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Dr. Collins

## *American Folklore: Government is Corrupt*

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If you ask most people how they feel about government you will hear everything from “Their all a bunch of liars” to “They are up to something”. Regardless of where your opinion lies along this spectrum, you probably feel the same. This is not unusual. It is a folk belief that government, politicians, etc. are corrupt and not to be trusted. The way this all becomes evident, without even asking peoples’ personal opinions, is to read the nearest article in print that has anything to do with government or its organizations and affiliates. Another issue affecting our government is the lack of respect we give these ‘elected’ officials. We put them where they are and yet we don’t give them the respect they deserve. Most think it is because they don’t deserve our respect or appreciation because they’re -you guessed it- CORRUPT. So back to the point, where did we get this insatiable desire for conflict? It is human nature. However, the media “feeds the frenzy” by making us more suspicious and in the end, cynical. News media is infatuated with the idea of the “real scoop”. Without some form of conflict there would be no interesting story and in turn, no readers. Have you ever tried to read a straight news story about the government where no one is in trouble or in question? They are pretty dry and boring. We, the American people, like conflict.

With all this understood, just how does the print media get the effect and readership they desire? They use many different techniques in trying to make a story interesting. When all these devices come together, they can be a powerfully convincing force.

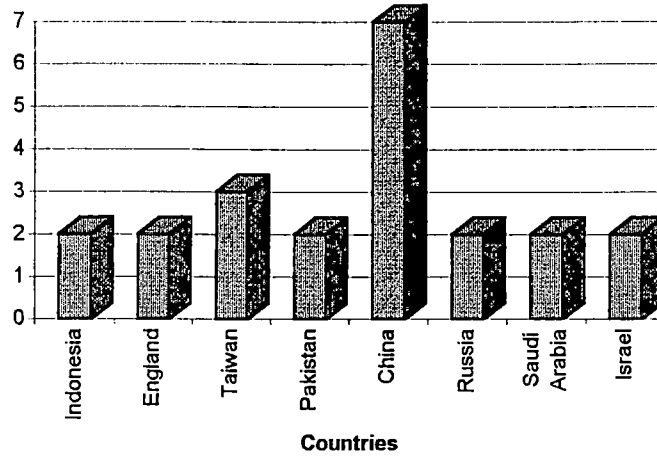
One way is to use the method of name dropping. Many people scan over articles, but will stop when they see names that are important or have been involved in scandal before. The articles I read used the names below to try and pull the reader in. Often times, the person listed had no impact on the topic of the article at all. Their name was simply used as a 'point of entry'.

Attorney General, Janet Reno	2
Sec. of State, Madeleine Albright	2
Bill Clinton	14
Al Gore	3
Benjamin Netanyahu	2
Ambrosius Tung Young	3
Newt Gingrich	4
Ronald Reagan	2
Haley Barbour	5
George Bush	3
Sen. Fred Thompson	4
Kelly Flinn	3
Paula Jones	2
John Huang	3

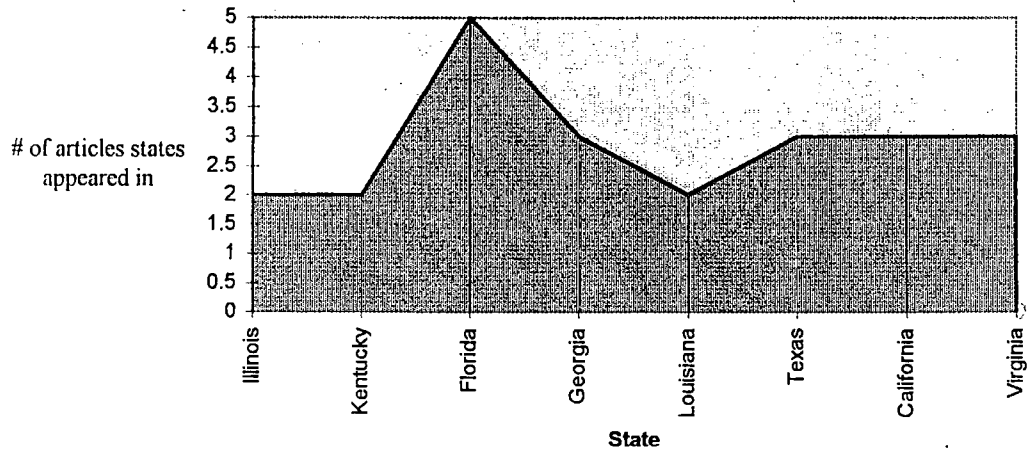
Some of these names were also used if they were not recognizable to most. The reporters seemed to want people to say "Who's That?" and then read on to find out.

Another way for the articles to draw readership was to try and make them more personalized. Also, Americans have preconceived stereotypes about certain places in the world. If a foreign nation or state in the U.S. is "preconceived" to be 'bad', 'crime infested', etc. then you can be sure that it was mentioned. The graphs on the next page show the states and foreign nations mentioned.

### Foreign Conspiracy



### States Involvement



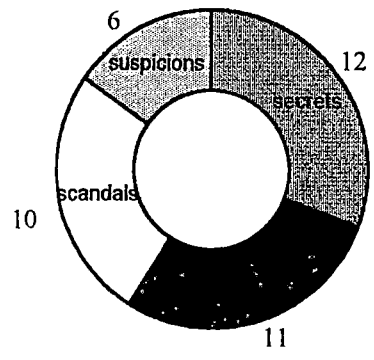
However, of all the devices used by the writers of these articles to imply conspiracy, the choice of the words they use in their description are the most forceful. The authors used words to implicate trouble, depict guilt, and cause question. They used words like the following to show that there was definite 'wrong-doing' going on. The

proof is in the fact that other words could have been chosen. Words that didn't have such a negative connotation.

explaining	4
confessing	4
depositions	1
subpoena	4
testifying	2
settlements	2
negotiations	4
hearings	5
deal	8

The words above have a more questioning connotation attached, perhaps. The ones in the next graph not only have a negative connotation, but they also give the reader an extremely cynical view of the government. These words are obviously being used for no other reason than to put question into the minds of the readers about the topic of the article: Government.

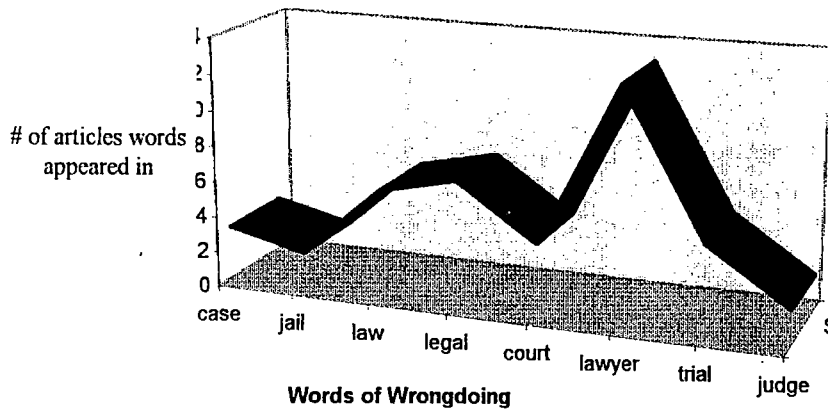
**Words to put Questions in our Minds**  
(# of articles appeared in)



Many might think that the print media would lose credibility if they used words like that too often. They might if they didn't back-up their reports, whenever they could,

with official terms to make their stories more reputable. Words that show there was a definite crime or the law was involved. For example:

Implicating Trouble

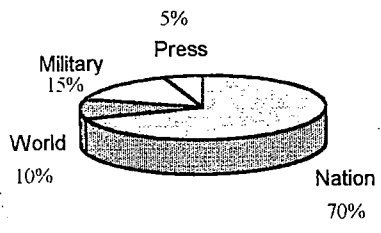


It is important to remember that without the folklore belief to back up this kind of 'suspicious' journalism these articles would have never been written this way.

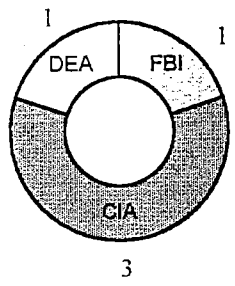
Journalists write what they know people will read. They write it the way people will read it. The best thing, as readers, that we can do is recognize it for what it is- FOLKLORE.

Because it is folklore doesn't mean it is good or bad; because most everything we believe and encounter every day is based on folklore or is folklore. It is not a question of what is right or wrong it is a question of "What I choose to believe" and, maybe more importantly, "What I don't believe".

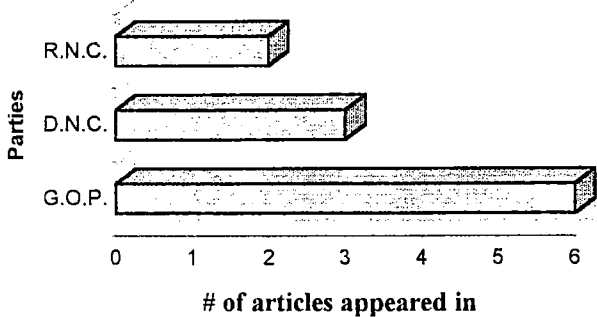
### Topics of Conspiracy in 20 Articles



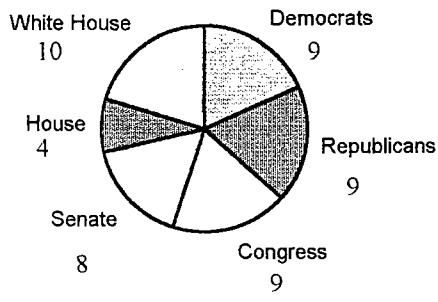
### Number of Articles Listing These "Secret" Organizations



### Party Conspirators

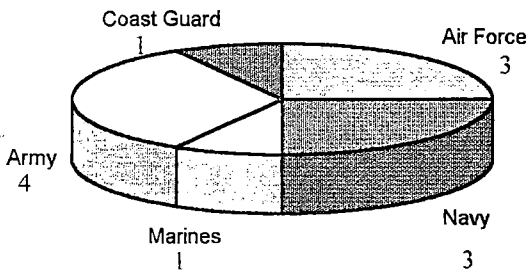


### "On the Hill" Conspirators (# of articles appeared in)



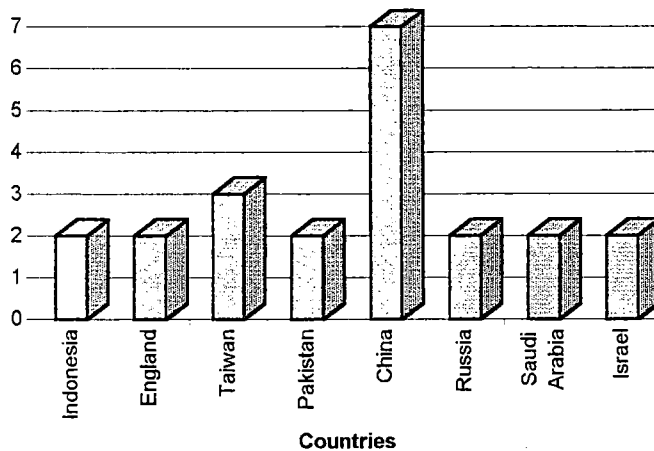
### Armed Forces Conspiracy

(# of articles appeared in) - -



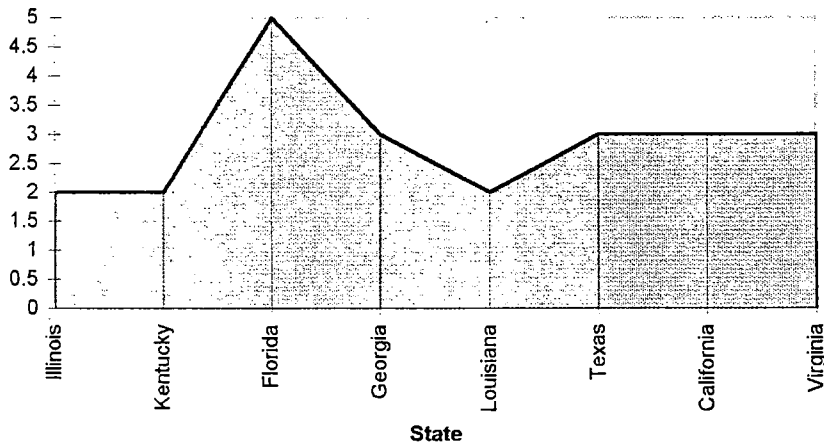
### Foreign Conspiracy

(# of articles appeared in)



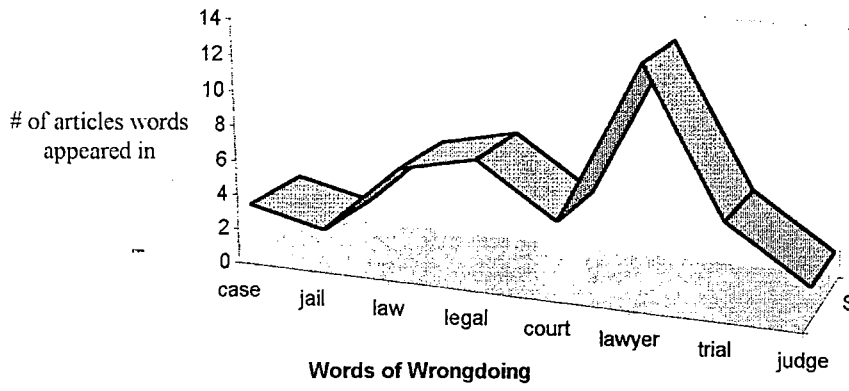
### States Involvement

# of articles states appeared in

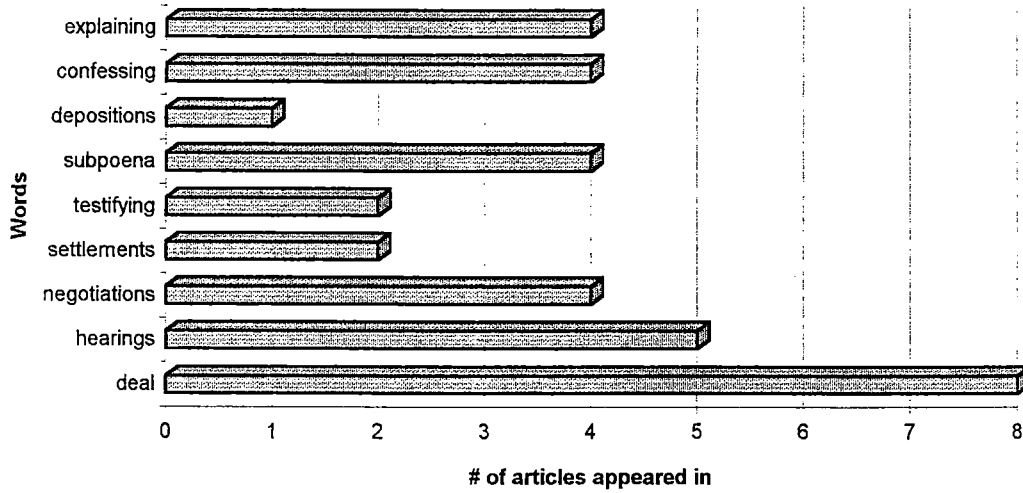




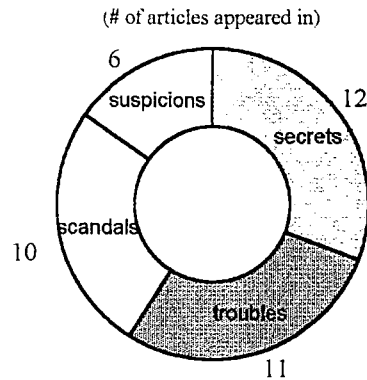
### Implicating Trouble



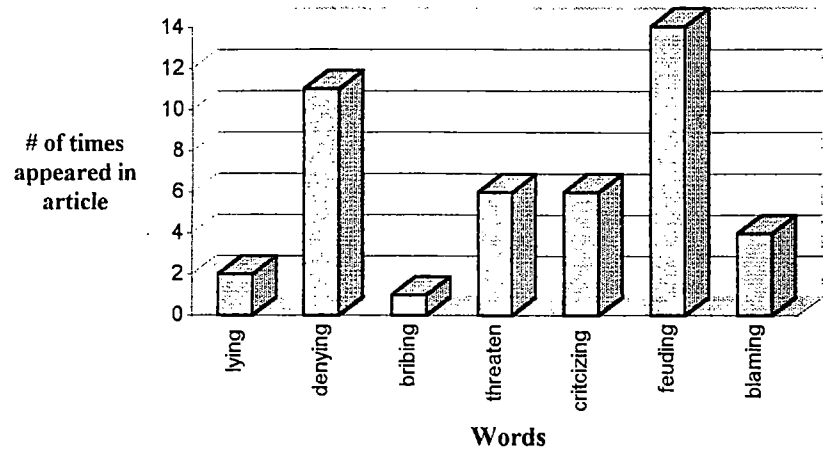
### Word Used Depicting Guilt



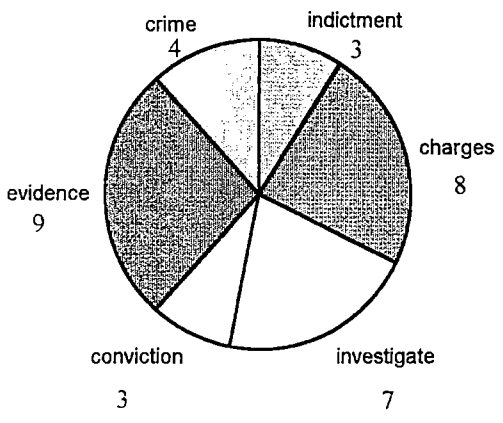
### Words to put Questions in our Minds

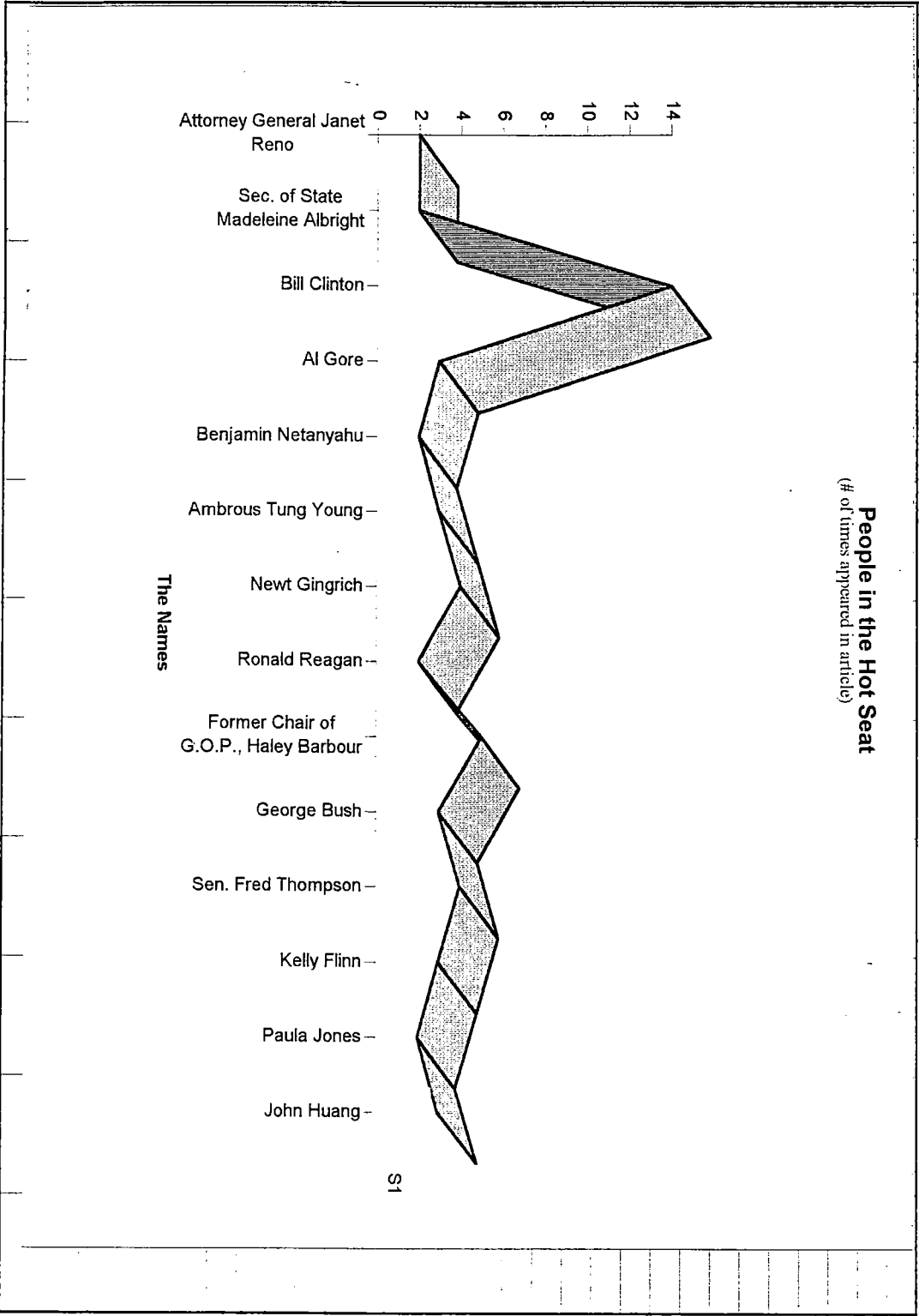


### Innocent: No Matter What it Takes



### "Official" Words of Guilt (# of articles appeared in)





People in the Hot Seat  
(# of times appeared in article)

The Names

S1