as classified. Luckily, one of them came to the University of Minnesota to talk about, among other things, her opinion on how the government handles its so-called "intelligence."

Mary McCarthy served as Senior Director for Intelligence Programs and Special Assistant to Presidents Clinton and Bush Jr. She received her Ph.D in history from the University of Minnesota, and returned to campus on Wednesday, October 24th to give a lecture entitled "CIA Intelligence and Democracy: Lessons Not Learned." As a high-ranking CIA official, it was her job to analyze intelligence from undercover operatives and pass the information along to the president. She handled uncensored classified information, so her opinion is not only important, it also sheds some light on the intelligence the government uses to take action. She began her lecture begging for one thing: protest.

As an activist in the 60's, Dr. McCarthy finds the lack of outcry coming from our generation confusing.

“You have plenty of things to be upset about today,” she says.

She listed the Patriot Act, the detainees being held in secret prisons overseas, and the interrogation techniques the government employs that push the boundaries of legality.

“The government has powerful capabilities that are not always lawful,” McCarthy says. “They have the ability to isolate and attack certain groups of people based on information that is classified to everyone except themselves.”

She pointed to the detainment of Japanese Americans during World War II, which was brought about by a widespread sense of fear, racism, and insubstantial intelligence after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The fact that the government can use intelligence that is unavailable to anyone else leaves ample room for misinterpretation, corruption, and misrepresentation of the American people.

How do Americans know where their tax dollars are going? How do we know that the government isn't committing crimes? McCarthy states, “We don't know until we hear otherwise.” Her lecture consistently pointed out the rift between the agencies that gather intelligence and the way the administration uses the information. According to McCarthy, there is “insufficient skepticism against intelligence,” especially regarding source and reliability.

While McCarthy certainly doesn't see eye to eye with the current administration's use of intelligence, she doesn't downplay the importance of the CIA, secrecy, or the gathering of information. A large part of her lecture was devoted to discussing the history of the CIA and its involvement with world affairs in the past. She also discussed the different positions available in various intelligence agencies, and of course, what it takes to be a “clandestine operative.”

Surprisingly, becoming a spy is as easy as going onto [cia.gov](http://cia.gov) and applying. The CIA is looking for a bachelor's degree with a strong academic background, an interest in political affairs, and excellent communication skills. Travel and

language experience is preferred as well.

“They avoid aggressive personalities. They’re looking for people who are sensitive and easy to talk to,” McCarthy says. “I had a great time working for the CIA.”

McCarthy’s outlook on the current administration’s executive decisions should warrant a public outcry, especially with her knowledge of the intelligence in which they base their actions. While the protests of today are merely a whisper compared to the screams of the 60’s, Americans still have a right and responsibility to demand answers to their questions. A situation in which a government is allowed to make decisions without an informed and supportive public is unacceptable, and there should be no support for an administration that takes action without accurate information. If a government’s actions define its citizens, then the citizens should make sure they are being well represented. If we have to fight for an explanation, something isn’t right. It’s time to demand change.

1. <http://www.wakemag.org/cities/lies-and-spies/>
2. <http://www.wakemag.org/author/archivedstory/>