

WHEN DID CLARENCE THOMAS GO TO THE KOCH CONSPIRACY FEST? AND DID HE BRING GINNI?

As you've no doubt heard, the right wing conspiracy does exist. As the NYT reported the other day, the Koch brothers host semi-annual secret get-togethers to strategize with other rich conservatives and media people about how to advance their views.

The participants in Aspen dined under the stars at the top of the gondola run on Aspen Mountain, and listened to Glenn Beck of Fox News in a session titled, "Is America on the Road to Serfdom?" (The title refers to a classic of Austrian economic thought that informs libertarian ideology, popularized by Mr. Beck on his show.) The participants included some of the nation's wealthiest families and biggest names in finance: private equity and hedge fund executives like John Childs, Cliff Asness, Steve Schwarzman and Ken Griffin; Phil Anschutz, the entertainment and media mogul ranked by Forbes as the 34th-richest person in the country; Rich DeVos, the co-founder of Amway; Steve Bechtel of the giant construction firm; and Kenneth Langone of Home Depot.

Sure, we've known that rich people work like this for a while; this report simply provides documentation of it.

But one detail of the NYT report deserves further scrutiny: the report that Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia have attended the gathering.

To encourage new participants, Mr. Koch offers to waive the \$1,500 registration fee. **And he notes that previous guests have included Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas of the Supreme Court,** Gov. Haley Barbour and Gov. Bobby Jindal, Senators Jim DeMint and Tom Coburn, and Representatives Mike Pence, Tom Price and Paul D. Ryan. [my emphasis]

Again, it's not a surprise that the guy who duck-hunted with Dick Cheney while reviewing a suit involving the Vice President would hang around with the conservative elite.

But the report raises a whole slew of questions.

Think Progress has an important post looking at how Scalia and Thomas have been instrumental in loosening campaign finance regulations, which has made it a lot easier for people like the Kochs to buy elections.

But Scalia and Thomas have been involved in more than just rulings that make it easier for the Kochs to win election.

After all, they once cast two of the only nine votes to matter in the 2000 Presidential election.

They've not only issued rulings that make it easier for conservatives to win elections, they've decided an election. And one of the most obvious explanations for why Thomas and Scalia have attended at least one of these secret shindigs but not Sam Alito or John Roberts would be if they attended before the latter two were SCOTUS Justices. You know, back before Thomas and Scalia selected a President.

So did Thomas and Scalia attend a meeting strategizing how to win elections before the decided one?

And then there's the other question: whether Ginni Thomas, the founder of an organization that bridges mainstream conservatives with the

TeaBagger movement, attended the gathering.

The invitation from this year's shindig shows that most attendees bring their spouses. So if Thomas followed the norm, then Ginni would have attended with him. Which would put Ginni Thomas, now a big player in the TeaBagger movement, at an event hosted by the guys who are bankrolling the TeaBagger movement.

The Koch brothers would already be leading candidates to be funding Liberty Central. The Koch brothers would already be leading candidates to be the source of the \$500,000 or \$50,000 donations from undisclosed individuals to Liberty Central. The Koch brothers—and their funding of TeaBagger activities—have been central in opposing the health care reform that Liberty Central has called unconstitutional.

But it would be very neat if the Koch brothers recruited Ginni Thomas to front this group at their secret cabal meeting, wouldn't it?