The 6 Books That Sharpened My BS Detector

An Author Shares the Inspiration for His Award-Winning Book

by Jason Makansi / April 2018

I'm a born skeptic. Or maybe I ended up in a career which honed me into one.

I had a choice the day after the November presidential election. I could wallow even deeper into a cultural and political funk or make something of it and get the book I had already drafted up into final form and do my part to fight against a burgeoning post-fact world. In other words, help others become skeptics.

While the original inspiration for *Painting By Numbers* was a college engineering lab course (a mere four decades ago), a number of books I read in the last decade caused me to actually get off my duff and write it.

My goal with *Painting By Numbers* was to give every living, breathing, thinking citizen the tools to assess the numerical results bombarding us 24/7/365. I wanted *Painting By Numbers* to be the first book people reach for when they've had enough of the post-fact, marketing-driven culture we are immersed in. It had to be simple, entertaining, and, strangely for a book about numerical analysis, free of math! I also hoped that it would inspire many readers to then dig deeper and reach for the titles which inspired me. They are listed below.

How to Lie with Statistics, by Darrell Huff
This 1950s classic, revised several times, was my template; but it needed to be updated with a focus on computer models and algorithms.

The Signal and the Noise, by Nate Silver
I recommend this book to anyone who will listen; Silver comes closest to engaging a general audience, without the academic style or ax to grind.

An Engine, Not a Camera, by Donald MacKenzie
A work of academic achievement, it challenges the raison d'etre for the foundational equation/model of modern financial engineering.

Models.Behaving.Badly, by Emanuel Derman
Derman takes on Wall Street's wizards and helps you understand why global economic crises like 2007-2008 occur, and will again.

Mindware: Tools for Smart Thinking, by Richard E. Nisbett
Credit Nisbett for questioning wholesale the academic reliance on multiple regression analysis, a popular form of statistical analysis.

The Laws of Medicine: Field Notes from an Uncertain Science, by Siddhartha Mukherjee
The Pulitzer prize winning author of *The Emperor of All Maladies* should get as much credit for this slim volume; no visit to a doctor's office or hospital will ever be the same.

As an engineer, independent consultant, electricity industry specialist, communicator, author, entrepreneur, speaker, and educator, Jason Makansi has been converting words to numbers and numbers to words for his entire career. He is the author of four non-fiction books relating to business, energy/environmental issues and mathematical modeling; hundreds of industry articles and academic papers; short stories in a variety of literary journals and collections; and most recently, his debut novel, *The Moment Before*, released March 2018. He earned his BS in Chemical Engineering from Columbia University.

He is a member of the National Numeracy Network, dedicated to quantitative literacy education, and was invited to speak at the organization's national meeting in NYC last year. Following the publication of Painting By Numbers, Mr. Makansi has been a sought after speaker for numerous other educational and professional conferences around the country.

Source: http://independentpublisher.com/article.php?page=2308