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# Conspiracy Theories

In Blog 69 I wrote about demagogues. What I did not mention at that time is how demagogues use conspiracy theories to advance their views. Wikipedia concisely defines it as follows:

A conspiracy theory is an explanation for an event or situation that invokes a conspiracy by sinister and powerful groups, often political in motivation, when other explanations are more probable. The term has a pejorative connotation, implying that the appeal to a conspiracy is based on prejudice or insufficient evidence.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In America there have been many such conspiracy theories, but in my lifetime perhaps the one most believed by a majority of Americans is the Kennedy Assassination. This theory promotes the belief that Kennedy was not killed by a lone gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald, but by multiple gunmen.

Sen. Joseph McCarthy created the “Red Scare” in the early 1950s by asserting that Communists had infiltrated the government and Hollywood. I can remember the fear this created among average Americans that there were Communist sympathizers everywhere. People so accused were ostracized and blacklisted with many Hollywood types being especially targeted. After a couple of years of the hysteria caused by the McCarthy Hearings, which was the main vehicle for his outrageous accusations, finally a few brave people challenged him and when Edward R. Murrow criticized McCarthy on his television program on March 9, 1954, it created a backlash against the senator which led to his ultimate downfall.

Today there is another demagogue named Alex Jones who uses his radio programs to virulently promote all sorts of conspiracy theories, the most dangerous being, those of a political content which are extremely right-wing and critical of Democrats specifically. He spews out hate and disinformation like a rabid dog which no intelligent person would consider for an instant. Most disturbing, though, is the large number of people who believe his lies and accusations, including Donald Trump. Trump uses the conspiracies promoted by Jones to whip up the emotions of his supporters to gain their support in his bid to win the coming presidential elections.

History shows that America has always weathered the hysterical storms and social disruptions caused by demagogues and their use of conspiracy theories so perhaps one day we will be able to look back on this current time as being just another such aberration.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy\_theory [↑](#footnote-ref-1)