

Conspiracy Theorists Anonymous

By Joseph E. Green, 9/7/2016

Halfway through reading the new article by Reeves Wiedeman in this month's *New York Magazine* ("[The Sandy Hook Hoax](#)," September 5-18, 2016), I had a sudden realization: *This is how they're going to do it.*

That is to say, this is how they're going to make it OK to expand the ban on certain forms of speech. The kind of speech that power doesn't like.

Wiedeman's article profiles one Lenny Pozner, who lost three children in the massacre at Sandy Hook. Pozner became upset when he found that many people on the Internet believed the massacre to be a fake. They had endless questions about the details of that day. They believed his children never existed, and that he was an actor. Indeed, Pozner asserts in the article, "Conspiracy theorists erase the human aspect of history."

The main hook in the story is that Pozner is said to have been a conspiracy theorist himself before the massacre. Previously, he claims he enjoyed the radio broadcasts of Alex Jones. Also invoked in the article is Professor James Fetzer, who has recently written a book called *Nobody Died at Sandy Hook*. In the words of the article:

Pozner had entertained everything from specific cover-ups (the moon landing was faked) to geopolitical intrigue (the 'real' reasons why the price of gold sometimes shifted so dramatically) and saw value in skepticism. But for him, the appeal of conspiracy theories was the same as watching a good science-fiction movie. 'I have an imaginative mind,' he said.

As is wont to happen on the Internet when you start interacting with people, he received some terrible comments. Anyone who has read the Yahoo comments under any random article knows the sort of remarks that are made, powered by immaturity and anonymity. Many of these statements took a personal tone since they referred to his three dead children. Outraged, Pozner took it upon himself to fight back. He did so by creating something called *Conspiracy Theorists Anonymous*, which grew a small following. Some of these people, according to the article, were "...recovering conspiracy theorists just like him." Continuing this theme of mental health, Wiedeman reports that Tiffany Moser was a former Sandy Hook conspiracy theorist who saw the light and began helping Pozner instead. Unfortunately, according to the writer, Moser "...did not give up fringe theories entirely and believes that her son has autism because of a childhood vaccine."

It turns out that Pozner has some training in information technology, although no details are provided in the article. In any event, he used this training to specialize in cleaning up the Internet of videos featuring Sandy Hook conspiracy theories.

Pozner found that his most effective tool for getting material taken down was to file copyright claims whenever anyone used a family photo of him, or Noah, in a post. By his estimate, Pozner had successfully taken down hundreds of images... 'A whole lot of them fear me,' Pozner said proudly, nothing that much of the hoaxer community assumes he has connections at Google or works for the NSA.

He created a movement, in the HONR Network, dedicated to take down content posted by 'conspiracy theorists' or 'hoaxers.' He and his followers persuaded Amazon to take down Fetzer's book and filed a lawsuit against another Sandy Hook theorist, Wolfgang Halbig, for invasion of privacy.

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Let's take the Sandy Hook part first. I don't know what happened that day. There has been much written about the incident, and some of it seems interesting and some of it seems inane. However, it is, like anything else, an historical question that will be determined by facts and evidence. I know from much experience that the government does lie to its own people at times and is certainly not averse to setting up attacks against its own citizens. There is documented proof in the [MK-ULTRA](#) papers and in [Northwoods](#), not to say the strong circumstantial cases that have been made in the assassinations of the Sixties, including JFK. Is Sandy Hook an example of this scenario? I don't know.

However, I am interested in something else. Whether you believe the 9/11 attacks emerged from Osama bin Laden in his cave, or was a domestic enterprise, we can all agree that the government immediately was in a position to *take advantage of the attacks*. This can perhaps be best summarized in Donald Rumsfeld's famous "sweep it all up. Things related and not" [memo](#). That is, 9/11 became both crutch and explanation for everything the government and its attendant military-industry-complex wished. It has gotten to the point now where the government more or less reinstated COINTELPRO on a much larger scale.

I am therefore concerned, whatever the ultimate origin of the Sandy Hook incident, because it could be used as the justification for legislation or executive action. The right wing constantly talks about having their guns taken away, which is illogical and absurd in the face of enormous gun ownership. That isn't to say though, that it couldn't be used for something a little more subtle.

The article, it seems to me, makes the following key observations:

1. Conspiracy theorists are inhuman and possessed of a runaway imagination that makes them prone to mistaken observations and 'fringe' claims.
2. Conspiracy theorists can be lumped together and are best exemplified by devotees of extreme individuals such as Alex Jones and Jim Fetzer.
3. Conspiracy theorists are mentally deficient, and can be helped through recovery programs(!) and treated like an addiction.
4. An effective tactic for 'fighting' conspiracy theorists is silencing them via copyright law and – in the case of Fetzer's book – because presumably it is in bad taste.

Let me be clear. The Fetzer situation is regrettable. His resume reveals a brilliant man. His books *Assassination Science* and *Murder in Dealey Plaza* have some useful information and fine articles by people like [Dr. David Mantik](#) and [Vince Palamara](#). Fetzer has unfortunately compromised JFK researchers by his belligerent behavior and outbursts, as well as supporting the most outlandish 9/11 theorists and then supporting a Holocaust denial book. I don't know how or why this happened but it has damaged political researchers with the general public. Alex Jones likewise has made his fame by becoming essentially the Bill O'Reilly of conspiracy research, using his public outlets to bleat a random assortment of the true and untrue in a manner better suited to a wrestling match than serious discourse. The presence of both Fetzer and Jones on the scene has made it very easy for journalists to cite them as representing typical 'conspiracy thinking.' They are certainly far more visible than the [Doug Valentines](#) and [Edwin Blacks](#) of the world.

And this is the false dichotomy that will aid those who wish to repress speech: A government investigating terrible crimes versus a group of lunatic conspiracy theorists seeking to disrupt the lives of the victims.

All historical questions – no matter how impertinent – need to be resolved with facts and reason, not impeded by law. An article like Wiedeman's appears to signal a new strategy in discouraging political research with brute force. Political research has always been consigned to a ghetto, albeit a ghetto which has produced some of the finest nonfiction writing in the country's history. This article suggests that suing people and attacking retailers are appropriate ways to deal with information you don't like.

On this we must say no. Not every book we get is going to be as good and useful as ones by [Talbot](#), or [DiEugenio](#), or [Fonzi](#), or [Douglass](#), to mention just a few names. But we cannot have those books if we deny people to the right to think, and write, in the public sphere. It is the cost of doing business in a free republic.

Is writing that the government faked a massacre of its own citizens in bad taste? Of course it is. Unless it happens to be true, in which case it is in terrible taste not to notice.