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NATIONAL

My Summer With The Koch Brothers

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Columnist

My summer break was supposed to be devoted to a vast underground right-wing conspiracy, but thanks to the New Yorker, the secret is out.

In a breath-taking [10,000 word piece](#) in this week's issue, reporter Jane Meyer delves into the network of Charles and David Koch, billionaire brothers who've contributed considerable sums of money to various free-market enterprises over the last 30 years. Meyer describes how the brothers fly under the radar, using their wealth to almost single-handedly "destroy progressivism" while promoting sham libertarianism as a way of boosting their bottom line. These so-called "billionaires behind the hate," have supposedly duped millions into opposing the Obama administration by funding various think tanks and grassroots organizations that allow the Koch's evil empire to pollute and pilfer at will.

Though I'm not completely sure, I suspect that I too got a small share of the Koch fortune. This summer, I received scholarships to attend economics and policy seminars put on by the [Cato Institute](#) and the [Institute for Humane Studies](#). Both are leading libertarian organizations and are both heavily supported by the Koch brothers. There, along with several hundred other students from a myriad of American and international universities, I was brainwashed into towing the Koch brothers' line on a variety of right-wing causes.

Among the radical conservative ideas were:

- George Mason University economics professor Bryan Caplan speaking about why the United States ought to adopt a more open immigration policy and dramatically increase the number of immigrants it allows in every year.
- Cato Institute defense scholar Chris Preble arguing that we should halve our defense spending, pull our military bases out of several nations and end our role as the world's policeman.
- Robert Higgs of the Independent Institute calling for a repeal of the PATRIOT Act and speaking historically of the pernicious effects that war has on individual liberties.

Meyer's piece would be laughable if it weren't gaining such traction in respectable media outlets. [Paul Krugman](#) and [Frank Rich](#) of the New York Times have already jumped in with their own private "a-ha" moments to deride opponents of Obama and the Democrats as mere dupes of this right-wing cabal. Never mind the fact that Democrats presided over nearly a year of bitter partisan wrangling over the hugely [unpopular Obama-care bill](#) and, as the presiding party, have owned the moribund economy for the last several years. In typical sanctimonious leftist thinking, anyone who doesn't see the light is a victim of corporate brainwash or suffers from Marxist false consciousness.

It's not a conspiracy of billionaires that's behind the massive Tea Party protests and failing poll numbers of Democratic candidates, but a popular repudiation of the left's agenda. Besides, rich people funding ideas near and dear to them is nothing worth 10,000 words in the New Yorker. The Koch brothers fund libertarian think-tanks for the same reasons that David Lynch funds Transcendental Meditation, John Travolta funds Scientology and George Soros funds progressives. A free society thrives on the spread of ideas. The more ideas in the marketplace, the better off the society is.

Reach Reporter Stan Oklobdzija [here](#).



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