

Alex Jones: Exploring Conspiracy as a Response to Rising Urban and Rural Inequalities

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New World Order conspiracy theories have been around for hundreds of years, but in recent times an Austin, Texas native, Alex Jones, has produced an interesting variant that provides an insight into the creation and motivations of a modern-day NWO conspiracy. Although Alex Jones and his conspiracies have become known nationally through his multiple internet sites, the New World Order conspiracy he created still retains much of its local Texas ideology. By taking his New World Order conspiracy out of its global context and placing it back into the local context that created it, definitive links can be seen connecting this conspiracy to its surrounding environment. Jones' Texas audience of primarily white, suburban, working class "Austinites" finds itself struggling against the apparent devaluation of Texas ideals in a rapidly forming global marketplace that is emerging in downtown Austin. This rift between the urban center and the surrounding suburban communities is effectively rendering traditional rural Texas imperatives old-fashioned and irrelevant.

Alex Jones' complete version of a New World Order conspiracy is laid out in his full-length DVD movie "Endgame: Blueprint for Global Enslavement" which was released in 2007. The movie, shot in a documentary style, consists mostly of Alex Jones narrating his New World Order conspiracy while visual evidence or historical footage is shown in the background. In addition to the movie, Alex Jones has held several public speeches and rallies that were recorded and put onto YouTube. In this new internet age of conspiracies, it should be noted that there is no official written version of his conspiracy theories, as internet distributed movies have largely taken the place of pamphlets and books. In the movie, powerful American and European businessmen have formed a coalition to shape both the world and world politics as they see fit. The UN and the secretive Builder-

burg group are the primary examples of this alliance. Their main goals are to develop and enforce a rigid, global plutocracy.

This conspiracy has found a sizable audience mostly in the Austin area of Texas. Judging from numerous videos of public speeches and rallies posted on his website, Alex Jones supporters tend to be white, working class Texans. According to an op-ed column in the Austin Chronicle, there is “an overlap between Ron Paul supporters and Alex Jones supporters” and on several official Alex Jones message boards there is talk of a Ron Paul/Alex Jones Presidential ticket. This conspiracy circulating in current-day America: An America whose increased dependence on foreign markets and investors has, in the eyes of Alex Jones, weakened it significantly, an America facing an influx of illegal aliens, and therefore a dilution of the “right” kind of Americans, and an America who many believe is run by corporations gone wild with power. This conspiracy has a special resonance for working class Texans. Traditional Texan values such as independence, personal freedoms, the importance of private property, and the right to bear arms are being increasingly marginalized and devalued in urban America. Faced with this perceived devaluation and obsolescence of Texan values in urban and international settings, many Texans have come to believe Alex Jones’ explanation of a New World Order.

By examining Alex Jones’ global Conspiracy as a local product, produced from the unique tensions surrounding Austin, Texas, it becomes apparent that the environment in which a conspiracy is created has a great deal of influence on its content. Austin, Texas is a city at war with itself. A relatively liberal city core with a booming technology sector and a growing community of white-collar “transplants,” is surrounded by the poorer, long-established, highly libertarian and conservative suburbs of Austin and Travis county. In recent times, the city has catapulted into the spotlight when it was rated by Forbes magazine as one of the fastest growing cities from 2000 to 2006, and portrayed as an ideal example of “smart growth.” Numerous Fortune 500 companies have built large complexes in Austin such as Apple, Cisco systems, 3M, Samsung, and Silicon Laboratories, in a large way fueling the \$1.09 trillion dollar and rising Texas economy. But behind these largely metropolitan successes, lies a rural

Texas that has been left behind by this new globalized, white-collar, technology based economy. This dichotomy has led to a Texas identity crisis, with split personalities of the “new” Texas and the “old” Texas (urban Texas and rural Texas) struggling for political, spiritual, and ideological dominance. Alex Jones’ concerns about Texas’ future in this rapidly globalizing environment shaped the content of his conspiracy in specific ways that feed a growing insecurity among his suburban listeners and supporters. When viewed this way, what might at first glance be dismissed as a yet another NWO theory becomes a telling portrait of suburban Texas’ concerns for the coming age of globalistic thinking, with Alex Jones as a man who envisions Texas as the first sacrifice in America’s blind rush to profit off of this new globalism.

Underlying Jones’ conspiracy narrative is part of a long running dialogue between city dwellers and the rural population. The three main phases of Jones’ conspiracy represent three different fears or insecurities facing the white, suburban, working class Texan in a modern, internationalized urban setting where globalism has reduced their value not only as workers, but as people. In examining the specific conflict of urban/international values and local/suburban values manifested in each phase of the conspiracy, we can learn more about how this conspiracy is serving its believers and is a unique product of the Austin area.

(1) Dissolving national borders and the formation of the NAFTA Super-highway.

At the starting point of the conspiracy, Alex Jones rails against the formation of the proposed Trans-Texas Corridor, a super highway that would connect Texas and Mexico with roads, trucking lanes, light rail and industrial railways. Jones labels it the “NAFTA Super-highway control grid,” and claims that it is a government plot to “restrict free movement” around the country. Looking at how the highway would affect Austin’s suburbs, Jones’ comments can be put into context: The proposed route would run right outside the city of Austin through its suburbs, cutting across rural farmers and ranchers property and devaluing their land. It is planned to be a toll road,

which would not affect intercity travel, but would tax people traveling around it. For Alex Jones' suburban audience, this is like an affront to their very freedom- the freedom to travel freely without being monitored and taxed. This massive network of toll roads would promote international trade, which is good for urban communities, but bad for rural communities, whose farmers and ranchers now have to compete with products from other countries. On multiple levels the highway is serving urban interests and ignoring rural ones, creating a context of inequality where conspiracy and resentment are gaining increased support. For Jones and his audience, the construction of the highway represents the "first New World Order assault" on American soil.

(2) Mass 80% die off

After the "highway control grid" is constructed by the NWO, Alex Jones contends that the governments of the future intend to "wipe out 80% of the population, all in the name of eugenics." This mass genocide is going to be done by scientists through covert, nefarious ways, such as slipping fatal or sterilizing drugs into the American drug supply or through GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) in the food supply. Specifically, Jones cites historical examples of scientific intervention as sinister, including "Putting mercury in vaccines," "adding sodium fluoride in the water," and "Cancer viruses in vaccines." He goes on to say that the scientists are "spies and enforcers of the eugenics race cult," that they have become "arrogant" and that they "have the same sickness that elites have had throughout history." In Jones' mind, science and scientists have aligned themselves with the global elites and not the common man. In his conspiracy scenario, science and technology are tools by which the global governance seizes power over the common man and kills those who are unfit for the new society. This is a parallel to Austin's urban center, which saw an explosion of growth and wealth with the arrival of hi-tech and bio-tech companies and through its overwhelming success is indirectly "killing" the rural Texas and the rural way of life. This does not mean that Alex Jones and his Texas audience resents science and scientific progress; they resent the money and power it has brought the urban part of Austin. The rise of "eugenics"

in Alex Jones' doomsday scenario is portrayed as an attack on American families, and speaks to the fact that there is clearly a feeling of "science gone wrong" in rural America and that science has been tainted by unnatural desires. Additionally, Jones' tirade against genetically modified food is directly related to the negative effects of globalism on local farmers. These genetically manipulated crops take sophisticated equipment to manufacture, and are relatively expensive to purchase, adding an unnecessary burden to the average farmer. In Alex Jones' eyes, science has become a tool by which corporations are rationalizing the death of small businesses and farmers; Science has become a means by which the global plutocracy is diverting power from the rural man and transferring it to the urban man. In the eyes of Alex Jones technology and science are the industries driving Austin's globalist transformation, forming an unbridgeable gap between the new Texas and the old Texas.

(3) Forced to live in tightly controlled police states.

In the final stage of Jones' conspiracy narrative, "The remnants of a once free humanity are going to be forced to live in highly controlled, compact, prison-like cities." the remaining humans are confined to huge cities, and live a life of misery and fear. A cramped, city life with few rights is almost the opposite of traditional rural living conditions in Texas. Texas is a large state with plenty of space and a strong bent towards personal freedoms and rights, especially on one's own property. In Alex Jones' picture of the future under the control of the New World Order, you do not own your own property; you have few personal rights, and are "crowded into European-modeled cities." This final part of the conspiracy represents Jones' view of the future of Metropolitan Austin. Having discarded the morals and values of rural Texas in pursuit of wealth and power, the Texas people become slaves to corporations and politicians, forming the ultimate urban dystopia. In other words, Traditional rural Texas beliefs are all that is holding Austin back from self-destruction due to the acceptance of globalism.

It is clear that on its deepest levels, Alex Jones' conspiracy is linking into a powerful source of rural American pride and identity.

Richard Slotkin, in his book *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*, explains that the source of this rural pride is a “frontier spirit” that has been internalized into the American experience. Contrary to Europe, where large metropolises were the model of success, success in early America was the result of expanding your territory, conquering the fringes of civilization, and fighting off savages. This “colonial outpost” mentality has influenced the American psyche for centuries. Indeed the concept of “the myth of the American frontier” lines up especially well with Texas’ own history and mentality. The frontier identity suffuses Jones’ entire conspiracy and gives it a powerful appeal to its Texas male audience who are not far removed from the western settler mentality. It connects to long-standing feelings created by America’s “original condition as a settler-state, a colonial outpost of the European ‘metropolis.’” The very birth of America is therefore linked with the severance from the “originating metropolis.” Jones’ desires to both avoid urban models of the future, and to withdraw America from the UN, and from the international stage altogether is indicative of the underlying desire for the return of the “frontier” spirit in American culture and politics. On many levels, Jones’ conspiracy is attempting to recapture these uniquely American feelings of “outward movement from the center,” isolation, of a more primitive or natural state. But in Austin, Texas, the appeal of the “frontier spirit” is weakening as a new class is proving to be more powerful economically. Enter Richard Florida’s concept of the “Creative Class.”

The frontier identity is a big part of Jones’ Texas audience, and this old American Identity is clashing with a new Identity emerging in downtown Austin, which Richard Florida labels the “Creative Class.” The creative class is comprised of a wide range of jobs such as doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, poets, university professors, basically jobs that produce “ideas, information and technology.” In his book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida argues that intellectual jobs, creative jobs and artistic jobs are the ascendant economic force in America and that traditional agriculture and industry jobs are on the decline as other countries begin to provide these goods and services for cheaper than America can. As a result, America should focus on the manufacture of creative ideas and intellectual

property because it can no longer compete in the agricultural and industrial manufacturing processes. Addressing Austin specifically in his book *Who's Your City*, Florida ranks Austin as the “second most creative city in America,” trailing behind only San Francisco. In fact, Texas is home to two other cities in the top ten: Houston and Dallas. So the old American “frontier spirit” is clashing with the undeniable power and influence of the new “creative class” in downtown Austin.

This “creative class” in Austin is taking the economic power away from the suburbs and rural communities of Texas and placing into city centers, and more specifically, well educated, well credentialed workers. The “creative class” in Austin is killing Jones’ rural audience in a number of ways; first, the balance of power has shifted completely away from old agriculture and industrial jobs and towards new “knowledge intensive” jobs in what Florida describes as a “globally emerging knowledge economy.” The decline of the American industrial age combined with a reverse of the traditional “frontier values” (now the European metropolis is a source of power and a new America- one where intellectualism is of the highest value.

What is happening in Austin, Texas is a clash of two scholar’s concepts - Richard Slotkin’s “frontier identity” and Richard Florida’s “Creative Class,” but is it possible that in Texas, not only is agriculture and industrialism being threatened by the “creative class,” but a certain traditional male identity as well? Susan Faludi in her book *Stiffed* talks about a certain “Angry White Male” identity that is prevalent in Texas. They are angry because the traditional masculine role of “defender of the homestead” is no longer necessary, as “women do not want to be ‘protected’ anymore.” Faludi argues that men subconsciously try to set up a “protection racket” in which females are kept in a dependant role by males, who require them to turn to men for protection—from other men. In some ways, it is possible that Jones’ New World Order conspiracy is giving these Texas males a chance to fill a masculine role denied to them by contemporary culture—to protect their families from an imagined enemy, the New World Order. Through this “necessary enemy” the men are recapturing a masculine role that has been lost with the current age of equality, the role of the fearless protector for helpless women and children. Such an

enemy restored to them “an old domestic role, as guardians of families.” Looked at this way, the conspiracy is giving them a masculine purpose; one that has been lost with time but hearkens back to the original American frontier mentality that Texas embodies. Faludi would argue that just as the rural economy of Texas has been marginalized, so has a certain traditional rural masculinity.

The “Creative Class” is therefore downgrading traditional “masculine” roles and jobs (and by extension the frontier spirit) such as farming and industrial jobs, and is promoting a “feminine” economy where credentials and creativity are valued more than old-fashioned muscle, grit and determination. In turn these rural Texas men have fled to a conspiracy narrative, constructed by Alex Jones, which is restoring their world to a familiar order and giving them a familiar role to play. America has been infiltrated by foreign invaders, they are creating a world in which the traditional Texas man has no place and the creative, artistic, bohemian man is the model of the new masculinity. Everyone will live in cities, because rural land and suburbs are nothing more than relics of an agricultural age that has long since died. Geneticists are hard at work building a new super race of man that is smarter, stronger, and better. There is no place for the Texas man and the frontier mentality anymore; in fact, there aren’t even any real “frontiers” anymore. For the NWO, Texan ideals of independence and freedom are outdated and antiquated. The conspiracy gives its audience an enemy to fight against, an injustice to struggle against. Ultimately, America is failing to address the dark undercurrent of conspiracy coursing through the modern rural identity.

Ironically, globalization appears to be a double-edged sword for Jones. He is hoping to forestall the globalization of America, yet at the same time; he himself is in a way globalizing conspiracy by selling his conspiracy for profit online through membership fees and DVD sales. Globalization is a huge force that is remaking American society. The main effect is that cities across America are making a transition from a local economy to a global economy and this transition is having a devastating impact on rural America. Richard Longworth’s book, *Caught in the Middle: America’s Heartland in the Age of Globalism*, describes the change as one positively effecting companies but not individuals: “Only big companies can spread production and

administration across a dozen countries. Only big stores can afford to deal with these companies.” It is easy to imagine this transition as an attack on rural America, an attack from global corporations and foreign companies. American farms and factories now compete daily with farms and factories in China and Brazil.

Alex Jones’ conspiracy is a suburban Austin mentality imposed onto a New World Order conspiracy structure. In this case, Conspiracy becomes a dialogue for the power struggle between urban and rural Texas. For Jones and his followers, the future of America and Austin’s rural and suburban population share the same fate, destruction at the hands of foreigners, corporate greed, and selfish politicians. According to conspiracy scholar Peter Knight, “Conspiracy theories... express a not entirely unfounded suspicion that the normal order of things itself amounts to a conspiracy.” The “normal order” in America that is emerging is a higher value placed on an urban way of life, and a reduction in value of the country way of life. What will happen to rural life in a political system that regards the urban quality of life as superior? Austin may provide us with the answer; as Austin becomes increasingly globalized, city leaders will face a tough decision on how Austin’s rural past will affect its future.

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