



Earth Manifesto

AMAZING DISGRACE

A Save the World Publication
by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, creator of the online Earth Manifesto
and publisher of the Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto
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A beautiful rendition of *Amazing Grace* resounds in my mind as these words precipitate into the public arena of broadening awareness.

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
T'was blind but now I see.

This essay relates the story of John Newton, a reprobate scoundrel and slave trader who prayed to God to save him during a violent storm off the coast of Ireland in 1748, and after surviving the scare he repented and became a preacher who embraced a path of virtue and honest rectitude. Newton later wrote the lyrics to *Amazing Grace*, the highly respected anthem of hope, courage, transformation and redemption, and a song that is often sung at times when people are experiencing a social crisis of conscience.

Each and every one of us human beings has many opportunities to choose to honorably demonstrate the better angels of our character, or alternatively to give free reign to the worse devils of our nature. Every day presents us with opportunities to show others our virtuous sides, or to miss the mark by indulging in selfishly misguided activities or engaging in mean-spirited actions.

We cannot afford to continue treating our vital home planet like a business in liquidation, or like a corporation headed towards bankruptcy due to mismanagement, rigged competition or condoned malfeasance. Despite this understanding, leaders in the USA are launching mankind into a zealous new realm of rash risk-taking with their debt-financed economic stimulus, encouraging of financial speculation, deregulatory casino capitalist strategies, encouraging of corporate cost externalizing schemes, bubble economic policies, failure to address the causes of intensifying disruptions of the global climate, mindlessly materialistic consumerism, and politically corrupt system-rigging abuse of the influence of Big Money. *The understandings in Comprehensive Global Perspective: An Illuminating Worldview provide deeper context to these ideas. Check it out online, and see Chapter #7 - A Vast and Rash Uncontrolled Experiment, in particular.*

The insightful writer Naomi Klein gave a brilliant presentation titled *Addicted to Risk* in a great talk at a TEDWomen Conference in 2010. She indicated that we have become far too willing to gamble with things that are precious and irreplaceable. How can this collective recklessness be explained? There are, of course, many contributing factors, as Naomi Klein noted in her talk, which she gave soon after the BP Gulf oil spill. These factors include greed, hubris, a surfeit of confidence in the righteousness of close-minded convictions, a male eagerness to take risks, and the perils inherent in embracing a top priority of giving excessive perks and privileges to the few. All these factors are rationalized by archetypal narratives that tell us that we human beings deserve to reign supreme over others, and over Nature. Unfortunately, Mother Nature is absolutely unforgiving, so we should work with her rather than against her, and protect her instead of ravishing her habitats, wildlife and ecosystems.

God and Mother Nature both share one overarching moral value -- they demand that we be more responsible in our relationships with the environment and with others. What is morally right in a society is what is consistent with the greater good. If there is a God, wrote John Fowles in his eminently thought-provoking book *The Aristos*, that God has paid very poor wages in the 20th Century. And early indications and extrapolations indicate that the 21st Century is going to be much worse, especially if too many leaders continue to oppose intelligent foresight in planning for future well-being.

We simply must tackle big issues head on, like addressing fresh water shortages, land degradation, disruptions of weather patterns, global warming emissions that will cause destructive sea level rises and intensified storm surges, overpopulation and species extinctions, as well as outrageously anti-egalitarian social engineering policies. And we need to alter the hyper focus our leaders have on short-term profiteering and regressive changes in taxation that serve to goose the inequalities between the masses and the power-abusing rich.

Thomas Paine famously declared that we have it in our power to make the world over again, and one thing is crystal clear: We need to take action now! A bugle horn sounds for solidarity of purpose. Providentially, good solutions abound to the myriad of truly big problems in the world today, and it would not be that hard or expensive to adopt them, except for the intractable intransigence of uncompromising abusers of governmental authority who are dictating the increasingly unfair terms of the social contract to *We the People*. Great ways to ensure that the overall hopes of the American people would be realized would be for us to honestly create more favorable conditions by implementing *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Make America Great Again*. Check it out online, or in *Common Sense Revival - Book One of the Earth Manifesto*.

The Office of Government Ethics has declared that it is essential to the success of our republic that citizens can trust that the decisions made by the representatives of the people are motivated by the public good, not by narrow personal interests. The American people have very good reasons to distrust the current domineering party in power.

Humanity is at a juncture in history when we need to honestly address a daunting litany of existential challenges. As world population approaches 8 billion needy people within the next 7 years, we are faced with resource limits, critical shortages of fresh water, internecine strife between capitalists and working people, violent global conflicts, a worldwide refugee crisis, global extinctions of wildlife that sadly include biotic calamities in species living in coral reef communities, and increasingly costly natural disasters that are being made crucially worse by poorly regulated emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and strongly correlated episodes of extreme weather events, powerful hurricanes, harsh droughts and terrible wildfires. At the same time, an excess of irresponsibly greedy people are hell bent on increasing the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and with about half of the world's wealth already belonging to the richest 1%, who are jealously hoarding it. This is causing social strife to intensify and revolutionary conflicts to heat up, and right wing leaders are seizing control by using divisive schemes in nations around the globe to repress these threats to their hegemony and to abuse their ill-gotten authority for the purpose of further enriching the rich.

One of our biggest problems in the USA today is that inequalities of income and wealth have reached risky extremes that are the worst since 1929. The richest 10% of Americans currently owns more than two thirds of the nation's wealth, and at the same time more than 75% of full-time American workers live paycheck to paycheck, and wages are not nearly keeping up with the rising costs of food, education, healthcare, home ownership, rent, insurance and most consumer goods. An honest evaluation of how to really make America greater would conclude that we need to make the economy fairer by reversing the structural status quo that promotes ever-increasing inequalities and harshly rigged outcomes by means of grotesquely corrupt influence peddling. The vast majority of people will be better off when they really are better off, not when wealth and power are increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few.

Budgets are, in effect, moral documents because they have determining impacts on economic outcomes and people's lives, and on the environmental commons upon which all future well-being is crucially dependent. All tax and spending decisions involve trade-offs, and changes in them create winners and losers. Government budgets and revenue raising plans and allocations of spending reveal the real priorities of those who design them, and the decisions bring codified into law today are far-reaching and immensely consequential in their impacts, and unconscionably narrowly focused and irresponsible.

The brilliant simplicity of Mark Twain's lampooning words rings down from more than 100 years ago with his observation that we have the best government that money can buy. Today, Big Business has bought our government, and they have bought it at an incredible cheap price. The total amount of money spent on the 2016 elections was a record high, but still it was less than \$7 billion, and only a part of that was spent by corporate entities and rich people. Yet the tax cuts that banks and corporations will be given will total a massive \$1 trillion in the coming decade. That is a sensational "return on investment", equivalent to gambling 7 cents to get \$1,000. Legalized corruption pays damn well, it seems!

Our representatives tend to be bought by the highest bidder. Almost every Congressperson takes big money aimed at helping private interests win government favors. If they took the cash for themselves, it would be illegal, but when they use it to get elected, and to get re-elected to allow them to keep their plum jobs, and to do the bidding of special interest groups, it is legal and sanctioned by politicians opposed to campaign finance reform and even by the five "conservatives" on the Supreme Court with their approval of system-rigging campaign spending in the *Citizens United* ruling.

As 2018 begins, a corruptly financed and deeply unpopular Congress has just rammed through a terribly flawed and astonishingly anti-egalitarian and broadly unpopular tax cut bill that contains more than 1,100 pages of system-rigging provisions concocted by self-interest prepossessed lobbyists for special interest groups. This disgracefully corrupt plan is full of very complex, inequality-stoking, deviously discriminatory, healthcare undermining and trust betraying plans that burden taxpayers with debt. And a historically unpopular president has signed this legislation into law -- "A WIN!" -- in what will prove to be a disastrous plan for the majority of the American people.

The Republican Tax Cuts law will ramp up extreme inequality in the USA by giving people in the top 1% tax cuts averaging more than \$50,000 in 2018 while households earning less than \$25,000 will get an average tax cut of \$60 and middle-class households will get about \$900. And after 10 years, that disparity will get much worse as individual tax cuts expire and corporate tax cuts remain "permanent".

The Republican Tax Cuts law is a risky and fiscally irresponsible plan because it finances tax cuts by borrowing an estimated \$1.5 trillion and adding it to the record high national debt. Even without this folly, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that deficit spending from 2018 through 2027 will add a cumulative \$10 trillion to the national debt from fiscal 2018 to 2027. A rashly irresponsible \$15 trillion of the current national debt has been run up since January 2000, due to the *Sad Implications of the Two Dueling Santa Claus Strategies in Political Economics*. This rapidly growing debt will create increasing risks of a debt crisis, and it will impose a heavy burden of interest expense costs on taxpayers for generations to come.

These problems are made much worse by increasing debt burdens on the majority of Americans. Student debt has increased from less than \$600 billion in 2006 to more than \$1.5 trillion today. Americans also have more than \$1 trillion in credit card debt, which is owed at exorbitant interest rates, and over \$1 trillion in debt on auto loans. All these obligations are at record highs. There is currently a total of more than \$12 trillion in debt that Americans have used to pay for food, housing, cars, education, healthcare and other things.

The debt load for the working poor has nearly quadrupled in the past 20 years, as a percentage of their incomes, and most of them will never be able to repay their debts. These debt obligations are a form of bondage that doom most working people to desperate insecurity, and it is a main contributing factor to more than 40 million Americans living below the poverty level -- the majority of them being women and children. It is also a main reason that the number of people relying on food stamps is higher than ever before.

The Republican Tax Cuts law will speed up the rate at which businesses are able to convert natural resources to cash, facilitating their profit-prepossessed propensity to maximize profits by treating planet Earth like a "business in liquidation". It is crazy to design a law to be "rocket fuel for the American economy" at a time of diminishing reserves of non-renewable fossil fuel resources, excessive amounts of climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions being spewed into Earth's atmosphere, aggressive assaults on public lands, and an imprudent deregulatory zeal that forsakes environmental protections in favor of profiteering and allowing more costs to be unjustly externalized onto everyone in society. The law will initially stimulate economic growth, since deficit-financed tax cuts will be a fiscal

stimulus, but given that the economy is operating at full employment, insidiously faster inflation and higher interest rates will likely result.

Republicans in Congress rammed through this film-flam law, bizarrely ignoring warnings of their own Congressional Budget Office, which stated that high and rising debt will have serious negative consequences for the nation because federal spending on interest payments will increase substantially as a result of increases in interest rates, and lawmakers will have less flexibility to use tax and spending policies to respond to unexpected challenges. The CBO ominously emphasized this risk by pointing out, "The likelihood of a fiscal crisis in the United States would increase.

There would be a greater risk that investors would become unwilling to finance the government's borrowing unless they were compensated with very high interest rates; if that happened, interest rates on federal debt would rise suddenly and sharply." This would critically constrain funding for things like education, military spending, veterans' benefits, healthcare, the social safety net, transportation, the administration of justice, natural disasters and protections of public lands and the environment.

When that time inevitably arrives, all the deceitful Republican sales pitches about how brilliant their Tax Cuts Act will be will have a bright light of ignominy cast on this radically unscrupulous gamble, and the glaring light of hindsight will make it crystal clear that this Act is foolhardy because of its politically corrupt money-grubbing, uncompromising and deviously self-serving design, and its anti-precautionary imprudence in contributing to heightened risks of widespread hardship. Then everyone will see how risky their December 2017 Christmas present gamble will prove to be in running up the national debt to give more money and power to the few.

A particularly unethical last minute middle-of-the-night "Corker Kickback" loophole was inserted into the Tax Cuts law that will give Donald Trump and his family and at least 14 Republican members of Congress tax breaks of millions of dollars each through ridiculously generous benefits for real estate partnerships. Also, income earned by overseas subsidiaries of American companies will be assessed taxes in the U.S. that are half the rate applied to their domestic income (10.5% compared with the new top corporate rate of 21%), so the Republican tax bill thus contains big incentives for American businesses to close their U.S. manufacturing plants and relocate activities overseas.

Republicans also created a strong incentive in their Tax Cuts bill for companies to acquire robots instead of hiring workers. Businesses can claim a 100% deduction for purchasing automation equipment that displaces human workers.

This is an especially foolhardy provision given that a recent study by McKinsey & Co indicated that about one-third of all jobs in the USA could be automated by the year 2030. That is only 12 years away!

Republicans are crowing about how great their Tax Cut plan is for the American people. They have the audacious temerity to claim that "workers are the big beneficiaries" of the corporate tax cut. They point to bonuses announced by more than 50 companies since the passage of the debt-financed tax cuts, which will total roughly \$1 billion, with many lucky employees getting \$1,000 bonuses. Bravo for the largess! However, we should keep this in proper perspective. These bonuses represent less than one-tenth of one percent of the total cost of the corporate tax cut. One-tenth of one percent!

Instead of workers being the big beneficiaries of the tax cut law, this is a dreadful distortion of the truth. "While the bonuses sound impressive, they're table scraps compared to the total cost of the corporate tax cut."

"How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and how hard it is to undo that work again."

--- Mark Twain

It is CEOs, top management and shareholders who will reap by far the biggest benefits of the debt-financed Tax Cuts bill. Many major companies will make massive share buybacks, which primarily further enrich their shareholders. And the wealthiest 1% of shareholders always receive an estimated two-thirds of the total value of all capital gains, so wealthy people will be the biggest beneficiaries of the Republican tax cuts, and what trickles down to the masses will generally be more than offset by coming austerity measures that will cruelly harm the poor and those who lose health insurance and those who rely on social safety net programs. So it can be seen that Republican politicians are mortgaging the future to primarily benefit the few, and in so doing, they are perpetuating a swindle that is driving inequality to very dangerous extremes, making the masses more insecure and vulnerable to the coming economic shock when the debt-fueled bubble bursts.

All of these conditions are contributing to revolutionary unrest in the land of the free, and for salvation we should look to history. The lessons of history teach that an excessive concentration of wealth in a country diminishes the economic and political freedoms of the people. History also shows that extremes in the gap between the few and the many are best remedied by a fairer distribution of wealth. When leaders in a highly unequal nation abuse their power by taking steps to make inequalities even worse, they risk instability, violent discord and a turn toward either revolution or dictatorship. Ominously, ruthless demagogues are generally the candidates most successful in imposing harsh totalitarian rule.

At a time in history with similar extremes between rich and poor in the city-state of Athens more than 2,500 years ago, revolutionary discord was spiking between members of the wealthy aristocracy and an angry populace. The citizens chose a course of wise moderation, giving power to a statesman named Solon who is known as "the father of democracy" for the fair-minded reforms he was able to put into effect. Solon was a skillful negotiator who introduced comprehensive compromises between the hubris-filled rulers and the people, saving the republic from destructive conflict. It should be noted that the democratic rabble had very good reason to be angry in those times, for the government was in the hands of elite factions who were abusing their power by giving most of the benefits of economic activities to themselves, and by corruptly stacking the courts with judges willing to decide every consequential issue against the masses.

A Profligate Economic Boom is Not What We Need

The devil is in the details, as they say, and the details of the Republican Tax Cut law are downright diabolical in their extreme partisanship, brazenly deceitful anti-egalitarian character, naked pandering to the rich, and the insidious degree to which this scam will treacherously burden future taxpayers with riskily high levels of debt.

John Maynard Keynes, "the father of macroeconomics", was famous for having advocated stimulative government spending during recessionary times when business investment was low and rates of joblessness were high, in order to get the economy growing again. Writing after the speculative bubble of the Roaring Twenties had burst and forced the American people to live through the worst economic depression in American history, Keynes also cautioned that during boom times of low unemployment and high debt, the government needed to run offsetting budget surpluses to pay down the debt and keep the economy from overheating in a costly bubble. It is crazily misguided for Republicans today to spike the proverbial punch bowl with shots of stimulative deficit spending at a time when the unemployment rate is at a 17-year low and the national debt is at a risk-laden record high. This is exactly the wrong time to stimulate the economy by giving huge tax breaks to rich people and corporations, and to run up deficit spending.

The economist Robert Samuelson agrees with this assessment, writing in early December 2017 that we do not need a debt-financed economic boom because the unemployment rate of 4.1 percent is the lowest since 2000, and the national debt of more than \$20 trillion is dangerously large. Artificially stimulating a boom with borrowed money to give people tax cuts will inevitably give rise to an eventual severe and protracted bust that will be hugely destructive in human terms -- meaning higher unemployment, lower incomes and widespread hard times. Trump, triumphant, had pushed the passage of the Republican tax bill by claiming that the "massive tax cuts will be rocket fuel for the American economy". Danger ahead!

Enthusiasts of bubble economic policies know that there are more big opportunities for speculators to profit in volatile markets than in stable markets with solid fundamentals. This is one reason why we have booms and busts, and Republicans always contribute most to artificially stimulated, deregulation stoked, cost externalizing, resource squandering, debt-financed booms. And their zeal to abandon good management practices in favor of speculators are always significant contributing factors to the inevitable harm-engendering busts.

Extremes of inequality negatively affect the health and well-being of the vast majority of the people, so national policies are deeply wrong when they serve to dramatically increase inequalities and correlated injustices in our society by giving huge tax cuts to the highest income earners while treating poor people and those in the middle class with outrageously stingy resolve. It is scandalous that Republican lawmakers are being fiscally irresponsible about this largess in giving great benefits to the few by financing this scheme with \$1.5 trillion in borrowed money

and thereby requiring all taxpayers to pay interest expense on this financial obligation in every future year, forevermore.

A group of leading inequality researchers led by this century's most prominent economist Thomas Piketty published the *World Inequality Report* in mid-December 2017. This is a "panoramic study showing how, over the past thirty-seven years, the richest households in many countries have grabbed more and more of the economic pie. In an ironic coincidence, the report came out on the same day that more details emerged about the final version of the G.O.P. tax bill, which Republican leaders pushed through the House and the Senate just before Christmas. In an op-ed that was timed to accompany the release of the *World Inequality Report*, Thomas Piketty and his colleagues warned that the Republican tax bill will "turbocharge inequality" in America. "Although the bill is officially called the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, it could more accurately be labeled the Augmenting-Inequality Act of 2017."

Professor Robert Reich makes it crystal clear in the film *Inequality for All*, and again in *Saving Capitalism - For the Many, Not the Few*, that we should be striving to create a more inclusive and moral economy in which a virtuous circle reigns, not a vicious circle. The American people should stand up together and declare that they are as mad as hell at power-abusing politicians, and that they're not going to take it anymore, and that they want a peaceful progressive populist revolution right now. I call on all Americans to make their voices heard in favor of fairer national policies and smarter national priorities. New, more honest and less greedily myopic management is needed!

Thinking about the people getting as mad as hell at politicians and declaring that they are not going to take it anymore, let us recognize that anger is not good for the soul, and let us smile broadly in our convictions in the righteousness of resistance to leaders who swindle people, lie to them, cheat them, distract them with divisive rhetoric, and act in ways that detrimentally engineer society and sacrifice the environmental commons to satisfy greed and gain more power. Let's adopt a philosophic equanimity in our understanding, and respect the words once conveyed by the Dalai Lama about the need for a sense of urgency to accomplish important goals.

The middle class is the most politically and economically stable part of our society, so it is dangerous to subject people in the middle class to increasing hardships and insecurities. The foundation of a strong middle class in America was a history of consistently rising real wages for 35 years after the Depression of the 1930s and World War II, as economic circumstances improved for millions of American workers and the value of their compensation increased in conjunction with greater productivity. But beginning with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, Republicans began to alter this trend by engaging in a crusade to undermine the collective bargaining power of employees, and they made matters worse with regressive changes in the tax structure designed to give bigger and bigger slices of the economic pie to the few and to erode the security of working people.

The increasingly polarized "tribal politics" in the USA today "has devolved into a winner-take-all blood sport", as the editor of *The Week* magazine recently observed. Ethical considerations guided by a fair-minded understanding of the consequences of actions tell us that today's divisive ruses are exceedingly harmful, for they pose grave threats to the security, well-being, general welfare, domestic tranquility and future prospects of the American people.

Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley defended his party's tax plan by declaring that plans to reduce the estate tax mean that people will use their money more wisely. "I think not having the estate tax recognizes the people that are investing, as opposed to those that are just spending every darn penny they have, whether it's on booze or women or movies", said Grassley in a revealingly harsh judgment of the majority of American workers, who are living paycheck to paycheck and therefore don't have money to invest, and can't cash in on the spoils of the artificially stimulated stock market boom created by irresponsible borrowing increasingly risky quantities of money from the future. Providence cries out!

The arena of tax law is subject to the most intense focus of political influence of any aspect of government, since it involves money and greed and is thus a primary area for elite factions to abuse influence and power. Tax law is highly prone to egregious political corruption, and the Republican Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that has been sneakily codified into law is a shamefully uncompromising and irresponsible scheme that caters to special interests and is a devious compilation of broadly unfair plans that stoke inequality, undermine education, impede clean energy initiatives, squander natural resources, try to refute the best scientific understandings, allow too many costs to be

externalized, burden all taxpayers with excessive debt, and betray the best interests of people in the future.

Political scientist Norman Ornstein of the conservative American Enterprise Institute declared in a tweet, "There has never been a more outrageous, revolting, unfair process to pass a corrupted bill in the history of Congress." He expressed this opinion eleven years after he co-wrote a book with Thomas E. Mann that blamed "both parties, equally," for the dysfunctional nature of Congress and politics in Washington, D.C. They now write in *How the Republicans Broke Congress* that "... over the past decade it has become clear that it is the Republican Party -- as an institution, as a movement, as a collection of politicians -- that has done unique, extensive and possibly irreparable damage to the American political system."

Republicans seem to have embraced political corruption with a messianic fervor, driven to gain domineering control at any cost and selling their souls to the devil by championing a top priority of giving great benefits and advantages to the rich in the face of existentially consequential economic, social and environmental challenges. They are not only goosing the economy with debt-fueled stimulus, but also increasing the rate at which non-renewable resources are being used up and rashly rejecting conservation and precautionary principles. They are dishonestly trying to convince a hyper-divided populace that their regressive new tax plan is more important than the public health, the well-being of children, protections of the environmental commons and investments in a sustainable future.

These politicians are ruthlessly ruling as though they were given a mandate to push through their hard-hearted and incredibly irresponsible agenda, despite the fact that Trump lost the national popular vote by almost 3 million votes. The fact of the matter is that their mandate is illegitimate because it comes from a small minority of wealthy people, corporate CEOs, greedy people and other corrupt representatives of moneyed interests, not from the true will of the people.

Abraham Lincoln said that all the people couldn't be fooled all of the time. Today, too many people are being fooled by manipulative propagandists, and the voices and best interests of the vast majority sure are being deeply disrespected and ignored in the zeal of rich people to grab bigger portions of the income and wealth generated by the exploitation of natural resources and working people. Inequality is more extreme than it has been since 1929, at the calamitous end of the Roaring Twenties, because the richest 1% of households in the United States now owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined. Any honest tax plan would be more fairly structured so that this extreme level of wealth inequality would be reduced, rather than being made worse. And yet scheming power-abusing "conservative" politicians have just taken a pivotal step with their egregiously devious tax cuts legislation towards further redistributing wealth upwards and permanently stratifying inequalities of income and wealth.

The overarching goal of honestly reforming taxation, and simplifying it and making it fairer has been sacrificed in the Republican tax scam to a plan that is much more regressive, anti-progressive, anti-egalitarian and unfair. "Virtually every independent study has shown that the G.O.P. plan showers most of its goodies (tax cuts) on the richest people in the country while doing little for poor and middle-income households." Once the personal tax cuts and family credits it contains are gradually phased out "... then, according to an analysis by the Tax Policy Center, by 2027 the only group paying noticeably less tax would be the richest 5% of households." And the corporate tax cuts are "permanent", while the personal tax cuts are temporary.

How is it possible in a democracy for power-abusing leaders to get away with this? The reason is basic -- because the vast majority of the American people effectively have no measurable influence at all on public policy. This stark conclusion was confirmed 2 years ago by Professors Martin Gilens of Princeton and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University, who analyzed about 1,800 policy issues and found that "the preferences of the average American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy." LET'S DEMAND BETTER!

Republicans have often used arguments for strong state's rights to hobble the federal government, but now that they control Congress and the White House and are in a position to abuse this one-party power, they are trying to screw progressive-minded states by sending federal agents to enforce U.S. laws on undocumented immigrants and the use of marijuana, and they are trying to open the entire coastline of the United States to offshore oil drilling, and they are forcing double taxation on blue states by limiting deductions for state and property taxes. Apparently, the Hypocrite-in-Chief and his minions only honor state's rights when it comes to restricting voting rights or

enabling businesses to discriminate through "religious freedom" legislation.

Republicans have engaged in extreme gerrymandering of congressional districts, voter suppression tactics and the purging of voter rolls, and these shrewd strategies have given them excessive and harmful influence to disenfranchise millions of American citizens, especially poor people, working people, blacks, Latinos, immigrants, women and advocates for strong protections of clear air, clear water, a stable climate, public lands, wilderness areas, coral reefs and planetary ecosystems. This is simply wrong.

We are seeing that ambition, unchecked by moral constraints, can lead to atrocities. With their debt-financed tax plan, scheming Republicans are trying to codify into law what Senator Wyden of Oregon called a "massive con job". It is likely that they are creating an atrocious brew of powerful trouble, "like a Hell-broth", pitting rich against poor, and people in red states against those in blue states, and one can just imagine hearing the refrain of the witches in Macbeth chanting "Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble."

Listen for the echoes of a stentorian female voice reverberating down from the skies above a burning bush on the Mount, and visualize some cartoon balloons with jagged edges proliferating like lightning bolts across dark skies that spell out the details of how deeply dishonorable and extraordinarily irresponsible the Trump Folly Tax Plan really is, with its anti-environmental, inequality stoking, anti-democratic and despotically authority-abusing features. Another searing flash of lightening illuminates parenthetical footnotes above, which include (1) *The Top Ten Ways Our System is Unfairly Rigged*; (2) *The Thirteen Main Methods Used to Concentrate Wealth and Power*; (3) *The Fourteen Worst Ways that Powerful People Abuse Power*; and (4) *The Con Goes On: A Triumphant Coup by Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalists*. These essays can be found online, and are also included in *See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times - Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto*, available from the on-demand printer Lulu Publishing. These incisive illuminations provide a fuller understanding of the underhanded schemes, scams and hard-times swindles being perpetrated on the American people.

Mark Twain famously observed that we Americans have the best government that money can buy. This satirical ridicule of the corrupting influence of Big Money in politics has become much worse in the USA today, and can accurately be characterized as a preposterous parody of propriety as an epic flood of money has given us rudely anti-egalitarian political leaders who are ruthlessly dishonest, treacherously manipulative and consequentially mean-spirited. These shrewd folks say they care about the best interests of the people, but what they really are doing is selling the vast majority of Americans down the river -- in order maximize profits and give increasingly gargantuan benefits to the few.

The most radical plank in the rotten Republican tax cut plan is to slash corporate taxes from 35% to 21%. It is a Big Lie that this action will significantly benefit working people and those with 401(k) retirement savings plans. Yes, more than 45% of American households have direct or indirect investments in the stock market through 401(k) plans, mutual funds, trusts, pensions or direct purchase of shares, but the top 10% of households own more than 80% of the total value of those investments, while the vast majority have relatively meager holdings. So rich CEOs and shareholders will gain most from these tax cuts. Capital gains on investments, curiously, are taxed at rates that are exceedingly favorable compared to taxes on income from work. Rigged at every turn! In addition, as Steven Rosenthal of the Tax Policy Center estimates, 35% of stock in U.S. corporations is currently held by foreign investors, so a big portion of this giant tax cut will likely end up in the bank accounts of people outside the USA. Borrowing an estimated \$1.5 trillion to give a third of it to wealthy foreigners? Nice going, Donald J. Trump!

This tax cut scam is a "real live experiment" in deficit financed hard-right social engineering that is cunningly designed to increase the already risk-laden extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of the relative few. The outrageously regressive Trump Folly tax con job is built on the trickle-down Big Lie, and represents corrupt values, insane priorities, fiscal irresponsibility and disgracefully extreme changes that would give advantages to high-income earners and already wealthy people at the expense of everybody else. This law would create an economic bubble in the short-term by hyper-stimulating the economy with deficit spending at the wrong time, in a period of low rates of unemployment, cruelly aggressive deportations of tens of thousands of hard working people and record high levels of debt. The treacherous plan would wage war on the poor, betray young people and be a dangerously divisive assault

against social cohesion that would also sacrifice the environment, unconscionably exacerbate ecological risks and portend disaster for the prospects and well-being of all in future generations.

These are tragic times for the American people, as pathologically power-abusing Republican politicians have just delivered great gifts to the rich along with dirty coal in the Christmas stockings of the vast majority of Americans. These sycophants to the donor class are rigging the economic system ever more extremely in favor of wealthy people, and achieving this grotesque top priority by betraying greater good goals, shredding the social safety net, pitting rich against poor, displaying a severe deficiency of empathetic concern, sacrificing the environmental commons, favoring dirty non-renewable sources of energy over clean renewable energy, driving up the risks and future costs of climate-related natural disasters and extreme weather conditions, dangerously piling on the national debt, and undermining the prospects of everyone in the future.

It would be much smarter for us to create a rainy day fund to help pay for natural disasters like destructive hurricanes and Diablo wind-driven wildfires and unanticipated contingencies. There will certainly be countless costly surprises as this century unfolds, so it is a calamitous Trump Folly to champion imprudence by putting the pedal to the metal and driving up the national debt in order to slash taxes on corporations and rich people. Having Republican politicians characterize their plan a Jobs Act is deviously cynical. A true effort to create jobs would invest in working people, students, education, expansive opportunity and physical infrastructure rather than having a primary focus on padding the bank accounts and portfolios of rich people.

A member of the group Patriotic Millionaires named Eric Schoenberg explains in an online video exactly how the Republican tax cut bill would slash his personal income taxes, and he exposes Trump's outrageous lie that the deviously devised tax law would "cost me a fortune, believe me." Bella DePaulo, a social scientist who studies liars and their lies, observes that Trump's lies are more frequent, more self-serving and more malicious than ordinary people's. This is not good.

The Reasons Why the Current State of Affairs is an Amazing Disgrace

Sadly, the USA is barely functioning as a fairly representative democratic republic, though there is hope in the upset victory by Doug Jones over the extreme right politician Roy Moore in the Alabama Senate race on December 12, 2017. An overarching reason for this shortcoming is because the people of the United States have been deeply divided by rashly scheming, deceitful and manipulative demagogues who managed to gain domineering power through a disgracefully corrupt litany of illegitimate means, as set forth in *Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy*. These treacherous frauds are now in the process of "selling the people down the river" to unnecessarily harsh fates with their deeply unjust tax plan scam.

Think about this. While dishonest Republican politicians are selling the American people down the river with their debt-financed one-Party tax plan, again the beautiful sounds of refrains of *Amazing Grace* drift into my consciousness, and a recognition dawns. The lyrics to this great song were written by John Newton, a former sailor involved in the slave trade from Africa to the American colonies who had suffered a traumatic experience during a severe storm in 1748 off the coast of Ireland. Newton found religion after having prayed desperately to God to save him -- and miraculously surviving -- so he converted to evangelical Christianity and became a clergyman. Having once been lost as a crude and unprincipled opportunist in his younger years, he resolved after this crisis of conscience to repent and be found, having been blind and then suddenly seeing, and he changed course and become more morally responsible, respectful and willing to embrace true right action. He later penned a polemic opposing slavery, titled *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, and his moving song *Amazing Grace* is often sung in honor of forgiveness and redemption. Let us sing it now, together, and resolve to be more open-minded and to seek better consensus solutions to big challenges.

Black Africans back in Newton's time were being captured and sold into slavery and brought in miserable conditions across the Atlantic Ocean to a land where they were given no rights. They were often sold down the river to much harsher fates in the Deep South, with or without their families and for many generations. Today, many despot acts are being perpetuated that are much worse than those of King George III in the years leading up to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the Revolutionary War that followed, and modern "conservatives" are

betraying the well-being of the American people and undermining the hopes of hundreds of millions of folks in much more consequentially harmful ways than merely levying taxes on imported tea in the American colonies and refusing to allow fair representation to the masses.

Harriet Beecher Stowe used the lyrics from the song *Amazing Grace* in her anti-slavery sentimental novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The character Uncle Tom was a long-suffering black slave and the novel depicts the harsh reality of slavery while also asserting that Christian love can overcome something as destructive as enslavement of fellow human beings. Perhaps love is all we need? Or at least a more responsible and compassionate empathy.

Humanity is increasingly in desperate need of a better modicum of salvation in the here and now, and our leaders are horribly missing the mark -- a real sin! -- so we must seek salvation and redemption through greater honesty, honorable principles, inclusive understanding, sensible reason, precautionary wisdom and broadened fair-mindedness. Pursuing redemption is a more providential plan than complacently waiting for an imagined afterlife of heavenly good. Most everyone is likely going to the hell place anyway, according to a close reading of holy books, if heaven and hell exist. In our aggregate efforts, we should be guided by the Golden Rule reciprocity principle, and we should make an overarching commitment to the farsighted provisions of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, as proposed in detail in the Earth Manifesto.

Existential Climate Change Considerations

The worst aspect of Donald Trump's policies that put rich people first and damn the poor, and put life on Earth last, are the degree to which his corrupt Oil Politics stand against responsible climate action and serve to eviscerate protections of the environment. Humankind is right now in the grip of perhaps our highest stakes gamble of all -- deciding what to do, or what not to do, about the unfolding climate crisis. Republican leaders are rejecting prudent precautionary principles, and do not seem to have any viable backup plan to deal with the skyrocketing costs of climate disruptions and the far-reaching damaging impacts of their wrongheaded actions. Scientists tell us that we must leave 80% of known reserves of fossil fuels in the ground to prevent a calamitous onset of hotter global temperatures, more destructive hurricanes, hellish wildfires, ominous droughts, creeping desertification, coral reef bleaching, widely affective coastal flooding and a rash increase in the rates at which human being are driving other species of life on Earth toward eternal extinction. Nonetheless, Republican politicians are working to prevent action that would protect humanity from these destructive outcomes. What part of this, in their myopic authority-abusing greed, do they not understand?

Consider an amazingly disgraceful concatenation of facts. In December 2009, Donald Trump and his three oldest children, Ivanka, Donald Jr. and Eric, signed a letter printed in the New York Times, along with dozens of other prominent business leaders, that urged President Obama and world leaders headed to Copenhagen for international climate negotiations to take bold actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The letter stated that, "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet." Most unfortunately, now that there is a huge amount of money and power available to the Trump family by aggressively siding with the fossil fuel industry, they seem to be just fine with pandering to polluting companies, opposing climate action and appointing climate change deniers to positions of power. They thus betray common sense, the common good, integrity, precautionary wisdom and the moral good by contributing to the probabilities that humanity and planet Earth will suffer "catastrophic and irreversible consequences". This is a grotesque repudiation of social responsibility and environmental justice!

The cost and consequences of INACTION on climate issues are economically unacceptable and morally indefensible. Climate science has reached the point that it can definitively say that failure to aggressively try to prevent climate change and mitigate its effects is neither a rational or moral option for a nation or humanity as a whole. And, according to a quote in Joe Romm's fascinating article *It's Not Too Late to Stop Climate Change, And It'll Be Super-Cheap*, "**The \$44 trillion additional investment needed to decarbonize the energy system by 2050 is more than offset by over \$115 trillion in fuel savings, resulting in net savings of \$71 trillion.**" We should be making smart investments like this, improving infrastructure and making neighborhoods and cities more resilient.

Scientists keep being surprised how rapidly environmental conditions are being altered by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and especially how fast ice sheets and glaciers are melting and how severe the episodes of coral bleaching are becoming in tropical oceans. Stubborn denial is a dumbly irresponsible course of action! Professor Garrett Hardin's words from his 1968 treatise on the Tragedy of the Commons resonate resoundingly: "Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons." For an in-depth assessment of best understandings of this extraordinarily consequential issue, see the online essay, *Climate Change Considerations, Carrying Capacity and Population Overshoot*. This essay can also be found in *Big Picture Perspectives and A Pursuit of Social Action - Book Eight of the Earth Manifesto*.

In a sensational example of how easy it would be to make America much more responsible to people in the future, all Americans could go carbon neutral for all carbon dioxide emissions for every mile they drive for less than 10 cents per gallon, or an increase in gasoline prices of less than 5%. Yet Republicans have made "tax" into a dirty word, and the majority of them refuse to even consider a plan that would reduce emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Sensible folks at the Citizens Climate Lobby advocate creating a revenue neutral "Carbon Fee and Dividend" plan that would serve to cut down on wasteful uses of fossil fuels and simultaneously help reduce the dangerous degree of inequality in our society. They propose creating a more livable world through this plan that they say would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 50% below 1990 levels within 20 years, while adding millions of jobs and saving lives. This measure would have the eminently laudable impact of helping mitigate the on-rushing severity of the climate crisis by correcting cost-externalizing market distortions, and at the same time, it would reduce inequality by paying equal monthly dividends from carbon fees to every American household. This initiative would help ensure that families and individuals are able to afford the energy they need during the transition to an economy that generates sharply reduced emissions of greenhouse gases. Phased-in carbon fees on greenhouse gas emissions would be the most efficient, transparent and enforceable mechanism to drive an effective and fair transition to a renewable clean energy economy. Citizens Climate Lobby points out that financial incentives to stop spewing excess carbon emissions into the atmosphere would stimulate investment in alternative-energy technologies and give powerful motivations to all businesses to increase their energy efficiency and reduce their carbon footprints. With visionary commitments to such policies, the USA could once again become a leading force for environmental justice and more responsible approaches to future well-being.

In the consequential matter of smart resource management and conservation, President Theodore Roosevelt once declared, "The nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value." Then he commendably acted to protect 230 million acres of land for the public in the form of 5 National Parks and 150 national forests, along with 51 federal game preserves and bird sanctuaries, 18 national monuments and 24 fresh water reclamation projects.

In glaring contrast, anti-conservationist and avarice-addled Trump and his minions are working to eviscerate protections of National Monuments, National Parks, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other public lands, along with National Marine Sanctuaries, coral reef communities and the health of the world's oceans. The National Parks and Conservation Association has listed "30 dangerous and destructive decisions about America's public lands" that the Trump administration unilaterally made in 2017, and it is stunning how shortsighted these profiteering actions are from the perspective of the common good.

The Trump administration declared it a priority to expand offshore drilling for oil and natural gas in the waters along every coastal state in the USA, from Florida to the Northeast and California to the Northwest, and in pristine waters near Alaska and Hawaii. (Then Trump may have violated federal law by exempting Florida from this national plan, trying to help the Republican governor of Florida, who declared it his top priority to ensure that Florida's natural resources are protected.) To make things even worse, Trump's Interior Department doubled down on the Republican championing of anti-regulatory insanity at its most imprudent, drafting language to reduce key parts of offshore drilling safety rules and government oversight that were put into place in the aftermath of the 2010 Gulf oil rig disaster, an environmental calamity that cost BP \$60 billion.

Scientists around the nation and planet recoil in horror, knowing that humankind should rightly leave 80% of the known reserves of oil in the ground instead of selling rights to "drill, baby, drill" and exploit potential new reserves that threaten increased numbers of oil spills and stoke the fires that fuel extreme weather events in locales everywhere around the planet.

An ominous shout out is heard from beyond the grave as the highly respectable conservationist Aldo Leopold declares, "Having to squeeze the last drop of utility out of the land has the same desperate finality as having to chop up the furniture to keep warm."

William Shakespeare, in a line from the play *Hamlet*, wrote that an officer of the palace guard observed, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark". In context, he was referring to corrupt malfeasance manifest at the time. Today, in the USA, corrupt malfeasance is again starkly manifest, and it is increasingly obvious that something is rotten in our government. The Trump administration has become sinisterly Orwellian by prohibiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the leading national public health institute in the U.S., from using the words "evidence-based" and "science-based" in official documents included in next year's budget. This is another blatant instance of censorship that comes almost a year after Trump required the Environmental Protection Agency to remove all references to climate change from its website.

Where We Stand

Thomas Jefferson speaks to us today, from beyond the grave, about an impressive list of "what I deem the essential principles of our Government". He spelled out these sensible principles in his First Inaugural Address in 1804, and provocatively added, "Should we wander from these principles in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty and safety." Hallelujah!

When Thomas Jefferson spoke about what he saw as essential principles, he adduced what are basically *Common Good, Properly Understood* principles that should be honored in a democratic republic. Jefferson had just been through a hard-fought election contest, and noted that after the intense contest of opinion "all will unite in common efforts for the common good. All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression. Let us, then, fellow citizens, unite with one heart and one mind." Let's respect this honorable understanding, and join together in common cause!

The U.S. government has come to resemble a banana republic, corrupt in politics, with some officials even committing felonies to gain power and advance their narrow, extremely inegalitarian, pathologically unjust and environmentally insane agenda. This is very scary, for the United States is a superpower and the world cannot afford to have it lurch backwards and become like a banana republic, characterized by political instability, extremely stratified social classes, a large and unfairly exploited poor working class, an enthusiasm for throwing political opponents in jail, and a crony capitalist, plutocratic, oligarchic, corporatocratic and authority-abusing ruling class composed of elite persons in business, political, military and corporate media circles. Having an incredibly dishonest, emotionally unbalanced, dangerously vindictive bullying egomaniacal narcissist in the Oval Office compounds this danger.

It should not be too much to hope that these self-interested hard-right representatives of a diminishing minority of Americans will see the light and change course, and commit to greater honesty, or demonstrate a more inclusive concern for the common good, truer liberty and justice for all, the general welfare, domestic tranquility, peaceable coexistence, a better overall quality of life, fiscal responsibility and a sustainable future.

A Major Problem: The Hegemony of the Corporatocracy

Our Founding Fathers created a democratic republic in which the American people had power because their voices were supposed to be heard through representatives who would actually represent the people's best interests and the general welfare. Today, however, the United States is ruled by a corporatocracy: a partnership of "too-big-to-fail" corporations, an extremely wealthy elite, and government officials who collaborate with corporate interest groups, as psychologist Bruce Levine has written. In this corporatocracy, "as in most modern tyrannies, there are elections, but the reality is that giant corporations and the wealthy elite rule in a way to satisfy their own self-interest. In

this corporatocracy, it's in the interest of corporations and the wealthy elite that the winning candidate is beholden to them, so they financially support both Democrats and Republicans, and corporations and the wealthy directly and indirectly finance candidates, who are then indebted to them. It's common for these indebted government officials to appoint to key decision-making roles those friendly to corporations, including executives from these corporations. And it's routine for high-level government officials to be rewarded with high-paying industry positions or lobbying jobs when they exit government, so that they use their relationships with current government officials to ensure that corporate interests will be taken care of." When operatives gain power that are obsessed with torpedoing as many regulations as possible to increase profits, this often results in wrong-headed national policies and priorities.

Republicans are sticking with their Big Lie trickle-down theory that they have been propagating since Ronald Reagan adopted it in 1981 to use as a rationalization for enriching the rich, unconcerned about the fact that it would rashly exacerbate the extent of inequality in American society. The billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer made incisive observations about the foolishness of the trickle-down theory in an article titled *The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats*. In this article, written in the summer of 2014 and addressed as a Memo to "My Fellow Zillionaires", Hanauer expressed this provocative understanding:

"The problem isn't that we have inequality. Some inequality is intrinsic to any high-functioning capitalist economy. The problem is that inequality is at historically high levels and getting worse every day. Our country is rapidly becoming less a capitalist society and more a feudal society. Unless our policies change dramatically, the middle class will disappear, and we will be back to late 18th-century France. Before the revolution."

"And so I have a message for my fellow filthy rich, for all of us who live in our gated bubble worlds: Wake up, people. It won't last. If we don't do something to fix the glaring inequities in this economy, the pitchforks are going to come for us. No society can sustain this kind of rising inequality. In fact, there is no example in human history where wealth accumulated like this and the pitchforks didn't eventually come out. You show me a highly unequal society, and I will show you a police state. Or an uprising. There are no counterexamples. None. It's not if, it's when."

It can thus be seen that the desperate Republican push to pass a cunning tax cut plan as soon as they could reveals nakedly corrupt politics and a grotesquely scheming basket of treacherous priorities. Their extremely partisan plan is made worse by creating a new structure that will be easy for wealthy people to game to claim new lower tax rates designed for "pass-through businesses". Their plan will redistribute wealth upwards, at a terrible eventual cost to the majority of Americans and to everyone in the future when this deviously cold-hearted scheme comes tumbling down with revolutionary strife, secessionary fervor, a sudden debt crisis, an economic cataclysm, a rattling bursting of an artificially inflated stock market bubble, an ecological collapse or whatever other disastrous outcome will be delivered by this hard right, short sight, inequality stoking, greed driven, anti-precautionary hubris-exposing scam, with its scurrilously divisive provisions that will exploit working people, exacerbate crucial existential problems, deplete resources and sabotage the well-being of all in future generations.

The U.S. tax code really should reward work, not wealth. And yet Republicans are egregiously trying to preserve one of the most blatantly corrupt provisions of anything in the tax code, the so-called "carried-interest" loophole. This is a notorious tax break that allows highly compensated private-equity managers, real estate investors and venture capitalists to be taxed at extremely low rates, violating the progressive principle of a graduated tax system that makes the highest earners pay higher rates on the top levels of their earnings. "These are guys that shift paper around and they get lucky," said Donald Trump during the campaign. They were, he concluded, "getting away with murder." Now Trump is an accomplice, and is trying to give a presidential pardon to these folks, knowing their guilt before Lady Justice, the personification of the moral force in judicial systems.

It is stunning how cynically sinister Republicans are acting in their zeal to run up the national debt to finance the elimination of taxes on rich kids' inheritances and to continue to allow hedge fund managers "to get away with murder" by evading taxes on their colossal incomes, and to do these things while advancing a pro-fossil fuel agenda that harms the environment and exploits public lands and fails to address the risks of anthropogenic climate disruptions. Only two-tenths of one percent of people are so rich that they will be subject to any rich kid's inheritance taxes at all, and it is stupid to do the bidding of these few to give them huge tax breaks at the public

expense. The tax plan scam also brazenly ignores the best interests of millions of people who will be at greater risk of dying unnecessarily because they choose not to buy medical insurance now that Republicans have eliminated the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, driving up the costs of health insurance for everyone else.

We should shift our national priorities from a primary focus on pandering to the donor class and wealthy interest groups, and instead declare it to be our top priority to emphasize better national planning by acting much more responsibly, ethically, morally, humanely, justly, empathically, peaceably and sustainably, and with much greater ecological awareness and more respect for farsighted precautionary principles. We should stop facilitating Tragedy of the Commons outcomes, and act to prevent cost externalities from being foisted onto the general populace. The best way to accomplish this would be by ratifying a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, and by honoring its overarching guidance.

The great historians Will and Ariel Durant relate the story in their concise and thought-provoking book *The Lessons of History* about the wise Solon of Athens and his reforms long ago that saved the city-state from revolution, and they follow that observation with a contrasting episode when the Roman Senate some centuries later "adopted an uncompromising course when the concentration of wealth approached an explosive point in Italy; the result was a hundred years of class and civil war." Will and Ariel Durant also tell the story of another occasion when democracy met its demise in Athens and a dictatorship ensued. At that time, the wealthy demonstrated "a feverish struggle for money, a *pleonaxia* as the Greeks called it -- an appetite for more and more." The rich "began to distrust democracy as empowered envy, and the poor distrusted it as a sham equality of votes nullified by a gaping inequality of wealth." Without fair compromise, revolution or dictatorship is all but inevitable. Ominously, many philosophers and pundits have pointed out that those who ignore the lessons of history are destined to repeat them.

Roguish Developments and the Rise of the Kakistocracy

The Republican Party has gone rogue. Republican politicians and their shrewdly opportunistic crony capitalist friends are blatantly imposing domineering rule over the people, making our government a "kakistocracy" -- a term from Greek that means rule by the worst, least qualified or most unscrupulous citizens. One salient characteristic of this anti-democratic kakistocracy is that it seeks to impose some of the worst possible policies on the people, and to focus on nearly the worst possible national priorities. Since the top goal for these money-obsessed, control freak power-mad Mammonites is to give more tax cuts to the rich to gain their lavish support, the general welfare and seriously consequential common good goals are being rudely violated. For more details about the swamp denizens in the kakistocracy, see *Postscript One, Meet Members of the Kakistocracy* -- and *Postscript Two - The Top Ten Worst Aspects of Rogue Republican Rule in 2017* at the end of this *Amazing Disgrace* essay.

This modern-day kakistocracy is led by a Twittering Demagogue-in-Chief and his crony henchmen who are actually very well qualified in one terribly retrogressive regard -- they are effective in their opposition to the common good because they are amazingly eager to violate the principles, founding purposes, moral rightness and guiding missions of the government agencies they are charged with leading. This is a special category of unscrupulousness. It is a mystery how they could possibly act in such cunningly unconscionable ways and get away with it. They should be ashamed to be so willing to fulfill the expectations of the corrupting persons and entities that have bought their allegiance. Ideological extremists should be disqualified when they can be seen to be corrupt exploiters who want to "serve" treacherously by divisively torpedoing social cohesion, acting as shills for the rich, saddling the nation with more debt, and contributing to a profoundly unprincipled environmental Tragedy of the Commons of the first order.

Donald Trump craves adulation, so let's give him the highest award for Best Actor in an Unreality Show for his brilliant portrayal of a domineering demagogue who manipulates people's emotions to gain power in an *It Can't Happen Here* story of intrigue and betrayal. It is amazing that he still manages to have one-third of the populace supporting him a year after assuming office, as if he fairly represents a healthy, fair and positive future. After all, he is sowing toxic discord and manifesting grotesquely wrongheaded personal and national and global priorities. Let's send him off to the dustbin of history, along with his scheming unchristian religious fundamentalist Vice-President, whose accomplished look of vacuous adoration merits an award of its own. Satirist Andy Borowitz humorously observes, "Vice-President Mike Pence has requested that Jesus Christ rapture him up before the special counsel Robert Mueller can indict him ...". These leaders should be thrown out of office, and replaced with more honest and fair-

minded representatives. And let's also send packing the complicit henchmen "majority leaders" in Congress who have helped impose their misguided tax cut bill on a suspicious populace.

The editor of *The Week* magazine noted that Robert Mueller, the Special Counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 elections, is likely to conclude that Trump obstructed justice, and he observes, "Our democracy will be sorely tested; in the crucible, we will discover whether character, decency, truth, and the rule of law still matter."

A real imaginative 2-minute YouTube movie thriller gives America tantalizing hope again, a remake of the James Bond film *From Russia with Love*. Watch the intriguing video on YouTube titled *It's #MuellerTime! From Russia with Love*.

The Implications of the #MeToo Movement

One of the most amazing aspects of Republican disgrace is their extremely male chauvinistic, virulently anti-choice and effectively misogynistic national policy preferences and their boorishly sexist willingness to trade their souls for power by letting male leaders get away with lying brazenly about sexual misconduct against women, and even, in the case of Alabama's supposedly evangelical God-fearing Roy Moore, preying on teenage girls.

Aretha Franklin croons "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me" as these ideas slide into my mind. An unfolding cavalcade of cases of sexual misconduct are being revealed today between men in positions of power and damsels distressed by brazen instances of being treated disrespectful as objects of lust and sexual conquest. Clearly, many males have engaged in inappropriately taking advantage of females, in what might be characterized as testosterone-crazed failures of impulse control. A cultural revolution has been launched that will radically alter relationships between the sexes, and males are not going to be able to get away so easily with unwanted roaming hands, salaciously suggestive comments or other types of sexual harassment. This will spill over into the arena where domineering conservatives have been engaging in a much more consequential war against women with regard to political power, fairness of opportunities, equal pay for equal work, good healthcare, reproductive rights and other prerogatives.

With the #MeToo movement, the *War Between the Sexes* is taking a very interesting turn. For greater illumination, see the insights in *A Feminine Vision of an Achievable Better World: Anima Should Reign!*

Let's Move Forwards, Not Backwards!

The Goddess of Irony flashes in the night sky. The main focus of the current illegitimate president is to undo every accomplishment achieved by the smart black man who preceded him in the White House, particularly with regard to the most consequential issues like those involved with environmental damages, socialized costs, resource depletion, clean air, clean water, emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, protections of public lands, family planning, and biological extinctions. This seems to be a curiously reactionary and egomaniacal whim tinged by racial prejudice, and it is sad that this egregious stance can accurately be seen as avarice addled, excessively self-serving, obtusely shortsighted, broadly unjust, vindictively bigoted, extremely anti-environmental, blatant in its disregard for future well-being, grotesquely contrary to the general welfare, and insidiously treacherous to young people and all in future generations. The simple fact of the matter is that it will be necessary for new leaders sometime soon to undo the damages being done, and alter course from divisive swindles, irresponsibly short-term-oriented schemes, unethical scams, discriminatory executive orders and assaults on National Monuments, National Parks, the vulnerable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other public lands. New leaders are needed to responsibly reverse all the inequality stoking and inequity stimulating actions imposed on the world by Trump and his crony sycophants in Congress. Their "America First" policies simply give too little respect to other "constituencies", and effectively put life on Earth and the prospects and well-being of all people in future generations last.

We need progressive action, like the implementation of ideas espoused by Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand and Kamala Harris. We should act intelligently and with fair-mindedness foremost in our considerations, and elect significantly more women to office. We owe it to them, because many of them were cheated in the 2016 elections out of the opportunity to lead -- fabulous potential representatives like Zephyr Teachout in New York and Katie McGinty in Pennsylvania. We can no longer afford to hew to wrongheaded policies and priorities.

After a broad repudiation of Trumpian discriminatory demagoguery in the November 2017 elections in Virginia, New Jersey and the state of Washington, observers noted that the Trump era may one day be remembered as a last desperate power grab by white males who expect to have dominion and to be allowed great perks and privileges that radically favor them at the expense of the vast majority of others. Demographic trends are against them, and within a few decades white Caucasians will slip below 50% of the populace, so it is actually a very good time for them to support the decent goal of recommitting our nation to the precedent of respecting the rights of minorities. Instead, of course, Trump and his champions of white male privilege want to ratchet up discrimination against black people, Latinos, immigrants, Muslims, women, gays, poor people and others. This is disgraceful. The amazing victory of Doug Jones in the Alabama election to replace former Senator Jeff Sessions gives a rebuke to such extremist demagogic strategies.

Republican politicians have succeeded in gaining power, and in being able to abuse authority, by stoking hard-right populist resentments and exploiting anti-immigrant fervor, and by invoking religion and even God. They misuse power for personal gain, engage in naked political malfeasance and corruption in office, use legislative powers for illegitimate private gain, misuse government power to torpedo political opponents, and rationalize injustices like racial discrimination, hostility to the rights of women, class warfare, mass incarceration, police brutality and the violation of environmental laws and regulations.

Republicans triumphed over the common good by riling up the masses with divisive, emotion-manipulative advertising on TV (especially Fox News) and talk radio and social media. They employed excessively simplistic, deceitful and demagogic propaganda designed to gain support from folks who they are now in the process of rudely betraying. How could they have succeeded at this? Well, by following tradition, ever since Ronald Reagan showed them the way -- with his folksy anti-union, socially unjust, anti-egalitarian, fiscally irresponsible, deficit spending, Golden Rule violating, anti-environmental, military Keynesian, and authority-abusing plans for pandering to the wealthy few and their big organizational corporate tools, giving special sway to wealthy Wall Street interests and the Military-Industrial-Congressional complex.

Another attribute of Republican politicians is their broad betrayal of the American public by pretending to be primarily concerned about people in the middle class and "the forgotten man" -- while pushing policies that primarily benefit the top dogs in our country. Their treachery involves working to impose harsher austerity measures on the masses by slashing spending on healthcare, public education, environmental protections, nutrition programs and a hundred other initiatives characteristic of a civilized society. The Republican tax cut plan is a naked manifestation of this cunning corruption. Republicans are lying through their teeth about how their tax cut plan will help people in the middle class, because in fact the scheme would foist a new disastrous degree of inequality, unfairness and austerity on most of us denizens in the land of the free.

There is only one way possible that such a deviously disgraceful and despicably disingenuous tax plan could possibly be imposed on the American people by a hyper-partisan phalanx of hubris-filled politicians who are exclusively from one political party. There is only one way that this plan with its radically unfair hard-right social engineering provisions could squeak through into law when this narrowly focused generosity is financed using more than \$1 trillion of borrowed money. There is only one way possible that these Republican politicians could succeed at this without any public hearings in Congress and using anti-democratic tactics, and doing so in an all-fired hurry because the illegitimacy of their scandalously achieved electoral coup is being exposed by journalists and a Special Counsel investigation by the Department of Justice.

The only way these things are possible is because Big Money has domineering influence in our politics. Billionaires like Charles and David Koch, the Mercers and Sheldon Adelson have rashly been allowed to corrupt our country. Even the Supreme Court has joined the crusade by effectively sanctioning this outcome with its wrongheaded 5-4 decision in its *Citizens United* ruling. We should rightly fix our political system by doing what Professor Larry Diamond of Stanford University recommends: take steps to super-empower voters in the center to change our current system, which has in detrimental contrast super-empowered all the partisans on the fringes. Using ranked-choice voting would be one way to accomplish this. And enacting strong campaign finance reforms.

Republican politicians have very good reasons to have been in such a big hurry to deliver this *Amazing Disgrace* boondoggle to their lavishly generous and intensely expectant donors. The illegitimacy of the ruses they used to gain power is being exposed, and jail or impeachment for the top echelons of their leadership (or having them run out of town) is quickly approaching, and the ethical rot of their abuses of authority and obstruction of justice are coming to light, so ramming through this deceitful, secretly formulated, anti-democratic, common good-betraying abomination of vested interest giveaways and Forgotten Man takeaways was a "now-or-never" proposition.

"Conservatives" are engaging in what amounts to radically asymmetric warfare in their internecine political strategies. Remember that Republican politicians impeached Bill Clinton because he lied about having had consensual sexual relations with a White House intern. Today, however, Republican politicians are refusing to consider impeachment proceedings against Donald Trump even though he deceitfully lies about seriously consequential matters all the time and apparently not only encouraged a hostile Russian interference in American elections but also has been in league with his unprincipled minions trying to obstruct investigations into this treachery. Astonishingly, President Trump has made more than 2,000 false or misleading claims during his first year in office, according to fact checkers at the Washington Post.

Remember the sentiments and perspectives articulated by Thomas Paine during tumultuous times in his revolutionary pamphlet *Common Sense*, published in January 1776. After famously declaring that we have it in our power to make the world over again, sure enough, guided by his courageous counsel and driven by people's love of liberty and antipathy toward despots who wield abusive power, our ancestors in the American colonies sought common purpose in gaining liberation from British tyranny. And by July 1776, Thomas Paine's clarity of conviction in the cause of independence from despotism began catalyzing into a new form of fairly representative governance that better suited a liberty-loving people. Our Founders came together to bring forth a new nation, collaboratively creating a farsighted Constitution and fair-minded Bill of Rights, and they put rules of law into place and a brilliantly flexible governing structure that has progressively adapted over the span of the past two centuries.

Let us once again stand up for independence from tyranny and remember that true legitimacy of governance can be found only in the fair consent of the governed. Well-informed consent is, of course, better than poorly informed consent, and worst of all is coerced consent, along with the sad acquiescence to wrongheaded priorities by deceived voters due to devious spin.

Marvin Gaye lyrically croons out the words to his great hit *What's Going On*,

Yeah, what's going on
Tell me what's going on
Oh, you know we've got to find a way
To bring some understanding here today
Oh oh oh.

As the noose tightens on scandalous Republican malfeasance with Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, more details are being revealed of the cover up of coordinated efforts with Russia to interfere in the 2016 elections to help get Republicans elected. Also, Supreme Court Justices are being presented with overwhelming evidence of the unconstitutionally unfair influence of extreme gerrymandering by Republican legislatures across the country. This ruse has helped give socially disastrous domineering power to Republican politicians. These system-corrupting developments are allowing Republicans to egregiously abuse this excessive and unmerited influence by serving to disenfranchise millions of Americans and impose reactionary social and environmental policies on the populace.

To gain the power they are treacherously abusing, Republican politicians have pursued an amazingly disgraceful agenda of broadly disenfranchising many millions of citizens with their extreme gerrymandering of congressional districts and their anti-democratic efforts to prevent people from voting, especially poor people, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, college students and women.

Only those who are adequately repentant for egregious sins are deserving of the amazing grace of forgiveness. By deviously designing a tax bill that makes winners of a narrow minority -- and relative losers of the vast majority of

the people -- scheming Republicans are trying to further "divide the blue states from the red, the Democrats from the Republicans. It is evil in the extreme", as California Governor Jerry Brown declared. Evil is not good!

Jerry Brown also accused Republicans of "acting like a bunch of Mafia thugs" by targeting rich, high-tax and largely Democratic states in their Tax Cuts plan in order to redistribute money to Republican-leaning, low-tax states. The arrogantly unscrupulous Mafia-like Republicans in the Senate and the House managed to get an extremely narrow majority of votes to pass tax cut bills in both chambers, without a single representative of Democratic districts included, and then engaged in the process of "reconciliation" in a conference committee to put the final cunning touches on the schemes hatched and narrowly passed in both chambers. An accurate understanding of what they did is, according to newspaper reports, "negotiating among themselves to find the tricky combination that can win over various GOP factions in both chambers without losing others, all the while keeping the projected increase in the deficit below \$1.5 trillion." This whole process was not only tricky, but the whole scam is a dishonest and risk-laden trick upon all people in the future.

The Republican tax plan is basically a \$6 trillion tax cut that will primarily benefit a small group of already well-off people and give more profits and power to influence-abusing corporate entities that are externalizing big costs onto society and evading taxes and abusing the power of their influence. This \$6 trillion boondoggle will be paid for by burdening tens of millions of Americans with \$4.5 trillion in benefit cuts and implementing a fiscally irresponsible addition of \$1.5 trillion to the already riskily large national debt.

In 1980, the top tax rate on individuals was 70%. Then Ronald Reagan became president and managed to get the top tax rate slashed to 28% during his tenure in office, and since then budget deficits almost every year have driven the national debt to record levels that are dangerously risky because they represent a historically high percentage of GDP, a level seen only once before in U.S. history -- when the U.S. fought World War II against fascist aggressors. Today, the top tax rate is still less than 40%, and wealthy people make most of their money on capital gains that are taxed at much lower rates, and most wealth is passed on tax free to heirs after they die. It is due in large part to tax cuts on the highest levels of income and on inheritances, and tax evasion schemes by corporations and rich people, that the national debt has soared to from less than \$1 trillion in 1980 to more than \$20 trillion today. This is a high-risk venture.

Republicans are crowing about their tax cut strategy, brazenly claiming it will be a win-win for everybody, despite the fact that it has been designed to choose big winners while wreaking disadvantages on countless millions of others who will be left behind. In all probability, their actions will have devastating lose-lose consequences for the vast majority of Americans and everyone yet to be born. After Republicans cause budget deficits to balloon, they plan on sounding the alarm about the dangerously large national debt, and they are already cynically beginning to use this as a nasty justification to impose reductions in spending on healthcare, social safety net programs like Medicare and Social Security, and protections of public lands and the environmental commons.

Senator Marco Rubio admitted this fact that the Republican tax plan is just a first step before "instituting structural changes to Social Security and Medicare". They will now try to slash benefits or privatize programs like this in order to reduce the federal deficit that their tax cut plan will significantly increase. Senator Bernie Sanders had predicted this outcome when he wrote, "Mark my words. If passed, the Republicans will then rediscover the 'deficit crisis,' and push aggressively for massive cuts in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, education -- higher education in particular -- nutrition, affordable housing and more. They will seek to undo every major piece of legislation passed in the last 80 years designed to help working families, the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor." This is pathological treachery against the American people!

A first instance of this already surfaced as Republicans were laser focused on trying to ram through their wrong-headed assembly of shrewdly targeted tax cuts. Nine million children are on the verge of losing their health care because funding has not been re-authorized for the Children's Health Insurance Program. This low-cost health insurance plan for children from low-income families expired on October 1, 2017. During an early December debate on the Republican tax bill, Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio asked about the future of this program, and Orrin Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee that presided over tax cut hearings, claimed the health

insurance program had not been renewed "because we don't have money anymore." This negligence is occurring even though there is bipartisan support for renewing the program rather than abandoning 9 million children.

Republicans are not only betraying the well-being of children, but also have repeatedly taken the side of business over the elderly in nursing homes. From a more expansive perspective, Bernie Sanders made a provocative point when he stated, "Rich or poor, we are all born, we all get sick, we all have accidents, we all need health care at the end of our lives, and we all die. And in my view, the function of a sane health care system in this country should be to keep all of our people well in a cost effective way, not to make health industry CEOs richer or to drive up the stock prices on Wall Street."

Despite the wisdom and fair-mindedness of this point of view, Republicans have treacherously used the vehicle of their Tax Cuts Act to sabotage the Affordable Care Act by eliminating the individual mandate on health insurance. It is as if they do not understand the insurance concept of a pooled solution to spreading risk to help cover the costs of adverse events. Nearly every state in the union has enacted mandatory car insurance liability laws to cover the high costs of traffic accidents, but with their stance on healthcare, it seems plausible that Republicans will want to eliminate this vehicle insurance requirement, and damn the consequences.

Casino Capitalism, Inc. has its doors wide open for speculative business, and hubris-filled conservatives are making an all-out gamble that they can get away with engaging in idiotically arrogant overreach, exploiting the people. Both the intended and unintended consequences will eventually be exceedingly ugly. Let's sharpen our wits.

Corporations are abusing the power of their domineering influence in ways that are extremely contrary to the greater good. These organizations too often betray the public trust and the people who use their products, and their employees, taxpayers, people in other countries and everyone in future generations. Many of them illegally dispose of hazardous wastes or defy health and safety standards, or engage in price-fixing, or gain socially detrimental advantages through lobbyist shenanigans or any number of other schemes. Corporate violations of laws and regulations cost hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of lives, and the magnitude of their offenses becomes clear when one considers that a single corporate offense may run into millions of dollars in losses, while the average cost of a burglary or larceny is less than \$1,000. In some cases, the cost of a single case of corporate or banking misconduct may cost more than a billion dollars, and corporate corruption is contributing to a widespread breakdown of ethical propriety, societal well-being and the providential boon of social cohesion.

Disaster capitalism, as Naomi Klein incisively explains it in her book *The Shock Doctrine*, is amplifying itself by morphing into the most crazed Trumpian casino capitalism that can plausibly be imagined. It suffers from the fault of being value deficient, due to its astonishingly wasteful materialistic consumer craziness. For whom does the bell toll? It tolls for us all. Let's pay attention!

Our national priorities should reflect higher values, not just a mish-mash of power-abusing expediencies and race-to-the-bottom profiteering and a profoundly corrupt agenda. All budgetary decisions should be guided by considerations of ethical fair mindedness, true moral rightness, ecological intelligence, and greater respect for the farsighted provisions in an ultimately responsible Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

It is a crippling fault of our representatives in the world today that instead of Right Action, politicians are almost exclusively engaged in pandering to exceedingly narrow interest groups, and facilitating Tragedy of the Commons outcomes, and foisting externalized costs onto the innocent. The budget proposed by scheming Republicans is an affront to fiscal responsibility, inclusive concepts of fairness, truer justice, and the prospects of all yet to be born. The Right Action for us to take would be to emphasize better national planning that is more responsible and ethical, just, empathetic and ecologically aware, and thereby to make greater commitments to farsighted precautionary principles, peaceable coexistence and sustainable courses of action.

Let's save the world! Together, let's rekindle that admirable revolutionary spirit of our liberty loving Founders, with their fairness-oriented democratic principles and Enlightenment Era ideals.

Retrogressive Leadership

Abraham Lincoln echoed the Bible during the Civil War, one of the most divisive times in American history, when he

warned that a house divided cannot stand. Today, master dividers have seized power through an electoral coup and are abusing this power by exerting domineering control over the people, rashly rigging the economy and tax law ever more extremely in favor of the few and against the common good. We should, as a consequence, rightly stand up and throw these treacherous men out of office, and replace them with leaders who are much more honest, fair-minded, inclusive and justice championing, and who are truly more respectful of women and peaceful coexistence, precautionary principles, protections of a healthy environment and other important values. Moderation in all things!

When the prospects for well-being for every being in future generations are roundly betrayed by greedy apologists for outrageous abusers of power, this is not good. When the common good is betrayed through the use of deviously deceitful ideological arguments, this is anti-American. When the schemers who are perpetrating these outrages are working overtime to grab domineering power at any cost and to stack the courts with "conservative" collaborators, these dastardly zealots deserve the deep disdain of those who they betray.

Republican politicians, drunk on power and exhibiting coldly calculating hubris, are unfortunately busy rigging the rules in our country in retrogressive ways that will reward their generous benefactors, and they are doing this at a terribly high cost to the vast majority of Americans, and of all persons in future generations. They are cynically using the slogan to "Make America Great Again" and taking outrageous advantage of anti-immigrant fervor to promote a bait-and-switch agenda and deceive the populace into supporting extremely anti-egalitarian outcomes.

Instead of promoting truly fair and honorably principled national policies, they are pushing a right-wing agenda to engineer society into a more repressive one that is inimical to broader personal rights and freedoms, especially for women and people in racial minorities. And they are misusing religious doctrines and fostering divisive propaganda in order to implement an unacceptably narrow agenda. This is having highly detrimental impacts. Let's stop allowing them to hijack our emotions and manipulate us so easily, and let's not fall for the distractions and scams that corrupt politicians are using to take advantage of the people. Republicans are trying to sell their preposterously flawed Tax Cut scam as a blessing, but it will much more likely prove to be a curse for all.

In the Bible, Paul, "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior," told mankind in Timothy 6:17-19 that rich persons should not be haughty, and that they should do good and be rich in good works, and be generous to those in need and ready to share with others, thus storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life. Nemesis, the Greek Goddess of divine retribution, was a deity that embodied indignation against, and retribution for, evil deeds. She was a personification of the resentment aroused in men by those who committed crimes with apparent impunity, or who took advantage of inordinate or unmerited good fortune. Nemesis was regarded as becoming particularly indignant when a man demonstrated overweening hubris and engaged in deceit, so she would likely be hyper-alert. Voters, likewise, should pay close attention!

Let's all be neighborly for a moment and have the grace to exit our echo chambers and come together to honestly look at the Big Picture, and to seek the most adaptive, fair-minded, inclusive and future-respecting solutions to the unprecedented challenges we face as the human population surges from 6 billion when the 21st century began to 9 billion less than 25 years from now. We'll want to be much more effective in addressing local and global problems like pollution, resource exhaustion, fresh water shortages, climate disruption, increasing inequality, severe injustices, human health care, social stresses, failing infrastructure, snarled traffic, crime, terrorism, mass dislocations and violent conflicts.

Theodore Roosevelt wrote about Abraham Lincoln, saying that his life "teaches our people that they must act with wisdom, because otherwise adherence to right will be mere sound and fury without substance; and that they must also act high-mindedly, or else what seems to be wisdom will in the end turn out to be the most destructive kind of folly." Today, men's souls are being tried, as Thomas Paine declared they were during Revolutionary times, and they are being found guilty. Dante regarded fraud and treachery to be the worst of his nine circles of Hell, and if there is a judgmental God, "He" is looking down with burning disapproval upon those who perpetuate highly consequential crimes against humanity, decency, civility, Golden Rule fairness and environmental sanity. We are not lost and need now to be found; we have been blinded by deceivers, charlatans and demagogues, but now we can see. 'Tis grace that hath brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home.

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain is a concerned American who has been inspired by imagining herself as the philosophic soul mate and valiant though illegitimate great-granddaughter of the highly esteemed and irreverent writer, lecturer, humorist and philosopher Mark Twain. She has published Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto, an incisive save-the-world treatise that contains wide-ranging and far-sighted observations and recommendations with regard to all the biggest issues facing humanity here in the second decade of the 21st century. All the contents of these books can be viewed online at EarthManifesto.com.

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Postscript One: Meet Members of the Kakistocracy

Who are the main members of this misguiding kakistocracy? Let's meet some of them. Among the worst characters is the top legal authority in the country in the Department of Justice, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has lied through his teeth about his and the Trump campaign's collaboration with Russia to throw the election to Trump Republicans. This man wants to make the costly War on Drugs even harsher, selectively deciding that overreach by the federal government is a good idea, as evidenced by this decision to ratchet up the extremely unjust and oppressive criminalization of the use of cannabis by engaging in a crackdown on existing marijuana laws in eight states that have legalized it. This is a bizarre inconsistency with what was once a core Republican value of defending states' rights, and it reveals soul-less and unprincipled aspects of the Party. Sessions is also an exceedingly lousy representative of fair criminal justice reform or honestly dealing with the racial discrimination inherent in national policies that have made our system of excessive criminalization and mass incarceration extremely unjust.

Also among the worst members of the kakistocracy is the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, an agency created through common sense bipartisan agreement during the Nixon years. This sycophant brazenly favors short-term-oriented profiteering by the fossil fuel industry and the rash foisting of costs onto the public. These wide-ranging "cost externalities" include air pollution, water pollution, adverse impacts on millions of people's health, the unsustainable depletion of resources, and spiking costs related to emissions of greenhouse gases and the rapidly worsening conditions being caused by the climate crisis.

These reckless efforts undermine conditions that would help guarantee fairer treatment to young people and all people yet to be born in future generations. In keeping with this misguided ecological policy, the Secretary of Education favors private education at the expense of the funding of public education, and shows inadequate concern for the heavy burden of debt imposed on students and their parents due to our system of student loans that have high interest rates and harsh terms.

The Treasury Secretary came from a private bank where he became known as an unscrupulous "foreclosure king" for his ruthless actions toward victims of the Credit Crisis of late 2008, and he is one of the main drivers behind the highly regressive and fiscally irresponsible tax cut plan that Republicans have rammed through into law without any input from representatives of more than half of all Americans who did not vote for their demagogic power grab.

Also, the billionaire Secretary of Commerce, it turns out, had investments that he suspiciously failed to disclose during his confirmation hearings in a shipping firm he once controlled that has significant business ties to the son-in-law of Vladimir Putin and a Russian oligarch who is subject to U.S. sanctions, according to the "Paradise Papers". This leaked trove of more than 7 million internal documents of a Bermuda-based law firm provide "a rare insight into the workings of the global offshore financial world, which is used by many of the world's most powerful companies and government officials to legally avoid paying taxes and to conduct business away from public scrutiny." Where the sun doesn't shine, you can bet the shenanigans are scandalous, and sure enough, more than 120 politicians and royal rulers around the world are identified in the Paradise Papers as having ties to offshore finance tax havens.

Yet another way that Republicans are betraying the best interests of the vast majority of Americans is by stacking the courts with ideologically extreme "conservative" judges. The new Gorsuch Supreme Court is already making its impact by siding with amoral corporations over people. And they will no doubt look with narrow favor on challenges

to things like a recent vote by Senate Republicans to strike down a sweeping new rule that would have allowed millions of Americans to band together in class-action lawsuits against arbitrary arbitration clauses in all manner of banking and commercial contracts. By forcing people into private arbitration, such clauses effectively take away one of the few tools individuals have to fight predatory and deceptive business practices. Republicans overturned this rule only by having Vice President Mike Pence break a 50-to-50 tie. Their intention is to further loosen regulations on Wall Street and roll back Obama-era policies enacted in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis. By this action, Republicans are dismantling a major effort of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the watchdog created by Congress in the aftermath of the mortgage mess.

In the big picture, there is a gaping disconnect between Trump's populist rhetoric and the more conventional reality of how he's trying to govern. In signing this bill killing the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Arbitration Agreements rule, it will make it harder for folks who are gouged by big banks or subjected to discrimination to seek redress in the courts. Putting Mick Mulvaney, an opponent to banking regulation, in charge of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is blatant antagonism to the common good. "This is not the type of change most Trump voters were looking for. Perhaps that's why he signed the measure behind closed doors and with no fanfare."

Trump's Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai has been trying to kill "net neutrality". This corporate friendly move is contrary to the best interests of the American people. Ajit Pai, a former lawyer for the conglomerate Verizon, has also been changing the policies of the Federal Communications Commission to create a more pro-Trump media landscape by pushing through rule changes on media ownership to help right-wing Sinclair Broadcast Group gain an ever-larger monopoly on television stations around the country.

Postscript Two - The Top Ten Worst Aspects of Rogue Republican Rule in 2017

1. Arrogant leaders are mindless ramping up assaults on life on Earth, despite the fact that humankind has already been decimating the population of almost all other forms of life on the planet. They are doubling down on plans that have contributed to wiping out more than half the populations of 10,000 representative species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, as ominously reported by the World Wildlife Fund in its sensational and sadly revelatory *Living Planet Report 2016*.
2. Meanwhile human numbers have tripled since 1950, increasing from 2.5 billion to 7.5 billion. And yet Republican politicians are making it more difficult and less affordable for women to get contraceptives, and they have instituted a version of the Global Gag Rule that is monstrously wrongheaded by being much worse than ever before, expanding prohibitions on abortions abroad to make them significantly more onerous than when Ronald Reagan first instituted this rash rule. This population explosion is a driving causative factor behind the shredding of the web of life on Earth, because increasing numbers of us are wreaking damage on wildlife habitats, poisoning ecosystems, altering normal patterns of temperature, precipitation and storm intensity, and altering the gaseous composition of the atmosphere and the acidic-alkaline balance of the oceans.
3. They are pushing policies that serve to squander natural resources at the fastest possible rate with no discernable shred of concern for either sharing the spoils more broadly or conserving these critical resources on behalf of all persons in future generations.
4. They are stubbornly refusing to take strong action to reduce carbon emissions or mitigate the increasingly severe damages and risks associated with the worsening climate crisis.
5. They are pushing a variety of scams, schemes and swindles to facilitate the socializing of externalized costs and increase inequalities and concentrate wealth ever more narrowly in the hands of the few. The sordid details of these shrewd ruses and con games is revealed in the sensational essays contained in *See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times - Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto*.
6. They are working to undermine public education, goose private profiteering and oppose sensible steps to reduce student debts, and failing to strengthen protections of women from sexual assaults.
7. They are trying to maximize private profits for the few by rashly undermining sensible protections of Clean Air, Clean Water, public lands, National Monuments, National Parks, oceans, Wilderness Areas and endangered species.

8. They are ruthlessly using extremely divisive tactics to gain and maintain power, and abusing this power by disdainful broader efforts to expand inclusivity and social cohesion. Instead of honoring Golden Rule principles of mutual reciprocity and working to achieve common good goals, they are sowing division to control and dominate, and they are exploiting resentments, anger, fears, anti-immigrant sentiments and racial biases to discriminate against almost everyone in the USA who is not a white male.

9. They refuse to take steps to limit access to gun purchases by people on the terrorist watch list or known to be suffering from mental health problems, and they obediently march to the drummer of the NRA, a front group for arms manufacturers and assault weapons pushers. The NRA has nefariously produced a series of rabble-rousing videos using starkly inflammatory rhetoric by a scornful spokesperson named Dana Loesch. These dark videos seem to be designed to provoke people's fears and hatred of advocates for sensible controls on gun sales and protestors in general, and even to incite violence against them.

10. The top priority of rogue Republicans is to cut taxes on corporations instead of more honorably promoting the general welfare or insuring domestic tranquility or leaving a fairer legacy to people in the future. To achieve these tax cuts, which are designed to primarily benefit the rich, they want to slash spending on programs that help old people and poor people and tens of millions of Americans whose voices are being ignored -- programs like Medicare, Medicaid, protections of the environment and a hundred other hallmarks of a civilized society.

Seeing Republican politicians in such an all-fired hurry to ram their abomination of tax legislation into law before anyone really understood the impacts it will have on various constituencies, it becomes clear that these operatives are trying to satisfy a driving lust for money and authority through this modern master plan of pandering to a corrupt coalition of corporate crony capitalists, wealthy conservatives, manipulative demagogues, resentment-filled right-wing populists, religious fundamentalists, anti-choice zealots, white supremacists, male chauvinists, opponents to sensible gun regulations, and anti-environmentalists. This is amazingly disgraceful.