

MYTH #2:

**JEWS CONTROL THE BANKS, MEDIA, HOLLYWOOD,
EVEN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT;
JEWS HAVE A SECRET PLOT TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD**

Where does it come from?

Anti-Semites point to “The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion” as proof of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate world political and economic sectors as well as media. This proven forgery, written by agents of the Russian czar in the late 19th century, claims to be the minutes of a secret meeting of Jews that details plans of Jewish leaders to rule the world. The proven forgery spread throughout the 20th century and continues to this day to promote the stereotype that the Jews own the banks and control the media.

In 2004, much of the Arab world watched a television mini-series based on “The Protocols” produced by the government of Syria and presented as the truth to its viewers. Among many lies, the broadcast included depictions of Jews killing a Christian boy for blood to make matzah for Passover and the brutal execution of a Jewish merchant by his fellow Jews for keeping his store open on the Sabbath.

The reality is that in societies, like the United States, that have extended rights and freedoms to Jews, individuals who identify as Jews have succeeded. For example, in the 109th Congress (2005-2007 congressional term), 11 Senators identify as Jews. This Jewish success story is not the result of some secret Jewish conspiracy to rule the world.

This myth is also related to the misperception that Jews are different, alien people with strange powers to control others. Some people who have never met Jews, or do not know them well, can build up some strange ideas about what Jews are like. During different historical periods, Jews were accused of killing Christian children, causing plagues, and setting out to destroy Christian society. If something went wrong, the Jews were said to have planned it. Today, there are even those who claim that AIDS was invented by Jewish doctors.

What are the facts?

It is easier to blame one group for everything bad that happens rather than try to understand the complex and multifaceted causes of problems. Conspiracy theories have always tended to be popular in difficult economic times, and Jews often surface as the traditional scapegoat. Many white supremacist groups today thrive on conspiracy theories and blame not only Jews, but also African Americans, immigrants, and even the Federal Government for everything that goes wrong.

The charge that Jews have been trying to take over the world is especially absurd in light of Jewish history. In almost every country where Jews have lived, they have been a small minority and have experienced centuries of persecution.

Jews have played a large part in the development of the movie industry and some find themselves in high-profile positions. Steven Spielberg and Barbra Streisand, among others, are examples of Jewish people with much status and power in Hollywood, but one only needs to watch the Academy Awards to see that Jews do not dominate the movie industry. Likewise, Jews constitute a small minority of the heads of Fortune 500 companies such as IBM, Exxon, and GE.

How can we respond?

It is important to recognize that this can be a subtle kind of anti-Semitism because we may not encounter it directly, but with a sudden, unexpected comment that can take us by surprise such as “Your people control” If someone makes this kind of comment, you might ask, “if Jews really ran the world, why have they been persecuted over the last several thousand years?”

If someone says that Jews own everything, emphasize that Jews are individuals like other Americans and need to be looked at as such. Even though certain high-profile individuals in an industry may be recognizably Jewish, that does not mean that the entire industry “is controlled by Jews.”

Challenge assumptions: Ask if there’s a “_____” way to run a bank or produce a movie. There isn’t a “_____” way, and there isn’t a Jewish way. You could respond with, “Why shouldn’t Jews be involved in the media or finance?”

When faced with the accusation that the war in Iraq is the result of a small group of Jews in the U.S. government, you might point out that President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, then-National Security Advisor and current Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld were all in favor of the war and had the ultimate authority for making decisions for the United States, yet none of them are Jewish. As for the

fact that there are a number of Jews who have attained positions of influence within the U.S. government, it may be useful to point out that Jews are not the only ones who have achieved positions of influence within the U.S. government. It is important to remember not to rely on an individual's group membership to determine success or failure. One must look at a person's success or failure based on his or her individual characteristics.