

9/11: Say It Ain't So, Howard Zinn!

Searching for the truth about what happened on 9/11 "is a diversion."

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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Howard Zinn, 86-year old folk hero, activist, professor, historian, and author of one of the great books of American popular literature, *A People's History of the United States*, is telling people that searching for the truth about what really happened on 9/11 "is a diversion."

Say it ain't so, Howard Zinn!

He used the word "diversion" several times during an interview on The Real News Network with senior editor Paul Jay.

http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=3553

Here are some excerpts:

"There are some issues that are interesting but are diversions from what we really have to do. This is one of them."

"Maybe there was a conspiracy. Who knows?"

"It'll go on and on and on and people will write books and talk about it; it'll be an enormous waste of good energy... I just don't think that it leads anywhere."

In the interview, Paul Jay points out to Zinn that much of current U.S. foreign policy, such as the Afghan War, "still has its roots in 9/11." Making it clear that no matter what we may think about conspiracies, Jay states that peculiarities about 9/11 are part of the historical record.

For instance, he cites the fact that then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice acknowledged to the 9/11 Commission that she had been warned about an attack by Osama bin Laden during the summer of 2001 but that she did nothing about it. Jay also points out that "hundreds of thousands or even millions of Americans" question the official version.

Zinn: "It will never be clear. It will be one of those situations where nobody will ever be able to prove anything, and it will lead us nowhere."

To be fair to Zinn, he also states that "9/11 was used as an excuse by the Bush administration to go to war," but adds that what should be investigated is, "Why are there people in the world who want to blow up our buildings, who want to scare the American people, who want to do terrorist [things]," and who "are enraged by American foreign

policy.”

He says, “We should be concentrating on in what way is American foreign policy responsible for the terrorism that exist in the minds and hearts of so many people in the world and which in a small number of them results in violent acts.”

It reminds me of another famous 9/11 conspiracy debunker, Professor Noam Chomsky. On October 6, 2006, Chomsky said on ZNet: “One of the major consequences of the 9/11 movement has been to draw enormous amounts of energy and effort away from activism directed to real and ongoing crimes of state, and their institutional background, crimes that are far more serious than blowing up the WTC would be, if there were any credibility to that thesis.” <http://www.oilempire.us/chomsky.html>

It would be easy to criticize Zinn for failing to be consistent. He knows how important the study and writing of history really is. In his *People’s History of the United States* he set out to correct the record about the role of the labor movement, U.S. imperialism in Latin America and around the world, the violence of our culture, and many other issues.

Zinn knows, as we all do who have worked in the genre, that the writing of history is about discovering the truth. We know that absolute truth about the past is an impossibility. But we can try to get close, because the truth matters. A good historian is a scientist, attempting to draw conclusions from factual data. A good historian knows that even small discoveries, properly validated, can change the way we view the past and make decisions in the present.

But doesn’t what Zinn is saying about 9/11 go beyond the writing of history? Isn’t he suggesting by talking about “the people who want to blow up our buildings” that it is probable that those who carried out the 9/11 attacks really were a few angry Arabs with box-cutters, just like the Bush administration told us? Isn’t he asking us to buy into the government’s own flawed conspiracy theory regardless of whether we think the World Trade Center towers were brought down by controlled demolition or the Pentagon was attacked by a missile rather than an airliner, or whatever?

It doesn’t seem to me Howard Zinn really is saying we’ll never know what actually happened on 9/11 or that trying to find out is a “diversion.” It seems to me that what he is saying is itself a diversion. Please correct me, Mr. Zinn, if I am wrong.

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