

PUBLIC ENEMY #1? CHARLES KOCH AND HIS DONOR NETWORK!

Why the Koch network?

Why not, instead,...you know who. Several reasons:

- First, because they've been at it for over 40 years.
- Second, because their influence machine is bigger, better organized, more diversified, and better funded than anyone else's.
- Third, because they and their donor network of millionaires and billionaires now constitute a private political party that operates on roughly the same scale as the two major parties.
- Fourth, because they're mounting a coordinated, nationwide assault on the ordinary people and the democratic institutions of this country, and we the people must therefore mount a coordinated, nationwide resistance in our turn.

So, what is the Koch network attacking? (What isn't it!)

The Planet

Using tactics devised by asbestos and tobacco companies, Charles Koch has worked hard—and effectively—to sow doubt in people's minds about (a) the reality of **global climate change** and (b) whether we humans are causing it. He

started doing this under Bush 1, before the issue got politicized—a disastrous outcome that he helped to make happen. Why? Koch’s wealth depends largely on the sales of the fossil fuel industry. (Koch Industries’ website currently promises that they will be right here in 2030, gassing up the one billion more cars that they say will be on the road worldwide by then.)

Naturally, the Koch network is also a prime mover in the current drive to **eliminate regulations** protecting the public from pollution. Indeed, they despise any regulations or scientific findings that get in the way of their profits. And they don’t like public lands, mass transit, or (frankly) public anything, aside from the police, the military, and a judiciary that is obedient to their will.



Subjugate Workers

Something else that Koch and his donor network dislike with a quasi-religious fervor is **labor unions**, because they interfere with the sway of the power that money and ownership confer (on the few). An example: To the surprise of Wisconsin voters in 2011, the new administration there made breaking public sector unions its first priority. This had not been mentioned during the campaign, but it was a prime objective of Koch and his allies who had bankrolled the campaign. The ultimate objective? To take *all* power away from workers *everywhere* and give it all to the owners. The result would be oligarchy (the rule of the few), with most of us left to pick up the crumbs from the tables of the rich.

Privatize Public Education

Public education is another Koch network target. They’d love to privatize all of it. Along with their ally, the Bradley Foundation, they’ve been peddling scams like vouchers, ESAs, and “public choice” that serve to whittle (or hack) away at funding for public education and eventually to eliminate it. They’ve blocked refinancing of Pell grants and supported deep cuts to them. They push for cuts in

state funding of public education, thereby forcing relentless tuition increases and making public higher education increasingly unaffordable (and resented). They attack teachers' unions (e.g., in WI and NJ).

Feed the “School to Prison” Pipeline

Koch Industries is on the board of the American Legislative Exchange Council [ALEC]. ALEC and Right on Crime support the “school to prison” pipeline that fills the pockets of the owners of the private prison system. The Koch network also wants to privatize re-entry services (for instance, parole) and to get corporate criminals even lighter treatment than they currently receive.

For an in-depth analysis of the machinations of ALEC, the State Policy Network, and the Koch-controlled Americans for Prosperity network, see Alexander Hertel-Fernandez' 2019 *State Capture*.

Colonize Universities and High Schools

Charles Koch and his donor network have used their money power to plant hundreds of academic centers on university campuses all over the country, including at UA, ASU, and NAU here in Arizona, thereby cloaking their operations in the prestige of these universities and lending a color of academic objectivity to their highly ideological “research” products. The “Freedom Center” here at UA has even produced a high-school textbook and course to indoctrinate unwitting students in “freedom economics” both here in Arizona and in Mexico—something that Kochs Off Campus! has been fighting tooth and nail. We have run the Freedom Center's high school course out of the Tucson Unified School District and gotten it temporarily canceled in the Amphitheater School District.

For details on the growing presence of the Koch influence machine in our K-12 schools and universities, see Nancy MacLean's 2017 *Democracy in Chains* and also the abundant resources at www.unkochemycampus.org.

Sack the Social Safety Net

The **social safety net** is also in their sights. Indeed, Koch and his allies are part of the ongoing effort to overturn the New Deal that began over 80 years ago. In their worship of privatization as the magic solution to everything, they would like to get rid of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, as well as unemployment insurance and Workers' Comp. The gig economy, where workers don't get benefits or even enough hours to support themselves, is fine with Koch.

Abandon Public Health

Charles Koch and his allies even oppose government-run efforts to protect the public health, for instance from waterborne diseases like cholera and typhoid. Their message for their less prosperous fellow human beings is, “You’re on your own, baby.” As the economist George Buchanan, who worked closely with the Kochs when they were revving up their operations, put it, people who don’t save money for their future needs “are to be treated as subordinate members of the species, akin to...animals who are dependents.” And if you don’t make enough money to save any, you deserve to die in a ditch, and die like a dog. Cholera or typhoid? Take your pick.

For details and history of the Koch network’s ideology, see Quinn Slobodian’s 2018 book, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neo-Liberalism* and MacLean’s *Democracy in Chains*.

Take Over the Courts

Brennan’s kind of thinking also leads to the attempt to co-opt the judiciary, especially at the federal level, by appointing judges friendly to Koch’s ideology. The Koch network and the right-wing Federalist Society, which has replaced the American Bar Association as the source of recommendations for appointments to the federal bench, are working hand in glove with each other. State-level judiciaries are also being affected. For instance, in 2018 in Arizona, the Arizona Supreme Court quashed the “Invest in Ed” and “Outlaw Dirty Money” initiatives, despite strong support from state residents. Koch operative Governor Ducey had “expanded” (read: packed) the court with hand-picked appointees, so the court’s decisions, however outrageous, came as no great surprise.

Unkoch Our Courts!

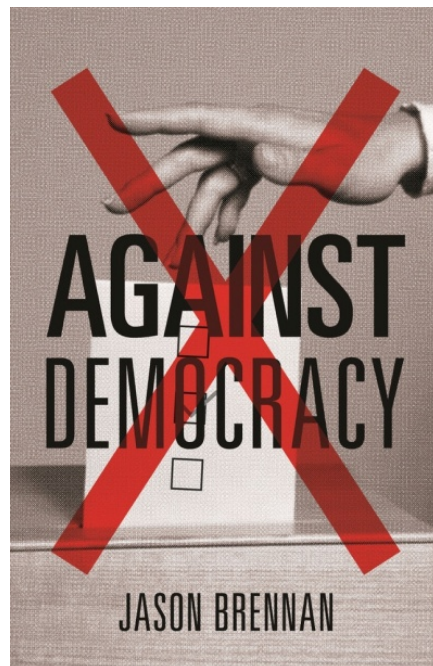
Trying to draw attention to the issue and build opposition to the takeover of the American legal system, UnKoch My Campus has launched a campaign to “UnKoch Our Courts” in parallel with its campus-oriented work. So much to do! Meanwhile, if the will of the people gets in your way, then the courts are a handy weapon to use against it.

For details about the Right’s attack on the legal system, including legal education, in the USA, see Stephen Teles’ 2008 book, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement*.

For details about Charles Koch’s far-flung business dealings and his support for climate change denialism, see Christopher Leonard’s brand-new book, *Kochland*.

Dump Democracy

Last, but definitely not least, what **democracy** this country still enjoys is on the chopping block. A 2017 book by the prolific Jason Brennan, a protégé of the director of the UA “Freedom Center,” is the fullest expression of the hostility and contempt felt by the adherents of the ideology that drives the political activities of Koch and his allies. Its title? *Against Democracy*. In Brennan’s view, the less that ordinary people vote, the better. What we need is an “epistocracy,” i.e., rule by “those who know,” as determined by a sort of civics test designed by... whom? Thoughts of literacy tests in the old Jim Crow South leap to mind, but Brennan is not deterred. And indeed, his kind of thinking serves nicely to “justify” the voter suppression laws (and extralegal practices) we’ve been seeing so much of lately. It also “justifies” the stealth and deceit that have characterized Koch political operations from the 1980s on—how else can the virtuous, well-informed few defend themselves against the malicious, ignorant many?



All Hands On Deck!

The Koch strategy is aimed at capturing the “commanding heights” of our society and forcing it—us—to fit into the Koch mold. Groups that are trying to save the planet from global climate change, to protect the public from pollution and other forms of environmental destruction, to preserve or restore the rights of labor to

organize, to save public education, to keep intact (or even extend!) the social safety net, to prevent the further erosion of democracy in the USA—**we all need to recognize the nature and name of our enemy, join forces, and fight back.** Kochs Off Campus! is doing what it can here in Tucson, and UnKoch My Campus is supporting similar efforts in cities and campuses round the country. But it's not enough.

Consider joining the fight. After all, it's your future that's on the line!

Written and distributed by Kochs Off Campus!, a nonpartisan group of Tucson residents, UA faculty and students concerned about the undue political influence of "big money" on public education, and public subsidies for ideological institutions. We are an affiliate of the national organization Unkoch My Campus.

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8/13/2020