



## The NRA's 'Corrosive Role'

By Ed Haffmans

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ACCORD – The NRA, which spent \$54 million on the 2016 elections, is a macabre slice of the corrosive role of dark money in U.S. politics.

Originally promoting responsible gun safety, the NRA has metastasized into a rabid, pseudo-libertarian juggernaut and weapons industry lobbying arm.

A June 29, 2017, NRA video threatened progressives who "assassinate real news" with the "clenched fist of freedom." NRA's Wayne LaPierre decries a "leftist radical plan to tax capitalism to collapse." An Aug. 5, 2017, NRA video warns "Democrat overlords" and the New York Times, "We're coming for you".

Three percent of Americans own 50 percent of civilian guns. Many of these "super owners" frequent self-styled "libertarian" websites that spew paranoid conspiracy theories and openly equate democracy with communism. They remain obsessed with a certain "Kenyan Communist" and some, nostalgic for the antebellum South, envision a new civil war against the "libtards" and socialists.

"Dark Money" by Jane Mayer, and "Democracy in Chains" by Nancy MacLean document how America's greediest corporations such as fossil giant Koch Industries, fund fake populist "astroturf" movements like the The John Birch Society, and Tea Party; and think tanks like The Heartland Institute, U.S Chamber of Commerce, American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC, which submits ready to enact anti-union and anti-environment legislation to state legislatures), Americans for Prosperity, American Enterprise Institute, Cato Institute, and many others.

Some have a veneer of academic respectability, but all ramming billionaire-friendly policies and purchasing corrupt, climate-denying and gun-happy politicians.

Between tweeted distractions and outrageous chunks of red meat for his base, Trump is cutting taxes on the rich, repealing regulations that protect consumers, working folks, and our environment; taxing solar panels; filling the courts with corrupt judges; and rolling back healthcare.

The gun "super owners" just may become the storm troopers to enforce that agenda, and silence those of us who still believe in democracy.