

# HOW TO OVERTHROW THE ILLUMINATI

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BY WILL, CHINO, SAUDADE AND MAMOS

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## Further reading

- Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*
- Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era*, vol 1 & 2
- E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*
- Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*
- Margaret C. Jacob, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts and Fictions*
- Alexander Piatigorsky, *Freemasonry: A Study of the Phenomenon*
- David Smith and Phil Evans, *Capital for Beginners*
- Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*
- Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*
- Karl Marx, *German Ideology*
- Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*
- Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*

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## Glossary

APARTHEID: a system of institutionalized white supremacy, created by European colonial settlers in southern Africa, which lasted from 1948 to 1994. Apartheid means “separateness.” It involved segregation of whites and blacks in all areas of public life, similar to the Jim Crow system in the U.S. South. Under apartheid, a minority of whites ruled over a black majority. Whites got the best jobs, housing, education, etc. Black people were brutally controlled by violent police forces. Apartheid was destroyed by a mass movement of revolutionary blacks and whites.

BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT: The struggle of the Black community for freedom and equality. The history of the modern Black Liberation Movement begins with the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and ends with the defeat of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Black Panther Party, and the Congress of African Peoples in the 1970s.

CAPITALISM: An economic system where a new group of people (workers) have only their labor to sell to another group of people (the capitalists / bourgeoisie) who own all the factories, land, transportation, buildings, etc.

CLASSES: Economic and political groups. Classes in capitalism are defined by which group has to sell its labor power (the workers) and which group owns and controls the wealth of society, especially the wealth which employs workers (capitalists). Other classes include those who are permanently unemployed, and small business owners who work in their own enterprises. But the two most powerful classes are the workers and the wealthy (capitalists).

COLD WAR: From 1947 to 1991, Russia and the United States were the two main players in a struggle to dominate the world. For many smaller countries, this meant choosing sides, and the U.S. and Russia had proxy wars in these countries. Both sides made it seem like the battle was communism versus capitalism, but Russia was never truly communist, and merely used the label as a way to win over other countries to its side.

COMMUNISM: A society in which broad masses of people control the conditions of their lives and work. Under communism, every person produces goods, services and ideas according to their abilities, and takes resources from the wealth of society according to their needs.

EXPLOITATION: Taking advantage of someone else’s labor. Capitalists exploit the labor of workers because they do not pay us the full value of what we produce

# How To Overthrow The Illuminati

BY WILL, CHINO, SAUDADE AND MAMOS

## Introduction

Everyone talks about the Illuminati. You may have heard Jay Z and Beyonce are members of the Illuminati, and channel demons when they perform. You may have heard Obama is a member of the Illuminati, and plans to implant microchips in all U.S. citizens, to prepare for martial law. You may have heard the dollar bill contains secret symbols, which reveal the U.S. has been controlled by the Illuminati for hundreds of years.

Illuminati theory helps oppressed people to explain our experiences in the hood. Society throws horrible stuff in our faces: our family members get locked up for bullshit. Our friends kill each other over beefs, money or turf. Our future is full of dead-end jobs that don’t pay shit. We struggle to pay bills while others live in luxury. On TV, we see people all over the world dying in poverty, even though we live in the most materially abundant society in history. Most people act like none of these terrible things are happening. Why does this occur? We start looking for answers, and Illuminati theory provides one.

We believe Illuminati theory is wrong, and we wrote this pamphlet to offer a different answer. We wrote this pamphlet because we know people who think about the Illuminati usually want to stop oppression and exploitation. They’re some of the smartest people in the hood today. Forty years ago, Illuminati theorists would’ve been in the Black Panther Party. Today most of them sit around and talk endlessly about conspiracies. This is a waste of talent. The world is in a deep crisis, and big protests, rebellions and revolutions are happening. In Egypt, South Africa, Turkey--and even in the U.S.--these movements are already taking place. People who say we can’t do anything because no one else is fighting

are simply refusing to join the fight themselves. With the right tools, we can participate in these actions, and make history with millions of others.

This pamphlet is a tool to help you understand the world around you. It offers a brief history of Illuminati theory: who invented it, when and where. It shows how Illuminati theory became popular in the hood after the defeat of the movements of the 1970s. It reveals that Illuminati theory is unable to explain how society works, or provide solutions for how to end oppression and exploitation. It offers an alternative explanation of why exploitation and oppression exists, and what we can do to change it. First, we have to unearth the origin of Illuminati theory itself.

## 1. Where Illuminati Theory Came From

Almost every Illuminati theory is made up of a few main pieces, like the different parts of an urban legend. The pieces can be put together in different combinations, or one piece can be emphasized more than another. But they always combine to tell more or less the same story. You may have heard these different pieces mentioned: the Illuminati, the Masons, Satanists, the Bilderbergs or the bankers. Each of these pieces of Illuminati theory arose at different times in history. In most cases, they were developed by rich and powerful people, who were being kicked out of power by mass movements.

### FIRST PIECE: THE BAVARIAN ILLUMINATI...

The first piece of Illuminati theory is based on a real group called the “Order of Illuminists”. The Illuminists were founded in May 1776 in Bavaria, part of present-day Germany (but Germany didn’t exist yet at the time). The leader of the Illuminists, a Bavarian professor of religious law named Adam Weishaupt, wanted to free the world “from all established religious and political authority”. His Order aimed to get rid of the kings and the churches that had

ruled Europe since the Middle Ages, and make room for new forms of commerce, science, and democratic government that were struggling to emerge at the time. The Illuminists modeled themselves partly on the Jesuits, an order of Catholic priests, and partly on the Freemasons. They infiltrated Masonic lodges in order to gain influence in society, and pursue their goals.

To understand any group or movement, you have to understand the context it emerged from. The time period when the Illuminists appeared was called “The Enlightenment”. It was a century of ongoing radical change in Europe,

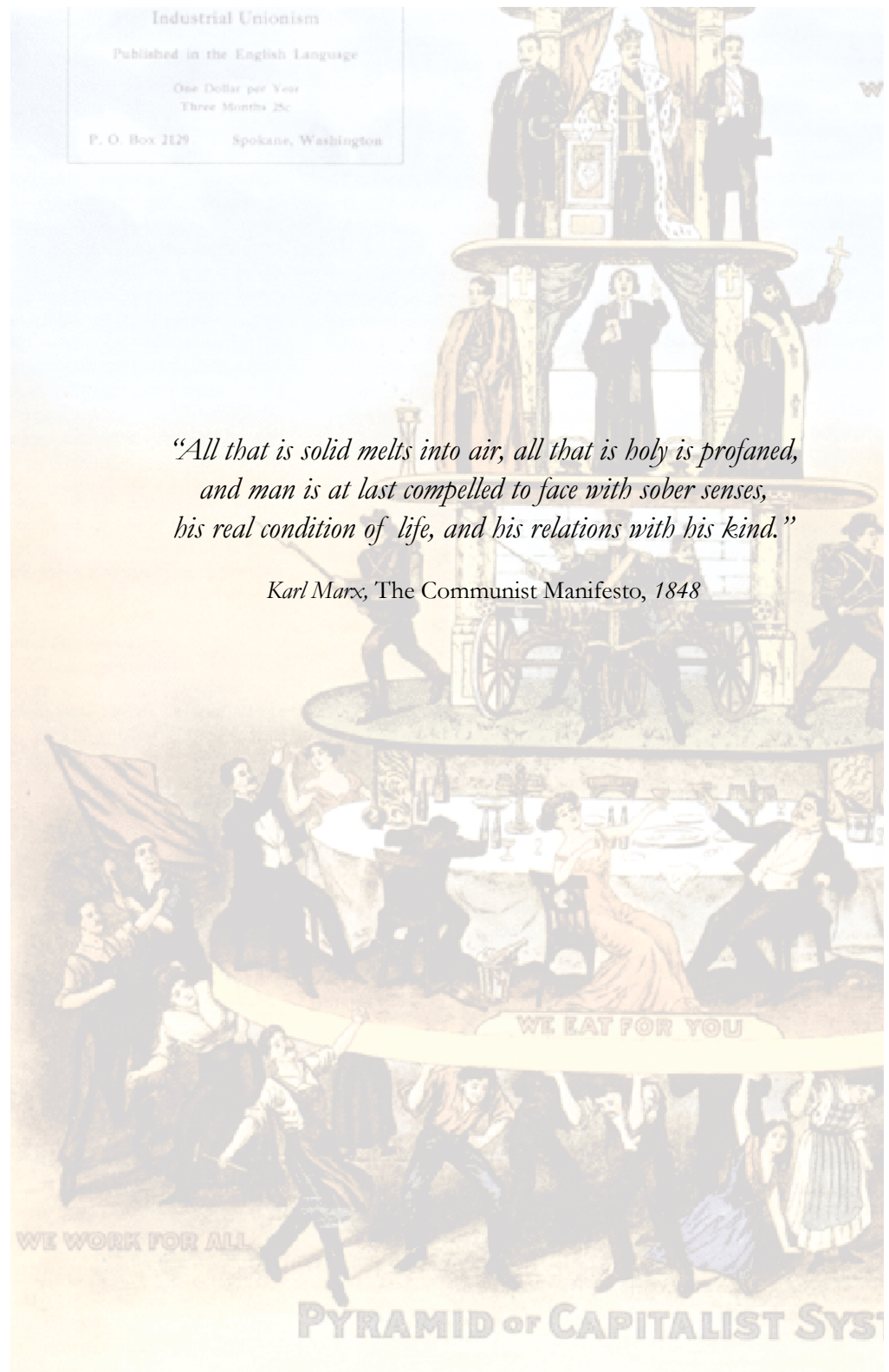


ADAM WEISHAUPT, 1748-1830

Industrial Unionism  
Published in the English Language  
One Dollar per Year  
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P. O. Box 2129 Spokane, Washington

*“All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned,  
and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses,  
his real condition of life, and his relations with his kind.”*

Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto, 1848



# Conclusion

In this pamphlet, we've traced the origin of Illuminati theory. It emerged in the early 1800s as a reaction to the revolutionary spirit of the Enlightenment. It was refined in the 1920s in reaction to another revolutionary wave that threatened capitalism itself. We've traced how these theories spread into poor black and brown communities after the 1970s, when the defeat of the black liberation movement left a political void in its wake.

We've offered a critique of Illuminati theory. We've demonstrated that it leaves no room for chance or error, and so views the enemy as unbeatable. It relies on circular logic and innuendo, rather than logical scientific argument. And it provides no clear strategy to end oppression and liberate humankind.

We've offered an alternative explanation of capitalism, which also explains why Illuminati theory is so popular. Capitalism is an economic and social system where one class of people engages in alienated labor for the benefit of another. This everyday activity alienates us from each other, and creates a reified power that seems to impose itself upon us. This power is called capital. It is bigger than any one individual or institution who wields it. It is regenerated every day by the activity of millions of people. Illuminati theorists sense this dynamic at work, but inaccurately project it onto individuals, groups, or made-up figures.

We've argued that it's possible to overthrow capitalism, and bring about a free communist society. Communism is possible because capitalism relies on workers, and must continually bring them together in cooperation in order to continue sucking their labor. This cooperation creates the possibility for revolutionary movements to change society. Communism is the movement of people to overthrow capitalism throughout history. It is also the organizations, experiences, and theory that have been developed out of all these historical experiences.

We want to bring together talented thinkers and fighters who yearn for liberation. We want to start a communist movement that eventually grows to every city in the U.S. If you agree with what we have written, let's sit down and figure out what we can do to end the oppression we see around us.

stretching from the 1600s to the late 1700s. During the Enlightenment, the old social system that people had lived in for centuries, dominated by kings and priests on top with peasants at the bottom, began to break down. A class of rich merchants arose in Europe, trading with far-flung parts of the globe. New technologies developed, and with them new kinds of skilled workers. These new classes started to wield more power than the kings and queens who were supposed to be on top according to law and tradition. The American Revolution demonstrated the power of these classes to the whole world, when they broke free from the British crown.

As the social world began to change, people began to think differently. Before the Enlightenment, most people believed the physical world, and the social order, were determined by God's divine law. As the Enlightenment set in, experimenters like Isaac Newton, and philosophers like Hobbes and Rousseau, developed modern science and politics. People started to believe the physical world was shaped by natural laws—like the law of gravity—that could be discovered by investigation. They described how governments could be organized without kings, through a social contract among “citizens”.

Soon hundreds of small groups of thinkers and activists caught the spirit of the Enlightenment. The Order of Illuminists was just one such group, alongside others like the Rosicrucians and the Italian Carbonari. During the 1780s the Illuminists grew to about 2,500 members in central Europe. But they weren't very successful at overturning the medieval order, and soon began facing repression from authorities. They disbanded around 1787. Like so many other groups of its kind, the Illuminists failed to bring about revolutionary changes. But revolutionary change happened without them.

In the decade after the collapse of the Order of Illuminists, massive protests rocked France, culminating in the French Revolution. Rebellions by angry peasants and urban workers overturned the feudal order that had existed for centuries, and sent shockwaves across Europe. Slaves in the French colony of Haiti launched their own revolution, demanding the same freedoms French citizens were winning on the streets of Paris. In France the aristocrats were kicked out of their palaces, and systematically killed so that no king could ever claim the throne again. Churches were burned to the ground, and Catholic priests driven from positions of power. A parliamentary system was established with elections, representatives, and a legislature. It was the first time anything like it had happened in history.



THE FRENCH REVOLUTION LASTED  
FROM 1787 TO 1799

Not everyone celebrated the changes sweeping through Europe, however. People whose social status depended on the old aristocracy and the church tended to resist the changes. Some of them wrote books, and this is how the first Illuminati conspiracy theories were created. In 1798, an English scientist and inventor named John Robinson wrote *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati and Reading Societies*. In 1803, Jesuit priest Abbe Agustin Barruel wrote *Memoirs, Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*. Both authors disliked the French Revolution, and so they blamed it on a small group of conspirators: the “Illuminati”.

Robinson and Barruel argued that the Order of Illuminists didn’t really disband in 1787, but only went underground. They claimed this “Illuminati” had secretly plotted and carried out the French Revolution, and were still hiding in Masonic lodges, planning to overthrow governments in Europe and America. Robinson and Barruel disliked revolution, and they didn’t think it was possible for millions of people to mobilize together and change the conditions of their lives. To them, ordinary people weren’t organized or smart enough to pull it off. They needed to be guided like sheep by an elite group. In this way, Robinson and Barruel’s original Illuminati theory was a kind of conservative myth, used to make sense of a social reality its authors found confusing and scary. Today’s Illuminati theory follows the same pattern. Even poor people who draw on Illuminati theory, who might otherwise sympathize with protest movements, often view movements as secret ploys by the Illuminati to cause trouble.

### ...AND THE FREEMASONS

Robinson and Barruel’s original Illuminati theory, and Illuminati theory today, talks a lot about the Masons. The original Order of Illuminists established itself in Freemasonry groups, called “lodges”. But Freemasonry had emerged a few hundred years earlier. Originally, Freemasonry was just what it sounds like: a group of people who worked with masonry and stone to build structures. Starting in the 1300s, skilled workers, such as masons, weavers, and blacksmiths, began to organize in groups called “guilds.” Guilds received permission to carry out their trade in a given town, and policed who could do their line of work. They were highly exclusive, and invented rituals and symbolism to distinguish themselves from everybody else.

As capitalism developed, the guilds slowly broke down. New technologies made their outdated tools and skills irrelevant, and most disappeared. But the Masonic lodges were different. In the 1700s Masonic lodges began recruiting rich or influential people, in order to maintain their funds and high social status. They soon lost their association with masonry work, and turned into a social club.

Masonic lodges provided a venue for radical organizing as the Enlightenment set in. The emerging class of rich merchants and intellectuals gathered in Masonic lodges, discussed the changes taking place in society, and planned

also lays the seeds for movements against capitalism. In this way, capitalism creates “its own gravediggers,” as Karl Marx said in 1848. Even now, there are movements going on in Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Spain, in U.S. prisons and on the streets of poor neighborhoods, where the poor and oppressed people exploited by capitalism are learning they can struggle together and win. In the course of revolutionary struggles, ordinary people dramatically change their personalities and ways of interacting. It might seem impossible today to think that people in the Bronx, Harlem or Brooklyn can cooperate to run New York City. One of the great victories of capitalism has been to make people distrust each other, to be alienated from each other, to think everyone is stupid. A communist society will involve everyone taking part in running society, and exercising control over their own lives. When we fight in the “school of struggle,” our consciousness changes, and makes this kind of world possible.



Communism is the destruction of capital, white supremacy, women’s oppression, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender oppression, imperialism, environmental destruction, and much more. Billions of poor and working class people will accomplish it through strikes, riots, armed battles, and mass meetings against the system. It will not be done by a small group of “enlightened” people. It will happen—like every revolution in the past—through a mass movement against oppression.

People who understand this can become *revolutionaries*. They can find places where poor and working class people are cooperating and struggling. They can participate in these struggles, and learn from them. Then they can help people to struggle more effectively, and help them understand the road ahead more clearly. They can help people to set themselves free. Revolutionary confrontations don’t come very often, but when they do, they require millions of people to break their own chains. Those of us who want a free society need to prepare.



## COMMUNISM: JAILBREAK OUT OF CAPITALISM

Communism is the movement of the working class and the oppressed, which aims to overthrow the capitalist system and create a free society. For hundreds of years, poor and working class people have been trying to end capitalism, capital, white supremacy, patriarchy, nationalism, homophobia, and imperialism. This history has produced a long list of organizations, movements, and ideas that we can learn from. Communism is the theory drawn from the struggles of the oppressed to break their own chains. It can help us reach a better kind of society. It is continually growing and changing with every new struggle that emerges.

Unfortunately, many who called themselves communists throughout history, like those who call themselves Christians, Muslims or Jews, ended up practicing something very different from what they preached. Instead of fighting for a free society where everyone makes what they can and shares what they need, many communists created dictatorships run by elites, with the same alienation and exploitation as under capitalism. After the twentieth century, the names Lenin, Stalin and Mao are more associated with mass murder and oppression than anything else. We agree with this assessment. At the same time, we know communism isn't defined by these tragedies. Many anarchists and communists throughout history fought against top-down state socialism, and tried to find a different path to liberation. Like them, we believe we can learn from the experience of the 20th century, and create a genuinely free society.



PLATINUM MINERS IN MARIKANA, SOUTH AFRICA STRUCK FOR HIGHER WAGES IN 2012, RESISTING POLICE REPRESSION AND SPARKING A NATIONAL CRISIS

1791, 1848, 1871, 1905, 1917, 1921, 1956, 1968 (and 2014?) were all examples of such pivotal moments. So far, each time mass movements almost took down capitalism, the system transformed itself and capital emerged stronger. But the outcome of the next battle is still undecided. We can also emerge stronger, by learning from these past successes and failures.

Every time capitalism transforms, it creates new conditions for its own destruction. The reason is because capitalism needs workers to cooperate doing alienated labor in order to keep growing. But cooperation among workers

Communism is born from the movement of everyday people for freedom. At many points throughout history, movements went beyond winning small reforms, higher wages, or new presidents. They grew so powerful that the entire capitalist system was thrown into question. Millions of people felt a free, communist society was possible, and tried to create it.

activist actions. Many famous revolutionaries developed their radical ideas while they were Freemasons. Because of this association with Enlightenment radicalism, people who opposed revolution tended to view Freemasons as the enemy. This is a common pattern: the elite always think revolutions are planned and directed by a small group of enlightened people, instead of by masses of people themselves.

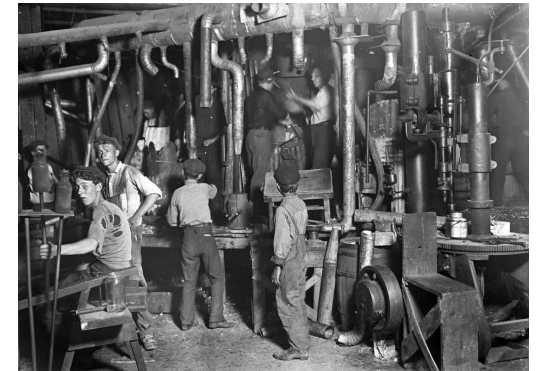
In reality, Masonic lodges are elaborate social clubs for people who want to feel elite. In some places, Masonic lodges have provided a place for intellectuals to discuss how to change society, but they're usually pretty boring. If you go into a Masonic temple today, you'll see groups of small business owners talking about how to plant trees on Main Street, not a secret group plotting to rule the world. Nevertheless, their association with the original Bavarian Order of Illuminists has meant they're always included in Illuminati theory.

The Bavarian Illuminati, and its association with Freemasonry, is the first piece of the Illuminati theory we hear today. But there are two other important pieces to most Illuminati theories: anti-Semitism and the antichrist.

## THE SECOND PIECE: ANTI-SEMITISM

Distrust, prejudice, and hatred toward Jews arose in Europe hundreds of years ago. Europe was ruled by kingdoms allied with the Catholic Church after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Jews were banned from playing a major role in the economy or gaining political power. Over time, different Jewish communities found ways to survive at the edges of society, doing things that mainstream society looked down upon, like lending money. Soon Jews as a whole became associated with this profession. At first this profession wasn't very powerful. But as capitalism developed, money-lending (credit) became more important.

As capitalism developed, millions of people were driven off the land, and forced to work for poverty wages in the new factories of industrial Europe. Because Jews were already identified with money and credit, different groups began to view Jews as a symbol of capitalism itself. Many European workers believed Jews used their role as financiers to gain power and exploit people. Jews also provided a convenient scapegoat for the *petit-bourgeoisie*: small business owners trying to become big-time factory owners. This class resented the debts they had to take out in order to expand their



FACTORY WORK IN THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION WAS EXHAUSTING AND UNSAFE, LIKE IN MANY FACTORIES AROUND THE WORLD TODAY

businesses. They viewed financiers as an obstacle to “fair” competition. In the early 20th century, Jewish communities regularly suffered attacks by mobs of workers and petit-bourgeois business owners. Especially in Eastern Europe and Russia, “pogroms” (lynch mobs against Jewish neighborhoods) were a common occurrence.

Anti-Semitism united poor workers with small business owners, despite their opposed interests. The poor workers were angry about their treatment under capitalism, but saw Jews as a bigger enemy than their exploiting factory bosses. The small business owners worked to become the big-time exploiters of the poor workers, and felt Jews stood in the way of their goals. These two classes were fundamentally opposed to each other, but temporarily joined together in a *populist* movement, because of their mutual, misguided anti-Semitism. Populist movements join poor people with the *petit-bourgeoisie*, against imagined elite enemies. They speak in the name of the “common man,” but they’re guided by middle class elements, and screw over poor and working participants in the end. Contemporary examples of populism include the Tea Party, some parts of Occupy Wall Street, and the Nation of Islam. Illuminati theories are often populist in character. Many populist theories draw on anti-Semitism to identify an evil elite that runs the world.

Many Illuminati theories make use of a document from the early 1900s called the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The *Protocols* claimed to be a secret document written by Jews, about their plans to take over the world. In fact, they were written sometime between 1897 and 1903, most likely by members of the Russian secret police. At the time, Russian nationalists were trying to prevent the breakout of a Russian Revolution against the Emperor of Russia, called the Tsar. Most nationalists were strongly anti-Semitic. They viewed the entire mass movement to overthrow the Tsar as a Jewish conspiracy. The *Protocols* were written to help fuel the movement against Jews, in order (they thought) to prevent the revolution.

Most of the *Protocols* was crudely copied from two other books: *Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*, written by Maurice Joly in 1864, and *Biarritz*, a German novel written in 1868 by Hermann Goedsche. Despite being exposed as a fake, the document became widely read in Russia and Europe, and eventually the U.S. too. Because of this, Illuminati theories regularly make mention of Jewish banking groups like the Rothschilds and the Bilderbergs, and portray Jews as a secret group intent on world domination. This is the second major piece of the Illuminati theory. The third is the antichrist.

### **THE THIRD PIECE: THE ANTICHRIST**

Many Illuminati theorists also talk about the “end of days” and the “mark of the beast”. These terms come from a religious movement called Protestant Millenarianism, which arose in the mid 1800s. Millenarian movements believe the end of the world is coming, and try to get ready for it. Millenarians in the

or the murder of Trayvon Martin. Consciousness is changed when poor and working people struggle for their own freedom, and in the process clear their heads and develop new ideas. There is no magic trick to changing consciousness, no perfect conversation technique that will finally “enlighten” everyone at once. The study of how consciousness changes is ultimately the study of history, class struggle, and the ideas that are born in them.

Only by ending the forms of oppression found in real life can we finally get rid of all the stories about aliens, the Illuminati, and other conspiracies. It is the exploitation we endure every day as workers and unemployed people that generates Illuminati theory. It is our alienation from each other, and from our most fundamental human capacity to create food, clothing, shelter, art, cities (etc), which requires Illuminati theory as an explanation.

To destroy this imaginary world of conspiracies, we must destroy the real world of capital. The only way to stop this oppression and exploitation is to attack the way society is organized, and destroy the social relation between classes. To do this, we will have to abolish classes entirely. We will have to kick the bourgeoisie out of power, and create a new society where labor isn’t alienated, where workers control their work, and where ordinary people control their own lives and communities.

It’s possible to do this, because capital needs us: human labor is required to keep the system going. Therefore, we have the power to end capitalism. But to do it, we’ll have to do more than attack particular individuals who prop up the system. We’ll have to attack the relations of exploitation and oppression that recreate capitalism. We’ll have to attack the system of alienated labor and the existence of classes itself. The end of conspiracy theories will come with the end of capitalism.

## **6. Liberation Beyond Illuminati Theory**

Capitalism isn’t eternal, it wasn’t decreed by god, and it isn’t run by a secret Illuminati. Like any social system, it can be created and destroyed. As we’ve seen, capitalism depends upon our everyday activity to be sustained and reproduced. Therefore, we can destroy capitalism: by organizing with each other to stop the process of exploitation and oppression. By defeating the forces that stand in our way. By creating new ways of running society, and living together with dignity, peace and with all of our needs met.

In a truly free society, everyone will labor for the common good, without being forced to work for a ruling class, or pay for the goods produced by their fellow human beings. Throughout the history of capitalism, the struggle for this free society has been called anarchism or communism.

what we've been taught--and most importantly, learning through struggle--allow us to change our perspective.

There's no doubt the power of the media, Fox News, or Glenn Beck are immense. But no one is ever a passive recipient of ideas. Take the example of "rights". Our society teaches that everyone has equal rights. Everyone is smart enough to know it's a lie. But still, the idea seeps into their consciousness, and becomes part of their common sense. This helps uphold the system. But people can also use the same idea to challenge the system. They might demand "rights" that the system wants to deny them, like the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s. Sometimes, these struggles reach such a height that people question the idea of "rights" at all. This happened in the 1960s, when many people who had participated in the Civil Rights movement stopped thinking about winning rights from the government, and started thinking about how to overthrow the government. As you can see from this example, the ideas people are "brainwashed" with do limit their thinking, but people aren't entirely passive. They also actively employ their ideas to understand their lives. And sometimes, their experiences in struggle change their ideas altogether.



THE "NEW NEGRO" MOVEMENT AROSE AFTER WORLD WAR I, WHEN BLACK VETERANS, CHANGED BY THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE WAR, BEGAN TO RESIST JIM CROW SEGREGATION

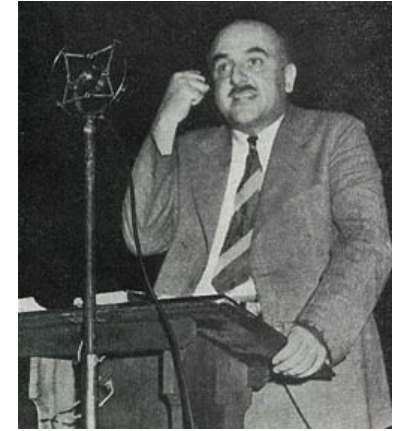
According to most Illuminati theorists, people will only fight for liberation if their ideas change. The most effective way to change people's ideas, they say, is by talking to them, or getting them to read or watch something that will "enlighten" them. These methods can make a difference on a small scale. But this doesn't happen so easily on a larger scale, involving thousands or millions of people. Yes, we have access to the internet, blogs, and YouTube, and this helps us reach more people. But a revolution is not going to be made one YouTube video at a time.

Historically, peoples' ideas have changed in periods of immense crisis, due to a variety of factors, and not just because they heard the correct argument. Most importantly, they've changed as people have

learned through the heat of struggle. People change through our experiences of struggle, not simply by listening to what others have to say. As more and more people start to fight, from Tahrir Square, to Occupy, to the Flatbush Rebellion, we begin to realize we have collective strength that no one has dared to tell us about. Then we become open to new ideas when we weren't before. Consciousness is changed by great historical events such as World War I and II, the Vietnam War, the Russian revolution of 1917, the economic crisis of 2008,

1800s developed a complex timeline describing the Second Coming of Christ, with a sequence of important signs. One of the signs was the coming of the "antichrist." In the Bible, the "antichrist" is sometimes described as a single person, and sometimes as many individuals or groups. The "antichrist" is supposed to gain dictatorial power over the world just before Christ's return. Today, many U.S. evangelical Christians are constantly looking for signs that the antichrist is appearing.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, World War One, the Great Depression, the rise of Fascism, and World War Two, gave Evangelicals many signs that the end was drawing near. Based on their interpretation of the Bible, evangelicals looked for signs of growing government power, and individuals with cult-like status that might be the antichrist. In the 1920s, U.S. evangelical leader Gerald Winrod claimed that Mussolini, the Italian Fascist leader, was actually the antichrist. He said the League of Nations was a sign of his growing world power. "End of days" predictions continued for years afterward. In the 1950s, some evangelicals predicted that a new invention called the "computer" was actually the antichrist. In the 1970s, others argued that the microchip or laser barcodes were the "mark of the beast," destined to brand individuals in the antichrist's name. During Obama's election, many people thought he was the antichrist.



GERALD WINROD, 1900-1957

The figure of the antichrist and the "end of days" has been a main piece of many Illuminati theories since the 1920s. The story works like a game of bingo: believers have a list of signs of the end of the world, and they sit around waiting for them to appear. Every popular political figure, like Obama, can be seen as the antichrist. Every big political organization, like the U.N, can be seen as his growing power. Every development in information technology, like implanted microchips, can be seen as a "mark of the beast." Theories like these don't accurately describe reality. Instead, they get people to find evidence for a theory they already want to believe.

### THE THREE PIECES COMBINED = ILLUMINATI THEORY AS WE KNOW IT

All the pieces we've talked about so far were combined in the 1920s, a time of great unrest. Before and after World War I, there were huge working class rebellions against capitalism. Massive workers' movements with millions of members rocked Germany, Italy, France, England, and even the U.S. Workers finally toppled the Tsar in the Russian Revolution of 1917, and they tried to establish a communist society. To many people, it seemed like a wave of socialist revolution would overturn capitalism, just as capitalism had overturned

feudalism a century before.

Just like before, those who depended on the dominant order opposed the revolutionary movement. They felt the need to explain the growing unrest, which they disliked and couldn't understand. Just like the kings and queens in the French Revolution who couldn't explain the uprisings against them, the modern capitalists turned to Illuminati theories. They didn't think workers were smart enough to actually change the world. In 1926, Nesta Webster, an English aristocrat, published *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements, The Need for Fascism in Great Britain*. Lady Queenborough

(also known as Edith Starr Miller), the daughter of a U.S. industrial capitalist, published *Occult Theocracy* in 1933. Both writers argued that the revolutionary fervor sweeping the globe was caused by a secret conspiracy. Both combined the old Illuminati theory with new elements.

Webster and Queenborough hyped up the Illuminati more than before: now the Illuminati were said to be descendants of



MILITANT GERMAN WORKERS ATTEMPT  
A REVOLUTION IN BERLIN, JANUARY 1919

the ancient Knights Templar, and every secret society that ever existed was supposedly an Illuminati front group. They also linked Jewish financiers to the Illuminati conspiracy. The Illuminati, they said, were paid by a secret group of Jewish bankers in their quest for world domination. Webster and Queenborough's conspiracy theories were preached in the U.S. by Gerald Winrod—the same Winrod described above, who was on the lookout for the antichrist. Winrod wrote a pamphlet in 1935 called *Adam Weishaupt, a Human Devil*, which drew on Webster and Queenborough's work. He argued that communism itself was a Jewish conspiracy, and that the Illuminati conspiracy heralded the coming of the antichrist.

Webster, Queenborough and Winrod brought together the three pieces of Illuminati theory under one big umbrella. Their writings established the main core common to the Illuminati theories we hear today: the Illuminati are a secret society, financed by a Jewish banking syndicate, which goes way back to ancient religious societies, and which aims to rule the world. In some cases, the Illuminati are portrayed as followers of Satan or the antichrist, aiming to bring about his rule on earth. Almost every Illuminati theory today builds off this core story.

Originally, Illuminati theories were used by elites to try to explain and stop movements. But if these theories were first developed by elites and other conservative forces, how did they end up being used by poor and oppressed people in the hood?

## ILLUMINATI THEORY MISTAKES BAD PEOPLE FOR CAPITAL

Illuminati theorists look around, and accurately perceive aspects of the capitalist system. But their explanation is wrong. Instead of seeing capital as the dominating force in society, Illuminati theorists replace this with other forces using their imagination. Sometimes Illuminati theorists project the power of capital onto particular groups of people. As we've seen, capital isn't reducible to any one individual boss, manager, or cop. But Illuminati theory projects this huge power onto individuals, who come to be seen as having all the power of capital itself. Often Illuminati theorists mistake real people, who serve important roles in government or corporations, for the force driving capitalism as a whole. They view rulers as evil individuals who control everything, instead of powerful figures who are still only players in "the game".

Illuminati theorists imagine that the evil rulers are secretly planning how to run the world. There is no doubt that many of the places important decisions happen—corporate boardrooms, the Fed Reserve, or the Pentagon—are not democratic and transparent institutions. Illuminati theorists are right to want everyone to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. But they don't see that, as long as the capitalist system is creating powerful people and corporations, democracy will never really exist. The vast majority of us can't participate in running society every day, because we have to work for someone else to survive. Instead of running society ourselves, we vote someone else into power to do it for us. This won't end until capitalism ends.



Illuminati theorists try to fight the enemies they imagine. They set out to battle the Illuminati, the Jews, the United Nations, or aliens. But all these are just individual personifications of capital, or a projection of capital onto made-up groups. People who try to change the world using Illuminati theory are boxing with shadows. The shadow is the shadow of capital, the real alien created by all of us, through the social relationships we participate in every day. Illuminati theorists blame a secret conspiracy that runs the world, when they should blame the system that recreates capital, power, exploitation and oppression.

## ILLUMINATI THEORY MISTAKES BAD IDEAS FOR CAPITAL

Conspiracy theorists often emphasize how brainwashed people are. This shapes how they think liberation can be won, or if they think it's possible at all. We have a different take on people's ideas. We believe people develop new ideas through a complex process. Arguments, everyday experiences that clash with

against us, using our own bodies against ourselves.

Capital is not a conspiracy of aliens. It's an alien we create. It's not just Jay Z or George W. Bush--we have all sold our souls and our bodies to the devil. But it is a devil we create with our own hands. It can do nothing without us: our bodies are its arms, its legs, its reproductive organs, and its brains. Therefore, we have the power to end it. Throughout history, poor and working people have struggled to limit how much labor capital sucks from them. They've tried to change the rules of the game or stop playing it altogether.

### **NO WAY OUT BUT TO DESTROY THE SYSTEM**

Many people think they can escape the cycle of alienation, reification, exploitation and oppression without overthrowing the system. Like "enlightened" Illuminati theorists, they think they can find an *individual* way out, apart from everyone else. But it never works. We can try to hustle on our own, but we end up working just as hard as for a boss, and we risk getting locked up. Whether we sell weed or bottled water, we still have to compete with other hustlers, or make money for the suppliers above us. We can start our own business, but we still have to overwork ourselves to compete with other businesses. We can try to get signed to a record label, but we still make more profits for our bosses than for ourselves.

Even when we work "for ourselves," our labor is alienated. We're still wasting our talent, creativity, and time in order to survive, and keeping the system running. Sure, one in a million may become the next Jay Z who runs their own company. But this is only possible by exploiting thousands of other people who want to be Jay Z too, and making sure they *don't* make it. All these strategies are failed routes out of exploitation and oppression. The only way out is to overthrow the system. This is possible because we create capital, the very force that dominates us. But Illuminati theory doesn't recognize this fact. Instead of viewing the system of capitalist social relations as the enemy, Illuminati takes aim at particular groups of people.

## **5. Where Illuminati Theorists Think Oppression and Exploitation Come From**

Capitalism is an elusive process. It exists in the billions of social relations between workers and capitalists, and in millions of physical objects, but it can't be pinpointed in any one of them. It's a lot like gravity. Gravity can't be identified and touched, but it can be felt in the relation between planets. Similarly, you can't put your finger on capital in any one place, but it is present in the relations between people, and asserts a powerful force on them. Illuminati theorists feel this force at work in society, but identify it incorrectly.

## **2. How Illuminati Theory Came to the Hood**

Elites invented Illuminati theory to explain challenges to their power, and today poor and working class people in the hood use it to explain our own oppression. We live in a society that blames individuals for failing to succeed. But people in the hood aren't stupid: we know we aren't to blame, and that there are outside forces preventing us from living with dignity. For this reason, conspiracy theories and urban legends have been a common feature of oppressed communities in the U.S, especially black communities, for decades.

In black neighborhoods, people say AIDS was invented by the government to kill off black people. People say the government has secret plans to establish martial law and open concentration camps. They say Church's Fried Chicken is secretly owned by the Klan, which uses it to destroy black people's health. These small conspiracy theories and urban legends have floated around black communities for years. It was only a matter of time until the huge conspiracy theories invented in the 1920s put them together in one big Illuminati theory. Without meaning to, the black liberation movement helped this to happen. Illuminati theory came to the hood after the defeat of the black liberation movement of the 1970s.

### **CONSPIRACY THEORIES DURING BLACK POWER, AND AFTER IT**

At the height of the rebellions of the 1960s, millions of black people were rebelling against U.S. capitalism. The revolts were huge: in the summers between 1965 and 1968, every major city in the country experienced a rebellion. People looted goods and distributed them for free. They raided National Guard armories and battled the police in the streets. As the struggle developed, millions of people began to question why black people experienced oppression and exploitation, and who the enemies were.



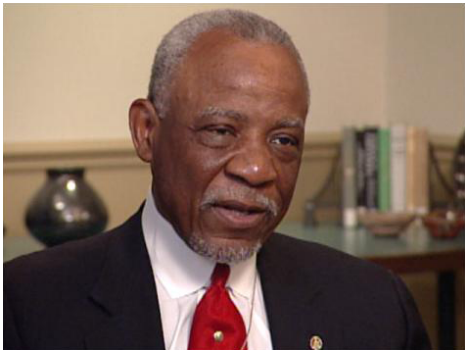
NEWARK RIOTS, JULY 1967

Black communists like the Panthers identified the enemy as white supremacist capitalism, and aimed to unite workers of all races against this system. Others like Ron Karenga (the inventor of Kwanzaa) fell back on wrong explanations similar to Illuminati theory. They saw black people as a united group, regardless of whether they were rich or poor, and they thought all black people were in a war against all white people. The Nation of Islam invented a myth of black superiority. It taught its followers that whites were created thousands of years ago by a black scientist named Yakub, in a lab accident.

Now, with the help of the NOI, blacks were out to regain their rightful place as the superior race on earth. This story had no basis in science or history, but it provided one explanation for black oppression, and who the enemy was.

Another part of the black power movement turned to anti-Semitism. Many black people saw small business owners exploiting black customers, and banks refusing to loan to blacks, and some of these people were Jews. In “Black Art,” the most famous poem of the Black Arts movement, Amiri Baraka wrote that blacks needed “dagger poems in the slimy bellies / of the owner-jews.” Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam also embraced anti-Semitic rhetoric at this time.

These black artists and activists mistook the immediate appearance of their oppression for the whole thing. Yes, black people were exploited by petit-bourgeois business owners and bankers. Yes, many of these folks, (but not all of them) were Jewish. But they exploited black people because they were business owners, not because of their religion. Behind these individuals lay a bigger global capitalist system, which exploited black people too. But black militants couldn’t put their finger on this, so instead they blamed the bankers and small shop owners who were in front of their faces. Like in the 1800s, anti-Semitism in the 1960s served as a populist myth, which hid class differences within the black community. Poor and working class blacks could have united, and collaborated with other poor people, to oppose the ruling class. They could have fought the black business owners who later became police chiefs and mayors. Instead, they united *with* black business owners and politicians, against a made-up “Jew” enemy.



BLACK MAYOR WILSON GOODE OVERSAW THE POLICE BOMBING OF THE BLACK RADICAL MOVE ORGANIZATION IN 1985

By the mid-1970s, the black liberation movement had been mostly defeated. The rebellions had been put down with armed force, and the revolutionaries were dead or imprisoned. U.S. capitalism adopted reforms to take the steam out of the movement. Black mayors were elected in cities across the U.S. New careers opened up for black professionals. There had always been black business owners and middle class people. But legal segregation and white mob violence

kept them living with, and servicing, the black working class. Now many of the legal and social barriers holding down the black bourgeoisie and middle class were removed. They quickly rose socially and economically, and left the black poor behind.

Like all capitalists, black capitalists sought profits over people, black or

imposing itself on the people taking part in the relation in the first place. We’ve all experienced reification at some point. When we’ve bowed down to our boss so often that all bosses seem to have some innate Authority, that’s reification. When we’ve been stuck in an unhealthy relationship for so long that The Relationship shapes all of our choices, that’s reification.

The side-effects of alienation don’t stop with reification. In capitalist society, the process of alienation also gives rise to ever greater oppression. Every time workers manufacture something, transport and and sell it, they make money for the bosses. The workers who do the alienated labor along the way get a fraction of the money back in the form of a paycheck. But the vast majority of the money goes to the bosses, who then use it to hire more workers, to manufacture, transport and sell more products, to make more money, and so on. Money that is used to make more money is called *capital*. Capital is our everyday labor, alienated from us, and reified into a thing that dominates us.

### CAPITAL: OUR LABOR TURNED AGAINST US

The more alienated labor we perform, the more capital we generate. And the more capital is produced, the more power the people who wield capital have to dominate us. Capital takes different forms. Sometimes bosses invest in big office towers and factories, and capital takes the form of physical buildings. Sometimes bosses use their capital to hire people to make sure the process of making capital continues smoothly—for example, managers or cops. In this case, capital is *personified* in other human beings and human behaviors. But capital itself is bigger than any individual cop, manager or boss. A corporation can change its CEO or board of directors, or reshuffle its entire workforce, and the capital flowing through it can continue to grow. Individual corporations can merge with each other, or go out of business, and capital on a national scale will continue growing. It’s like the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy says: rulers are like bullets in a clip. As soon as you shoot one, another pops up to take its place.

Capital is not just the capitalists who run the corporations. It is the whole system, the “game” with its own rules that everyone has to follow. So long as labor is alienated from one class to another, the day-do-day operation of society creates capital, and with it, a ruling class that takes control of alienated labor and products. Capital only grows by sucking our labor, which it can do in many ways. It can push us to work harder and faster. It can force us to work longer hours or accept lower wages and benefits. Capital is nothing but our zombieified labor, half living and half dead. It is nothing but our bodies and minds turned into objects for use.

We produce and reproduce the capitalist system every day. Television and toxic waste, pornography and plantations, silicon and slums, nurseries and nukes are all things it creates and recreates through our daily activity. Capital lives off our energy: it is vampire-like, parasitic, an alien force that dominates us from inside of ourselves. It reproduces itself through us, turning our creative powers

of goods in trucks and warehouses that don't belong to us. We prepare and sell products that aren't ours in restaurants and retail shops. Even when we're unemployed, we're surrounded by buildings, clothes, and food that don't belong to us, which were alienated from people just like us when they were made. We struggle to survive, because we can't take food, clothing and shelter if we need them, or share them if we make them. Everything belongs to somebody else; usually to a corporation. Capitalism is a society divided into one class of people, who control others' labor in order to make a profit, and another class--most of us--who can only sell our ability to work in order to get food, clothing and shelter.

A byproduct of all this alienation is that relations between people become hidden behind our relations with things. Everything in your apartment was manufactured, transported, assembled, and sold by other people living a lot like you: your fellow proletarians. Those people rely on the things you make, transport or sell with your alienated labor, too. But under capitalism, we don't provide each other the things we make directly. Everything we make (or transport, assemble, cook) is given to a corporation, which ultimately sells it back to other alienated workers like us. Instead of relating to other *people* by freely sharing the fruits of our labor, we relate to *things* we have to buy, and don't see the working people behind them. We become alienated from each other, too.

### REIFICATION: OUR LABOR TURNED INTO A THING

After a while, we come to view this situation as normal. We come to think of ourselves as isolated individuals. Soon it starts to seem like products impose

*their* conditions on *us*. We are forced to go to work, because otherwise we can't get things like food, clothing and shelter. We are forced to choose careers, homes, and even spouses based on their dollar values. We aren't forced to do these things at gunpoint, but our options are limited because we don't have free access to the resources, land, tools, and skills necessary to sustain ourselves. These things were stolen from our ancestors, and today, if we don't work, we starve. If we don't make smart economic decisions, we end up poor.

We end up justifying these relationships as natural and justified, when they aren't. The stuff made by millions of alienated workers appears to dominate over the workers themselves. This process is called *reification*. Reification happens when a relation between people starts to seem like a separate force,

otherwise. Like all politicians, black politicians looked after their own interests, and their constituencies came second. The black mayors elected in the 1970s soon directed the crackdowns on the black movement itself. In Philadelphia, black mayor Wilson Goode oversaw the bombing of the MOVE organization, a black radical group, in 1985. The actions of the black capitalists and politicians confused the black movement, because they thought they had been fighting alongside the black business owners, capitalists, and politicians.

Black revolutionaries like Fred Hampton, who might have opposed these developments, were imprisoned or killed off. As a result, younger generations weren't exposed to the idea of class war between black workers and the black and white ruling class. Other black revolutionaries helped black politicians run for office, or became academics, and stopped talking about revolution. Internationally, the national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America came to an end. The theories of revolution coming from these struggles lost popularity. All this left a political void in poor and working class black communities. Black people had made it into positions of political and economic power, but racist oppression and exploitation continued for poor and working class black people. How could one explain this reality?

Illuminati theory flowed in to fill this gap. It was similar to other conspiracy theories that had been used before. It said the black elite had made it because they were part of a secret group of rulers, or had cut a deal with the devil. It said poor and working class black people were still oppressed, because these rulers were super-powerful. And the trend deepened in the 1990s.

### ILLUMINATI THEORY IN THE "NEW WORLD ORDER"

Illuminati theory resurged all over the U.S. in the early 1990s. Before Russia collapsed and the Cold War ended, most people felt big events could be explained by the conflict between U.S. capitalism and Russian state socialism. Every national liberation struggle in the Third World had to pick between these two sides. But everything changed with the end of the Cold War and the growth of globalization. In 1990, George Bush Sr. called the fall of Russia and victory of the U.S. a "new world order". This phrase was adopted by a variety of conspiracy theorists, as an umbrella term to link conspiracy theories together.

Conspiracy theorists began to publish "superconspiracy" theories, which tied every existing conspiracy and urban legend to the Illuminati storyline. Some of these conspiracies involved UFOs, Satanists, or secret government plots to colonize space. The most famous "superconspiracy" book is *Behold a Pale Horse*, written by William Cooper in 1991. *Behold a Pale Horse* brings together a huge range of different conspiracy theories in one big web, including the Illuminati, Jewish bankers, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, UFOs, and more.

Many of these theories were used by poor and working class whites. Whites were confused and angry about the impoverishment they experienced with factory closings and globalization, and the growing status of non-whites in U.S.



MOST CITIES HAVE ENOUGH VACANT BUILDINGS TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS POPULATION, BUT LANDLORDS AND CITY OFFICIALS DENY PEOPLE ACCESS UNLESS THEY CAN PAY FOR THEM

society. They said the government was coming with silent black helicopters to take away their guns. They said the government was planning to unleash murderous black gangs on the population. They said white gun-owning citizens who were loyal to the U.S. Constitution would have to defend themselves. These theories became very popular in groups like the Michigan Militia that appeared in the 1990s.

Some whites were clearly racist, and opposed to the changes of the 1960s. But others were experiencing increased oppression and exploitation as poor and working class people, and were angry about it. Just as black people in the 1960s blamed Jews for their oppression, poor white people in the 1990s blamed people of color--and the Illuminati--for their situation. In both cases, the analysis of



IN 2010, FEDERAL AGENTS IN MICHIGAN RAIDED THE HUTAREE MILITIA (ABOVE), AN ARMED GROUP THAT WAS PREPARING FOR A MILITARY BATTLE AGAINST THE ANTICHRIST. AFTER THE MURDER OF TRAYVON MARTIN IN 2012, RAPPER KILLER MIKE (BELOW) CALLED ON BLACKS TO ARM THEMSELVES, IN CASE OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS OR THE END OF THE MAYAN CALENDAR.

has a long history. At multiple points in history, white supremacist and black nationalist movements have linked up. In the 1920s, Marcus Garvey met with members of the Ku Klux Klan, to discuss to how to separate whites and blacks through Garvey's "back to Africa" scheme. In the 1960s, the Nation of Islam held similar talks with the Klan. In South Africa in the 1980s, during the collapse

of these groups was incorrect, and it led them to fight the wrong enemy, instead of building solidarity with other poor and oppressed people. Despite their conservative flavor, these new Illuminati theories became popular in the hood. They spread through self-published books, and with the growth of the internet, through websites and videos.

From the 1980s through the 2000s, Illuminati theory broke out of its traditional audience. Instead of appealing to elites threatened by mass movements, Illuminati theory now appealed to the black poor and working class, and others in the hood. People in the hood started to talk about the Illuminati, the Bilderbergs, the antichrist, and more.

It may seem strange that the same theory would appeal to both white ultra-conservatives and poor black people. But really, this "strange bedfellows" situation

functioning of a whole *social system*. The activities and interactions of millions of people keep society running, day after day, and also create oppression and exploitation in the process. By explaining how this system works, we can figure out how to stop it and create something new. We can also see how Illuminati theory fails to recognize how our capitalist social system works, and instead blames the bad shit we experience through on a single group of people, like Masons, Jews or bankers.

In our social system, the vast majority of people experience alienation. "Alienation" means the act of separating something from oneself. When you go to work for a boss, you alienate your abilities to that person for the length of your shift. Your ability to lift boxes, do mental math, or coordinate an office, are all properties of your body and mind. But for a few hours, they become a tool for someone else, who orders them around for their benefit. Your qualities are *alienated* to serve someone else. This relationship may seem simple, but it has huge consequences when it happens to millions of people every day.



THE WORLD SUPPLY OF APPLE'S iPADS ARE MANUFACTURED IN FACTORY COMPLEXES IN CHINA

In our capitalist society, people are divided into two main classes. The vast majority alienate their labor, their time, their whole lives in order to get a wage and survive. This class is called the *proletariat*. The proletariat includes the workers who have to alienate their labor, and everyone who depends on them: unemployed people, children, the disabled, and more. A different class takes control over the alienated skills of the workers, and the alienated products they make. This class is called the *bourgeoisie*, or the capitalist class. The bourgeoisie uses the skills and products of workers to their own benefit, ultimately in order to keep both classes in their respective positions.

As long as these class relations of exploitation keep running, day after day, the bourgeoisie will keep gaining more wealth and power by using the alienated labor of the proletariat, and keep strengthening the system that keeps this relationship in place. To end this situation, we will have to do more than attack individual members of the bourgeoisie. We will have to attack the system of capitalist social relations as a whole.

## ALIENATION: OUR LABOR TAKEN FROM US

Capitalism is a society built on alienated labor. At work, we put our skills to work for someone else. We manufacture products on assembly lines, but when they come out of the factory they don't belong to us. We transport stacks



compulsion by living within our means.” Should we just accept the poverty that’s imposed on us? He tells us to “defend your own soul” by engaging in spiritual walks and meditation outside of institutional religion. These things are great to do, but they’re not going to end police brutality, poverty, or environmental collapse. And he tells us to “ignore the crowd, which is manipulated by the Illuminati.” Don’t sleep around, be frugal, pray alone and ignore everyone. This strategy will never build a mass movement to change anything.

The logical shortcomings of Illuminati theory are very convenient for many of its theorists. When it comes to fighting oppression, they can talk about it but they don’t have to be about it. What would these conspiracy theorists have said to U.S. slaves 150 years ago? That the white slavemaster was all-powerful? That he had duped the slaves into submission? That the slaves should stop having sex, be frugal, pray, and ignore the other slaves? They would have been the most conservative and cowardly people. That is what many Illuminati theorists are today, sad as it is to say.

When Illuminati theorists do take action, they often end up becoming violent, “lone wolf” types like Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber. They think the enemy is super-powerful, and so extreme measures are needed. But they also think the masses of people are stupid, and so the “enlightened” person can only act alone. This strategy never inspires masses of people. The lone wolf is not something most people look up to or imitate, even if they sympathize with his or her motivations. Ultimately, “lone wolf” actions are like cries of impotence.

The truth is, masses of ordinary people have the ability to change society. History has shown it over and over again. Illuminati theorists are searching for answers about why society is fucked up. If masses of people aren’t asking the same question, it’s not because they’re stupid: it’s because they don’t think it’s possible to change things, and so don’t bother looking any deeper. Theories only move people to action when they provide an accurate explanation of the things they are experiencing, and offer viable ways for them to act to change things. Illuminati theory offers neither.

Illuminati theory is inherently elitist, conservative, inaccurate and illogical. Ultimately, it is unable to explain oppression and exploitation, or help us figure out how to stop it. To truly stop oppression and exploitation, we need an accurate analysis of where they come from.

## **4. Where Oppression and Exploitation Come From**

The best way to explain oppression and exploitation is through a theory of the capitalist system as a whole, not Illuminati theory. A theory of capitalism explains how oppression and exploitation happen due to the everyday

of *apartheid*, Zulu nationalists met with the white supremacist AWB group, to discuss how to split the country into separate white and black nations.

The overlap between these movements is based on their shared populist logic. Both white supremacists and black nationalists believe whites are fundamentally different from blacks. Both believe they need to separate from each other, given certain conditions. (White supremacists think, if they can’t dominate blacks, they might as well ship them back to Africa. Black nationalists think, if white people won’t accept them, they might as well form their own separate nation.)

Illuminati theory is just one more example of this strange overlap. In Illuminati theories, poor people in the hood see banks and the political elite as their enemy, and they tend to embrace “black businesses” as a way to uplift the community, just like the black power movement of the 1960s. White conservatives use Illuminati theory to target the same enemies (as well as people of color), and embrace the U.S. constitution as a way to unite with white political and economic elites. You can see this trend in conspiracy shows like Alex Jones’ *Infowars*.

Illuminati theory presents the same danger as white supremacist and black nationalist theories. It will tend to support populist movements that unite poor white people and poor black people with their respective ruling elites, instead of building a movement for the destruction of white supremacy and the liberation of all poor and working people. Illuminati theory also presents a second danger: it simply fails to provide an accurate explanation of oppression and resistance.

## **3. Why Illuminati Theory Doesn’t Work**

There are several logical shortcomings to Illuminati theory. Here are six main reasons that Illuminati theory isn’t a useful explanation of the world.

*1. Illuminati theory sees everything as connected, and leaves no room for coincidences or mistakes.* Illuminati theorists tie every major world event to the Illuminati. They believe every event in human history is carefully watched, planned, or even controlled by conspiratorial groups. They leave no room for coincidence: Illuminati theorists believe everything happens for a reason, that everything is willed.

This view of history ignores that a gap always exists between what individuals or groups try to do, and what ends up happening. This gap is a fact. It exists for the rich and powerful just like everyone else. Even the U.S. government, the most powerful government in the world, cannot stop dozens of major events every year, from natural disasters to bureaucratic screwups. Of course some great world events were led by important individuals or groups. There was the

Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution, and the Black Panther Party in the black liberation movement. But serious study shows that none of these groups had an all-powerful, controlling influence. There are always contingencies, coincidences, chance events, and mistakes.

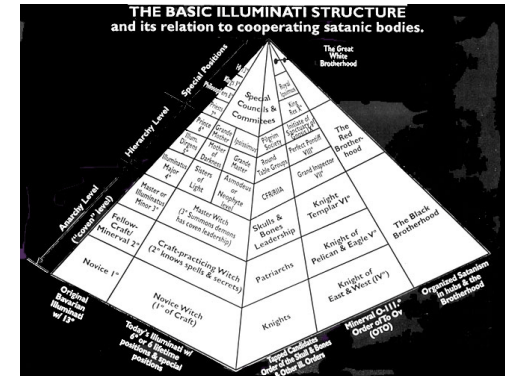
2. *Illuminati theory makes the enemy out to be all-powerful.* Because Illuminati theory denies that history involves chance and mistakes, it makes the Illuminati seem god-like. This is like when peasants used to say that kings were untouchable gods, and could not be overthrown. The truth is, there is no social group so powerful that humanity cannot overthrow it. When the French revolution came, the king and queen were beheaded. In every period in history, myths arise that make the rulers seem invincible. With every transition to a new period, these myths are always shattered.

3. *Illuminati theory fails to make basic logical or scientific arguments.* When people talk about Illuminati theories, they vaguely suggest there is a connection between groups and events, rather than demonstrating exactly how they are connected. For example, an Illuminati theorist might say “an earthquake happened the same day Obama made a speech using earthquake metaphors. This was not a coincidence.” The Illuminati theorist hints there is a connection, but doesn’t say what it is. Did Obama cause the earthquake? Why was he trying to drop hints about who caused it? They leave it up to your imagination. This lets the Illuminati theorist avoid having to demonstrate and prove the connection he or she is hinting at. Most of the time, if the connection were described openly, it would seem silly or implausible.

Other Illuminati theories offer explanations of events, but then leap to saying their explanation is absolutely accurate. But just because an explanation for something is *possible* doesn’t mean it’s *probable*. If your car overheats, and you explain it by saying a bird built a nest in your radiator, your explanation could be accurate. But that doesn’t mean it’s the most likely explanation. For your theory to become generally accepted, you would have to show that other competing theories are less likely, or prove your theory true in practice, by opening up your radiator. Illuminati theory never does these things, because it says we can never get hard evidence of the actions of such a secret group.

In reality, there is plenty of evidence of what the capitalist class does on a daily basis. Most capitalist plans for economic and foreign policy are printed openly in the pages of the *Economist* and the *Wall Street Journal*. We can see them disagreeing publicly, and we can see that sometimes their plans don’t work out. Sure, there are some secrets, but as Wikileaks and Ed Snowden show, even these can be exposed by courageous people willing to take action. And most of their secrets are actually “open secrets”: information is available in public libraries and websites, but people are so overwhelmed by the volume of information available that we don’t have time or energy to sort out what’s important.

4. *Illuminati theory is impossible to disprove.* Illuminati theorists have a clever way of attacking anyone who argues against them: they say “that’s just what they want you to think.” Of course, Illuminati theorists never ask how they’ve avoided being tricked themselves. This argument is a trap, because it never considers any evidence trustworthy, and so it doesn’t allow you to weigh the accuracy or usefulness of any theory. How do we know that all the conspiracy theories on YouTube aren’t actually produced by the Illuminati? How do we know that Illuminati theory itself isn’t a government hoax, designed to convince people that it’s impossible to fight back? Or that *Behold a Pale Horse* isn’t an Illuminati hoax? The logical traps are endless. Once you go down this road, you throw out any effort to really understand the world, or weigh theories and evidence about how it works.



MOST ILLUMINATI THEORIES ARE EXTREMELY COMPLEX, BUT EXPLAIN VERY LITTLE

5. *Illuminati theory leads to elitism.* Most Illuminati theorists claim to want democracy and transparency. But there is nothing in their theory or behavior that shows they are serious about either. Like the people who invented Illuminati theory in the early 1800s, Illuminati theorists today believe that the majority of society are blind sheep, who are incapable of doing anything without being controlled by an elite. When the public doesn’t react to their theories by rising up in rebellion, they blame the public for being stupid, instead of examining their own theories. Very often, Illuminati theorists think of themselves as the only “enlightened” people, and think everyone else is below them. Many Illuminati theorists are just as elitist as the groups they constantly theorize about.

6. *Illuminati theory offers no viable solutions to the problems it tries to explain.* Ultimately Illuminati theorists have no strategy, no game plan, no way out for billions of oppressed people on this planet. If the enemy is all-powerful and most people are duped, then there’s nothing that can be done. All they can do is constantly talk about conspiracies, and complain that people are brainwashed and will never wake up.

For example, look at the revolutionary strategy offered by *Illuminati: The Cult that Hijacked the World* by Henry Makow. In the conclusion to this book, Makow offers tips for how to “survive the New World Order.” He tells us to “direct our sex drive by confining it to a monogamous relationship.” What does this have to do with fighting oppression and exploitation? He tells us to “escape the money