

The Best Conspiracy Theories

NASA Faked the Moon Landings

And Arthur C. Clarke wrote the script, at least in one version of the story. Space skeptics point to holes in the Apollo archive (like missing transcripts and blueprints) or oddities in the mission photos (misplaced crosshairs, funny shadows). A third of respondents to a 1970 poll thought something was fishy about mankind's giant leap. Today, 94 percent accept the official version ... Saps!



THE SCIENTOLOGISTS RUN HOLLYWOOD

The long list of celebrities who have had *Dianetics* on their nightstands fuels rumors that the Church of Scientology pulls the strings in Tinseltown—vetting deals, arranging marriages, and spying on stars.



The much older theory is that Jews run Hollywood, and the Scientologists have to settle for running Tom Cruise.

THE JEWS RUN HOLLYWOOD AND WALL STREET

A forged 19th-century Russian manuscript called "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (virtually required reading in Nazi Germany) purports to lay out a Jewish plot to control media and finance, and thus the world. Several studies have exposed the text as a hoax, but it's still available in numerous languages and editions.

The US Government Was Behind 9/11

Or Jews. Or Jews in the US government. The documentary *Loose Change* claimed to find major flaws in the official story—like the dearth of plane debris at the site of the Pentagon blast and that jet fuel alone could never vaporize a whole 757. Judge for yourself: After *Popular Mechanics* debunked the theory, the magazine's editors faced off with proponents in a debate, available on YouTube.

AIDS IS A MAN-MADE DISEASE

A number of scientists have argued that HIV was cooked up in a lab, either for bio-weapons research or in a genocidal plot to wipe out gays and/or minorities. Who supposedly did the cooking? US Army scientists, Russian scientists, or the CIA. Mainstream researchers point to substantial evidence that HIV jumped species from African monkeys to humans.

Princess Diana Was Murdered

Rumors ran wild after Princess Diana's fatal 1997 car crash, and they haven't stopped yet. Reigning theories: She faked her death to escape the media glare, or the royals snuffed her out (via M16) to keep her from marrying her Muslim boyfriend. For the latest scenarios, check out www.alfayed.com, the Web site of her boyfriend's dad, Mohamed Al Fayed.

Paul is Dead

Maybe you're amazed, but in 1969 major news outlets reported on rumors of the Cute Beatle's death and replacement by a look-alike. True believers pointed to a series of clues buried in the Fab Four's songs and album covers. Even for skeptics, McCartney's later solo career lent credibility to the theory.

Lizard-People Run the World

If a science fiction-based religion isn't exotic enough, followers of onetime BBC reporter David Icke believe that certain powerful people—like George W. Bush and the British royals—actually belong to an alien race of shape-shifting lizard-people. Icke claims Princess Diana confirmed this to one of her close friends; other lizard theorists (there are several) point to reptilian themes in ancient mythology. And let's not forget the '80s TV show *V*.

CHURCH'S FRIED CHICKEN STERILIZES BLACK MEN

Sociologists call this decades-old urban legend a cultural echo of the very real syphilis study carried out on blacks in Tuskegee, Alabama. In another version, KFC is the culprit—and secretly run by the KKK. There's less controversy over whether the biscuits clog your arteries.

THE ILLUMINATI RUN THE WORLD

This ur-conspiracy theory holds that the world's corporate and political leaders are all members of an ancient cabal: Illuminati, Rosicrucians, Freemasons—take your pick. It doesn't help that those secret societies really existed (George Washington was a Mason). Newer variations implicate the Trilateral Commission, the New World Order, and Yale's Skull and Bones society. —LUCAS GRAVES



The Terrorist Attack of September 11, 2001... Was an "Inside Job"

Thanks to the power of the web and live broadcasts on television, the conspiracy theories surrounding the events of 9/11 - when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington - have surpassed those of Roswell and JFK in traction. Despite repeated claims by al-Qaeda that it planned, organized, and orchestrated the attacks, several official and unofficial investigations into the collapse of the Twin Towers (which concluded that structural failure was responsible) and footage of the events themselves, the conspiracy theories continue to grow in strength.

The theories range from those who believe the U.S. Government had prior warning of the attacks but did not do enough to stop them, to those who believe the Bush Administration deliberately turned a blind eye to those warnings because it wanted a pretext to launch wars in the Middle East.

A large group of people - collectively called the 9/11 Truth Movement - cite evidence that an airliner did not hit the Pentagon and that the World Trade Center could not have been brought down by airliner impacts and burning aviation fuel alone.

Many witnesses - including firemen, policemen and people who were inside the towers at the time - claim to have heard explosions below the aircraft impacts (including in basement levels) and before both the collapses and the attacks themselves. As with the assassination of JFK, the official inquiry into the events - the 9/11 Commission Report - is widely derided by the conspiracy community and held up as further evidence that 9/11 was an "inside job". Scientific journals have consistently rejected these hypotheses.

Lee Harvey Oswald was NOT the lone assassin of John F. Kennedy

JFK was shot on Friday, November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas. He was fatally wounded by gunshots while riding with his wife - Jacqueline Kennedy - in a motorcade. The 10-month investigation of the Warren Commission of 1963 to 1964, the United States House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) of 1976 to 1979, and other government investigations concluded that the President had been assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald - who was himself shot dead by Jack Ruby while in police custody.

But doubts about the official explanation and the conclusion that Oswald was the lone gunman firing from the Texas Book Depository overlooking Dealey Plaza where Kennedy was hit surfaced soon after the commission report. Footage of the motorcade taken by Abraham Zapruder on 8mm film supported the growing belief that at least four shots were fired - not the three that the Warren Commission claimed. The moments of impact recorded on the film also suggested that at least one of the shots came from a completely different direction to those supposedly fired by Oswald - evidence backed up by testimony of several eye witnesses. Many believed that several shots were fired by gunmen hiding behind a picket fence on a grassy knoll overlooking the plaza.

In 1979, the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) found both the original FBI investigation and the Warren Commission Report to be seriously flawed. The HSCA also concluded that there were at least four shots fired and that it was probable that a conspiracy existed. However, later studies, including one by the National Academy of Sciences, have called into question the accuracy of the evidence used by the HSCA to support its finding of four shots. Still, many people argue that six shots were fired at Kennedy.

There Were Aliens at Roswell

Roswell was the event that kick-started more than a half century of conspiracy theories surrounding unidentified flying objects (UFOs). Something did crash at Roswell, New Mexico, sometime before July 7, 1947 and - at first - the U.S. authorities stated explicitly that this was a flying saucer. Numerous witnesses reported seeing metallic debris scattered over a wide area and at least one reported seeing a blazing craft crossing the sky shortly before it crashed. In recent years, witnesses have added significant new details, including claims of a large military operation dedicated to recovering alien craft and aliens themselves, at as many as 11 crash sites, and alleged witness intimidation. In 1989, former mortician Glenn Dennis claimed that he was involved in alien autopsies which were carried out at the Roswell air force base.

The conspiracy theory has been fanned by the U.S. military repeatedly changing its story. Within hours of the Army telling reporters that it had recovered a crashed saucer, senior officers insisted that the only thing that had fallen from the sky had been a weather balloon. A report by the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force released in 1995, concluded that the reported recovered material in 1947 was likely debris from a secret government program called Project Mogul, which involved high altitude balloons meant to detect sound waves generated by Soviet atom bomb tests and ballistic missiles. A second report released in 1997, concluded that reports of alien bodies were likely a combination of innocently transformed memories of military accidents involving injured or killed personnel, and the recovery of anthropomorphic dummies in military programs like Project High Dive conducted in the 1950s.

NASA Faked the Moon Landings

Some of the theories surrounding this subject are that the Apollo astronauts did not land on the Moon; NASA and possibly others intentionally deceived the public into believing the landings did occur by manufacturing, destroying, or tampering with evidence, including photos, telemetry tapes, transmissions, and rock samples; and that NASA and possibly others continue to actively participate in the conspiracy to this day.

Those who think that NASA faked some or all of the landings base their theories on photographs from the lunar surface which they claim show camera crosshairs partially behind rocks, a flag planted by Buzz Aldrin moving in a strange way, the lack of stars over the lunar landscape, and shadows falling in different direction. Many commentators have published detailed rebuttals to the hoax claims, and these theories have been generally discounted.

The Illuminati Runs the New World Order

A conspiracy in which powerful and secretive groups (the Illuminati, the Bilderberg Group, and other shadowy cabals) are plotting to rule mankind with a single world government. Many historical events are said to have been engineered by these groups with one goal - the New World Order (NWO). The groups use political finance, social engineering, mind control, and fear-based propaganda to achieve their aims. Signs of the NWO are said to be the pyramid on the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States, strange and disturbing murals at Denver International Airport, and pentagrams in city plans. International organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, the European Union, the United Nations, and NATO are listed as founding organizations of the New World Order.

Shakespeare Was NOT Shakespeare

Who really was the English language's greatest writer? Among the numerous alternative candidates that have been proposed Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, William Stanley (6th Earl of Derby), and Edward de Vere (17th Earl of Oxford), are the most popular. Theorists believe there is a lack of evidence proving that the actor and businessman sometimes known as "Shaksper of Stratford" was responsible for the body of works that bear his name. Very little biographical information exists about Shakespeare.

Paul McCartney is Dead

"Paul is dead" is an urban legend alleging that Paul McCartney died in a car crash in 1966 and was replaced by a look-alike and sound-alike. "Evidence" for McCartney's death consists of "clues" found among the Beatles' many recordings. Hundreds have been cited at various times by various people. They include statements allegedly heard when a song is played backwards, symbolism found in obscure lyrics, and ambiguous imagery on album covers. A few of them are well known, such as the fact that McCartney is the only barefooted Beatle and is out of step with the others on the cover of the *Abbey Road* album.

The AIDS Virus Was Created in a Laboratory

Since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention first reported the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1981, rumors have persisted that the deadly virus was created by the CIA to wipe out homosexuals and African-Americans. Even today, the conspiracy theory has a number of high-profile believers. South African President Thabo Mbeki once touted the theory, disputing scientific claims that the virus originated in Africa and accusing the U.S. Government of manufacturing the disease in military labs. When she won the Nobel Peace Prize, Kenyan ecologist Wangari Maathai used the international spotlight to support that theory as well. Others insist that the government deliberately injected gay men with the virus during 1978 hepatitis-B experiments in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Still others point to Richard Nixon, who combined the U.S. Army's biowarfare department with the National Cancer Institute in 1971. Though the co-discoverers of HIV – Dr. Robert Gallo of the National Cancer Institute and Dr. Luc Montagnier of the Pasteur Institute in Paris – don't agree on its origins, most members of the scientific community believe the virus jumped from monkeys to humans some time during the 1930s.

The Reptilian Elite Are Ruling the World

They are among us!!! Blood-drinking, flesh-eating, shape-shifting extraterrestrial reptilian humanoids with only one objective in their cold-blooded little heads: to enslave the human race. They are our leaders, our corporate executives, our beloved Oscar-winning actors and Grammy-winning singers, and they're responsible for the Holocaust, the Oklahoma City bombings, and the 9/11 attacks ... at least according to former BBC sports reporter David Icke, who became the poster human for the theory in 1998 after publishing his first book, *The Biggest Secret*, which contained interviews with two Brits who claimed members of the royal family are nothing more than reptiles with crowns. The conspiracy theorist and New Age philosopher, who wore only turquoise for a time and insisted on being called Son of God-Head, says these "Annunaki" (the reptiles) have controlled humankind since ancient times; they count among their number Queen Elizabeth II, George W. Bush, Henry Kissinger, Bill and Hillary Clinton, and Bob Hope. Encroaching on other conspiracy theorists' territory, Icke even claims that the lizards are behind secret societies like the Freemasons and the Illuminati.

Jesus and Mary Magdalene Were Married

Jesus and Mary Magdalene might have been married, or so says the Gospel of Philip. Sure, it's the basic plot of *The Da Vinci Code* (the thriller also wraps in conspiracy shibboleths like *Opus Dei* and the Knights Templar for good measure) – but the theory finds its basis in writings from the Gnostic Gospels, which were discovered in 1945 and whose authenticity religious experts still dispute. In the Gospel of Philip, Mary Magdalene, who is referred to as Jesus' *koinonos*, a Greek term for "companion" or "partner", is depicted as being closer to Jesus than any other apostle.

In an exchange between Peter and Mary, he admits to her that "the Savior loved you above all other women" – a tense moment in the scripture that seems to portray the jealousy that the other apostles might have felt for Mary's relationship with Jesus. The only other evidence used to support the theory is a mention of Jesus kissing Mary often, but some say kissing was the custom and it was typical of Jesus to practice it with those close to him. (Remember Judas?)

The Holocaust Never Happened

Despite overwhelming evidence and an admission and apology from Germany decades ago, revisionists continue to claim that nearly 6 million Jews were not killed by Nazis during the Holocaust. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, for one, has called the Holocaust a "myth" and suggested that Germany and other European countries, rather than Palestine, provide land for a Jewish state.

Unlike Ahmadinejad, most revisionists do not deny that Jews were interned in prison camps during World War II; rather, they argue that the number of deaths was greatly exaggerated. Gas chambers are a particular sticking point: Holocaust deniers say they were purely a rumor or, if they indeed existed, were not powerful enough to kill – though evidence and history indicate otherwise. And the photographs of emaciated and dying Jews? Attorney Edgar J. Steele, a revisionist, says, "All those pictures of skinny people and bodies stacked like cordwood were actually of Czechs and Poles and Germans [who] died of typhus, which was rampant in the camps."

The KKK Makes Products Aimed at Killing "Select" Groups of People

The Ku Klux Klan owns certain businesses that sell products meant for genocide, usually via smoking or sterilization. In the rumor mill, tobacco companies are often associated with the KKK. The spelling of Kool, for example, was taken as a sign of Klan involvement. In the early 1990s, R.J. Reynolds became the subject of Klan rumors when it planned to market Uptown menthols in inner cities. Marlboro's packaging was cited as evidence of Klan involvement, including three sideways K's or hooded figures on the crest. When an anti-smoking tract by England's Health Education Authority featured a Marlboro-like pack labeled with three K's, Philip Morris threatened to sue the agency for reviving "defamatory allegations". As a result, the HEA withdrew the pamphlet from schools.

Some people claimed that an ingredient in the batter of Church's Chicken was designed to sterilize black males (or any inner-city resident). In response to the rumor, Church's PR department printed a list of fourteen minority individuals as references-headed by the current director of the NAACP-and included positive hiring statistics showing that 72% of managers and 50% of the board were people of color. California congressman Jim Bates intervened with FDA testing when he heard his constituents' worries about the food's safety.

Princess Diana Was Murdered

Famous people meeting tragic ends are a phenomenon that seems to bring out conspiracy theories. The death of Princess Diana in August 1997 is no exception. The incredible scale of speculation is in evidence on the Internet, where there are an estimated 36,000 Diana conspiracy theories. Among the most popular is that MI6 agents were responsible for Diana's death, believing her relationship with Dodi Fayed a danger to the state. The theory is they blinded Henri Paul (the driver) with an ultra bright light from the Fiat Uno spotted at the scene before switching his sober blood sample for one which showed intoxication. Theorists also claim the Princess was pregnant at the time of her death.

Marilyn Monroe Was Murdered

While the official story is that Marilyn Monroe committed suicide in August 1962, conspiracies have claimed this is impossible as it was a barbiturate enema which killed her, and this could not have been self-administered. Her relationship with JFK and RFK, during which JFK reportedly told her top government and Mafia secrets, is seen as the motive.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami Was Self-Inflicted

The tsunami of 2004 came about due to India's race against Pakistan for nuclear weapons, and the fact that they tested them in the ocean and causing the earthquake which started the tsunami that killed over 200,000 people. Other theories suggest India created the huge waves with electromagnetic pulses and that they had backing, and co-operation, from Israel and the U.S. to wipe out Muslims in the area.

The *Titanic* Didn't Sink

It wasn't RMS *Titanic* that sunk in April 1912... but rather its sister ship the *Olympic*. Rather than stump up for repair costs after the *Olympic* crashed, the shipping line switched ships, crashed the *Titanic*, and cashed in on a massive insurance payout. This theory revolves around the fact that the ship's owner cancelled his ticket and boiler men resigning.

Queen Elizabeth Was...a Man

The story goes that in 1542, Henry VIII was on his way to a hunt at Berkeley, and left his nine year-old daughter, Elizabeth, at Overcourt in Bisley (now a home, but once a royal hunting lodge), where she would be safe from the plague which was prevalent in those days. Unfortunately for Elizabeth and her temporary guardians, the princess - according to the legend - died, but the courtiers, ever fearful of their royal master, devised a cunning plan. A substitute for the princess had to be found before the king returned, but alas, no girl could be found who closely enough resembled the recently deceased Elizabeth. So they opted for Plan B - and found a red-headed boy in the village instead. If the legend is to be believed, Master/Mistress Elizabeth must have been very convincing, as history tells us that Elizabeth went on to be a great queen, reigning for 45 years. Conspiracies point to the fact that Queen Elizabeth I never married, which, was very unusual during that time; she was completely bald, covering her head with wigs; she had left explicit instructions that no post-mortem should be carried out on her body after her death; she wore lots of white powder to cover a five o'clock shadow; she wore giant ruffs around her neck to hide her Adam's apple; her remains were reburied, but no-one knows where, and no grave has ever been found.