

# New York Magazine 911 Truth Article - A Response

Thursday, 23 March 2006

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The original article can be found at <http://www.nymetro.com/news/features/16464>

Mark Jacobson's de-brief on the latest currents in the 911 Truth movement, for New York Magazine, March 21 2006, has the feel of damage limitation; but, as with all such attempts, inflicts enormous damage (upon the official story) in the process. What these articles- by the simple fact of their presence in mainstream journals- demonstrate is how far the influence of independent researchers- has spread, and the continuing momentum the 911 Truth case is building.

Actually, Jacobson is engagingly fair-minded. Perhaps this is inevitable, considering that it is the authorities' silence on vital issues surrounding the 911 mystery, which prompted the necessity of the so-called Truth movement in the first place. He gives a lot of space to the sceptics' arguments, drawing on an impressively broad plethora of facts and resources. When it comes to defending the state-spun version, however, even the central protagonists admit to confusion.

Dr S. Shyam Sunder, the head of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Trade Centre report, admits difficulty in getting a handle on Building Seven. And despite the prosaic conclusions of the report (which Jacobson characterises as "fire and planes did it") the doctor evinces sympathy for those who cite opposing reports (such as authored by BYU Professor Steven Jones) to justify suspicions that explosives were used.

Ultimately, of course, it would do Jacobson's nicely-poised career do good at all to be seen to be too forgiving of conspiracists. In the now time-honoured tradition, therefore, he alternates between bouts of philosophising and simple name-calling in his earnest, showy attempts to finally nail down this strange social phenomena.

His first concern, typically, is to broach fears that the 911 Truth movement is associated with anti-Semitism. He quotes an anonymous activist who claims "there are people in this movement who are Nazis. You have to draw the line at Holocaust denial." It is an obvious attempt at thoughtstop, of course (but one which may prove problematic for the movement to rebut; not because it is true but because it is ubiquitous.) The immediate association of Holocaust revisionism with Nazism is another semantic legerdemain. Is the fate of all historical questioning to be held on a par with the Unpardonable Sin of "denial"?

After this initial foray into high-mindedness, Jacobson hits his stride (and finds his level) with a series of "late-night talk radio, Da Vinci Code synchronicities. With Dan Brown presently in London, debating the ownership of his novel's ideas is timely to consider that Brown's success has presented the enemies of independent thinking with another catch-all smear with which to tarnish suspected dissidents. Just as his success has been used to rubbish serious research into the Rennes-le-Chateau enigma (and its off-shoots) "the Da Vinci Code! charge can, and will be used to dismiss alternative ideas in entirely unrelated fields- as this quotation proves.

The synchronicities and coincidences Jacobson highlights are, as 911 students know, extensive and remarkable. Despite this, he refuses to even consider that they may have any broader significance except as entries into the Fortean compendium which appears to define his conception of the world. Any attempt to draw connections- of even a speculative kind- between coincidences, no matter how numerous, draws charges of "magical thinking": upon which, we are reliably informed, "the conspiracist" has "always relied."

In response, it might be countered that even magical thinking is preferable to none at all, which is what Jacobson seems to wish upon us. In his insistence that "the conspiracist's obsessive attempt to make sense where there is no sense" represents a kind of "(paranoid) art" he is committing us all to a world where the arbitrary reigns supreme, a world in which the self-evident is displaced by all-pervading chaos. This, indeed, is the preferred world-view of the authors of the Kean report, according to whom responsibility for the events of 911 lies with precisely no-one, not even- can it be said with any degree of certainty- the nineteen box-cutting hijackers. Those images, so familiar to us all, are mere illusion; our attempts to extract meaning from them are a crass sort of category error: an ontological faux-pas.

I consider the advocates of such arguments "consensualists" of the lowest order: deeply enamoured of consensual reality and unwilling to posit the existence of forces above or beyond the ability of their carnal senses to verify. It is worth remembering that this slide into existential mysticism was roundly dismissed by Freud as an attempt to escape the responsibilities and duties of adulthood through an "oceanic" identification with the parent, or God. Perhaps it provides its adherents with their vicarious mystical kicks, considering they have long since jettisoned all traces of magical thinking from their forebrains. Whatever, it is certainly highly convenient for those who (logic dictates) really do know what happened, who really were responsible, and who may yet actually be incarcerated for a very long time for their treason.