

CBS Mornings

10/05/26

8:00:13 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Author Michael Lewis]

NORAH O'DONNELL: Coming up, Michael Lewis has a new book about Elon Musk's leadership of DOGE — remember that — the Department of Government Efficiency? Well, the bestselling author will join us to talk about what unfolded.

(....)

8:05:03 a.m. [TEASE]

11 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Author Michael Lewis]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Coming up, the author of *The Blind Side* and *The Big Short* is setting his sights on a new target. Michael Lewis joins us for his new book that covers a group of people he calls some of the most valuable on the planet.

(....)

8:12:44 a.m.

1 minute and 12 seconds

O'DONNELL: Journalist and author Michael Lewis has chronicled some of the most compelling human interest stories of last two decades, many of which have become not only New York Times-bestselling books but also blockbuster hits. From sports dramas like *The Blind Side* about an All-American and NFL veteran offensive lineman Michael Oher and *Moneyball* about baseball's Oakland A's and its general manager to *The Big Short*, the Oscar-winning film about the buildup of the housing bubble in the 2000s. Lewis is now setting his sights on DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency, as it was called, that was led by Elon Musk. And the mission was to eliminate what the billionaire called waste, fraud, and abuse. Well, Lewis's new book is called *Blockers*, and he profiles six government employees who supposedly slowed Musk's progress. Scan the QR code on your screen to pre-order it today. We tried to reach Elon Musk for comment, but did not hear back. Michael Lewis joins us now. Welcome, Michael.

MICHAEL LEWIS: Good morning, nice to see you.

O'DONNELL: Another amazing book. Your work is absolutely incredible.

LEWIS: It was a joy to write.

O'DONNELL: Yeah. Before we get into these stories of these public servants who work for the government and this incredible story, I do want to ask you about kind of the news of our era too, which is AI.

(...)

8:15:56 a.m.

3 minutes and 46 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Michael Lewis on New Book "Blockers"]

O'DONNELL: Let's talk about your new book, *Blockers*.

LEWIS: Yeah.

O'DONNELL: Just describe where the title came from.

LEWIS: So, that's Elon Musk's word. He said he told his 20-somethings who went into the government to create as much destruction as possible. He said, "find the blockers," the people who were kind of trying to stop us from doing what we want to do, and get rid of them, and I thought when I tried to meet — I met some of these people who got, like, flushed out of the government — unbelievably good at their jobs, oath to the Constitution, serving the country, doing really important things.

O'DONNELL: Protecting the environment, taxpayers.

LEWIS: I thought — oh, he thinks blockers is an insult? We're going to turn this into a compliment. It's, like, the impressionists were once — impressionism was once an insult, right?

DUTHIERS: Right. It made me think that these are profiles in courage, in fact, because one of the most provocative ideas in your book is that what looks like government inefficiency to us, and to a lot of people on the outside exists for a reason. So, what do you believe is the reason why most Americans fundamentally misunderstand why these people are there and what they do? Because these are people that most Americans have never heard of.

LEWIS: That's right.

DUTHIERS: They don't know who they are, and yet, they are responsible for making our lives better.

LEWIS: Yeah. No, the answer — I think the answer is pretty simple. Their stories don't get told. And their stories don't get told for a reason. They're not allowed to tell their stories, but there is — I think most Americans think when they think government, they think politics because that's what they see. They see people who are on television trying to get elected. This apparatus, this two-million-person apparatus that is actually our government, filled with civil servants, they

aren't allowed to promote themselves. There's a layer of political people between them and the public who don't want them to get the attention, and so, when the stories don't get told, it creates this vacuum and, in rush, lots of false stories.

O'DONNELL: Well, people do understand healthcare, and they do understand the NIH, and they do understand that the NIH funds a lot of medical research, and one of the so-called blockers is Francis Collins —

LEWIS: Right.

O'DONNELL: — the head of the NIH who was flushed out.

LEWIS: Yeah, what I loved about it — so, what I love about writing this thing, I mean, it is awful to say, because it's really good, I think, to tell these stories, but it's wildly fun to tell these stories, because Francis Collins — I mean, he's a legend, right? I mean, he found the gene that caused cystic fibrosis. He was in his lab, just trying to do science, and he gets a call right after the Trump administration rolls in and says, 'Out of there — pack your bags. Out of there in 24 hours.' And when I go to meet with him, he says, "I got whacked." You know, he was — like a mob hit.

BURLESON: Yeah.

LEWIS: He says, "I don't know who whacked me." And so, I could write it as a murder mystery. It's, like —

BURLESON: Yeah.

LEWIS: — the question — the question — the question who whacked Francis Collins is actually kind of the question: Who's out for science? Who's out for long-term science?

BURLESON: So, then, let me ask you this, what is the long-term impact that this Trump administration is going to have when they are getting rid of these — these seasoned experts in their fields? What impact is that going to have on us?

LEWIS: It's a really good question because what they've done — it — I don't think Americans have realized that it has been a massive power grab, and what we had before was a government where The Blockers took an oath to the Constitution. They served the country. If the President asked them to do something illegal, they weren't — they weren't to do it. They have shifted — the Trump administration is trying to shift this to a loyalist operation, where the two million people served not the country, but a single man, a President, and that — that ripples through the government. It means all the different things the government does is going to do — it's going to do a little differently because the incentives of the people in the government have been shifted.

BURLESON: And we feel the ripple effect.

LEWIS: You will feel the ripple effect. All of a sudden, I mean — you may not feel it now, but all of a sudden, like your tax returns are not as safe as they were, you know, two years ago. You — more likely that someone's going to get them and use them against you for political reasons.

O'DONNELL: Michael —

LEWIS: So, be careful with what you say on the show.

[BURLESON LAUGHS]

O'DONNELL: Michael Lewis, thank you for joining us. *Blockers* is on sale tomorrow, scan the QR code on your screen to preorder it.