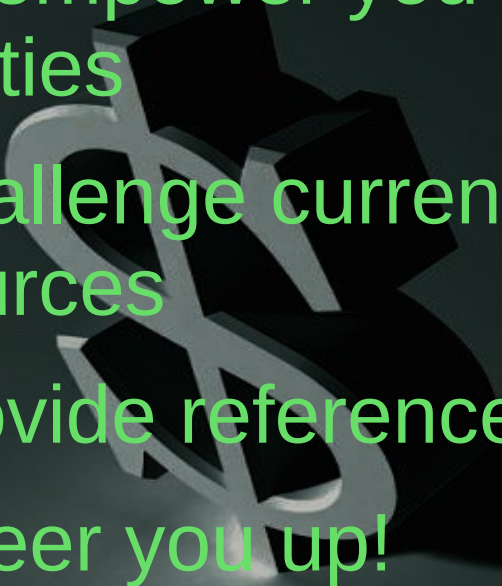


Examining Dark Money

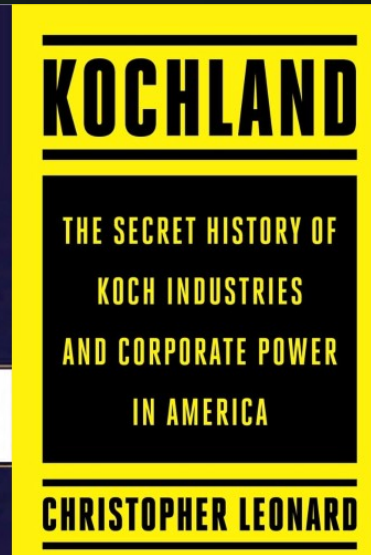
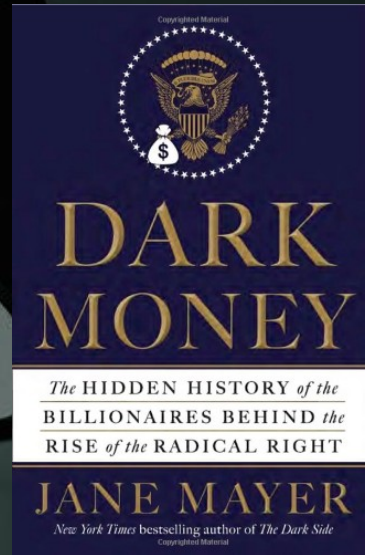
How Dark Money is behind the current chaos....
....why it isn't it being talked about
...and why we must.

Some goals of this presentation:

- To empower you to influence your legislators
 - To empower you to influence your local political parties
 - Challenge current elections for their funding sources
 - Provide references for further study
 - Cheer you up!
- 

See further resources at the Salon duc Tape archives afterwards (ncalf.org)

- this slide deck
- an online bibliography
- links to my 2 blogs (both have a search feature):
 - 'Examining Dark Money'
 - 'Kochland: the book' (not as complete)



My two blogs are:

Examining Dark Money:

<https://darkmoneyexamined.blogspot.com/>

Kochland: the book:

<https://kochland-the-book.blogspot.com/>

My bibliography (includes references to above books):

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/
1HWL5WQ06x97JXhfNAkNnKNuUsNawr0lvvGPx57TSW9c/edit?
usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HWL5WQ06x97JXhfNAkNnKNuUsNawr0lvvGPx57TSW9c/edit?usp=sharing)

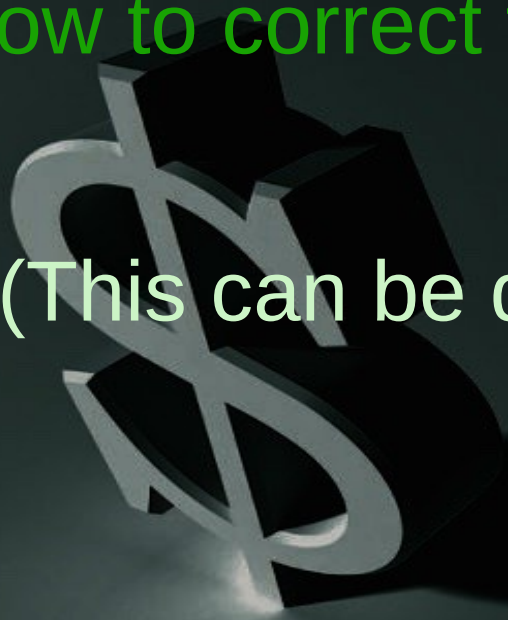
What this presentation will focus on:

- Show Dark Money's history (as far as possible)
- How Dark Money is currently affecting politics
- The principle operators behind Dark Money
- How Dark Money has captured the three branches of federal government
- The mindset behind Dark Money

What this presentation will partially focus on:

- How to correct the influence of Dark Money

(This can be discussed in the Q&A period)

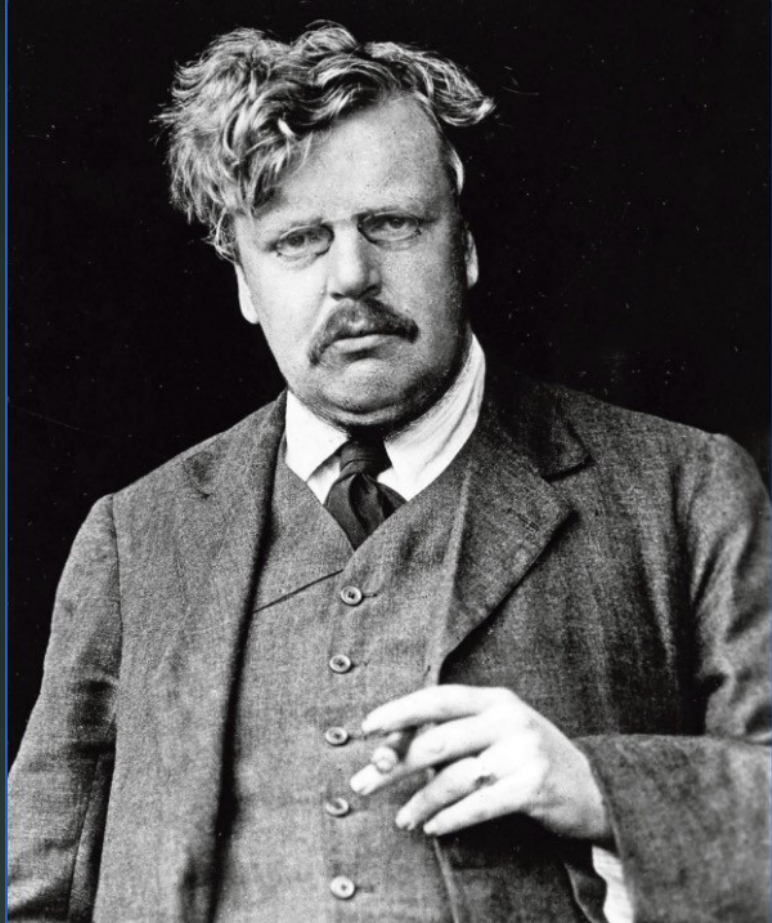


What this presentation will not focus on:

- Current actions of the Trump administration

Trump is a symptom, not the cause, of the current dysfunction...so it is incorrect to think stopping Trump will fix this problem. Dark Money will continue after Trump is gone.

Why should we understand where Dark Money came from?



G.K. Chesterton

The trouble with a man who doesn't understand the past, is that he doesn't understand the present...

In other words:
If we're going to counteract Dark Money, we first have to know where it's coming from, who's causing it, and how it's being used

Why Dark Money Matters

- All three branches of the federal government – the judicial, legislative & executive – have been captured by a single political group, the MAGA faction of the Republican Party
- The has eliminated the checks and balances that were part of the original design of the Constitution
- It has resulted in de facto tyranny by the MAGA faction running roughshod over existing laws, norms and traditions...and the will of much of the public
- With a real threat of an actual dictator taking control of the US military

Which has never happened before in out history....

This is why it matters that we understand where Dark Money came from...

Historical precedents

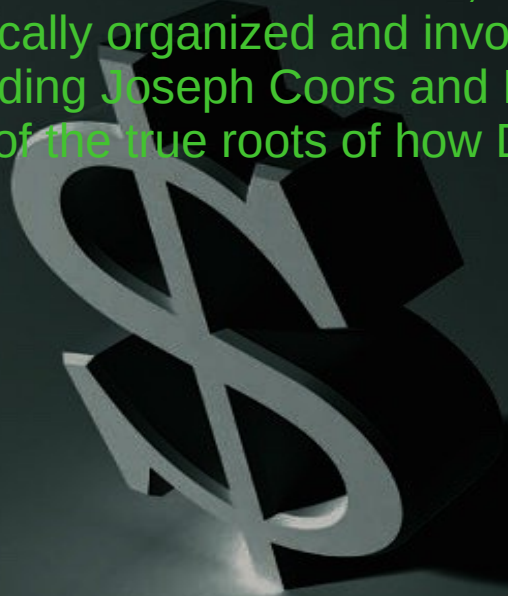
There three historical events in US politics relevant to today's unprecedented circumstances:

The New Deal – During the 1930s, FDR's relief programs intended to directly aid the American people suffering from the Great Depression, created something new in the US, the welfare state. LBJ's 'War on Poverty' was a continuation. The current crusade of the conservative forces behind Dark Money seeks to undo all this – and to insure it does not happen again.

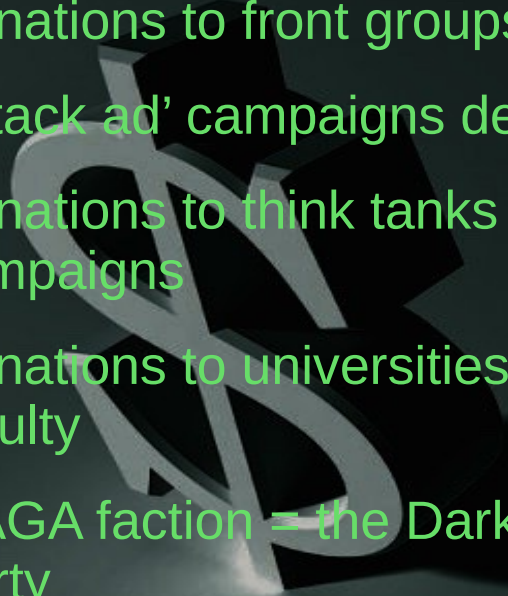
McCarthyism – For about a decade, from about 1946-1956, America was gripped by the 'Second Red Scare' that deeply terrorized the entire country, a period of mass mania that took years to recover from. This demonstrated how the US public is susceptible to lying and mass psychosis, even if the cause largely stems from one person; but, in this case, the cause is from the conservative forces behind Dark Money, not just one person. And now we have social media & misinformation to contend with....

Historical precedents

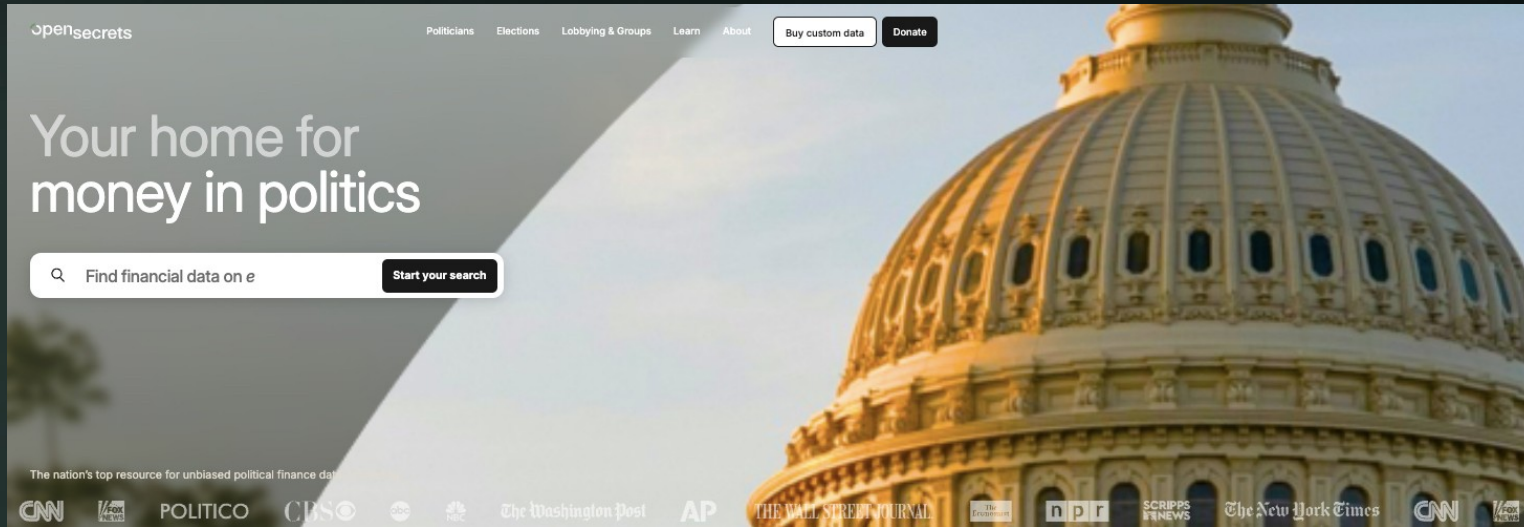
The Sixites & its backlash — In 1971, the infamous ‘Powell memo’, written by soon-to-be-nominated Supreme Court justice Lewis Powell wrote a long indictment of the political unrest of the times, calling on corporate America to ‘defend itself’, and get politically organized and involved. It stirred many conservative donors to action, including Joseph Coors and Richard Scaife. (see DM blog, ‘Powell memo’) and was one of the true roots of how Dark Money began its political influence.



Defining Dark Money for this presentation:

- Cash donations to specific federal political campaigns through PACs, bypassing political party channels
 - Donations to front groups to influence local and state elections
 - 'Attack ad' campaigns designed to make a candidate lose
 - Donations to think tanks to produce ideological content then used in political campaigns
 - Donations to universities & law schools to support chairs for conservative faculty
 - MAGA faction = the Dark Money donors who now dominate the Republican Party
- 

Best online reference for learning about money in politics:



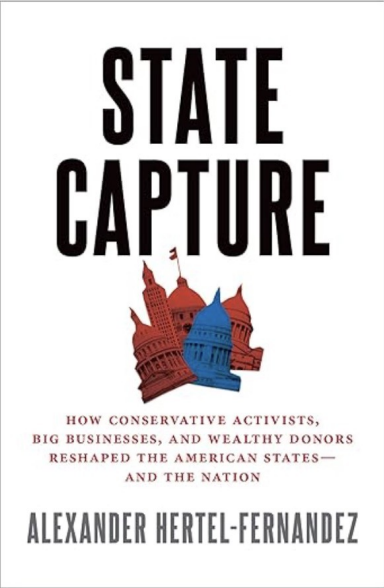
[opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org)

In particular, see: www.opensecrets.org/dark-money

April 11, 2025

Salon duc Tape: Examining Dark Money

Best recent book about money in state-level politics: *State Capture* by Alex Hertel-Fernandez



Read sample

Follow the author ⓘ



Alexander Hertel-Fern...

Follow

State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States -- and the Nation

by [Alex Hertel-Fernandez](#) (Author)

4.6 ★★★★★ (21) 4.0 on Goodreads 53 ratings [See all formats and editions](#)

Most Americans pay little attention to the massive number of elections that occur at the state level every year. Yet cumulatively, a party's success in state-level races across the country can produce major shifts in policymaking and governance. That is precisely what has happened in the US since 2010. In a wave election that year, the Republican Party began their ascendancy in state-level elections, and by 2016 had solidified their dominance. The party now fully controls 25 state legislatures and governorships—one of the largest advantages either party has had since the New Deal.

After the GOP wave, a broad swathe of states began considering and enacting a near-identical set of conservative priorities—often even using the exact same text. Where did this flood of new legislation come from? How did so many states arrive at the same proposals at precisely the same time? As Alexander Hertel-Fernandez shows in the eye-opening *State Capture*, the answer can be found in a trio of powerful interest groups: the Koch Brothers-run Americans for Prosperity (AFP), the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and the State Policy Network (SPN). Drawing from an impressive evidence base, Hertel-Fernandez explains how, since the 1970s, conservative activists, wealthy donors, and big businesses constructed a right-wing "troika" of overlapping and influential lobbying groups.

But it is about more than this. It also teases out how conservative-corporate mobilization has fostered epochal shifts in the American political economy: the decline of unions, party polarization, and the skyrocketing concentration of wealth. *State Capture* will be essential reading for anyone interested in understanding contemporary American politics.

[^ Read less](#)

[Report an issue with this product or seller](#)

ISBN-10	ISBN-13	Publisher	Publication date	Language
 0190870796	 978-0190870799	 Oxford University Press	 February 4, 2019	 English

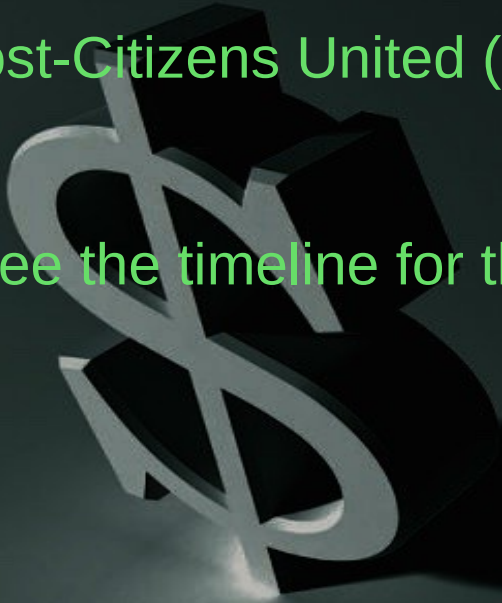
April 11, 2025

Salon duc Tape: Examining Dark Money

Rough History of Dark Money

- 1) Pre-Citizens United (1970s-2009)
- 2) Citizens United watershed decision, January 10, 2010
- 3) Post-Citizens United (2010 to present)

See the timeline for the History of Dark Money for specific events



Pre-Citizens United era

- Dark Money foundations began in the 1970s with individual right wing donors
- Reagan administration (1980-89) pushes conservative agenda, sets foundation for future deregulation
- A growing systemic strategy evolved through trial-&-error (primarily Koch brothers); the Obama administration & the Tea Party movement in 2009 is a key development
- Growing amounts of money invested in building a political machine bigger than, and totally outside the control of, the existing Republican & Democratic Party operations...combined!

Citizens United watershed decision, January 10, 2010

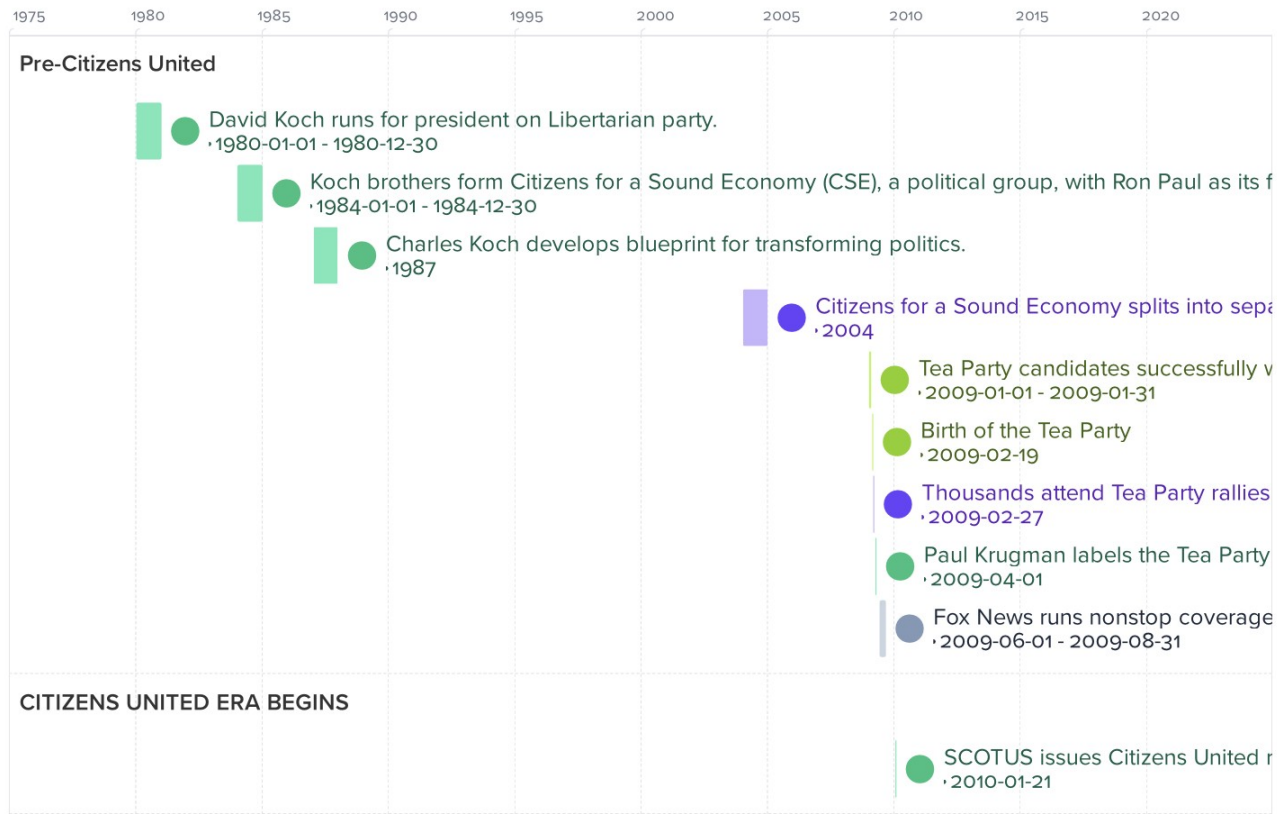
- The Citizens United SCOTUS decision was strategically planned but kept quiet.
- The decision has been extensively analyzed in retrospect.
- All evidence indicates that the SCOTUS has been corrupted by Dark Money influence in making this decision.
- Intensive lobbying for the appointment of conservative justices, combined with lavish gifts to them, including travel to conservative seminars in posh resorts, have all contributed to this unfortunate outcome.

Post-Citizens United era

- PAC spending has escalated each year since with no end in sight
- Dark Money goal of capturing all 3 branches succeeds with 2024 elections
- Growing public awareness of the consequences, dramatically amplified with Trump II in 2025 vis a vis the April 5th 'Hands Off!' protests



DM history



Timeline History of Dark Money...(click to see online timeline)

Other Strategies of Dark Money:

- Perfected 'quick attack' ad campaigns to defeat rival politicians (see Dark Money documentary for an example in Montana)
- Developed strategies to take over state legislatures based on gerrymandering (Project REDMAP) during Obama administration
- Provided funds that allowed the Tea Party movement to gain national coverage within a month in summer 2010
- Aided in engineering the takeover of the Supreme Court (see 'The Scheme' 31 videos by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse on YouTube) spending an estimated \$500 million to do it

Other Strategies of Dark Money (continued):

- Pressure universities to accept conservative faculty
- Pressure universities to allow radical right speakers on campus, even though unpopular with students (see unkochmycampus.org)
- Use SLAPP* suits to silence activists
- Use the Citizens United ruling to strike down state laws against corporate money in politics (e.g. Montana 2012)

* Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation

What is the Dark Money Strategy in general?

The strategy is to take over the three branches of government so there are no checks & balances to stop corporate dominance of the government, and business can operate in an anarchistic environment, free of regulation (both environmental and worker safety)

The tactics are to get people elected who agree with these goals, regardless of their competency or background.

The election tactics include blatant misinformation in attack ads, illegal campaign donations, voter disenfranchisement, flooding of social media, and harassment of any government officials who oppose them, elected or otherwise

And, of course, to do all this in secret, covering up the source of funds

The Mindset Behind Dark Money

All Dark Money actions are ultimately created by specific people.

So, understanding the mindset of such people is key to counteracting their strategies.

Next, an overview of how Dark Money has conducted its strategies in general will be discussed.

Finally, we will examine a prime operator in more detail because understanding their backgrounds and actions could be helpful in publicizing the truth about their actions. That prime operator is Charles Koch, the CEO of Koch Industries since 1967.

Koch-Fink Strategy for engineering political change *

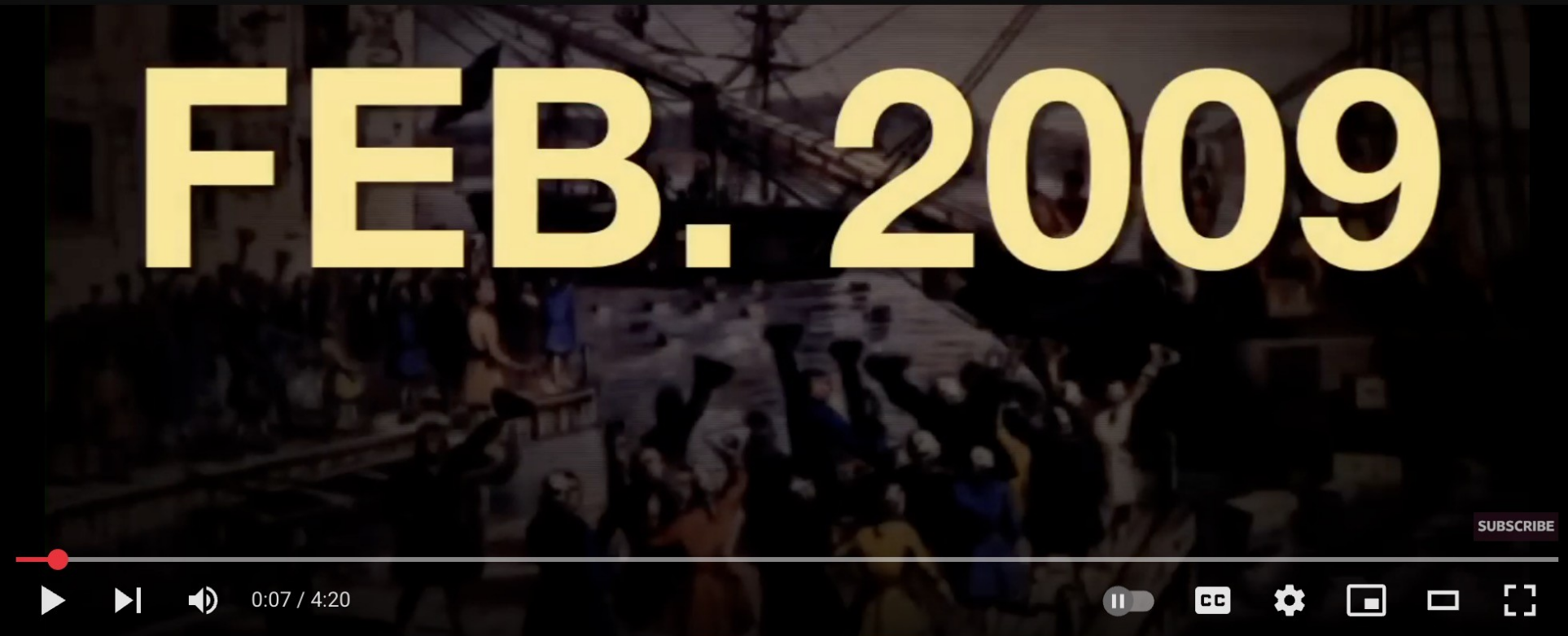
- 1) Invest in conservative intellectuals to produce 'raw product'
- 2) Invest in conservative think tanks to turn the raw product into policies that could be implemented
- 3) Subsidize 'citizen groups' (i.e. astroturf groups) & 'special interests' to pressure elected officials to implement the policies

...or better yet, invest in campaigns to elect the officials who would implement the policies directly. This multi-pronged approach earned the Koch brothers the name of The Kochtopus.

* to see connection of Richard Fink, search 'Fink' on the DM blog

How Dark Money operates...

FEB. 2009



The History of the Tea Party in Four Minutes

April 11, 2025

Salon duc Tape: Examining Dark Money

A prime mover Behind Dark Money: Charles Koch



the Darth Vader of Dark Money!

April 11, 2025

Salon duc Tape: Examining Dark Money

Facts about the Kochs

- Father Fred Koch got his start building refineries for Hitler & Stalin
- Extremely domineering father who beat his four sons & was a founding member of John Birch Society
- Charles, the 2nd oldest, indoctrinated at 22 into free market ideology at the Freedom School in Colorado Springs (search 'Freedom School' on DM blog)
- Became CEO of Koch Industries at 32 when Fred Koch died in 1967
- Consolidated his father's businesses in refineries, pipelines and ranching, expanded into wide variety of diversified companies
- Charles Koch leads family dispute with his older brother, Frederick, whom they suspect of being gay, forcing him out of their father's will and his share of his inheritance
- Koch Inc. has a long, sordid history of cheating customers, evading environmental regulation, and causing dramatic injuries to its workers and even the innocent public (see blog: kochland-the-book.blogspot.com)

Selected incidents in the history of Koch, Inc:*

(see blogs for details)

- 1973 – Koch breaks a strong union at the Pine Bend refinery after 7 month strike; refinery nearly destroyed by sabotage in the process (KL blog; search ‘pine bend’)
- 1995 – Don Carlson dies of cancer after working for Koch for 21 years, because the company failed to share information about his blood tests showing benzene; then refused to admit it was ‘work related’, preventing his wife from getting workmans comp; she battles for 3 years; gets an unknown settlement out of court. (DM blog; search ‘don carlson’)
- Aug 24 1999 – Two teens burned alive in car explosion due to negligence to fix a leaking pipeline; results in largest personal injury settlement in Texas history (DM blog; search ‘Lively Texas’)
- October 1999 – Koch Industries convicted in multi-year investigation of stealing millions from Indian tribes and federal lands (KL blog; search ‘oil theft’)
-

* In 2024, Koch Industries changed its name to Koch, Inc

Dark Money Mindset Characteristics

The leading characteristics are:

- Secrecy
- Top-down, autocratic chain of command
- Use of force instead of cooperation in public actions, preferably financing in secret to achieve its ends
- Extreme libertarianism: a maniacal belief in the supremacy of the private sector as the only economic policy
- An irrational hatred of public services and investment in the public good
- Zero concept of public service for the good of all
- Male dominated, continuation of old fashioned patriarchy
- Suppression of the feminine
- Suppression of LGBTQ values

Opposite Dark Money Mindset Characteristics

The following opposite tactics can be used:

- Transparency & honesty
- Democratic, open leadership
- Using cooperation & non-violence in public actions
- Embracing public investment in the public good
- Calling out corrupt schemes to privatize public resources for private profit
- Belief in science, climate change and need for environmental quality
- Male-female sharing of leadership roles
- Support of the feminine
- Support of LGBTQ values



That's all Folks!