



Defending the Koch Brothers

By William Reed

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On one hand you hear that the Koch brothers are evil and corrupt, and on the other, they're depicted as dedicated champions of the free market. In Black communities, the Koch brothers have been accused by politicians, of causing: the government shutdown, voter suppression, global warming and numerous other diabolical and evil plots.

Did you know that the Koch brothers advocate an end to Social Security and welfare? You're probably not certain, but the Koch brothers' name has been besmirched among Blacks for quite some time. Writer Robert Parry said: "The Koch brothers and other right-wing billionaires who provoked the government shutdown ... see themselves as people who deserve to rule without interference from lesser citizens, especially those with darker-colored skin."

At a Harlem church, singer, actor and activist Harry Belafonte compared Charles and David Koch to the Ku Klux Klan, branding them "evil men" and "white supremacists." Most Blacks believe the Koch brothers seek "to undermine government by financing libertarian initiatives and the Tea Party." The late Manning Marable called capitalism "racist" and "Black Americans' greatest enemy."

Modern-day Black Americans have put their faith and endeavors on the electoral franchise, at the expense of organized movements to build wealth through ownership and development of businesses. This mindset has much to do with anti-Koch attitudes and missives among Blacks. The phrase "Koch brothers" refers to the sons of Fred C. Koch. Fred Chase Koch founded the oil refinery firm that later would become the second-largest privately-held company in America, Koch Industries. Today, Koch Industries, Inc. is a multinational corporation based in Wichita, Kan., with annual revenue of about \$98 billion and subsidiaries in manufacturing, trading and investments.

Koch Industries own Invista, Georgia-Pacific, Flint Hills Resources, Koch Pipeline, Koch Fertilizer, and Koch Minerals and Matador Cattle Company. The companies are involved in core industries such as manufacturing, refining and distribution of petroleum, chemicals, energy, fiber, and polymers, minerals, fertilizers, pulp and paper, chemical technology equipment, ranching, finance, commodities trading, and other ventures and investments.

Koch Industries employ 50,000 people in the United States and another 20,000 in 59 other countries. The current leaders of the pack are Fred C. Koch's sons: Charles, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, and David H., executive vice president – they're the principal owners of the

conglomerate. The dynamic duo bought out their two other brothers, Frederick and William "Bill" Koch, for \$1.1 billion in 1983. Charles and David H. Koch each own 42 percent of Koch Industries. The brothers have contributed to a variety of free-market adherence. They have donated more than \$196 million to free-market individuals and advocacy organizations.

Black political activists insist that the Koch brothers sought to defeat Barack Obama's re-election, the Democrats and health care reform. But the messengers among us are primarily political operatives taking issue with the Kochs. The Koch brothers are only guilty of strong support of private enterprise. Their family and foundations have financially supported organizations "fostering entrepreneurship, education, at-risk youth, arts and culture, and medical research."

In case you didn't know, the "free market" doesn't mean you get stuff for free. The masses of Black Americans need to develop a culture and proficiency in free-market economics. The Kochs have given to conservative and libertarian policy and advocacy groups, including the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, and Americans for Prosperity. Americans for Prosperity (AFP) is an American conservative political advocacy group. AFP's stated mission is "educating citizens about economic policy and mobilizing citizens as advocates in the public policy process." AFP and Freedom Works are organizations with links to both the Kochs and the Tea Party movement.

Because of our propensity toward "big government," the shutdown has generated much ire from Blacks toward the Tea Party. Many Blacks see the Tea Party movement as racist and against Obama; some others see it as "a political movement" advocating a reduction in the U.S. national debt and federal budget deficit by reducing U.S. government spending and taxes. The movement is partly conservative, libertarian, and populist.