



Letter: Considering the record, ‘demon’ fits Kochs well

By: **Roger Haglund**

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Kathleen Parker (The Forum, April 10) wants you to believe that the Koch brothers are not demons but simply good American citizens who are advocating free-market principles. She is right when she says that “the vast majority of Americans probably have no idea who the Kochs are.” This is no accident. Charles and David Koch prefer to remain anonymous while providing massive funding to organizations that attack public education, social programs, worker salaries, business regulations, the environment and government in general. To understand why they are doing this we must look at their beliefs and background.

The Koch brothers were raised by an ultra-conservative father who founded Koch Industries and also was a founding member of the John Birch Society. The brothers took over the business and grew it into the 2nd largest private business in America. Forbes estimates their wealth at \$80 billion. They also set out to convert America to fit their right wing beliefs. In 1980, David Koch ran as the Libertarian Party’s vice-presidential candidate. Some of his proposals to reform government included:

- Abolishing personal and corporate income taxes.
- Repealing all campaign finance laws.
- Abolishing Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the Postal Service.
- Eliminating the minimum wage.
- Ending government operation and funding of schools and colleges.
- Privatizing public roads and the national highway system.
- Eliminating all government “aid to the poor” programs and agricultural subsidies.

When the Libertarian Party received only one percent of the vote, the Koch's realized their brand of politics wasn't going to sell at the ballot box. One reporter wrote that the Kochs came to regard elected politicians as merely "actors playing out a script." They decided that the way to create a right-wing America was to be in a position to write the script using political donations, think tanks, academia, and state politics.

Thus they created think tanks like the Cato Institute and Heritage Foundation to give their ideas legitimacy. They gave grants to college economics departments with the stipulation that they have control over curriculum and faculty. Through their support of ALEC, the Kochs have shaped legislation in every state legislature in the country.

The Washington Post reported that a Koch-backed political coalition, designed to shield donors, raised \$400 million for conservative candidates in 2012. With the recent Supreme Court decisions removing restrictions on campaign donations, the Koch Brothers (and their wealthy friends) can now buy any election they choose.

The Koch brothers are entitled to their wealth and to their opinions but using their vast wealth to undermine and corrupt our democracy should not be allowed. My dictionary defines demon as a source or agent of evil, harm, distress, or ruin. Considering the above Koch aspirations and actions, the definition seems to fit pretty well.