

Burying the Truth

Acting on behalf of the behind-the-scenes ruling Establishment, President Bush has rigged the "independent" 9-11 Commission to cover up prior knowledge of the attack.

"[The Federal Reserve Act] establishes the most gigantic trust on earth.... When the President signs this act the invisible government by the money power, proven to exist by the Money Trust investigation, will be legalized."

Martin Luther King Jr.
MARXIST TOOL & RACE AGITATOR
.....

SOCIALIST WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING
The Plot To Reshape The World Through Control of Education
By Dean Clarence E. Manion

SECRET GOVERNMENT
THREE PERCENT MIS-RULE UNITED STATES

Obama retakes oath to quell conspiracy theories

Toxic to Democracy

CONSPIRACY THEORIES, DEMONIZATION, & SCAPEGOATING

American Citizens Want to Know...

IS OUR TOWN NEXT?

*Why Are Strange Military Maneuvers
Taking Place All Over America?*

Circle of Intrigue Unmasks Hidden, Inner Circle of Illuminati

The Illuminati—A World Conspiracy Forged by the Super Rich?

From WTC to OKC to 9-11

The Persistent Question of Barack Obama's Citizenship



The "Military Industrial Complex"
is no more —
**How Zionist Banks and
Media Control Washington**

The "Military Industrial Complex" really has no relevance. It is the real masters of global power today. America has the most powerful military on Earth, and even though it faces a

Obama's secret pro-Zionist corporate confidant was Goldman Sachs, the Jewish international bank that gave him about a million dollars in campaign funds and over 25 million in donations.

**The North American Union
Invasion**



The Vince Foster Connection

**THE STRANGE
DEATH
OF VINCENT
FOSTER**

**WHO REALLY BOMBED THE
WORLD TRADE CENTER**

Obama bin Biden Play Down War on Terror

Jihadists Still an Obama Muslim-Outreach Problem

Terrorism's True Roots

The international terror network, including al-Qaeda, was created by Communists and their left-wing allies under the guise of "Islamic fundamentalism."

SIGNS OF THE ANTICHRIST?

PROTOCOLS

Zionist Plan For World Conquest

"...the Protocols... have fitted the world situation up to this time. They fit it now."

—Henry Ford, Sr. 1921

Political Research Associates is a progressive think tank devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive democratic society. We expose movements, institutions, and ideologies that undermine human rights. PRA seeks to advance progressive thinking and action by providing research-based information, analysis, and referrals.

For more information on this topic: www.publiceye.org/jump/toxic/

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Executive Summary

Even before Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States the Internet was seething with lurid conspiracy theories exposing his alleged subversion and treachery. Among the many false claims: Obama was not a proper citizen of the United States (and his election as President should thus be overturned); he was a secret, fundamentalist Muslim; he was a tool of the New World Order in a plot to merge the government of the United States into a North American Union with Mexico and Canada.

Hours following a flubbed inaugural oath of office, the Internet circulated claims that Obama was not really President of the United States because the wording of the oath of office had been scrambled by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts. A few days after the inauguration came a warning that Obama planned to impose martial law and collect all guns.

Many of these false claims recall those floated by right-wing conspiracy theorists in the armed citizens Militia Movement during the Clinton administration —allegations that percolated up through the media and were utilized by Republican political operatives to hobble the legislative agenda of the Democratic Party. Assertions that President Clinton assisted drug smugglers, ran a hit squad that killed his political enemies, and covered up the assassination of his aide Vincent Foster first circulated on right-wing alternative media, spread to right-wing information networks, and eventually appeared in mainstream media outlets.

A similar scenario could add to the already daunting challenges of the Obama administration. When Obama's "web-savvy" aides saw "conspiracy theories building up on the internet," they staged a repeat swearing in as "the fastest way to stop the speculation getting out of control." Such events illustrate the power and pervasiveness of conspiracism.

What Richard Hofstadter described as the "paranoid style" in U.S. right-wing movements derives

from belief in an apocalyptic struggle between "good" and "evil," in which demonized enemies are complicit in a vast insidious plot against the common good, and against which the conspiracist must heroically sound the alarm. As seen in the aforementioned examples, this type of conspiracism can move easily from the margins to the mainstream.

This study challenges the validity of conspiracy theory as a form of political analysis, and traces the roots and dynamics of conspiracism through United States history. Drawing on his extensive scholarly as well as popular writing on the topic, author Chip Berlet shows that the development of modern conspiracism is rooted in bigotry and that the conspiracist analytical model itself encourages demonization and scapegoating of blameless persons and groups. In so doing, conspiracism also serves to distract society and its would-be agents of change away from ongoing, structural causes of social and economic injustices. Examining various episodes spanning more than 200 years of U.S. history, *Toxic to Democracy* demonstrates how conspiracy theories have repeatedly garnered mass public followings. Throughout, the basic dynamics of conspiracism remained the same regardless of the ideological leanings of the conspiracists, or the (often interchangeable) identity of their targets.

The resurgence of conspiracy theories — on both the Right and the Left — since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and the tendency for antisemitic conspiracies to surge during times of financial crisis, makes the lessons of this study particularly urgent. What follows is a summary of key findings from *Toxic to Democracy: Conspiracies, Demonization & Scapegoating*:

THE CONSPIRACIST ANALYTICAL MODEL: TOOLS OF FEAR

The conspiracist narrative is built upon four key elements, which Berlet calls "tools of fear": 1) Dualism; 2) Scapegoating; 3) Demonization; and

4) Apocalyptic Aggression.

Dualism is an overarching theme or “metaframe” in which people see the world as divided into forces of good and evil. Scapegoating is a process by which a person or group of people are wrongfully stereotyped as sharing negative traits and are singled out for blame for causing societal problems, while the primary source of the problems is overlooked or absolved of blame. Demonization, a process through which people target individuals or groups as the embodiment of evil, facilitates scapegoating. Even the most sincere and well-intentioned conspiracy theorists contribute to dangerous social dynamics of demonization and scapegoating. Apocalypticism, also a metaframe, involves the expectation that dramatic events are about to unfold during which a confrontation between good and evil will change the world forever and reveal hidden truths. Apocalyptic Aggression occurs when scapegoats are targeted as enemies of the “common good,” and this can lead to discrimination and violent acts.

INTERCHANGEABLE TARGETS/BROAD APPEAL

The way in which the tools of fear are employed allows for scapegoat targets to change along with historic circumstances, even as the process by which these targets are vilified using the “Tools of Fear” remains the same.

A central motif of the 1950s Red Scare was that the enemy — communists, both at home and abroad — threatened the common good. Today Arabs and Muslims are portrayed in a similar demonizing way as an alien force conspiring to destroy Western culture from without and within. It is not that threats do not exist; it is that these threats are hyperbolized in a way that harms civil society and weakens homeland security.

The Christian Right, which in the 1960s mobilized to battle “Godless Communism,” now battles “Godless Secular Humanism” which they see as supporting sinful abortion and gay rights. Since these views are often wrapped around conspiracist theories claiming liberal sedition or satanic collaboration, the ability to resolve disputes through civic compromise is hobbled.

THE TERROR ATTACKS ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 MOVED CONSPIRACY THEORY TO CENTER STAGE IN THE UNITED STATES.

Immediately following the attacks, stories began to circulate about 4,000 Jews being warned to avoid the twin towers on 9/11. Reporters traced the contention back to a series of rumors and claims by unnamed sources that bounced around the Internet, becoming more elaborate with each retelling. Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, some on the Left circulated claims that government officials were “Guilty for 9-11.” This has turned into a “9/11 Truth Movement” where conspiracists debate whether then-President Bush and Vice President Cheney allowed the attacks to happen to gain political advantage, or actually planted explosives to collapse the World Trade Center and sent a missile into the Pentagon. Outlandish conspiracies fingering then-Vice President Dick Cheney and “the neoconservatives” have been injected into mainstream anti-Iraq War venues and documents. Sometimes these claims carry the baggage of anti-semitism.

CONSPIRACISM’S BIGOTED ROOTS

The roots of contemporary conspiracism can be traced back more than 200 years to the French Revolution. Conspiracists claimed the French Revolution was not due to long simmering public resentment due to poverty and despotism, but was orchestrated by the Illuminati, a secret society evolved from the ranks of Freemasonry, who were allegedly scheming to turn contented peasants into violent rebels.

In the early 1900s, the merger of Freemason and Jewish scapegoats took hold in the United States with the publication of the influential hoax, entitled the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The *Protocols* purports to be the minutes of secret meetings of a Jewish ruling clique conspiring to take over the world. It incorporates many of the core conspiracist themes outlined in the Freemason attacks, and overlays them with antisemitic allegations. A common conspiracist interpretation of the *Protocols* is that, peeling away the layers of the Freemason conspiracy, past the Illuminati, exposes a rotten Jewish core. Some contemporary conspiracy theorists directly mention the *Protocols* and claim they are an authentic document. This is easily found on Far Right websites,

especially those affiliated with Neonazis and Christian Identity. However, mentions of the *Protocols* cut across the political spectrum.

RIGHT-WING CONSPIRACISM

In the 1960s the John Birch Society (JBS) and other Patriot Movement groups peddled the anti-Freemason ideology from the 1790s, using it to explain the communist threat. Communists allegedly were just one guise of the Mason's Illuminati leadership. Later the Illuminati were variously said to control Wall Street, Hillary Clinton, and Dick Cheney. In terms of public discourse, when the JBS blamed the secret elites and plutocrats for the vast conspiracy, the organization was not covertly blaming the Jews. Instead a favorite theme of the JBS continues to be that the liberal globalists are planning a New World Order run by a totalitarian One World Government through the United Nations. Nonetheless, the JBS cites books and other works that perpetuate stereotypes about Jews, banking, and global power.

The right-wing group Populists American takes a step further toward antisemitism. For this group, the problem is not all Jews. Rather, its website explains that the real "enemy of all mankind" is the "Zionist Jews" who are "not to be confused with other Jews." The website then posts the text of the *Protocols* with a disclaimer typical of this genre.

Out on the fringes of conspiracism are organized White supremacist groups and neonazis who are mad about what they call ZOG: the Zionist Occupational Government (their name for the U.S. government in Washington, D.C.). The National Alliance, Aryan Nations, and Christian Defense League are White racist groups that cite the *Protocols*.

LEFT-WING CONSPIRACISM

Contemporary Leftist conspiracism gained a significant foothold as a response to blows suffered by social justice movements, starting with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, and increasing after the 1968 assassinations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Conspiracism percolated at the margins of the Political Left until the mid 1980s. In 1986 the liberal Christic Institute filed a lawsuit, *Avirgan v. Hull* (known in the popular press as the La Penca bombing case), which unwittingly helped pull at the seam of what would soon unravel into the Iran-Contra scandal.

The Christic Institute charges originally con-

cerned a series of allegations of CIA misconduct involving covert action and gunrunning in Central America to assist the overthrow of the socialist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Christic soon wrapped the case in conspiracy stories dating back to the Kennedy assassination and the Vietnam War — diverting attention from the illegal activities of the Reagan administration. The case was dismissed, but the conspiracist claims lived on.

TRACKING FROM RIGHT TO LEFT

Leftist conspiracy theories of the '60s and '70s established conspiracism as a form of discourse and analysis on the Political Left as well as some left-of-center countercultures, thereby facilitating the migration of (somewhat sanitized) right-wing conspiracy theories from Right to Left.

In its signature *Avirgan v. Hull* lawsuit (mentioned above) the left-leaning Christic Institute incorporated the central, conspiracist claims of *The Secret Team*, a book by right-wing populist L. Fletcher Prouty. Christic's investigators maintained back channel communications with right-wing groups known to purvey antisemitic conspiracy theories. Christic inadvertently took conspiracy allegations rooted in the *Protocols*, sanitized the antisemitic references, and peddled the results to the Political Left and gullible liberal funders.

The 9/11 conspiracy theory alleging 4,000 Jews were warned of the attacks is a clear case of antisemitic conspiracism peddled by certain Political Right groups as a recruitment tool. Their ultimate goal is mobilizing people to oppose progressive social and economic justice campaigns by targeting vulnerable communities as scapegoats. The progressive version of the 9/11 conspiracy generally avoids blatant antisemitic references. Some on the Left, however, picked up phrases such as "international bankers," "globalist elites," "secret government," "international bankers," and "banksters," that historically have been used as coded references to alleged Jewish power. While their target was Bush and Cheney, the accusations and catchphrases employed were laden with antisemitic bigotry.

SEEMINGLY UNBIGOTED CONSPIRACISM ENCOURAGES SCAPEGOATING AND DEMONIZATION

While some theories reject overt bigotry, as in the main branch of the "9/11 Truth

Movement,” they fail to appreciate that the *analytical model* of conspiracy thinking normalizes the process of demonizing a scapegoated group. Once researchers embrace the conspiracist mindset in which a vast global conspiracy is effectively an analog of the allegations about conniving secret elites found in the *Protocols*, the step from a Secret Team to a Secret Jewish Team is a very small one. Even when conspiracist theories do not center on Jews, homosexuals, people of color, immigrants, or other scapegoated groups, they still create an environment where racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice, bigotry, and oppression can flourish.

GOVERNMENT CONSPIRACISM: COUNTERSUBVERSION

Conspiracy theories are not confined to the margins of the political spectrum. Conspiracist theories have been used by governments to preserve the *status quo* against those they characterized as subversive alien outsiders and their sympathizers. Countersubversive conspiracy theories can be utilized by governments to build mass support for the surveillance, disruption, and crushing of dissident social and political movements in the U.S., as was done during the McCarthy era and again with the backlash against the social justice movements of the 1960s and '70s. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, anti-communists both inside and outside government moved away from conspiracy theories about global communist subversion and embraced a new target—terrorists. These conspiracy-based fears are present in hardline U.S. foreign and domestic counterterrorism policies that undermine First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendment protections for dissidents and religious and ethnic minorities whose views span the political spectrum. This could have potentially far ranging implications for how the United States prosecutes the “war on terror” abroad. Anti-terrorism policies based in hyperbolic conspiracy theories reduce the effectiveness of homeland security.

THE (IL)LOGIC OF CONSPIRACISM

Conspiracism is neither a healthy expression of skepticism nor a valid form of criticism; rather it is a belief system that refuses to obey the rules of logic. These theories operate from a pre-existing premise of a conspiracy based upon careless collection of facts and flawed assumptions. What consti-

tutes “proof” for a conspiracist is often more accurately described as circumstance, rumor, and hearsay; and the allegations often use the tools of fear—dualism, demonization, scapegoating, and aggressively apocalyptic stories—which all too often are commanded by demagogues.

Thus conspiracism must be confronted as a flawed analytical model, rather than a legitimate mode of criticism of inequitable systems, structures, and institutions of power. Conspiracism is nearly always a distraction from the work of uprooting hierarchies of unfair power and privilege.

CONSPIRACISM IS PERILOUS TO IGNORE

Conspiracist theories are attractive in part because they start with a grain of truth embedded in pre-existing societal beliefs.

Conspiracy theorists are correct about one thing: the *status quo* is not acceptable. Conspiracists have accurately understood that there are inequalities of power and privilege in the world—and threats to the world itself—that need to be rectified. What conspiracy theorists lack is the desire or ability to follow the basic rules of logic and investigative research. Conspiracy theories spotlight lots of fascinating questions—but they seldom illuminate meaningful answers.

While conspiracists tell compelling stories, they frequently create dangerous conditions as these stories can draw from pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices. Cynical movement leaders then can hyperbolize false claims in a way that mobilizes dangerous forms of demonization and scapegoating. People who believe conspiracist allegations sometimes act on those irrational beliefs, and this has concrete consequences in the real world. Angry allegations can quickly turn into aggression and violence targeting scapegoated groups.

Conspiracist thinking and scapegoating on a mass scale are symptoms, not causes, of underlying societal tensions; and while conspiracism needs to be opposed, the resolution of the grievances themselves is necessary to restore a healthy society.

Whether conspiracist claims are circulated by angry populists or anxious government officials, the dynamics generated by conspiracy theories are toxic to democracy.