SEE CLEARLY: Sanity During Insane Times
Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto

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

This Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto is dedicated to the Resistance movement and to all the participants in the extraordinary Women’s Marches, People’s Climate Marches and both the 2017 and 2018 March for Science. May these events be progenitors for a new renaissance of commendable spirit and social activism like that which drove the far-reaching political reform during the Progressive Movement from 1890 to 1920. A shout-out, too, to President Theodore Roosevelt’s laudable efforts to protect more than 200 million acres of public land in National Parks, National Monuments, National Forests and National Wildlife Refuges. And may the many essays in this manifesto serve as a good guide for this renaissance.

A thought-provoking prayer was penned by President John Adams in the year 1800, near the end of his tenure in office, and it is inscribed on a mantel in the State Dining Room of the White House. It reads: “I pray Heaven to bestow the best blessings on this house and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof.” Clearly, since January 2017, this hope has been broadly dashed.

All evidence indicates that the White House is occupied at this moment by deeply dishonest, greedy and power abusing men, with all too many hypocritically opportunistic Yes-men co-conspirators serving them in Congress and in the Trump Cabinet. So it is now the obligation of all Americans to demand that we restore our national commitment to fundamental values and “to throw off such Government,” as our Founders committed to doing in their courageous Declaration of Independence, and to provide new and dramatically improved safeguards for the future well-being and security of the people.

Ida B. Wells, an African-American suffragist and early leader in the Civil Rights Movement once insightfully stated, "The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them." Let these words show the way!

NOTE: The Titles of the Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto:

- Common Sense Revival
- Entertaining Illumination Unleashed
- Existential Enlightenment
- Imaginative Perspectives and Ecopsychological Insights
- Healthy Recipes and Provocative Worldviews
- Incisive Global Perspectives
- Comprehensive Global Perspective: An Illuminating Worldview
- Big Picture Perspectives, and A Pursuit of Social Activism
- The Original Earth Manifesto
- A Marvelous Miscellany of Musings and Evolutionary Understandings
- The Rather Ridiculous Ruses that Fuel Revolutionary Unrest
- See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times

See the very last link at the end of the Home Page of the Earth Manifesto website for the Tables of Contents pages of all the essays included in these twelve books. Every one of these essays can be found online, organized in their original ever-evolving form, on the Home Page. Sales pitch: All these handsome 212-page books are available right now from the on-demand printer Lulu Publishing for $10.22 each. This price includes a maximum allowable discount of 30% off, for each of these twelve insight-filled books.
Wise Native American leaders advised an eminently valuable perspective that recognized the crucial importance of living in the world in sustainable ways. They taught a “Seventh Generation Principle” that says all significant decisions should be made taking into account how any contemplated action will affect our descendants for seven generations into the future. This is a respect-worthy stewardship philosophy that was important to peoples in Native American cultures like the Iroquois, in their Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy, and also to other indigenous tribes around the world. This understanding makes it insane for leaders in modern times to ignore the precautionary necessity for us to choose to pay forward a fairer, safer and more providential legacy to our heirs. We must find much more effective ways to give adequate respect to our children and grandchildren, and all human beings to be born in the future. It is our ultimate moral obligation to help ensure that they will have reasonable prospects for well-being and flourishing in coming years and decades and centuries. Let’s come together now, responsibly, in making this overarching collective commitment!

What’s happening here should be perfectly clear. Here’s the bottom line. First, the powers that dominate our political system have rigged our economy to such an extreme degree that a small minority of the people is able to monopolize most of the wealth generated by using up natural resources and taking advantage of working people. Both Republican and Democratic politicians have collaborated together in this effort by allowing Big Money donors to exert dominating influence to mainly benefit themselves. Economic Elites have severely corrupted our political system, causing extremes of inequality in income and wealth to become more exaggerated today than they have been since the end of the Roaring Twenties in 1929. To achieve this excessively unfair state, the scheming few have cheated the vast majority of people by corrupting our democratic system of representation.

Our economic system is a ridiculously unfair one featuring generous socialism for rich people and harsh swim-or-sink Tough Luck capitalism for everyone else. One outcome of this treacherously skewed state of affairs is that the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few is becoming ever more exaggerated. Adversities associated with this system rigging are causing revolutionary discord to consequentially haunt the land of the free. This essay will clarify the ways the top dogs in our society are wrongly achieving this grotesquely unfair condition.

What’s really happening here is that business owners and executives and shareholders are grabbing way too much of the benefits of our economy, and they are compounding this sin by harmfully evading their common good obligations to invest in adequate social insurance policies against desperation -- by means of an adequately strong social safety net and universal healthcare -- and in environmental insurance policies, by means of protecting fresh water, clean air, valuable public lands and a stable climate. Public corruption is causing us to broadly fail to make sensible national commitments to stabilize the global climate, contributing to incomprehensibly big future costs related to natural disasters, rising sea levels, intensifying hardships and spiking flows of desperate refugees from failing states. We simply must change course, and begin to respect basic precautionary principles.
Early critics of capitalism like Karl Marx insisted that economics must be contained within an ethical context, and that social justice should be accorded higher priority than maximizing private profits at the expense of the public. Then ecological philosophers came along and asserted that both economics and ethics must rightly take into account ecological values. Trump Republicans are brashly undermining these understandings, sacrificing the environment to goose short-term profits and violating many codes of decency, honesty and ethics. The current illegitimate administration is working assiduously to erode democratic fairness, deprive many millions of people of voting rights and fairer representation, and weakening the civil rights of most groups of people, especially women, people of color, gay people and immigrants and refugees.

The Founding Fathers of the United States created a democratic republic in which the American people had power because their voices were to be heard through representatives who were supposed to actually represent the people’s best interests and the general welfare. Today, however, the USA is ruled by a corporatocracy: a partnership of very wealthy people and ‘too-big-to-fail’ corporations, and government officials who are cunningly collaborating with corporate interests, 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 persons to key decision-making roles who are friendly to, and lenient with, corporate entities and their executives. And it’s routine for high-level officials in the government to be rewarded with really high-paying industry positions or lobbying jobs when they move on, so that they use their relationships with current government officials to ensure that corporate interests will be taken care of.” This generally results in wrong-headed national policies and priorities.

Mark Twain famously observed that we Americans have the best government that money can buy. This satirical ridicule of the corrupting influence of moneyed interests in our politics has become an increasingly pathetic parody of propriety in the USA today. An epic flood of money is giving us rudely equality-opposing political leaders who are Orwellian in their manipulative, poisonously divisive, ruthlessly dishonest and treacherous deceit. These shrewd operatives preposterous pretend to care about We the People, but what they are doing is selling the vast majority of Americans down the river to give increasingly gargantuan benefits to the few.

Joel Bakan observed that big corporations are basically designed to externalize costs onto the public, declaring that corporations are “deliberately programmed, indeed legally compelled, to externalize costs without regard for the harm it may cause to people and communities and the natural environment. Every cost it can unload onto someone else is a benefit to itself, a direct route to profit.” Corporations should not be given the full rights in courts of law that are constitutionally assured to real people, for the good reason that far too many abuses of power have been made using rationalizations like the one that wrongfully asserts the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees corporate entities the same rights of Due Process and Equal Protection as individuals.

Moneyed interests have succeeded in these scams partially by “deregulating” the economy. This approach allows those who are rigging the system to artificially inflate private profits in the short run through this shrewd expediency of externalizing costs and risks onto the populace. These externalized costs include resource depletion, damages to the environment, health harms, heightened adversities for farmers, and costs of recovery from natural disasters that are being made worse due to the unfolding climate crisis. Since 1980, elites have even managed to unfairly grab almost all the bigger profits earned from the increasing productivity of workers.

“Deregulation” is undoing laws that made sense in recent saner times, and doing the bidding of corporate executives seeking to maximize private profits at the public expense. Deregulation is a process of reversing national rules that had enjoyed majoritarian meritocratic support before coldly-calculating politicians and the profit-prepossessed puppet masters they serve seized power. This is maladaptive, for it wrongly allows more opportunities for Big Businesses to maximize profits by crushing collective bargaining rights, ripping off consumers, foisting damages onto the people, and socializing costs and risks. Deregulatory zeal often torpedoes the common good by dismantling sensibly established protections from the predations of those who rig the
system to their greedy advantage. It also undesirably facilitates the intensification of this assault on fairness, intelligent planning, good governance, fair-minded values, ecological sanity and sustainable living.

Our political system foolishly facilitates this cost-externalizing scheme of socializing costs of production instead of requiring them to be included in a full cost pricing of products and services. This strategy generates artificially high profits, and the preponderance of them are commandeered by the few. Making matters much worse, rich people and power-abusing corporate entities use the excessive influence of their Big Money to grievously corrupt our national policies and priorities by instituting more and more debt-financed tax cuts in a swindle facilitated by Big Lie “trickle-down theory” propaganda. This lavishly propagated spin is targeted to make sure these tax cuts are regressively structured to give overly generous benefits to the top 1%, as was the case with the Tax Cuts bill rammed through Congress, exclusively by Republican politicians, in December 2017. Since then, the national debt has rapidly mounted, and now exceeds a dangerously large $22 trillion. This is more than 100% of annual GDP in the nation, a threshold of irresponsibly big risk.

Political corruption thus allows power-abusers to obligate all taxpayers in every future year to pay interest expense costs on trillions of borrowed dollars, burdening everyone in every future year in order to give most of the spoils to the wealthiest few. Think about this. The bottom half of Americans have an average net worth of less than $12,000 per person, and roughly 20% of Americans have zero or negative net worth. These folks are financially extremely insecure, so it is unconscionable for the top 1% to have managed to rig the system so advantageously for themselves that they have an average net worth of $10 million each. Even more extraordinarily, the top one-tenth of 1% of Americans has an average net worth of more than $42 million, and the three richest Americans have a total net worth of something like $250 billion.

“There are lies, damn lies and statistics,” sagaciously sayeth Mark Twain. Sadly, there are really consequential opportunity costs related to reducing government revenues by making big Tax Cuts and assessing very low tax rates on the huge amount of income earned from investments, compared to rates charged to those who earn income by working for a living. One of the worst of these opportunity costs is the necessity to reduce spending on people’s healthcare, like making cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, as Donald Trump proposes in his latest budget, betraying the promises he made to get elected. Another opportunity cost is the chronic underfunding of public education, failing our children and having the insidious collateral impact of causing student debt to more than double in the last decade. With outstanding student loan debt in the U.S. now approaching $1.6 trillion, this rising level of burdensome obligations riskily exacerbates wealth inequalities and makes the hardships faced by tens of millions of Americans unnecessarily harsh. These things compound the excessively anti-egalitarian and profoundly unjust nature of our current economic system. USURY!

A reasonably objective observer would see how cynically immoral it is to pretend to care about “forgotten” men and women and children in order to gain power, and to then betray these folks with contrary policies and distorted national priorities. Making things worse, they deceive people about what they are doing, and why. See that the ultimate judge of what is the true moral good in an action is how consistent it is with the greater good, and how consequential its impacts are, for the better or worse.

Let there be no doubt or confusion about what is happening here. Our democracy is under concerted assault by power-abusing corporate managers and politicians who are demonstrating consequential attempts to corrupt public policies, pervert national priorities, pass unfair laws, repeal sensible regulations and tragically undermine the common good. And Republicans in the White House and the U.S. Senate are making this Amazing Disgrace worse by obstructing remedial justice, covering up the facts and the truth of their malfeasance, violating laws and the Constitution, and tricking people into letting them get away with these betrayals of the public trust.

Senator Bernie Sanders has described Donald Trump’s 2020 Budget proposal as “breathtaking in its degree of cruelty and filled with broken promises. Trump told the American people that he would be a different type of Republican, that he would be a champion of the working American, and that he would not cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. But his budgets do the exact opposite of what he promised the American people. At a time of massive wealth and income inequality, Trump’s latest budget proposal pays for huge tax breaks that primarily benefit the few, partially by cutting $1.5 trillion from Medicaid, $845 billion from Medicare and $25
billion from Social Security. Make no mistake about it: Trump's budget is a massive transfer of wealth from working class families to the wealthiest people and most profitable corporations in America.

One particularly deplorable aspect of the current corrupted status quo is that the USA has become a terribly unjust Incarceration Nation. A main reason for this is that controlling interests can use a discriminatory criminal justice system to repress persons who object to their harsh rule. These interest groups have very effectively used things like draconian drug laws to lock up millions of people, especially hippies long ago and liberals and a mercilessly disproportionate number of black people and others in disadvantaged racial minorities. To add insult to the grave injury of depriving these wronged folks of many freedoms and personal security, the designers and enforcers of this highly unjust system further deprive them of having any voice about this situation by taking away their voting rights, sometimes permanently. Exacerbating things, there are excessively big opportunities for the private prison industry to make huge profits off these injustices.

In another swindle-like indulgence, "rent-seekers" carve out profits for themselves instead of contributing to making the economic pie bigger, to the real detriment of the masses. This is why half of the world's poor live in resource rich countries. The prominent economist Joseph Stiglitz explains the true dimensions of the negative impacts of this scheme, especially in countries corrupted by powerful fossil fuel interests, in his insightful book, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future.*

Our national economy and the global economy are structured to maximize profits not only by extracting natural resources and taking ruthless advantage of working people (especially blue collar ones), but also by promoting materialistic consumption and profligately wasteful hyper-stimulus of the economy.

Trump Republicans are living like there will be no tomorrow, hubristically demonstrating a heedless lack of concern for conserving resources, reducing pollution or limiting the amount of toxic wastes generated. Worse, they are changing public policies in ways that will harmfully increase emissions of climate destabilizing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Even worse still, they are broadly abusing the power they have seized, pushing policies that will undermine the prospects for the health, security, general welfare and well-being of all in future generations. They are acting like King Louis XV of France, who famously saw the writing on the wall and said, "Après moi, le deluge."

Karl Marx astutely observed, in *Das Kapital,* that the phrase "Après moi, le déluge!" is "the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation. Hence Capital is reckless of the health or length of life of the laborer, unless under compulsion from society." Workers, unite -- let's come together, and generate compulsion!

Given all these aspects of the status quo, it is completely crazy to inadequately restrict the wily predations of gigantic corporate entities, and to let these tax-evading behemoths prosper at the expense of the public. And it is downright dumb to give wider latitude to Big Pharma, Big Oil, Big Coal, Big Chemical, Big Agribusiness, Big Tobacco, Big Insurance, Big Tech, Big Military, Big Gun Manufacturers and the reactionary NRA.

The ultimately irresponsible capstone of this concatenation of qualities that characterize the status quo is a powerfully promoted pro-birth stance that is propped up by a deeply established "be fruitful and multiply" opposition to family planning, contraception and reproductive rights for women to choose to have a safe, legal abortion. Anti-choice pro-natal promotion of population growth is a perverse way for exploitative vested interests to conspire to push consumerism, plunder assets, use up resources as fast as possible, take advantage of working people and deprive them of the fruits of their labors, and kill wildlife and cause damages to ecosystems.

Humanity faces daunting challenges in the world today in every sphere -- locally, nationally and globally -- so the need is growing imperative for us to deal comprehensively with the forces underlying these perplexing issues. The government of the United States of America has a moral obligation to solve complex problems, and not to make them worse by rigging the system even more reactionarily against the general welfare of the people.

Thomas Paine wrote that *We the People* have it in our power to make the world over again, and one thing is clear: We need to take action now! A bugle horn sounds for solidarity of purpose. It's not like there aren't
excellent plans out there to address all our national ills. Like Elizabeth Warren, “I've got a plan for that!” Good plans to transform our world are found in One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies.

With inequality becoming more extreme than almost ever before in history, we should think about these words in Common Sense Revival: “Thomas Piketty states in his prominent economic tome Capital in the Twenty-First Century that Karl Marx’s principal conclusion was what one might call the ‘principle of infinite accumulation’. By this, Karl Marx meant the inexorable tendency for capital to accumulate and become concentrated in ever fewer hands, with no natural limit to the process. It was for this good reason that Marx predicted an apocalyptic end to capitalism. As it turns out, things are more complex than that, and technological progress and increasing productivity and progressive political reforms have served, to a certain extent, as a partial counterweight to the process of wealth accumulation and the concentration of private capital and a monopoly on power. But today, with regressive debt-financed tax cuts and the accumulation of wealth growing to new neo-Gilded Age extremes, this state of affairs is becoming excessively destabilizing and is likely to result in either revolutionary unrest or authoritarian repression, which would be required to perpetuate the corrupt status quo.”

Dutch historian Rutger Bregman told the billionaire elites at the economic summit in Davos in 2019 that the bottom line issue of almost every consideration is low taxes for the rich. “What Bregman said, put simply, was the Davos emperors have no clothes. They talk a lot about how something must be done about inequality and the need to address social unrest, but cavil at the idea they might be a big part of the problem.” He told his audience that people in Davos talked about participation, justice, equality and transparency, but “nobody raises the issue of tax avoidance and the rich not paying their share. It is like going to a firefighters' conference and not talking about water.” After having told elites that the biggest issue in extreme levels of inequality was “taxes, taxes, taxes, and all the rest is bullshit in my opinion”, he later wrote, “This is about saving capitalism”.

All of these scams are being achieved by pushing ideological propaganda to deceive people, as well as through the use of divide-to-conquer strategies designed to fool people into accepting this sad state of affairs. But as wealth extremes and inequalities keep getting worse and worse, angry unrest is brewing in the USA. One might wonder how much harsher this insecurity and public corruption and moral turpitude and poisonous twitter spin will get before the rude ploys of succeeding by dividing people fail, and the powerful and superwealthy find out how disastrously dangerous these system-corrupting conditions really are, even to themselves.

Trump Republicans try to portray protests and dissent as anti-American -- and criminalize it! -- when in fact these are often patriotic stands against corruption and abuses of power. Open-minded folks see clearly that such misdeeds are posing basic threats to our democracy, public health, civil rights and overall well-being.

Excellent consensus solutions can be found to all these challenges, and it is pathological that the main way the puppet masters who control our misbegotten national decision-making get away with preventing these common good solutions is by dividing people and riling up resentments and stoking racial biases, and by exploiting tribal identity politics and taking advantage of people’s fears and insecurities -- so that these schemers can benefit by oppressing the lower classes.

A terrible paradox afflicts humanity. Control-obsessed “conservatives” demand dominion over all the people, and their bottom line drive is to achieve an irrationally irresponsible goal -- to sell humanity down the river to an unnecessarily harsh fate by treating our home planet like a business in liquidation, converting natural resources to cash at the fastest possible rate in order to give most of the benefits of this insanely foolhardy course of action to a small minority of power-abusing rich people. They achieve this purpose by seizing control of the government, giving profit-prepossessed corporate entities excessive influence, eliminating many sensible regulations, foisting a wide variety of cost-externalizing schemes and harms on the public, stimulating demand for goods and services through ratcheted-up debt borrowings from the public, enacting regressive and anti-egalitarian tax cut swindles, creating a profoundly artificial patina of a healthy economy, fooling the people with deceitful emotion-manipulating propaganda, and ramming through overly partisan judges to ride with the rich over the poor, Republicans over Democrats, and the powerful over the vast majority of people, whose best interests are betrayed by these actions.
It is rudely unscrupulous for dominating conservatives to have grabbed power by taking diabolical advantage of Roger Stone’s Machiavellian understanding that hate can be a more powerful motivating force than love, and that negative political advertising can be a highly profitable thing to promote. "You reap what you sow", they say, and this applies doubly here, for hate viscerally harms those who are conditioned to hate, as well as their targeted victims. A sad side effect of such divisive gambits is to make Americans into emotional wrecks. Republican dirty tricksters like Roger Stone and the former "Bush’s Brain" Karl Rove have engaged in despicable smear campaigns against rivals and fomented racial biases with “dog whistles” to get stronger support from their political base. Negative advertising is sadly effective because it is so easy to emotionally manipulate people. But though it shrewdly works, it seriously degrades civil discourse and undermines the vital quality of social cohesion, torpedoing the unity we need to develop and implement broadly positive collaborative solutions.

In light of all the perverse wrongs being foisted on the American people by Trump Republicans, the time has come for them to pay restitution for the far-reaching harms they are causing. Let’s magnanimously give Donald J. Trump his well-deserved Academy Award for most convincing portrayal ever in a role as leader of a Western democracy who is a cunning, manipulative, deceitful, unhinged and bullying demagogue, monomaniacally eager to betray the public trust and to mine the opportunities presented by personal conflicts of interest while trying to impose an authoritarian agenda on the populace. Then let’s demand that he and his complicit Vice President Mike Pence resign from office. Welcome, Madame President Nancy Pelosi.

An insightful Buddhist philosopher might observe with equanimity that we should sensibly be guided by Right Understanding, Right Intention and a commitment to responsible Right Action, three of the planks of the Noble Eightfold Path. The best gauge of responsible right action is to be found in accurate and comprehensive assessments of the consequences of the impacts of any given action. The Earth Manifesto points the way in epistles like Intelligent Precautionary Principles Enunciated – Holy Cow!, and a proposed Bill of Rights for Future Generations, and the Progressive Agenda for a More Sane Humanity. Let’s start here!

We the People are in desperate need of right-minded good solutions to the big challenges that confront us. Here is Right Understanding. It is an ultimate morally unacceptable wrong to allow corporate entities to make excessive profits by poisoning or destroying an infinite multitude of wildlife habitats. Instead of our representatives effectively making unrestrained profit-making and wealth concentration the top goals of our nation, we should all readily look to a most crucial leading indicator, the Living Planet Report, which is sending a Code Red signal. Having measured the number of animals in 10,000 representative species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes since a base year of 1970, this report reveals that a startling 60% of them have been wiped out, in large part due to destruction of habitats, and to environmental toxins related to agriculture, mining and development activities. We are unwittingly hacking away at the branches of the tree of life, and allowing others to chop into the roots of biological diversity. All for bigger profits, to be funneled to the few.

A Living Planet Index measure indicates that natural ecosystems are being degraded at a rate unprecedented in human history. See my online Sustainability Index for a clear-eyed evaluation of 45 important parameters that measure how humanity is doing in its hopes for living sustainably on planet Earth. As our human numbers continue to grow toward 8 billion within the next 5 years, it is crazy for us to reduce the carrying capacity of Mother Earth for our kind -- in effect -- by rashly damaging natural ecosystems and failing to adopt more reasonable conservation and family planning measures.

Young people have a big stake in future well-being, yet their voices are being ignored in decision-making today. To cope with the grave threats posed by the anthropogenic climate crisis, a Swedish teen climate activist named Greta Thunberg told Davos elites they need to do whatever it takes to meet the Paris Climate Agreement, which seeks to limit global temperature rises to below two degrees Celsius. She had drawn global attention when she delivered a fiery speech to world leaders at the December 2018 UN climate talks in Poland, and she has inspired tens of thousands of young students around the world to follow her lead and take off from school on Fridays to demand serious action against climate disruptions. She has warned, “At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories, but their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag. We can still fix this. But unless we recognize the overall failures of our current system, we most probably don’t stand a chance.”
Thomas Jefferson speaks to us today, from beyond the grave, about an impressive list of “what I deem the essential principles of our Government”, as he spelled out in his First Inaugural Address in 1804. “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 for progressive change, not the reactionary!

When Thomas Jefferson spoke about what he saw as the essential principles of our government, he adduced what are basically principles of The Common Good, Properly Understood that should faithfully be followed in a democratic republic. Jefferson had just been through a hard-fought election contest, and noted: “During the contest of opinion through which we have passed … this being now decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the Constitution, 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 must be reasonable to be rightful: 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 come together in common cause! Think again of December 2017, when the unpopular Congress rammed through a deeply flawed and astonishingly anti-egalitarian Tax Cuts bill that contained more than 1,000 pages of system-rigging provisions designed by lobbyists for special interest groups. See clearly that this disgracefully corrupt plan is full of inequality-stoking, healthcare undermining, deviously discriminatory, trust violating and irresponsibly debt-burdening provisions. And, of course, a very controversial president with low approval ratings eagerly signed this legislation into law, in a cynical, self-serving and counterproductive Christmas present to the people. A win for him!

Budgets are 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 plans for raising revenues and allocating spending reveal the real priorities of our representatives, and these decisions are immensely consequential. Unfortunately, Republican changes in national taxation are unconscionably narrow in their focus and their inequality exacerbating and riskily short-term orientation. The real reason that the biggest element of the Trump Tax Folly is to cut taxes on corporations is because the top 1% of Americans currently gets more than two-thirds of all dividends paid out and capital gains realized every year, so this tax cut is mainly benefiting CEOs and big shareholders -- and the politicians they buy. Capital gains, curiously, are taxed at exceedingly low rates. Rigged at every turn!

Republicans are sticking with their Big Lie trickle-down theory that they have been propagating since Ronald Reagan adopted it in 1981 as a rationalization for enriching the rich. Bah, humbug! This ruse is a pathetic key in exacerbating extreme inequalities and associated hardships. 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 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. ... 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.”

Our tax code really should reward work, not wealth. 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 notorious tax break allows highly compensated private-equity managers and 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 Republicans have generously given a zealous pardon to these people, despite knowing their guilt before Lady Justice, the lovely personification of the moral force in judicial systems.

The Republican push to pass a cunning tax cut plan before they lose their narrow majority power reveals how corrupt our political system is, along with how treacherous their grotesquely scheming basket of priorities really is. This extremely partisan Tax Cuts plan, designed to lavishly reward rich people and corporate shareholders, is made more unfair by creating a structure that will be excessively easy for wealthy people to game to claim new lower tax rates designed for "pass-through businesses". This is another plan that redistributes wealth upward, at a terrible eventual cost to the majority of Americans -- and to all in the future when this devious scheme falls apart with a calamitous debt crisis, an economic recession, a rattling bursting of an artificially-inflated stock market bubble, revolutionary strife, secessionary fervor, an ecological collapse, or whatever other disastrous outcomes will be delivered by this hard right, short sight, hubris-exposing, inequality stoking, scurrilously divisive, greed driven, anti-precautionary principle swindle. Worse, this agenda is designed to deplete resources, take unfair advantage of working people, exacerbate crucial problems, rashly run up the national debt, ruin Our Planet, and sabotage the potential well-being of everyone in future generations.

Let's pay forward a better legacy! We should shift our national priorities from a primary focus on pandering to the donor class and wealthy vested interest groups, and instead declare it to be our top priority to emphasize smarter national planning by being much more responsible, fair, ethical, moral, humane, just and empathetically peaceable. And we should give greater respect to far-sighted sustainable precautionary principles, and be more ecologically aware. We really should make concerted efforts to stop facilitating Tragedy of the Commons outcomes and allowing externalized costs to be imposed onto the general populace. The best way to accomplish this would be by ratifying a Bill of Rights for Future Generations -- and honoring its overarching guidance.

Listen for the echoes of a stentorian female voice reverberating down from the skies above a burning bush on the Mount, and visualize some word cartoon balloons with jagged edges proliferating like lightning across dark skies, spelling out how deeply dishonorable and extraordinarily irresponsible the Trump agenda is, with its anti-environmental, inequality stoking, anti-democratic, anti-immigrant bent. Another flash of lightning illuminates a panoply of parenthetical footnotes that include Assessment: The Top Ten Ways Our System is Unfairly Rigged, along with The Con Goes On: A Triumphant Coup by Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalists. These essays provide a fuller understanding of the underhanded schemes and swindles being perpetrated on the American people.

Where We Stand

Republicans have created a vicious cycle of minority rule in which they use dark money and twisted partisan gerrymandering and voter suppression tactics to seize excessive influence, then use that power to pack courts and further expand the reaches of dark money and make it harder for millions of people to vote. So we need to enact fairer campaign finance laws and lobbying reforms to rein in the Supreme Court's 2010 corruption-enabling Big Money-kowtowing Citizen United ruling, and we must end partisan gerrymandering that allows politicians to choose their voters, instead of letting voters choose their representatives. We must also reverse all the Republican voter suppression laws enacted in recent years, so that politicians are forced to compete more fairly for their influential positions. A tea pot whistles in the background.

We must strengthen our democracy by rejecting those who stubbornly refuse to compromise with the majority of people and their representatives. We should ratify a Constitutional Amendment like one proposed by Rep. Adam Schiff and advocated by the Move to Amend coalition, which would make it clear that corporate entities are not persons, and should not have the same rights as individuals, because they wantonly abuse the powers this gives them. Break up the corporate behemoths again today, like Theodore Roosevelt did when corporate Trusts had to be busted up to protect society from the negative outcomes associated with excessive power.

Supreme Court conservatives narrowly ruled by a 5 to 4 vote in late June 2019 to give state legislatures a green light to gerrymander congressional districts "to their heart's content, no matter how partisan or racist their motivations (and they're always partisan or racist)." This outrage against fairness in elections caused a new
realization to dawn. The court of public opinion can be more powerful than federal courts, and the people’s voice becomes critically important when courts have been stacked with judges who act in accordance with extremely partisan biases. So let’s come together and apply powerful public pressure to our representatives in government to honestly and responsibly create nonpartisan districting in every one of the 50 states. Tinderbox conditions!

The U.S. government has come to resemble a banana republic, corrupt in politics and featuring all too many officials willing to commit improprieties, and even illegalities, to advance a narrowly self-serving and extremely unfair, pathetically unjust and environmentally insane agenda. This is scary, for the USA is a superpower and the world cannot afford to have it become like a banana republic, characterized by extremely stratified social classes, a large and unfairly exploited poor working class, political instability, and a crony capitalist, plutocratic, oligarchic, corporatocratic, authority-abusing ruling class composed of elites in business, politics, the military and corporate media networks. Having an incredibly dishonest, anger prone, bullying, emotionally unbalanced, dangerously vindictive egomaniacal narcissist in the Oval Office compounds this danger.

It is apparently too much to hope that these self-interest-promoting hard-right representatives of a minority of Americans will change course, and commit to greater honesty, and demonstrate a more inclusive concern for the common good, the general welfare, fiscal responsibility, domestic tranquility, truer liberty and justice for all, a better overall quality of life, peaceable coexistence and a sustainable future.

It is too much to hope because they are too busy using divisive strategies to keep people from uniting against “elite” power-abusing factions and demanding that they be allowed to continue rigging our economy and politics. They use powerful tools to perpetuate this division in corporate organizations like ALEC (the American Legislative Exchange Council), and in state propaganda machines like Fox News and the Federalist Society. The dividers have also been remarkably successful in using social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to propagate falsehoods and confusion by emotionally hijacking people, taking advantage of their resentments and fears, racial biases, gullibility for being deceived, and propensities to believe all manner of contorted conspiracy theories. By sowing the seeds of doubt about everything, they are able to cunningly divert attention from all the malfeasance that allowed them to grab domineering power, and from all the schemes they are perpetrating right now that are terribly contrary to the best interests of the people.

These dastardly folks also promote their right-wing agenda by corruptly stacking federal courts with extremist judges to undermine democratic fairness and torpedo unity and further enable the excessive concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few, and to rationalize wrongs, perpetuate cost externalizing scams and repress people. These are reasons why effective democracy reforms are needed, with a goal of altering the nefarious trajectory toward anti-democratic rule, anti-egalitarian outcomes and the implementation of policies that reduce protections of the environment, all in the interests of the greedy few at the expense of the many.

The House of Representatives passed sensible measures in March 2019 with the For the People Act (H.R. 1), and they are a great step in the right direction. In the Senate, Mitch McConnell has been stubbornly preventing this legislation from coming to the floor for a vote because he claims it is an unfair “power grab” for regular citizens to have more influence. What a glaring contrast to his greedy lack of concern for unlimited corporate money drowning out the voices of the vast majority of Americans! Since Donald Trump and corrupt Republican politicians so staunchly oppose these measures, we should all throw open the windows like crazed Howard Beale in the great film Network, and shout out “We’re not going to take it anymore.” Throw the bums out of office!

On Patriotism

A true American patriot pledges allegiance to the principles upon which our republic was founded, not to political officeholders, and especially not to those who abuse the power of their positions to benefit themselves and rich people and corporate entities at the expense of everyone else. George Lakoff notably wrote in Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think: “Patriotism is about improving the lives of one’s fellow citizens and improving one’s country’s contribution to the world. In the conservative moral hierarchy, our country is taken as simply better than other countries. This is jingoism, not true patriotism, which rests on progressive values.”

Robert Reich conveyed astute understandings on what constitutes true patriotism in his July 2018 article Trump
pushes destructive distortion of patriotism. He observed, "America's core struggle has been one of inclusion, not exclusion. ... Trump's patriotism centers on symbolic displays of loyalty like standing for the national anthem and waving the American flag. ... Real patriotism involves strengthening our democracy -- defending the right to vote and ensuring more Americans are heard, not claiming without evidence that millions voted fraudulently and pushing for laws that make it harder for blacks and Latinos to vote. ... True patriots don't inundate government with industry lobbyists, attack the freedom of the press, or criticize judges who disagree with them, or fill the airwaves with lies. ... True patriots don't court foreign dictators, and don't excuse tyranny by denigrating America. ... True patriots don't fuel racist, religious or ethnic divisions. They aren't homophobic or sexist. To the contrary, true patriots seek to confirm and strengthen and celebrate the 'we' in 'We the People of the United States'. ... If we are losing our national identity, it is because we are losing those ideals: a commitment to the rule of law, to our democratic institutions, to truth, to tolerance of our differences, to equal political rights and equal opportunity, to participating in our civic life and making necessary sacrifices for these ideals we hold in common. ... Trump is doing everything he can to destroy these ideals. We must do everything we can to strengthen them. This is the true test of our patriotism." -- Bravo!

As conservative author David Frum states, the new Trumpian GOP seems, in effect, to hate democracy because, as he writes: "The Republican party has a platform that can't prevail in democratic competition. When highly committed parties believe strongly in things that they cannot achieve democratically, they don't give up their beliefs, they give up on democracy." This is why "the GOP fights tooth and nail to make voting as hard as possible, to kick people off voter rolls, to gerrymander, to appoint ideologues to the Courts, to blow up all institutional norms in Congress: the new GOP has a twisted agenda, and they don't care how they get it. Democracy isn't to be protected, it's to be thwarted." This is tantamountically twisted! In Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic, David Frum persuasively clarifies the nature of the whole litany of shenanigans going on right now, thanks to Trump and his Cabinet and the members of Congress who are trying to rationalize and hide this far-reaching malfeasance. Right now, dissent is most patriotic!

A Collateral Overview - Economics for a Sustainable World

John Fowles once trenchantly made it clear how necessary it is for capitalist economic systems to auspiciously adapt as rapid change occurs. In The Aristos, he succinctly wrote, "Capitalism contains the seeds of its own transformation. And it is high time it started to nurture those seeds." He was thinking of such things as harsh injustices and inequities, spiritually bankrupt excessive materialism, wastefulness and myopic ecological harms.

Perhaps "solidarity economics" is an idea whose time has come. This may have started with an idea expressed at the World Social Forum 2015 that "another world is possible". Applying this concept to economics, the idea posits that it is possible to organize economies around fairer principles that are markedly different from those that characterize global capitalism today.

Stunningly, more than 40 percent of jobs in many industries are likely to be eliminated in the next 20 years due to technological advances in automation, artificial intelligence, and the use of robots and other labor-reducing practices. To deal with the extremely destabilizing impacts of this transformation, former Greek finance minister and professor Yanis Varoufakis suggests that governments need to enact serious redistributive policies. One good way they could do this, says the economist, is to put 10% of all future issues of shares into a "common welfare fund", which would be owned by the people. From this fund a "universal basic dividend" could be paid to every citizen. This idea, remarkably, is consistent with a global wealth tax recommended by Thomas Piketty in his incisive tome, Capital in the Twenty-First Century." Let's give serious consideration to such ideas.

To accomplish greater good goals, we need to follow the advice reflected in a handwritten protest sign seen at a Women's March: MAKE AMERICA THINK AGAIN!

Truly, Tiffany Twain
Hannibal, MO.
August 21, 2019  Contact at SaveTruffulaTrees@hotmail.com
This essay is included in this published version #51 of See Clearly in place of Intelligent Precautionary Principles Enunciated, which had been included in all previous versions. The wise understandings in Intelligent Precautionary Principles Enunciated are an important positive adjunct to the ideas in See Clearly, so they are included herein by this reference. They can be found linked to the Home Page in the Earth Manifesto online, and are a core inclusion in Common Sense Revival – Book One of the Earth Manifesto.

These writings in the Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto contain some marvelously entertaining and illuminating stories, with a breadth and scope that explores an extraordinary range of ideas. The recipes contained in this manifesto are alone worth the time spent reading these essays, for I am an excellent cook with a hearty appreciation of delicious flavors and healthy eating. See Clearly is by far the most political of my writings, of necessity, for it addresses issues that intimately affect all our lives, and all of humanity in the future, and the fate of all life on Earth.

“Civilization is in a race between education and catastrophe. Let us learn the truth and spread it as far and wide as our circumstances allow. For the truth is the greatest weapon we have.”

--- A poignant and provocative point articulated in 1920 by H.G. Wells

"John Steinbeck and ‘Doc’ Ed Ricketts had debated and articulatedvaluably holistic worldviews during their famous voyage on the Sea of Cortez in 1940. One conclusion they reached was that seeing things clearly and with keen insight is a prerequisite to ‘breaking through’ to understandings that are fuller and more holistic. John Steinbeck saw humankind as ‘a creature of earth, not a heaven-bound pilgrim’, so he believed it was vitally important to see things whole, and to work purposefully to change the way things are, for the better.”

I am a strong believer in the power of a positive and compelling narrative, and reasonably accurate worldviews, and think that the clarity of such stories could help inspire movements to champion causes that advance the common good. Surely true narratives are superior to false ones, and it is real concerning that our social and political beliefs are being so skewed by propaganda, partisan spin and micro-targeted manipulative messages on social media. Distorted propaganda can be all too effective in manufacturing consent, giving undeserved power to swindling and deceitful politicians and other puppets of the ruling class. Such propaganda serves to throw open the protective walls to our freedom loving idealistic appreciation of truer fairness in our society -- and to allow ruthless leaders to have an easier time taking advantage take unfair advantage of the people.

Perceptive folks say that if you want to change someone’s mind, you give them facts; if you want to change someone’s heart, tell them a story. Let me tell you dozens of stories — and pardon me for including a plethora of facts and persuasive evidence, seeing beyond their propensity to subvert “sticky” ways of communicating.

Sometimes an idea develops this quality known as “stickiness” by striking a resonant chord within us. Sticky ideas are ones that are generally better understood and remembered than run-of-the-mill conceptions. They achieve this status by relating a good story that is simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, engaging, emotionally impactful and maybe even inspirational. The stickier an idea is, the more likely it will be able to make people care, and thus to have a lasting impact by actually changing people’s opinions or behaviors. Malcolm Gladwell coined the term
"stickiness" in his book *The Tipping Point*, and Chip and Dan Heath adapted the idea in their illuminating book, *Made to Stick*. The Heath brothers emphasized the importance of clearly identifying core ideas in all attempts to set forth positive plans and transformative messages.

A core understanding in *See Clearly* is that extreme foresight-deficient short-termism is a form of existential insanity. Foresight is perhaps our most important human capability, for it gives us the ability to improve the prospects for truly saving ourselves, and for redeeming ourselves. I imagine Prometheus, the pre-Olympian Titan deity of forethought in Greek mythology, looking down on us today in disgusted disapproval of our compulsive behaviors and irresponsible scheming leaders.

John Fowles wrote in his thought-provoking book *The Aristos* that money has become a towering idol in our minds in our capitalist materialistic world. “Much more than we let philosophies guide our lives,” he observed, “we allow obsessions to drive them: and there is no doubt which has been the great driving obsession of the last one hundred and fifty years. It is money. ... Money, not being, governs our time.”

Religious folks reading the Bible might wonder why God got so angry at the worship of idols, and with anti-Christian irreligious behaviors, and with rich people who were going to have a hell of a hard time getting into a Christian heaven, on account of the way they treat poor people and neighbors and strangers.

Mark Twain decried “lies, damned lies and statistics”, and certainly there is a potentiality for truths to be oddly obscured in our minds due to the agitated ascendance of cartoon-like beliefs and biases. The great writer and philosopher concluded his thought-provoking essay *Corn Pone Opinions* with an observation about Public Opinion: “It is held in reverence. It settles everything. Some think it the Voice of God.”

Conservative ideologies like those inspired by the radical libertarian Ayn Rand make one think of perspectives written in crayon, for they tend to be one-dimensional, juvenile, self-referential, titanically simple-minded and poisonously prejudiced against larger humanitarian understanding and community social cohesion.

A far, far, far more accurate and enlightened view of the world is communicated in this Earth Manifesto, though it has yet to have had a minuscule fraction of the impact of the boasting bloviating bullying maniacally Twittering Trumpster. It is time for this excessive imbalance to radically change.

The Bottom Line

We Americans should rise up as one and demand that our congressional representatives hold to account those in the current administration who are treacherously violating the primary purpose of the U.S. Constitution — which is to prevent despotically inclined and illegitimately unfair rulers from seizing power and abusing it in the service of doing the bidding of wealthy people, thereby putting the health, safety and collective well-being of the people -- and our national security -- at unnecessarily grave risk.

The whole litany of these violations of propriety is outrageous, as spelled out in sweeping detail throughout *See Clearly*, and, curiously, these things vastly exceed the relative pittance of complaints that our colonial ancestors bemoaned in the Declaration of Independence as reasons for cutting ties with the British Empire.

The devil is in the details, as they say, and the details of the despotic abuses of power going on right now in the USA are extraordinarily damming, damming from the standpoint of legal, ethical, social, environmental and moral considerations. When anyone honestly examines a big picture summary of the details of this extremely unfair assault on Right Action, they should be motivated to seek common cause with all wronged people and demand revolutionary changes in our leadership and corporate governance.

The influence of blaring megaphones lavishly financed by Big Money is overwhelming in our society today. Rich people have succeeded in getting huge tax cuts for themselves as a top policy priority, and they are preventing higher tax rates on all annual earnings on incomes above $250,000. The vote on this plank would be 98 to 2 in favor of those who would be helped by more progressive tax plans, yet the top 2% of taxpayers continue to get away with imposing regressive Tax Cut scams on the populace, as they have since Ronald Reagan reduced the top tax rate by an astonishing 60%.
When Republicans rammed through their massive debt-financed economy stimulating tax cut in late 2017, they designed it in ways virtually certain to make inequality much worse. A U.N. expert noted in an official report that the tax law was driven by a strategy that "seems to be tailor-made to maximize inequality ... It seems driven by contempt, and sometimes even hatred, for the poor, along with a ‘winner takes all’ mentality."

The American people must fight hard for a fairer national agenda, because those who are opposed to a progressive restructuring of our economy and more inclusive politics are powerful, obstinate, uncompromising and fiercely committed to protecting the status quo and the rigged establishment. These abusers of power and influence work tirelessly to crush those who oppose their hegemony over the masses.

A Titanic Issue

Climate scientists are prophetic seers of future conditions for life on Earth, and they confirm our worst suspicions, inconveniently telling us we are irreversibly altering climate conditions everywhere around the globe. They explain exactly how these outcomes are being caused by our unrestrained burning of fossil fuels and rash efforts by timber interests to chop down of huge tracts of tropical and temperate forests. They further make it clear that these changes are causing storms and temperatures to become more extreme, destabilizing normal precipitation patterns and causing both worse floods in many areas and more severe droughts in many others. They also tell us how these activities are making wildfires more intense and widespread, and causing glaciers and icecaps to melt, altering the gaseous composition of the atmosphere, changing the temperature and chemical composition of the oceans, and causing sea levels to rise. And they warn us about the unfolding dire consequences for us and for life on Earth associated with these changes.

In November 2017, fifteen thousand scientists from 184 countries issued a stark "warning to humanity", in which they predicted that we face "widespread misery and catastrophic biodiversity loss" if we fail to take dramatic steps to alter our dangerous trajectory.

Faced with the daunting challenges of what to do about the aggregate activities that are destabilizing the global climate, the worst possible plan for the USA is to try “to squash action in every other country, too.” Yet that is what Trump Republicans have done by pulling the U.S. out of the Paris climate accords. As Bill McKibben observes, "It was as shameless a moment as in our recent history: the country that produces more carbon than any other announcing that it was now the only country on earth not willing to make even a modest international commitment to solving climate change."

Since the U.S. has spewed more of the climate-destabilizing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than any other country every year for the last 200 years, it is morally wrong for Republican politicians and business leaders to arrogantly, unjustly and belligerently oppose taking responsible remedial steps to prevent the resulting irreparable harms. We should rightly be paying large sums of money into a Green Fund to compensate those who are adversely affected by the resulting catastrophic damages that are taking place as extreme weather strikes and temperatures climb and sea levels rise.

The fact that these harms will prove to be irreversible in the timeframe of human history makes it especially wrong to allow polluter profits to be given higher priority than the future well-being of humanity and life on Earth. It is an ultimate wrong to allow corporate entities to seize privileges to foist so much externalized cost onto everyone in the future.

In December 2009, 100 prominent business leaders put a full-page ad in the New York Times urging President Obama and Congress to pass effective laws and regulations to prevent anthropogenic climate change. The ad insightfully read: "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and the planet".

Catastrophic and irreversible consequences! Ten years later, we are in the ominously advancing stages of a global climate emergency. And here's why. We live in a world of cause and effect.

Greenhouse gas warming in the northern latitudes of the Arctic is taking place twice as fast as the warming elsewhere on Mother Earth. This causes reflective white sea ice to melt, an annual melting that is taking place
earlier in the year than ever before in human history, ominously amplifying climate-disrupting feedback loops.

As energetic rays of the sun impinge on the exposed wine dark sea, the waters absorb the sun's heat and cause waters to warm. Early summer sea surface temperatures right now are a stunning 9 degrees warmer than usual in the Arctic. This in turn is causing the melting of vast regions of frozen permafrost — which covers an estimated 24% of all exposed land in the Northern Hemisphere. When frozen permafrost thaws, microbes are activated and they flourish, converting organic matter into methane gas and carbon dioxide. Methane is a super greenhouse gas that traps heat much more effectively than carbon dioxide, and both of these gases are dangerously accumulating in the atmosphere right now. This thaw is taking place 70 years earlier than climate scientists had been predicting. And enormous wildfires are raging in drying out peatlands in Alaska and Siberia.

These double whammy feedback loops are releasing more heat energy into the climate system, speeding up the advent of global warming and agitating El Niño and La Niña, and destabilizing the jet stream and causing disturbing perturbations in the cold spinning Polar Vortex. These fundamental changes in ecological conditions rashly upset the providential balance of normal temperatures and patterns of precipitation around the globe.

Stunningly, four of the 100 business leaders who signed the full-page ad in the New York Times in 2009 were Donald Trump and Ivanka, Junior and Eric Trump. It is unconscionable for them to have known that failing to act will cause catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity, and to have then chosen to pander to fossil fuel corporations and rich conservatives to gain power. They have parlayed this treacherous collaboration into profit, power and hegemony over the best interests of the people, thereby committing outrages against true fairness, decency, ecological sanity and intelligent action. It is grotesquely self-serving and mercenary, revealing how radically irresponsible the Trump family is, in pushing their authority-abusing agenda. This is the height of a tragic lack of mindfulness, or worse, of contemptuous greed-driven self-centered anthropocentric hubris, a glaring lack of honesty and humility, and a sad nadir of sane being.

An African proverb cited at the bottom of the 2009 ad reads, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." The Trump family has elected to go alone, on the backs of rich conservatives and politically involved evangelical fundamentalists and a deceived political base. This is a Tragedy of the Commons outcome that prevents us from going together, in unity, for ignominiously base motives.

Consequential ethics passes judgment that knowing how harmful the consequences will be, and then usurping and abusing power for political support and selfish advantages and crony profiteering is pretty much evil incarnate. This gives mere con man hucksters a bad name! It's all but unbelievable what depths of expediency and betrayal politicians will go to, to get money and power.

We have a vital need for strong and eminently responsible leadership to address the unfolding climate emergency, and we must chart a new course toward saving ourselves. We need to take effective steps to stave off the worst scenarios of incalculably costly and deadly impacts that the status quo represents. Wisely adaptive change must come, accompanied by powerful incentives to facilitate it. We need revolutions in human perception and understanding, and in every arena of the economy, especially including clean energy, transportation, forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry, healthcare, construction, the media, Internet communications, and the military-industrial-congressional complex.

As a creative gal, I have enjoyed specializing in good design. As Elizabeth Warren says, "I've got a plan for that." See these ideas in One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies.

Let's mobilize like we did when we committed our nation to fly to the moon with the Apollo Project. We need visionary inspiration similar to that exhibited by our leaders when the United States spent the equivalent of $100 billion on the Marshall Plan in the aftermath of World War II, with a laudable goal of helping millions of people in war-devastated Western Europe. Right now we need a far-reaching Green New Deal that helps deal with the climate crisis and rectify the great inequities and risks inherent in growing extremes of inequality and climate injustices. Let's think big!

One consequential outcome of intensifying climate instability is that it dramatically increases the likelihood of
conflicts between peoples, causing dangerous spikes in the numbers of desperate refugees from droughts, floods, failed crops, economic despair, failing states, depleted resources, natural disasters and internecine wars. Right-wing conservatives who deny climate change are diabolically using hyped-up anti-immigrant sentiments to strengthen their grip on power in many nations worldwide, and this is both wrong and contrary to the best interests of society.

The American people have despised despotism ever since colonial days, and though the megaphones are blaring in rationalization of demagogic authority-abusing rule, a majority of people in our liberty-loving republic see through the hyper-manipulative deceptions and political corruption and swindles and cronyism and mind-numbing distractions, and recognize that we are like frogs in a pot of water being brought to a poaching simmer, with all too many fools cheering on the scheming tribal leaders. This is another form of a Tragedy of the Commons.

Foreign Interference in Our Elections

Our Founders loved liberty and hated despotic abuses of power, and it is pathologically wrong for partisan politicians today to give higher priority to narrow Party advantages than to election security or honestly fairer representation of the best interests of the populace, or loyalty to the general welfare of people in our country.

In Ayn Rand's monumental novel The Fountainhead, Howard Roark defiantly bucks established precedents, prompting the architecture school's dean to say, "My dear fellow, who will let you?" Roark declares, "That's not the point. The point is, who will stop me?" This question, writes climate activist Bill McKibben, "may turn out to be the crucial question of the human future." Who will stop the saboteurs of future human well-being?

The greatest good for the largest number over the longest period of time is a vastly more rational, sensible and intelligent goal than maximized profits for the few in the short run. The overall quality of life should be improved, and strong respect should be given to those who see that it is ultimately wrong to push anti-choice policies that serve to maximize the quantity of babies to be born, no matter what the circumstances.

Donald Trump's job as president should be to represent all Americans. But he succeeded in gaining power only by dividing people, with the help of rich people and lavishly funded distorting propaganda broadcast by "conservative media" outlets like Fox News, and deceitful tweets that manipulate people's emotions and prejudices. Unity threatens his illegitimate rule: this is why he welcomed hacked information by WikiLeaks being used by Russians to divide the American people by micro-targeting unsuspecting folks on social media, amplifying resentments, spreading conspiracy theories, promoting fears and stoking racial biases. Trump seems to enjoy nothing more than dividing our country based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and immigration status. Co-conspiring operatives in his campaign and administration are complicit in this effort, along with his enablers in Congress, and they are acting as puppets to the ruling class and corporate entities and autocrats in foreign nations.

Mayor Pete Buttigieg directed a statement to sitting Republican congressmen during a presidential debate in late July, saying: "... if you are watching this at home, and you are a Republican member of Congress, consider the fact that when the sun sets on your career, and they are writing your story -- of all the good and bad things you did -- the thing you will be remembered for is whether in this moment, with this president, you found the courage to stand up to him or you continued to put party over country."

"Moscow Mitch" McConnell has blocked all efforts to protect the United States from past and future cyber-attacks by pro-Trump Russian operatives, or by any other foreign nation trying to interfere in our elections. His actions clearly demonstrate that he is unpatriotic, as he demonstrates in his fealty to an overarching goal of triumphing through skullduggery to give him and wealthy conservatives and corrupt Trump Republicans the ability to continue abusing domineering executive, congressional and judicial power over the people. He values this unwarranted and socially harmful ability much more highly than common good goals and honorable American values like honesty, integrity, fairness and reasonably expansive concepts of liberty and justice for all.

Let's throw the cunning cheating puppet politicians out of office, especially the worst of them, including Donald Trump, Mike Pence, Mitch McConnell, Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz, Jim Jordan and Devin Nunes.
“Not a puppet, not a puppet”, whines Trump, snarling threateningly, though he has been coming across more and more like an angry spoiled child suffering from Malignant Narcissistic Character Disorder. The rude outcomes of his deceitful anti-democratic and thuggish behaviors are wide-ranging, far reaching and unconscionably detrimental to tens of millions of Americans alive right now, and to countless numbers of people in future generations who will be affected even more consequentially as the “long emergency” to come irreversibly unfolds.

Shania Twain sings about innocent flirtations, crooning out that, “God ain’t gonna get you for that, because he’s much too busy with the guys in the back”. But God definitely does not approve of the guys behind the curtain who commit broadly offensive and detrimental acts against ethical Right Action, financed by Dark Money, and who distort Right Understanding to get away with these outrages against decency and humanity.

Racism Persists

The editorial board of the Baltimore Sun, a city fixture since 1837, joined a wave of Maryland residents and leaders condemning Trump tweets that called Rep. Elijah E. Cummings’ district a “rat and rodent infested mess” where “no human” would want to live. The scathing piece, which drew responses across the world and which the Sun expects will help break records in readership and subscriptions, highlights Baltimore’s strengths, and accuses the president of deploying “the most emotional and bigoted of arguments” against a Democratic African American congressman who represents a district that happens to have a 55% majority of black people.

The editorial staff at the Baltimore Sun newspaper took strong exception to the inflammatory rhetorical attacks that Trump made against Baltimore in late July 2019, and they did not mince words. “Better to have a few rats than to be one,” the editorial staff declared in its headline.

“It's not hard to see what's going on here. The congressman has been a thorn in this president's side, and Mr. Trump sees attacking African American members of Congress as good politics, as it both warms the cockles of the white supremacists who love him and causes so many of the thoughtful people who don't to scream. President Trump bad-mouthed Baltimore in order to make a point that his border camps are 'clean, efficient & well run,' which, of course, they are not — unless you are fine with all the overcrowding, squalor, cages and deprivation to be found in what the Department of Homeland Security's own inspector-general recently called 'a ticking time bomb.'”

Notably, Elijah Cummings serves as Chair of the House Oversight Committee, which leads investigations into Trump's illicit activities and crooked finances. It is a vital Constitutional duty for House committees, and the legislative branch of government in general, to exercise oversight and enforce accountability on abusers of power in the executive branch. Trump always tries to defend himself from his manifest culpabilities by vindictively attacking others, mercilessly employing ranks of lawyers and co-conspirators and enlisting brain-washed supporters and treachery-committing loyalists.

Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut was so disgusted by Trump's intensifying racism, as revealed yet again by his acerbic tweet attacks against Elijah Cummings and the city of Baltimore, that he decided to quit following the Trump Twitter feed, saying: "I'm unfollowing the President of the United States today on Twitter, because his feed is the most hate-filled, racist, and demeaning of the 200+ I follow, and it regularly ruins my day to read it. So I'm just going to stop." That’s a good call. I heartily encourage every one of Trump's Twitter followers to join Senator Murphy, and free your mind of the Demagogue-in-Chief's darkly compulsive and manipulative emotion-agitating psycho-madness. Free yourself from the staining negativity, urgent distractions and all the perverse perspectives and preposterous distortions and lies.

Populism and White Nationalism

Democratic fairness is a common good. It is consistent with social cohesion, the general welfare and a more perfect union. Populism can be marvelous as a grassroots movement to inspire and enable courageous efforts to buck authority and rectify injustices and derail despotism. In distinct contrast, rabble-rousing right-wing populism manifests a false-prophet patina of rectitude that cunningly manipulates prejudices and hijacks
emotions and exploits fears and scapegoats immigrants. Despots and rich conservatives take zealous advantage of such ruses to co-opt passions that should rightly be channeled into more widely beneficial common causes.

Poor white folks, betrayed and impoverished by their white supremacist overlords, want desperately to have someone to be superior to, to pay forward the injustices to, "since nothing so elevates a dispossessed farmer or a factory worker on relief", as Sinclair Lewis satirically expresses it in It Can't Happen Here, "as to have some race, any race, on which he can look down." Poor whites really resent the injustices they have been subjected to, like a dearth of fair educational and work opportunities, and unaffordably expensive health care, and being made to suffer the indignities of being victims of a cruel fate. It is thus supremely ironic that they have chosen to fall for appeals by Donald Trump to vote for him despite his villainous racially-exploitative tactics, and for them to continue to support this most dangerous con man in U.S. history, race-baiting betrayer of public trust and wrecker of havoc.

In unity, We the People would embrace neighborly attitudes of Golden Rule respect and cross-cultural tolerance, and enjoy a much more auspicious atmosphere of amity. And the 99% of Americans would come together behind fairness-championing leaders to rein in the predations and cunning swindles of the top 1%. Together, we could rapidly put a halt to all the kowtowing to the wealthiest capitalist masters, and to the unaffordable generosity of the public allowing them to get away with their anti-egalitarian, harm-engendering and repressive agenda.

Think about the Tea Party. The Koch billionaires and their rich-persons network cunningly riled up populists to support their wealthy people's agenda soon after President Obama took office in 2009. They co-opted populist passions and channeled them into fervent support for an agenda that was broadly detrimental to the populists themselves, seizing the opportunity to fool millions of Americans into vocally protesting against expanded healthcare during congressional recesses in the hot summer of 2009. Protestors spouted some absurd talking-point propaganda about "death panels" and socialism, and thus began a decade of vituperative attacks on expanded health insurance, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act.

"The Tea Party was perhaps the ultimate expression of the power of a wealthy few to channel the GOP base's populist instincts and undifferentiated rage at the country's first black president toward the preferred policy outcomes of the rich — and even to stir demands by citizens for the repeal of their own healthcare."

Rabble-rousing demagogy is effective because it is an easy way to hijack people's emotions and scare them, and to rile them up and provoke their prejudices. Authoritarian swagger appeals to blind followers of authority figures and their instincts toward tribal affiliation and obedience to alpha males. These folks are gullibly susceptible to propaganda that claims the mantle of being patriotic, even when it betrays the foundational principles of democracy and the ethical underpinnings of the values for which our democratic republic stands. Patriotism isn't just the last refuge of scoundrels but one of the first subterfuges of treacherous demagogues.

Right-wing populism achieves its goals by taking shrewd advantage of human nature. It is our evolutionary propensity to affiliate with tribal groups against those in "out-groups", but this feature of human nature is today becoming an adaptation-hindering instinct that is antithetical to the greater good.

There is a cynical circular strategy of America First nationalism, seeking to gain power by scaring people about surges of desperate immigrants that reinforce increasingly strident calls by demagogues scapegoating immigrants and demanding that walls be built and money be appropriated to build harsh detention centers to discourage the flows of desperate people, and insisting that seekers of refuge and asylum be criminalized.

George Shultz, Ronald Reagan's secretary of state, says Trump needs to pour more U.S. foreign aid into Central America — not cut it off — if he wants to reduce the number of people trying to cross the southern border. In a July 2019 Op-Ed published in the Wall Street Journal titled Make Central America Great Again, Shultz wrote that illegal immigration from the Northern Triangle of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras is understandable. "If you were there, you would leave too. Aliens often come for the economic opportunities in the U.S., and
many times are fleeing crime and violence. President Trump has urged the three countries to stop this illegal migration, but it is doubtful that they have the capacity to do so on their own.” His sound advice was for our leaders to address the real causes of this humanitarian crisis, not just to rashly and uncompassionately exacerbate the problems by cutting off aid to these countries and ruthlessly treating desperate immigrants like threatening criminals.

A Big Picture serious problem with white nationalism is that it violates the great positive social cohesion-inducing and fairness-oriented principle of reciprocity, as embodied in the Golden Rule. It does so cruelly when it succeeds by perpetuating discrimination against oppressed groups in order to ossify in place a ruthless hegemony of wealthy puppet masters and their collaborators over the masses. White nationalists favor perpetuating a disadvantaging of the majority of Americans, and especially of blacks and Hispanics and disdained poor people. This discrimination is notably focused against people who have already been given extremely short shrift in our society -- against folks who have suffered mightily at the hands of prejudice-exploiting and emotion-hijacking white supremacists. Unfortunately, this form of fundamentalism, given excess power by the NRA, opposes even sensible steps in addressing the lethal epidemic of gun violence that so threatens public safety in the USA today.

“One belief is that violence is caused by a deficit of morality and justice”, writes Steven Pinker in The Better Angels of Our Nature. In extraordinary contrast, “violence is often caused by a surfeit of morality and justice, at least as they are conceived in the minds of the perpetrators.” Peace, brothers and sisters!

Human survival is by definition the moral good for our species. We may not be likely to drive ourselves to eternal extinction in the next 100 years, but how will we survive a thousand, or ten thousand? These spans of time are a mere instant in the incomprehensibly long eons of geologic time. We have been recklessly hacking away at the branches and roots of the tree of life, and have already contributed to wiping out an estimated 60% of the populations of all mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and amphibians -- since 1970!! -- according to shocking information summarized in the World Wildlife Fund’s biennial Living Planet Reports.

Perhaps it won’t be the meek that shall inherit the Earth, but those microbes!

The world is in a catastrophically risky spot right now, partly because Trump Republicans are throwing obstacles in the necessary path toward remedial measures. They are waging ruthless assaults on the environment -- all for the purposes of maximizing short-term profits and funneling most of them into the pockets of the few. Since taking office, Trump and his Cabinet appointees — like disgraced former EPA Chief Scott Pruitt and his replacement, former coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler — have been attempting to rollback, delay and weaken environmental protections that have been in place for decades. These safeguards were designed to keep our air and water safe, protect ecosystems and prevent the destabilization of the global climate. These operatives are engaging in excessively heedless activities by damaging habitats and building in zones vulnerable to flooding, and overfishing the seas, and failing to take steps to ensure that our home planet remains habitable, and stoking tribal fights with others, and obtusely opposing more generous funding for family planning programs.

Let us stop failing to see the forest for the trees. There is a powerfully determinative Population Connection between the global ecological challenges we face and the overwhelming needs and greed of a human population that is approaching an unsustainable total of 8 billion persons within five years or so.

Big Ideas for Rebuilding American Democracy

Elections have far-reaching consequences, and it is crucial for fairness in a democracy to drive up voter turnout to defeat divide-and-conquer tactics and make elections about what kind of people we want to be, and what kind of future we want to create.

We Americans share many values, and serious damage is done and vulnerabilities heighten when power abusers are not held accountable for trampling on them, and on civil rights.

Trump, while complaining about the Mueller probe, falsely told a room full of teenagers at the Turning Point USA Teen Student Action Summit that the Constitution gives him “the right to do whatever I want.” Note --
IT DOES NOT. No one is above the law.

We need to save democracy itself. American democracy is under threat, and the majority of the people must win back power and make some big reforms to save it. "Step one is taking the House, Senate, and Presidency in 2020 -- that's obvious. Step two is reforming American democracy -- but what does that mean?"

"Democracy" is a big issue. Earlier this year, the House passed the For the People Act, which includes many common sense reforms like campaign finance limits, improving election security, and expanding the right to vote and the ease to do it. This was a good first step. Let's demand that our Senators pass such legislation. And let's grapple with how to build on this.

Bill McKibben makes astute observations about "leverage" in his latest book Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out, making it clear that humanity is seriously off kilter and may discover that it is terminally risky to live too high on the hog. McKibben writes that the worst possible plan with respect to our impacts on altering the global climate would be not just to throw obstacles in the way of dealing rationally with the accelerating costs of the climate crisis by sowing doubt on the reality and causes and consequences of the crisis, but also to try to squash remedial action in every other country on earth. This is a terribly shameful irony of the fossil fuel industry's corrupt hegemony over the Republican Party.

A month after James Hansen's startling clarion call testimony to Congress in July 1988 about the risks of global warming, "Exxon's public affairs manager recommended in an internal memo that the company 'emphasize the uncertainty' in the scientific data about climate change. Thus began the most consequential lie in human history." So writes Bill McKibben in Falter.

"Within a year, Exxon, Chevron, Shell, Amoco and others had joined together to form what they called the Global Climate Coalition, 'to coordinate business participation in the international policy debate' on climate change", launching humanity on a track of climate denial and staunch opposition to a cost internalizing tax on fossil fuels or global actions to do anything about climate change. These Merchants of Doubt even hired lawyers who had propped up the tobacco industry against the harms it causes to millions of people's health to catapult the propaganda.

Disinformation campaigns by fossil fuel industries about climate change are "predatory delays", according to the environmental writer Alex Steffens. He was referring to efforts to block or slow needed change "in order to make money off unsustainable, unjust systems in the meantime." These profit-prepossessed delays in taking necessary climate action will prove to be unbelievably costly,

Koch Industries continues to rake in huge profits from fossil fuels while imposing costs and harms on the public, and the Koch network of wealthy people spends hundreds of millions of dollars on elections and funding for junk science seeking to spread doubt about the deleterious impacts and threats posed by the climate crisis.

Fossil fuel industry apologists and zealots for excessively irresponsible profiteering apparently believe in their own dogmatic ideology more strongly than they believe in sciences like physics. Greed-driven corporate "libertarians" like Charles and David Koch push their anti-government propaganda with such fervor that it is creating climate risks so severe that they will cause incalculable, unconscionable damages to the future well-being of all of humanity and life on earth.

Their top goal is to maximize their own personal profits, and even to do so by engaging in a public debt swindle that is excessively irresponsible because it externalizes huge costs onto people in the future and simultaneously hyper-stimulates wasteful exploitation of resources by stoking the fires of depletionary consumerism. This scam is perpetuated to mainly benefit the few, who have no need for the wealth generated. As wealth is concentrated more and more in the hands of the few, so is power, and this power is reprehensibly abused to continue this über scam. This is an ultimately harsh form of inter-generational treachery that damages future prospects and is ecologically insane. This is wrong.

It is crazy to give corporations domineering power, because these organizational tools are designed to maximize profits by taking excessive advantage of working people and by exploiting natural resources, mindlessly
depleting them. They strive to externalize large amounts of costs and risks, and abuse the influence of the money they generate to corrupt our decision-making and pervert our national priorities. Their strategies include hyper promoting the products they produce and services they offer, bombarding everyone with a merciless barrage of insidiously persuasive advertising and emotion-hijacking political spin and propaganda.

Environmental organizations are trying to hold big polluters accountable through strategic campaigns in the media, in corporate shareholders' meetings, in the communities they devastate, and in the halls of government. As one instance, the organization Corporate Accountability publicizes a Corporate Hall of Shame designed to force corporate entities to pursue more socially responsible courses of action. More must be done.

To Impeach or Not to Impeach, that is the Question

Republicans aggressively impeached President Bill Clinton because he lied about a consensual sexual relationship with a White House intern. This was a damaging abuse of Congressional power. In pathetic contrast, Democrats have been extraordinarily hesitant in initiating impeachment proceedings against Donald Trump that would more viscerally flesh out more details of his many violations of laws, propriety and despotic abuses of executive power, and for his obstruction of justice and his cover-ups of wrongdoing and his thousands of lies. This is a serious dereliction of the Constitutional duty Congress has to investigate high crimes and misdemeanors and protect the American people from corrupt and authoritarian rule.

It is one of the core purposes of the U.S. Constitution to prevent tyranny. That is why its Framers distributed power between the executive branch and Congress and the judiciary. That's why each of the three branches was designed to limit the powers of the other two. “In other words,” according to Professor Robert Reich, “the Framers anticipated the possibility of a Donald Trump. Fortunately, they also put in a mechanism to enforce the Constitution against a president who tries to place himself above the law and to usurp the powers of the other branches of government.”

Trump is not only trying to usurp many of the powers of Congress, but he and his Senate collaborators are stacking the federal judiciary with judges who they expect will pay them back by allowing them to get away with their wrongdoing and Trump's violations of laws, the Constitution and Right Action. Under these circumstances, the Constitution mandates that the House of Representatives undertake an impeachment inquiry and present evidence of its findings to the Senate.

It may not be the strategically and politically savvy thing to do, to impeach Donald J. Trump. But in order to safeguard our democracy and our Constitution, and improve our collective well-being, it is the right thing to do.

Robert Mueller reported in no uncertain terms that Russia interfered in our elections in 2016 "in a sweeping and systematic fashion", and it did so in ways that helped Republican politicians get elected. "What's more, Mueller also made clear that the Russians approached the Trump campaign and offered them illicit help, and that the campaign never reported it to authorities. In fact, they welcomed the help of a hostile foreign power, encouraged it, planned for it, and built a campaign around it. And then they lied over and over to cover it up."

Mueller also stated that threats of foreign interference in our elections remain imminent. "Over the course of my career," he stated during testimony to the House Judiciary Committee, "I've seen a number of challenges to our democracy. The Russian government's effort to interfere in our election is among the most serious."

Nonetheless, the unprincipled "Moscow Mitch" McConnell has repeatedly blocked critical legislation in the U.S. Senate that would help secure our elections. McConnell calls himself "the grim reaper" for his treachery against election security as well as Big Money campaign financing abuses and democracy reforms and other progressive efforts to alter the way our political system is rigged against the majority of the people.

McConnell's colleagues in the Senate recently released a report that confirmed the conclusion that our democracy remains vulnerable to Russian meddling unless we make significant changes to our election security. But McConnell stands against protecting our democracy, spinning it as a "power grab" -- by the people disadvantaged by being disenfranchised by the excessive influence of Big Money and giant corporate entities in our national decision making, law writing and setting of national priorities.
Robert Mueller also made it clear that his report did not exonerate the president. Far from it. As Mueller said in his prosecutorial words — “The president was not exculpated.” And when asked if Trump could be charged with a crime after he left office, Mueller simply said “Yes.” Mueller also strongly defended his investigation, refuting Trump’s devious characterization of his work as a “witch hunt” and his ridiculous assertion that it was all a “hoax” that Russia interfered to help him win. When asked about this, Mueller simply answered: “It is not a witch hunt.” And, “Absolutely, it was not a hoax.”

Mueller made it clear that this isn’t just about past events, it’s about the present, and about elections coming up. The Russians are still interfering, “doing it as we sit here, and they expect to do it in the next campaign. We have underplayed to a certain extent that aspect of our investigation”, and he indicated that Russia’s efforts could do “long-term damage to the United States that we need to move quickly to address.”

And yet Trump said just last month that if he were to be offered dirt on his opponent by a foreign power again, he’d probably take it. It seems clear that Trump will not take the threat of foreign interference seriously. The fact that he still welcomes it, in the words of Robert Mueller, means “problematic is an understatement.”

Trump’s loyalty is to himself and his family’s financial gain, not to the country or the majority of Americans. “And that avarice was shared by those closest to him in the 2016 election -- a willingness to put money ahead of patriotism and ethics. That is disloyalty to country. Strong words, but justified given what Mueller found, and what we all see each and every day.”

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler says his personal view is that Trump “richly deserves impeachment”. A fair appraisal of the facts and evidence supports that assessment, even though it is politically risky. After all, Trump did welcome the help of WikiLeaks and Russian operatives to win the 2016 election, and he made continuous efforts to interfere with the investigation that followed, as seen in his sustained attacks against the Mueller investigation and his characterizations of it as a “witch hunt”. Clearly, Trump’s activities are much worse than behaviors that led House Republicans to impeach Bill Clinton 20 years ago.

While President Clinton lied about a sexual affair with a White House intern, “he didn’t sell our country out to the Russians,” observed a New Hampshire voter. President Clinton did not engage in anywhere near the amount of consequential lies, attempts to obstruct justice or financial conflicts of interest as Donald Trump has. “This guy is a liar, he’s been using the presidency to enrich himself, and he doesn’t have our country’s best interests at heart. The Mueller report is only a piece of it. It’s the culmination”, observed another New Hampshire voter.

Bill Clinton did not so blatantly violate the constitutional oath to faithfully execute the office of President of the United States “and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” Trump seems to daily disdain and disregard his constitutional duty to take care that the laws of the United States be faithfully executed, and “he has engaged in conduct that resulted in misuse and abuse of his high office, and, for self-protection or other reasons of personal interest, has (1) impaired and impeded the due and proper administration of justice and the conduct of lawful inquiries; and (2) undermined confidence in and the authority of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the United States.”

Articles of Impeachment have been drafted in the House of Representatives, and they reveal the sufficient grounds for this way of seeing the current hyper-partisan political situation. Every concerned citizen and responsible member of Congress should evaluate the facts, independent of strategic political calculations involved, and make an informed decision about whether a formal impeachment inquiry is merited.

Presidential candidate and climate activist Tom Steyer points out that “what’s preventing us from addressing the challenges facing our country isn’t our differences, but our broken politics. Until we get rid of the corrupting influence of corporate money on our democracy, we won’t be able to address climate change, make our economy more just and fair, or make health care affordable and accessible.”

Kudos to the Wise Theodore Roosevelt

Theodore Roosevelt said in a speech in 1907 that “malefactors of great wealth” had been responsible for causing much financial stress and widespread hardship around the world in the Panic of 1907. He decried rich
persons who abused power by trying to “discredit the policy of the Government and thereby secure a reversal of that policy, so that they may enjoy unmolested the fruits of their own evil-doing.”

Roosevelt continued, “In the last six years we have shown that there is no individual and no corporation so powerful that he or it stands above the possibility of punishment under the law. Our aim is to try to do something effective: our purpose is to stamp out the evil; we shall seek to find the most effective device for this purpose; and we shall then use it, whether the device can be found in existing law or must be supplied by new legislation. Moreover, when we thus take action against the wealth which works iniquity, we are acting in the interest of every man of property who acts decently and fairly by his fellows.”

“Experience has shown that it is necessary to exercise a far more efficient control than at present over the business use of those vast fortunes, chiefly corporate, which are invariably used in inter-state business. When the Constitution was created, none of the conditions of modern business existed. They are wholly new and we must create new agencies to deal effectively with them. There is no objection in the minds of this people to any man’s earning any amount of money if he does it honestly and fairly, if he gets it as the result of special skill and enterprise, as a reward of ample service actually rendered. But there is a growing determination that no man shall amass a great fortune by special privilege, by chicanery and wrong-doing, so far as it is in the power of legislation to prevent; and that a fortune, however amassed, shall not have a business use that is antisocial.”

Echoing with resonance down through the generations, the courageous “trust-busting” Theodore Roosevelt added the observation, “There is unfortunately a certain number of our fellow-countrymen who seem to accept the view that unless a man can be proved guilty of some particular crime he shall be counted a good citizen, no matter how infamous the life he has led, no matter how pernicious his doctrines or his practices.” Hmmm.

“Many men of large wealth have been guilty of conduct which from the moral standpoint is criminal, and their misdeeds are to a peculiar degree reprehensible, because those committing them have no excuse of want, of poverty, of weakness and ignorance to offer as partial atonement.” Heck, the Bible even says folks like this will never have a chance of getting into Christian heaven because of their unchristian behaviors.

Theodore Roosevelt also stated, “Men must be judged with reference to the age in which they dwell, and the work they have to do.” Fast forward 112 years from Roosevelt’s 1907 speech, and Trump Republicans should be judged harshly for their failure to do work clearly needed to rein in corporate abuses of power, and to address the costs and growing risks and threats of climate change. And their profound failure to make our society healthier and fairer and happier and more secure, and to protect ecosystems and public lands, and to ensure a more sustainable future. Having rendered this due judgment, and seeing that these politicians are refusing to stop pushing their backwards agenda or alter their illegitimate actions, voters must join together in common cause and ignore all the lavishly financed demagogic propaganda, and throw the bums out of office.

A media genius named Sam McClure assembled a group of investigative journalists who electrified the country at the beginning of the 20th century by exposing the plundering of America. Theodore Roosevelt cracked down on those responsible, the “malefactors of great wealth”, and progressives at the time promoted the middle-class dream -- what really made America great. According to historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, Roosevelt needed “a seismic shift in national consciousness” to succeed in accomplishing this change, and he needed the media and clear-seeing outspoken journalists and commendable muckraking writers to help produce it.

Truly, Tiffany Twain
Hannibal, MO.
August 21, 2019
Contact at SaveTruffulaTrees@hotmail.com
Belated Introduction - What the Hell Is Going On?

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We the People could create a dramatically fairer and more secure society by demanding that our representatives and leaders act more consistently with the needs of the people and the underpinnings of the common good. It is our moral obligation to do this, and to do so in ways most likely to be sustainable and more probably propitious to our descendants in future generations. The main barrier to achieving this more salubrious state of affairs is the deep corruption in our corporate-dominated economy and in our hyper-partisan politics. The simple fact of the matter is that the narrow vested interests of the wealthiest 1% of Americans are radically over-represented, and the more expansive interests, well-being and security of the other 99% are under-represented and betrayed.

We could easily chart positive new smarter and healthier and more secure and sustainable courses of action. We simply need to adopt the recommendations set forth in See Clearly, starting with a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, for overarching guidance. We should also give much greater respect to Intelligent Precautionary Principles, and put into effect One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies, and adopt some of the provisions identified in the online Progressive Agenda for a More Sane Humanity. Make no mistake about all these things. The fixes required are difficult only because of the extent to which the political status quo is corrupt, and these good remedies are rooted in much more fair-minded representation of all constituencies.

The USA today is one of the most unequal societies in world history. To understand what has happened to create this retrogressive imbalance, we must recognize all the ways that a corrupt crony capitalist con job has been perpetuated on the American people for many decades. See The Con Goes On: A Triumphant Coup by Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalists for the sensational details of this manipulative and exploitive swindle.

This highly inequitable and inauspicious state of affairs has been achieved through a suspicious smattering of grotesquely anti-egalitarian methods used to cement the status quo in place. I urge readers to understand more clearly these shrewd schemes that rich people use to maximize their fortunes at the expense of the masses, as spelled out in my online essay Thirteen Main Methods Used to Increasingly Concentrate Wealth and Power. These ideas are a prelude to many propitious recommendations for farsighted ethical and common sense right actions.

These wealth-concentrating schemes have been made more unfair by the main planks of the Reagan Revolution. First, Ronald Reagan deprived workers of rights to collectively bargain for a better deal. He started by firing 11,000 air traffic controllers who had gone on strike for better treatment. Then he acted to make radically regressive changes in taxation to mainly benefit the top 1%, and irresponsibly indulged in excessive amounts of deficit financing while engaging in efforts to ramp up military spending to create bigger opportunities for huge profits to be made on weapons and Cold War activities. He also reduced regulations on banks, savings-and-loan associations and giant corporations, and eviscerated measures designed to constrain their risk-taking and hold them accountable, and took steps to scale back enforcement of antitrust laws, leading to an era of corporate consolidation. Fast forward several decades, and with the 2016 national elections, a electoral coup took place that is making all these schemes worse. Check out the details of how this illegitimate outcome came about, and its serious implications, in Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy.

Also see my morphing introspection into Mark Twain’s extraordinary 1906 essay “My Country, Right or Wrong”
for a compelling perspective on related issues, and give close consideration to the real interesting insights contained in Amazing Disgrace, which give greater context to the ideas herein. Providentially, all the essays in See Clearly contain auspicious proposals for intelligent ways for us to remedy the tragic fix in which we find ourselves. All these understandings help us to better see what is wrong with our economic and political systems. These undesirable aspects of our nation’s governance are summarized in Assessment: The Top Ten Ways the System is Unfairly Rigged (find it on the Earth Manifesto website). And to understand more clearly how rich folks are going about satisfying their main goals and see abundantly clearly how negatively these shrewd strategies affect humanity, check out The Fourteen Worst Ways that Powerful People Abuse Power.

A Brilliant Examination

The Sun and the Moon and planet Earth came into perfect alignment on August 21, 2017, and tens of millions of Americans witnessed this phenomenon in a “path of totality” as the 70-mile wide shadow of the Sun-eclipsing Moon sped across the North American continent from the coast of Oregon to the Atlantic shore of South Carolina. Let this awe-inspiring celestial symmetry serve as a symbol of the shared destiny of all humankind on our revolving terrestrial orb. And let this presciently predicted confirmation of scientific understanding of reality represent a growing awareness that scientific experts are the true prophets of modern times, and that they should be heeded. In particular, let us be guided by the increasingly urgent existential warnings that scientists are giving us about the dangers and exceedingly costly ramifications of our failures to reduce the colossal quantities of greenhouse gases that we are spewing into the atmosphere. Meanwhile, our emissaries are chopping down vast swaths of forests that would otherwise be propitiously absorbing carbon dioxide. The crucial understandings in my online essay Climate Change Consideration, Carrying Capacity and Ecological Overshoot are included herein by this reference.

In ancient Athens more than 25 centuries ago, the wise lawgiver Solon was given power to mediate between the rich and the poor at a juncture in history when the disparity of fortune between the few and the many had become so extreme that revolutionary fervor threatened to violently overthrow the establishment. The rich were jealously protective of their wealth and power, so they were preparing to crush the brewing rebellion with despotic force. The unrest back then was particularly intense because the poor found their status getting worse every year, with leaders betraying them and corrupt courts deciding most issues against them. The great philosophical historians Will and Ariel Durant tell this compellingly relevant story in The Lessons of History:

"Good sense prevailed; moderate elements secured the election of Solon, a businessman of aristocratic lineage, to the supreme archonship. He devalued the currency, thereby easing the burden of all debtors (though he himself was a creditor); he reduced all personal debts, and ended imprisonment for debt; he canceled arrears for taxes and mortgage interest; he established a graduated income tax that made the rich pay at a rate twelve times that required of the poor; he reorganized the courts on a more popular basis; and he arranged that the sons of those who had died in war for Athens should be brought up and educated at the government’s expense. The rich protested that his measures were outright confiscation; the radicals complained that he had not redivided the land; but within a generation, almost all agreed that his reforms had saved Athens from revolution."

The road to salvation is clear. Yet in the USA today, inequality and injustices have reached such dangerous extremes that tinderbox conditions prevail in the land of the free. The billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer makes it clear how risky this state of affairs is, in his incisive article The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats. He makes an astute critique of deceitful trickle-down dogmas, pointing out that the U.S. "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." He goes on to add, "If we don’t do something to fix the glaring inequities in this economy, the pitchforks are going to come for us."

The smart alternative, of course, is to take effective and courageous steps to significantly reduce the huge disparities in opportunities, economic security and overall experienced well-being between wealthy people and the masses. The great writer John Steinbeck and his philosophic friend ‘Doc’ Ed Ricketts had debated at length during their famous voyage on the Sea of Cortez in 1940, and they articulated valuably holistic worldviews while
afloat and at anchor in this spectacular arid island region. I appreciate the conclusion they reached that seeing things clearly and with keen insight is a prerequisite to “breaking through” to fuller and more holistic understandings. Think about the philosophic Steinbeck’s vision of humankind as “a creature of earth, not a heaven-bound pilgrim”, and his belief in the vital importance in searching for better understandings and seeing things whole and working with courage and honor to change the way things are, to make them better.

We have an economic and political system that is increasingly a winner-takes-all game, even when the ruthless winners have usurped power by broadly illegitimate means, cheating and lying and discriminating and threatening future well-being. And even though they are despotically abusing the power they have grabbed with brash fervor. This state of affairs is sad and tragically consequential.

Some sort of useful social action should be one of the obligations of each and every citizen, and individual contributions should be combined with a systemic restructuring of our national incentives and disincentives and our political system to assure more positive outcomes for humanity. We should all strive to minimize the adverse effects we have on others, in true accord with the ethos of reciprocity embodied in the Golden Rule, and we should also responsibly contribute to helping achieve goals that are broadly consistent with the greater good. Wealthy people should be required to contribute much more to help achieve common good goals.

Thomas Paine, in his persuasive January 1776 pamphlet Common Sense, launched a powerful salvo of criticism against the colonial system and the despotic abuses of power that so rankled the three million people who lived in the thirteen American colonies. Seeing the pathetic abuses of the people in America by King George III and his British government, Paine poignantly observed, “these are times that try men’s souls.” Today, men’s souls are being severely tried once again, and women as usual are having their souls tried even more challengingly.

George Washington soberly observed that Thomas Paine’s pamphlet Common Sense “worked a powerful change in the minds of many men”. It did so by igniting popular disaffection with the British, and converting many colonists to a belief in the causes of independence, fairer political representation, expanded liberties, solidarity and broadened prosperity. Let’s clamor more insistently for these causes again today!

Thomas Paine noted that freedom can be dangerous in the hands of the poor, due to ignorance, just as it can be dangerous in the hands of the rich, due to abuses of influence. This is why he advocated public education as a way to overcome ignorance, along with a robust representative democracy strong enough to prevent corruption.

Both liberty and equality are important to the common good. To the extent that these two ideals conflict, we should wisely strive to establish the fairest balance between them, keeping the best interests of a maximum number of people in mind. Liberties should be protected by assuring openness in our societies and the freedom of speech and religion for every person, and by establishing laws that guarantee a maximum amount of economic self-determination and individual rights for all. And equality should be guaranteed especially with regard to fairness of opportunity and political representation for every individual, along with equal treatment for everyone under the law. Persistent efforts by retrogressive leaders that serve to bring about more extreme inequalities are anathema in a democratic society, and they should be opposed and reversed.

Let’s be honest and strive to see clearly, and gain big picture understandings. It is an unacceptable development for the American people to have been subjected to an electoral coup by deceitful demagogues who oppose fair-mindedness, true social justice, ecological sanity, expansive human rights, improved legal justice, a more progressive tax system, fairer national priorities focused on fostering improved social cohesion, Fair Elections, and better initiatives to protect public health. Let’s demand these things, plus real campaign finance reform and better accountability, greater openness, improved online privacy, Internet neutrality, more constraints on monopoly power, and smarter planning for courses of action that are more sustainable. We should rightly expect more honesty and less ideology in lawmaking -- and in judicial decision-making.

Here is a startling gauge of how corrupt our political system is, due to partisan gerrymandering and the rest of the long litany of ways that Republicans have managed to abuse influence to gain domineering power. Not only did Hillary Clinton get almost 3 million more votes than Donald Trump, but Republican candidates for seats in the House of Representatives got less than half of the vote nationwide, but won 55% of the races, giving them a
domineering 241 to 194 seat advantage from 2017 to 2019. This was an example of corruption incarnate!

The costs of NOT seeing clearly are rapidly mounting, rather ominously, as millions of Americans subserviently acquiesce to the predations of giant corporations, or fall for the ridiculous rationalizations that are shrewdly propagated by uncompromising ideological stalwarts who are contributing mightily to high levels of debt and unnecessary hardships, insecurity, suffering, grief and desperation for countless numbers of people, along with environmental despoliation and accelerated extinctions of species of life on Earth. This isn't pro-life!

Earth Manifesto Proclamation
A specter haunts humanity, a specter of ecological short-termism and of riskily extreme irresponsibility. These mindlessly heedless expediences will have harsh consequences for people in the future, and many irreversible impacts on the biosphere and on the survival prospects of most species of life on Earth. This colossal folly is exacerbated by foolhardy financial short-termism in which our leaders are mortgaging the future by piling on debt in order to give more tax cuts to wealthy people. Many rich people, in turn, are really busy abusing the influence of their Big Money to get these tax cuts, which they do not need.

It is an utterly wrongheaded top national priority to rape and pillage so, and it is a false economy for Republican leaders to treat our home planet like the target of a hostile takeover by a vulture capitalist private equity firm, selling off all the assets and mercilessly stiffing employees and other stakeholders in order to make quick windfall profits, to the severe detriment of the greater good. And to further unconsciously act to stoke the fires of consumerism, rashly waste resources, pollute the commons, damage public assets and refuse to act to mitigate collateral climate disruptions. These activities are not only far too short-term oriented, but will result in huge long-term costs that will include dangerous levels of stupidly-incurred interest expense obligations along with the undermining of the prospects for prosperity, security and well-being of people in future generations.

This specter that haunts nations worldwide is the amoral impulse of poorly managed capitalism, featuring, as it does, an overly aggressive oppression of working people. This specter was a principal reason that the political economist Karl Marx declared that people who labor for a living should unite to achieve a fairer deal, and to gain improved benefits in the conflict between domineering capitalist elites (the bourgeoisie) and urban and rural working people (the proletariat). His famous slogan, articulated in the year 1848, was “Workers, of the World, Unite!” Joining together, working people gain the power to bargain collectively for a better deal. Divided, they are weak pawns against ruthless capitalist profiteers, who rake in the spoils.

Conservatives want more like-minded right-wing Supreme Court Justices to help achieve their goals, undermine collective bargaining rights of working people and prevent protestors from gaining too much “Power to the People”. Greater fair-mindedness, however, almost certainly would work out better for all.

In the year 1776, the philosophic Scottish economist Adam Smith wrote the veritable manifesto of capitalism, The Wealth of Nations. In it, he famously asserted that an “invisible hand” properly guides self-interest in free market economic activities. By the year 1848, it had become obvious that there were far-reaching social ills associated with industrialization and oppression in the class struggle between capitalists and workers. So Karl Marx and the social philosopher Friedrich Engels launched their Communist Manifesto, with the idea that "a spectre is haunting Europe". This spectre was communism, which saw that history "of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" -- of oppressors and the oppressed.

The Age of Reason has not been repealed merely because the Know Nothing Party of Trump and operatives like the disgraced Scott Pruitt and the turncoat Ryan Zinke have wielded ruthless power. But sure enough, a pitched battle of unreason and treacherous irresponsibility is being waged against the clean energy revolution and sensible actions to protect the environment. And sustained ideological attacks are being made against progressive planning efforts, even though they represent our best hope of averting increasingly extreme weather events and an unfolding severe destabilization of storm, temperature and rainfall patterns worldwide.

The original Know Nothing Party was a nativist American political party in the 1850s that was xenophobic and hostile to immigrants and Catholics. It started originally as a secret society, and “Adherents to the movement
were to reply 'I know nothing' when asked about its specifics by outsiders, thus providing the group with its common name," according to Wikipedia. Know Nothing, huh? Surely, ignorance is not bliss in crucial matters!

Huckleberry Finn, in *Further Adventures*, observed: "I seen how it's possible to take things and twist them into whatever shape you want, and see them another way entirely that don't have no resemblance to the truth."

**Inequality and Its Discontents**

It is becoming increasingly clear that Donald Trump has deceived most of the American people with his outrageously false assertions. In the thought-provoking book *What's the Matter with Kansas*, the incisive journalist and historian Thomas Frank provides a stunning explanation of how and why many people are goaded into supporting the economic agenda of billionaires rather than their own self-interest -- or that of their children and people in future generations. A better understanding of these issues could be broadly beneficial for all Americans: it could even energize hopes of creating a healthier, fairer and more sustainable society.

The two political parties in our political duopoly system have contributed to causing inequality to reach levels that are historically extreme, and this is getting worse. The insightful billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer provided readers with sensational understandings about risks in allowing this to continue in his article titled *The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats*. He makes a compelling point after pointing out that the U.S. today "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."

He concludes: "The most ironic thing about rising inequality is how completely unnecessary and self-defeating it is. If we do something about it, if we adjust our policies in the way that, say, Franklin D. Roosevelt did during the Great Depression -- so that we help the 99 percent and preempt the crazies and revolutionaries, the ones with the pitchforks -- that will be the best thing possible for us rich folks, too. It's not just that we'll escape with our lives: it's that we'll most certainly get even richer."

Hanauer once made the compelling observation in a blog that, from the point of view of the average Republican voter, "the last 35 years have been a disaster, and their party has caused it. Because if you are a working- or middle-class white Republican-leaning man, your party has completely and totally screwed you."

"They screwed you by holding down the minimum wage.  
They screwed you by almost completely eliminating overtime pay.  
They screwed the union that used to defend your interests.  
The screwed you out of the pension on which the middle-class once retired.  
They screwed you a thousand ways on trade, and exported your job.  
They screwed you on tax policy by lowering taxes on the rich.  
They screwed you on infrastructure and education investment.  
They screwed you by deregulating the banks.  
They screwed you out of your home during the housing bubble and subsequent collapse.  
They screwed you on health care costs.  
They screwed you on the cost of college and on student debt.  
They screwed you (and sent your kids to die) in the Iraq war."

To compound these betrayals, we are now faced with a historic choice between a virtuous economic cycle and a vicious cycle, as made clear in the excellent documentary film *Inequality for All*, which concerned the character and ideas of Professor Robert Reich. With the proverbial pitchforks poised to come out, Republicans are taking deviously determined steps in the wrong direction -- toward making things worse and less fair for the majority of Americans. They are duplicitously acting as if they have gotten a mandate to enrich the rich after pretending to care about the disaffected working class. Throw the rascal out of office!

Only two outcomes are probable -- Solon-wise reforms that reduce tensions by making bigger investments in what are effectively smart social insurance policies, or repressive measures to defend the scurrilous outrages inherent in the rigged status quo and in the perpetuation of excessively anti-egalitarian rule.
Little-known fact: Mark Twain acted as a champion of labor organizing when he praised the smart strategies used by steamboat pilots in forming a labor union back in the Gilded Age of the 1880s, as told in Life on the Mississippi. Notably, the pilots won their wage demands from steamboat owners. Mark Twain also criticized the exploitation of working people during the Gilded Age in his clever novel A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, and he called for "a new deal". Eleanor Roosevelt said that this was her husband's favorite book by Mark Twain, and this is why Franklin Roosevelt named his Depression-era safety net programs the New Deal.

Today, our country appears to have returned to the greedy and conspicuously materialistic values and profound inequalities of the Gilded Age that Mark Twain wrote about, and financial elites and giant corporations and Dark Money operatives have succeeded in rigging our system in such ridiculously unfair ways that we are in dire need of another "New Deal". This better deal must be a much more honestly fair one for working people, and for the 99% of Americans who are being adversely affected by the control of our country by wealthy elites. In order to fix the plight in which the American people currently find themselves, we need honest leaders who are not overly beholden to moneyed interests. Instead, we have been sold a bill of goods by a man who is a billionaire real estate tycoon, and who has acted much more like a carnival barker and a demagogic charlatan than an honest and honorable leader. (The new New Deal we need needs to be green!)

One thing is certain that bodes ill for working people in the USA. Their best interests will be under continued assault by Republican politicians, who will continue to try to reduce millions of people's healthcare benefits while reciting a deceitful mantra of "jobs, jobs, jobs". They will continue to abuse the power of their positions by passing laws that will undermine collective bargaining rights of working people and reduce their influence in being able to get a fairer deal from their employers. This writing on the wall reveals that workers will continue to be disempowered and disenfranchised so that corporate America will be able to maximize profits more and more and more -- and wealthy people will be able to accelerate the rate at which they are increasing the concentration of wealth in the avaricious hands of the few, at great peril for all.

The French economist Thomas Piketty, who wrote Capital in the Twenty-First Century several years ago, is intensely concerned with issues of wealth and income inequality. He emphasizes themes in this book of his focused work on the concentration and distribution of wealth around the world over the past 250 years, and he provocatively points out that the rate of return on capital in developed countries has persistently exceeded the rate of economic growth, and is highly likely to continue to do so. What this means is that wealth inequality will get worse in the future. Piketty makes powerful arguments that this is a consequentially serious and really risky problem, and he incisively proposes remedial fixes for this increasingly dangerous challenge. He suggests that governments should implement more progressive taxation plans, and calls for a redistribution of wealth through a global tax on wealth. Such ideas stand in commendable contrast to the agenda of billionaires who are striving to impose austerity measures on people in nations worldwide in order to afford more regressive changes in taxation to give the highest income earners reduced tax rates on the highest levels of their earnings.

Sophisticated new versions of hostile takeovers have come about since the publication of the thought-provoking book Barbarians at the Gate in 1989, which was about a ruthlessly contentious leveraged buyout takeover of the giant cookie conglomerate RJR Nabisco. One ultimate lesson of the whole episode was that it seems to prove conclusively that excessive greed is not good for society. Ayn Rand devotees, take note!

Today, political barbarians have stormed the gates of our democratic republic, greedy with schemes to further enrich the rich. The hegemony of their domineering rule is proving to be a mad folly, and disastrous for almost all Americans, especially including Trump voters. Even the rich and powerful will eventually find out that extreme inequality is bad for them, since it is causing the social fabric to fray in "the land of the free". This is likely to cause the proverbial pitchforks to come out, and either wreak revolutionary discord across the country or result in harsh repression against those who dare defy the political and corporate masters in our oligarchy. Yes, these ones right here, who are unempathetically pushing for anti-progressive policies that will exacerbate mounting inequities and injustices. Yes, these anti-choice tax-cutting white nationalists gun fanatics.

It is a viscerally valid understanding to see that "we are living through a battle for the soul of our nation", and the fundamental values historically appreciated by our fore-bearers are being undermined by division,
propaganda, hyped up antagonisms, and extreme levels of inequities and insecurities.

As Mark Twain once pointed out, “You can’t depend on your judgment when your imagination is out of focus.”

The Status Quo

Casino capitalism is thriving at a catastrophic cost to the future prospects of human beings on Earth. Influence peddling and political corruption are allowing corporate entities to dominate decision-making in governments around the world. Mother Earth is consequently being treated like a business in bankruptcy after having been milked for all that can be gotten from it, before the bubble bursts. Profit-making for shareholders and CEOs has become the primary goal of almost every decision made by Republican leaders. With this environment-damaging casino capitalist corporatocracy exerting control of so many governments, the risks of widely harmful outcomes are being radically and irresponsibly increased.

So we are being misled and misguided. The main measure of how the economy is faring is Gross Domestic Product, but this is a distorted measure that fails to accurately assess true economic well-being. GDP measures fail to gauge many non-monetary goods, or to include many costs being externalized onto society as a whole.

We would be much wiser to adopt a new way of measuring economic and social well-being. In the beautiful Himalayan nation of Bhutan, they have adopted a measure of Gross National Happiness. This concept has often been explained by its four pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, the preservation of cultural values, and environmental conservation. “Lately the four pillars have been further classified into nine domains in order to create widespread understanding of GNH and to reflect the holistic range of GNH values. The nine domains are: psychological well-being, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and quality-of-living standards. National policies consistent with Gross National Happiness would be much better for social cohesion and a sustainable future than rash policies that risk turmoil and instability by giving financially well-to-do people big debt-financed tax breaks and forcing tens of millions of others to cope with an increased impetus toward austerity measures, diminishing social security, less personal safety and more stress and resentments in their lives.

The science of happiness is looking at the qualities and values that make people happy, and some interesting things are coming to light. One basic realization is that a significant part of people’s attitudinal propensities toward being happy or unhappy, toward manifesting a sunny disposition or a darker one, is essentially a genetically inherited predisposition toward positive or negative attitudes. Researchers are finding that circumstances in life generally have a surprisingly small influence. International happiness research, according to the 2011 documentary film Happy, reveals that happiness is best achieved, after basic needs are met, through the pursuit of intrinsic values rather than external ones. Inherently satisfying intrinsic goals include personal growth and fostering good relationships and community connectedness, while external goals are focused on more hollow and less satisfying materialistic goals like money, egotistic self-image and social status.

Today, in effect, people are being “brainwashed” with materialistic messages, manipulative marketing, seductive propaganda and broad distractions from vital values. We are being subjected to unnecessary dissatisfaction, discord, envy, suspicion, animosity and an over-emphasis on external sources of happiness at the expense of more important internal sources of satisfaction. And something is seriously awry in the land of the free, when judged by the proliferation of drugs to combat depression, as well as the opioid epidemic of addiction that tragically killed an estimated 72,000 people in 2017 alone (more than triple the number in the year 2000).

Millions of people participated in energetic Women’s Marches across the nation, and around the world, for a second year in a row on January 21, 2018. These remarkable civic events occurred on the weekend marking the anniversary of the first 365 days of Republican control of the White House, the Senate and the House. The marching crowds were like a giant family reunion. “Women in pink hats. Men pushing strollers. Kids laughing and running. Babies and great-grannies. Hugs and laughter. And an ocean of signs -- colorful, clever, creative.”

The 2018 Women’s March demonstrations were designed to build momentum for equality, justice, protections of women’s rights, and an end to sexual misconduct and harassment. In an amazingly tone deaf and manipulative
attempt to misconstrue the purposes of these protest marches, the Twitterer-in-Chief sent a hilariously weak and disingenuous tweet that pathetically proclaimed the occasion of the protests to be a fine one for women to “get out there now to celebrate the historic milestones and unprecedented economic successes and wealth creation that has taken place over the last 12 months.” Ha! -- what devious spin! Let’s join together and chuckle ruefully at the preposterous absurdity of this characterization!

The fact of the matter is that “conservative” wealth creation plans are being put into place by slashing regulations, facilitating the exploitation and depletion of fossil fuel resources and minerals on public lands, and borrowing huge sums of money to stimulate materialistic consumption and stoke the artificial creation of wealth in the short run, while wasting natural resources and eliminating vital protections of the environment.

Any of millions of folks who participated in one of these community activism events knows that the Women’s Marchers broadly opposed the whole far-right agenda, and expressed a very low opinion of the Narcissist-in-Chief, who had not long before the occasion proclaimed himself a “very stable genius”. One of the best of many colorful handmade signs seen was one that declared MAKE AMERICA THINK AGAIN. This is a very valuable sentiment, for H.G. Wells was surely right, this “prolific prophet and proponent of globalization who was never short of a nifty turn of phrase,” when he remarked in the closing pages of his lengthy Outline of History that the human condition was becoming “more and more a race between education and catastrophe”.

In an interview with British journalist Piers Morgan, the scheming Trumpster voiced idiotic skepticism about the climate crisis by trying to confuse people about scientific understandings of the correlation of extreme weather events to increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in Earth’s atmosphere. He said, in a reflection of his usual garbled thought processes, “There is a cooling, and there’s a heating. I mean, look, it used to not be climate change, it used to be global warming. That wasn’t working too well because it was getting too cold all over the place.” That is idiotic and irresponsible spin! Why? Fie on irresponsible rationalizations for excessive profiteering and climate inaction.

Global warming is a measured rise in the average temperature of the Earth’s surface. It is just one symptom of global climate change. Climate change refers to the altering of the world’s storm, temperature and precipitation patterns that is being caused by an increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The culprit in this geo-historically rapid increase is our profligate burning of huge quantities of oil, coal and natural gas, along with a reckless excess of chopping down forests. The year 2017 was the warmest year on record, and almost every year in the 21st Century is among the warmest ever recorded, on average around the globe, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The summer of 2018 was sizzling, with terrible heat waves like one that caused tens of thousands of people to be hospitalized in Japan, and ferocious wildfires flared in many locales around the northern hemisphere. And Europe in the summer of 2019 has baked in spells of record high heat.

Two of the biggest and most consequential challenges we face in the world today are extreme inequality and the unfolding impacts of climate change. The scale of response needed to begin properly addressing these problems is epic, so let’s devise a comprehensive national plan on the scale of the New Deal, which was created during the Great Depression, which will be effective in reducing inequalities and begin drawing down carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This will constitute a major effort to mitigate both social AND environmental injustices.

Albert Einstein famously used visualized thought experiments as a tool for understanding issues in physics, and for clearly conveying his concepts to others. In a positive development, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in conjunction with Naomi Klein has created a seven-minute video, titled A Message from the Future, which uses a thought experiment from the perspective of a future frame to convey hope that we will be able to succeed in taking big steps to solve big problems like these, and to appreciate the future value of right action.

The Ramifications of Stoked Insecurity

Populists on the conservative and far right of the political spectrum often fall for deceitful leaders who manipulate their emotions to get power -- by peddling Big Lies like the trickle-down theory -- but then betray their gullible followers. These deceit-driven initiatives are good for the richest 1%, but starkly contrary to the
best interests of almost everyone else, primarily because the rich are too foolishly penurious when it comes to investing in the smart social insurance policies of a healthier populace, a safer infrastructure and an adequate safety net. In a true democracy, leaders would honestly represent the best interests of the people, and recognize and respect them, not just strive to give the rich a bigger slice of the economic pie at every turn.

Alan Greenspan said in testimony before the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee in February 1997: “Atypical restraint on compensation increases has been evident for a few years now, and appears to be mainly the consequence of greater worker insecurity. The willingness of workers in recent years to trade off smaller increases in wages for greater job security seems to be reasonably well documented. The unanswered question is why this insecurity persisted even as the labor market, by all objective measures, tightened considerably.” Capitalists then and now seem to have workers almost completely cowed.

Noam Chomsky’s take on this Greenspan observation was what he regards as the true capitalist motive: “If the workers are more insecure, that’s very healthy for the society, because if workers are insecure they won’t ask for higher wages, they won’t go on strike, they won’t call for benefits; they’ll serve the masters gladly and passively. And that’s optimal for corporations.” Seeing the outcome of labor and trade policies in the past few decades, Chomsky’s wry interpretation seems accurate. Here is the age-old two-for-one capitalist scam again, where benefits accrue to corporate CEOs, stockholders and rich people — and working people are left behind. By crushing collective bargaining rights, big businesses can more easily control their employees, minimize wages and benefits and create increased job insecurity, making it easier for executives to take advantage of workers. Ideological rationalizations that serve to exacerbate inequalities, inequities and injustices should be roundly rejected. Similar initiatives supported by apologists for a far right agenda should be exposed when they serve to perpetuate the retrogressive agenda of hard-right conservatives, as evaluated at length throughout this manifesto. Let us give new respect to Thomas Paine, who voiced the honorable philosophy, "My country is the world, and my religion is to do good." In shocking contrast, the religion of extreme conservatives is not oriented toward doing good, but to supporting retrogressive politicians and organizations that oppose democratic fair-mindedness, Golden Rule reciprocity ethics, equitable inclusiveness and sensible protections of the environment.

On-Going Barrage

Mark Twain’s mother Jane Lampton Clemens -- my great great grandmother in an unofficial Tiffany Twain genealogy -- was known for being a sunshiny woman with a cheerful disposition. I can feel this enervating influence coursing through my genes, so that even in dark days when the world does not seem right, or there is some physical or existential complaint to annoy me, a hike into beautiful natural surroundings can free the spirit of a measure of anxiety, and let appreciation shine through. Life can be a rich, marvelous experience, and it is best enjoyed when economic and social stresses are not at anti-egalitarian extremes. This is why one of our top national goals should be to improve the quality of life for all, and to make successful efforts to reduce economic insecurities for the masses. This is why social inequities should be reduced, and it is why Supreme Court Justices and other judges should NOT make so many decisions in favor of the powerful. And this is why we should take bold action to prevent extreme weather events from wreaking more damages on people here, there and everywhere.

Self-proclaimed “truth-teller” Trump declared in August 2016, "We can’t fix a rigged system by relying on the people who rigged it in the first place." He milked people’s populist anger at being left behind, and attacked Wall Street interest groups in his TV ads and campaign speeches. He promised to “drain the swamp” in D.C. if he got elected. That assurance has become one of the biggest deceits in all of American political history, now that Trump has filled the government with establishment bankers, political insiders, conservative billionaires, alt-right strategists, ideological extremists, anti-environmentalists and brazen shills for fossil fuel industries. Republicans have used every slick scheme they could imagine except the simplest and fairest plan: appealing to the American people by honestly representing their best interests and the greater good. The primary objective of Republican politicians has been to gain overweening power, no matter what scurrilous means may be required. It doesn’t seem to matter to them how dishonorably subversive their tactical strategies are against just values.
This is their overarching goal, no matter how deceitful the bait-and-switch swindles may be, as evaluated from the perspective of working people and the hundreds of millions of people whose health, well-being and trust are being betrayed by these scheming, self-serving, unethical and morally deficient politicos.

This drive to gain power by any means is an overriding goal of dominion-seeking Strict Father types, as assessed by insightful linguist George Lakoff, who contrasts the constellation of values and characteristics that typify Stern Father types to the more responsible constellation of values and characteristics embraced by Nurturant Parent types. The best course of action for the human family is to be neither too strict nor too permissive, and to fairly and moderately balance competing forces and marginalize the fundamentalism of archetypal proponents at both extremes of these family metaphor narratives and ideological positions.

What's Goin' On?

Angry right-leaning populists have temporarily joined social conservatives and economic elites -- millionaires and billionaires -- to hand almost unchecked power to a pathological cabal of uncompromising rulers who are making it obvious they intend to perpetuate what can be described as the biggest financial swindle in world history. This swindle has involved irresponsibly borrowing $21 trillion since 1981 to slash taxes mainly for the benefit of the few. This swindle has been achieved by cutting marginal tax rates on the top levels of earnings. Tax rates on these highest levels of earnings had been 70% or higher, each and every year from 1936 until 1981. But then Ronald Reagan launched his rash revolution of the rich against working people and the New Deal, and succeeded in radically slashing this top rate to 28%, and it has never been increased up to even 40% since.

The bottom line net effect of this scheme has been to dramatically contribute to increasing the net worth of the richest 1% of Americans by something like $30 trillion since 1981, and to burden all taxpayers with this additional $21 trillion in national debt. This scheme will make it necessary for all taxpayers in every future year to pay interest costs on the debt that will dangerously compound, totaling 100% of this obligation every 15 or 20 years, on average (depending on the prevailing levels of interest rates) -- over and over and over and over again.

A bipartisan group of prominent national security experts has declared this huge and irresponsibly high debt to be one of the biggest threats to our nation's security. With the national debt reaching such a dangerous level, it is time to take effective steps to rein in this power-abusing scam. Instead, rich and powerful people are staunchly opposing compromises that would curtail these schemes. They are zealously intent on ramping up this rip-off by doubling down on this risk-exacerbating con job. They are spending Big Money to elect politicians who are highly partisan and will cut their taxes even further, especially for those in the top 1%. And they are financing this largess by trying to cut the social safety net and reduce government spending. This imposition of new austerity measures on the masses -- i.e., everyone in the 99% -- is stoking inequality, and will most severely hurt vulnerable people on the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder.

There is a depressive economic impact associated with concentrating wealth more narrowly in the hands of the few, so this action is counterproductive and threatens to bring on a severe debt crisis and economic recession or depression. This danger is being made worse by our leaders taking foolish new risks with their threats to impose more and more protectionist tariffs and belligerent “America First” taxes on imports from other countries, and with other national policies that will accelerate increases in the national debt.

The ideological push for the U.S. government to double down on this financial swindle is a colossal folly. And this could only be accomplished through brainwashing, oppressing and coercing the people, who are getting more intensely unhappy about these ruling elites and their greedily selfish, hubris-stoked priorities. Their goal is, in effect, to rig our economic and political systems ever more irresponsibly against the general welfare and the common good. A more sensible goal would be to promote fairer governance and more responsible management. Instead of ratcheting up debt, we should manage our national affairs with more fiscally responsible common sense, implementing consensus solutions. It would be much better to create a rainy day fund to buffer against adverse developments than to reduce our options by painting ourselves into a desperate corner -- i.e., incurring spiking amounts of debt for ill-advised purposes. The people of Puerto Rico would concur, for the government there created a serious debt crisis through decades of mismanagement. Then, after Hurricane Maria struck, a
terrible blow was dealt to the people of Puerto Rico, and they are now in unnecessarily perilous straits.

To improve conditions in the United States, and to thus help ensure a greater degree of common good, we must sincerely adopt more inclusive goals, and we should understand the best means to achieve them. As Gifford Pinchot reckoned, the greatest good consists of reconciling conflicting interests by always seeking solutions that are focused on achieving “the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run.” That was a good call by the first director of the U.S. Forest Service after it was created by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905.

For decades now, too many of our representatives have been seeking to achieve the greatest good for the few in the short term. This shortsighted and inequality-stoking scheme has been perpetrated against the people in the USA for much too long, and too mercilessly. And it is intensifying now that a greedy real estate mogul has seized the reins of power and is waging an incendiary and chaotic shock-and-awe offensive against core values of democracy and inclusive visions of the greater good. Readers will understand the many scurrilous facets of this con job when they evaluate The Con Goes On: A Triumphant Coup by Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalists.

No matter how loudly and persistently conservatives push deceptive propaganda claiming that tax cuts are a panacea for what ails us, this alternative reality is a colossal Big Lie, a ruse that threatens to destabilize human civilization and wreak havoc on billions of people around the world. Think about this. What is needed is a far-reaching strategic initiative that will significantly reduce the risky inequalities, inequities and injustices that are stimulating widespread unrest in our country right now. Millions of people would benefit from piecemeal reforms like higher minimum wages, fairer compensation for overtime work, equal pay for women and men, more comprehensive healthcare reform, and stronger collective bargaining rights for working people. But what we really need is bold tax reform that would reward work, not wealth, and make the tax code more progressive -- that is, more steeply graduated. We should assess a bare minimum top tax rate of 48%, which is still a damn good deal for the top dogs, compared to the 70% or more that was in effect for every one of the 45 years before Ronald Reagan cajoled the people into giving him power. And we should more generously fund common good initiatives, social safety net programs and stronger environmental protections. We should balance the budget, not incessantly exploit the rash expediency of scam-engendered deficit financing. To really succeed at implementing such reforms, we need to get Big Money out of politics.

Dateline Tuesday, February 12, 2019

The record high national debt has just roared past $22 trillion and is headed for becoming the highest ever in our country’s history as a percent of GDP. This debt is on track to exceed the previous high incurred in connection with fighting a world war against fascist aggressors during the 1940s. Today, the rapidly increasing national debt comes during a relatively healthy economy, “suggesting a structural gap between how much the country collects in taxes and how much it spends.” It is folly to have passed the Tax Cuts law in December 2017 that will force the government to borrow more than an additional $1.5 trillion over a ten-year period, and to allow most of the proceeds of this public borrowing to be given to the wealthiest 1%. This will force every taxpayer in every future year to pay interest costs on this debt, year after year after year after year.

The Congressional Budget Office made it clear in a report last year that this debt dilemma will continue to get worse as the interest expense on this irresponsibly incurred debt will compound, driving up the debt to even more dangerous levels and putting extreme pressure on federal spending. This burden imprudently increases the risk of another financial crisis and recession. The CBO projected this worsening status, indicating that the debt is "burgeoning". In the decades ahead, this spiking debt will result in reduced national savings and income, along with increased pressure to cut other budget priorities due to growing interest costs. This irresponsibly-realized imbalance will also limit lawmakers’ ability to respond to unplanned events and natural disasters.

Donald Trump had claimed in April 2016 that he intended to eliminate the national debt “over a period of eight years.” Given his propensity to radically distort the truth, this was merely a deceitful expedient for him, a claim made to promote his candidacy without a shred of truth to it. His administration has pushed for huge debt-financed tax cuts, and when this is combined with significant spending increases for the military and other things he signed into law, the national debt has been driven up rapidly, not reduced.
Aristotle and Epicurus were two of the greatest Greek philosophers of the Classic Age of Athens. They were commendably concerned with the concept of understanding what truly makes for eudaimonia, or human well-being and the “good life”. One of their salient ideas was that cultivating balance and moderation in all aspects of life is the most valuable and virtuous of pursuits, for this fosters resilience and allows people to cope well with inevitable challenges. Tellingly, ancient ethics considered the virtue of character to be strongly linked to human flourishing and the highest good. Aye, there’s the rub! Unscrupulous self-serving leaders who should be representing our best interests today lack an adequate real commitment to honesty and true virtue.

The Demagogue-in-Chief won the 2016 presidential election by using a myriad of illegitimate means, but he did NOT win a mandate to further enrich the rich by scrimping on safety net programs that keep 100 million Americans from more desperate circumstances. He did NOT win a mandate to stifle free expression, ruthlessly crush opposition, or abrogate the personal liberties of the majority of the American people. He did NOT gain a mandate to deceive the people, propagate a raft of lies or violate rules of law, or to attack the press and characterize it as “the enemy of the people”, or to severely undermine the independence of the judiciary. He did NOT win a mandate to sacrifice public lands and inflict a more rapid Tragedy of the Commons calamity on wildlife habitats and entire ecosystems.

Trump and his crony capitalist enablers are heedless politicians who are tragically eager to sacrifice the environmental commons, despite Professor Garrett Hardin having made it clear back in 1968 how crazy this compulsion is, and how detrimental to human prospects. Trump did NOT win a mandate to deprive millions of Americans of medical insurance or Medicaid. He did NOT win a mandate to appoint a Cabinet of Wall Street enablers at the expense of folks on Main Street across the USA. He did NOT win a mandate to let greedily uncompromising billionaires control the economy and rashly run up the public debt, or to let climate change deniers maximize short-term profits by sacrificing longer-term well-being and security. He did NOT win a mandate to allow anti-public education reactionaries to undermine public schools and foist bigger debt burdens on students. He did NOT win a mandate to build a wall on the southern border that the American people would be forced to pay for. And he surely did NOT win a mandate to wage rash trade wars that drive up cost, hurt farmers, and threaten economic growth -- and are likely to exacerbate social strife and intensify internecine conflicts, and cause an eventual recession rather than sustainable economic good times.

Trump and his cronies have gained power by lying and exploiting bait-and-switch strategies, but they will not be able to sustain this con game with impunity, for inevitably they will be smitten by the outrageous unfairness of these deceptive and fraudulent con man schemes. Nemesis, the Greek Goddess of Divine Retribution, watches intently, her long red robes a-flowing and her hypersensitivity to hubris rattled -- and her irascible ire appears to be piqued. In 2019, her modern emissaries are likely to finally exact justice for wrongdoing.

Truly, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

NOTE: Frankly, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain is a nom de plume, just like Mark Twain was a sly pen name used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens. How this whole project came about is a long and evolving story, and one that is better left a mystery than being disclosed in the full scope of more prosaic actual circumstance. See the autobiographical assertions made in the online Happy Harbingers in Good Ideas for a Better Future for some interesting images.

“Who the Author of this Production is, is wholly unnecessary to the Public, as the important thing is the IDEAS THEMSELVES, and not the author. Yet it is necessary to say that she is unconnected with any Party, and under no sort of influence, public or private, other than the influence of reason and principle.”

-- Thomas Paine (gender revised)
A Sharp Exposé and Scathing Critique of Misguided and Misguiding American Leaders

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, creator of the Earth Manifesto
June 2017, with updates through July 1, 2019

Please give these clear-eyed Big Picture understandings close consideration. This is the third of 16 essays in See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times. This Book Twelve of this manifesto contains accurate assessments of all the ways politicians are looting the country, excessively exploiting working people, lying to their constituents, cheating American citizens, betraying the best interests of the majority, manipulating people by hijacking their emotions, rashly depleting natural resources, tragically damaging the environmental commons, ridiculously irresponsibly mortgaging the future, and immorally sabotaging the common good.

In a bona fide liberty-loving democratic republic, the people are protected from being ruled with excessive ruthlessness by wealthy dominion-demanding rich people and their organizational tools -- giant corporations. Or for that matter, being governed by demagogues in repressive authoritarian regimes, or by religious fanatics. We the People generally prefer fairer and more honest governance. We want a more broadly inclusive populism in which we are offered better opportunities and more assured freedoms, and we want greater social justice to reign from sea to shining sea. We want to live in places where the air is not polluted and the water is not tainted with toxins, and where a reasonable modicum of environmental justice prevails. We want to be able to enjoy our lives and liberties and individual pursuits of happiness, and we want a fairer society that is more inclusive, and thus enjoys improved social cohesion that makes for greater mutual security and more peaceable coexistence. To establish these social goods, we must demand that our representatives honestly refocus our national priorities.

To really improve matters, a more widely shared prosperity is needed, and improved security for the populace and adequate investments in social safety net programs and better protections of the environment. These propitious conditions are needed at the same time that our leaders are not running the country into risky levels of debt by fraudulently borrowing trillions of dollars to bribe voters and nefariously give the lion’s share of the spoils to the top 1%. To achieve these common good goals, we need leaders who will respectfully champion fair reforms and act with more honorable ethical integrity, and stop imposing more and more austerity measures on the people in order to give unconscionably big tax cuts on the highest levels of income and inheritances to the already wealthy.

A Big Picture Focus

To actualize the greater good, we must be guided by more comprehensive concerns -- ones that take into account The Common Good, Properly Understood. Most folks see that the status quo is rigged irresponsibly against the vast majority of the people. As a presidential candidate Donald Trump promised to fix this, in a deceitful assurance that was part of a pathological con job. Instead of taking effective steps to honestly fix things, conniving Republican politicians stole the 2016 elections through a long litany of illegitimate and deceitful means and then began imposing an unbelievable number of manipulative schemes and frauds against the people in their two years of chaotic rule. The sordid details of this short-term-oriented infamy are spelled out in these essays.

Our colonial forbearers were outraged at despotic usurpations and abuses of power by King George III, so they courageously declared independence from the British monarchy in 1776. Then, twelve years later, delegates representing the people of the new nation ratified a great Constitution that had been hammered out during four
months of contentious consensus-seeking at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia the previous summer. A primary purpose for the creation of this commendably good guidance in our democratic republic was to ensure that sufficient checks, balances, accountability and safeguards were established in the government to protect the people from having any future despots or demagogues seize power, usurp it, and blatantly abuse it.

These eminently respectable Founders declared that the government's legitimacy itself, and its moral right to use the power of the state, are only justified and lawful when the people who are subject to that political power give their consent. This theory of consent is historically contrasted to the divine right of kings, and was often invoked as a charge against the legitimacy of colonial empires. Article 21 of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights formally confirmed this ultimate gauge of legitimacy in 1948, stating: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government".

We are living in a Bizarro world in which Republican politicians have abandoned stances that they long stood for, as Max Boot points out in his compelling book The Corrosion of Conservatism: Why I Left the Right. Max Boot is a longtime conservative writer and historian who succinctly states that he has been utterly dismayed since the 2016 national elections by witnessing "the Republican Party switch its position on issue after issue -- going from free trade to protectionist, from pro-immigration to nativist, from tough on Russia to appeasing Russia, from fiscal discipline to fiscal irresponsibility, from defending the rule of law to undermining it."

Lord Acton, a member of the British Parliament in the 1860s, once famously wrote, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". The Founders of our great American experiment in democratic governance understood this basic political truth: this is why they created a Constitution containing effective checks and balances to prevent corruption, despotism, demagogic abuses of power, self-dealing by politicians and taxation without fair representation. Ever since the Constitution was ratified, there has been a progressive evolution of laws, rights and protections that have helped make our democratic republic broadly providential in assuring the majority of people a fair modicum of liberty, justice and reasonable cause for being able to share in the American Dream of opportunity, equal treatment and fair dealings under the law.

The truth in Lord Acton's words are now being revealed anew by the bright light of subpoena power that the new majority of Democrats in the House of Representatives is exerting to fulfill the implied responsibility given to them in the Constitution to wield oversight over the Executive Branch and federal agencies. With Democrats now setting the legislative agenda and holding investigative hearings, this means the American people are starting to see a lot more details of the scandalous rigging, strategic deception, corrupt activities, malfeasance and conspiratorial cover-ups that many Republican politicians have been scandalously engaged in while they exerted domineering One Party power in the executive and legislative branches of government for the past two years. And when many incriminating findings are revealed through various investigations into wrongdoing by honesty-deficient, corporate-kowtowing Republican politicians, and into their efforts to obstruct justice, then the depth of illegitimacy and malfeasance will become much clearer, and a crisis of reckoning will engulf our public sphere. See Clearly provides good plans for how to deal with this!

The ruling class is waging class warfare against the citizenry, and as a pathetic consequence of the ways the status quo is rigged, millions of people in the USA and hundreds of millions around the world are being wantonly endangered and outright harmed. With "conservative" politicians so cravenly doing the bidding of corporate CEOs, they have been eviscerating government regulations, causing us to lose sensible safeguards against influence peddling, cost externalizing schemes, environmental damages, roguery, insider trading, illicit money laundering, and all manner of worse-than-the-mob scams that include criminal tax evasion, violations of campaign finance laws, Charitable Foundation fraud, bank and insurance fraud, brazen emoluments improprieties, and excessive financial leverage that heightens the probability of a recession and more costly bailouts.

It is fanatically misguided for corporate entities to be allowed to exercise domineering power. The two main legal purposes of corporations are to maximize profits and minimize responsibilities and liabilities of CEOs and managers and investors. As a result, corporate entities are driven to externalize costs, foisting them onto you and me -- and onto everyone in the future, to their inevitable eventual hardship and titanic chagrin.
The Vital Role of Women in Politics

Gender inequities are among the harshest of all injustices in our male dominated society. Martin Luther King Jr. once declared that injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane of all forms of inequality. Injustices related to healthcare, pre-existing conditions and reproductive rights are especially odious to women, and they are just one aspect of a multitude of gender inequities and harms, including many that are being exposed by aggrieved women through the #MeToo movement.

Congratulations to the record number of women who won political office in the 2018 midterm elections! This achievement was long overdue. While many good women were successful in their election contests, many more like Stacey Abrams in Georgia were cheated out of power by the GOP political machine. Women have been broadly deprived of fair representation in the halls of power in our sexist patriarchal republic ever since it began. This deeply unjust disenfranchisement of females has enabled significant discrimination against women in compensation, benefits, job security, a hard-to-break glass ceiling, sexual harassment, violations against both the dignity and safety of females, and many episodes of domestic violence, in addition to discrimination based on race and harsh deprivations of reproductive rights. Women of the world, unite! Men, give us greater respect.

Let us philosophize. The legacy we leave to every person in the future is the most consequentially important consideration for us collectively, and we need farsighted guidance from our leaders and institutions to ensure that aggregate impacts of all our individual choices and activities do not too severely compromise the hopes of people in future generations to live in a healthy and sustainable world. Let’s help prevent a dystopian future!

It is crucially important for humankind to make accurate assessments of the big challenges we face in the world today so as to identify and implement the best plans for propitiously dealing with these existential challenges. We need our leaders to more honestly and honorably strive to promote the common good instead of allowing shrewd opportunists to use divisive propaganda and demagogic deceit to harmfully exploit working people and consistently favor the interests of corporations over individuals. And we need to find better ways to prevent the excessive depletion of natural resources and wanton damages to the environmental commons.

Here’s the bottom line. The tree of life is under furious assault, with wildlife being driven toward extinction and the most providential biological habitats being decimated, sadly including beautiful coral reefs and tropical rainforests exceptionally rich in biodiversity. And both threatened species and endangered species are being sacrificed to hunters, real estate developers, fossil fuel profiteers and zealous exploiters of public lands.

We humans are treating planet Earth like a business in liquidation, converting natural resources to cash at nearly the fastest possible rate. Compounding this insidiously consequential folly, shrewd ruling factions are making damned sure that economic and political systems continue to be rigged so that the wealth generated and power are ever more narrowly concentrated in the hands of the few. This is being done to the detriment of the vast majority of the people, with mounting costs and risks being foisted onto the masses, and onto every person in the future. This tragic scheme is being made worse by leaders who are rashly running up national debts by borrowing huge sums of money and ensuring that most of the spoils of this fraudulent burdening of future taxpayers are given to the same wealthy people who are grabbing most of the benefits of all these über-scams. This debt stimulates spending in the economy, partially masking the ill effects of increasing inequality and dire disparities in security and well-being between the fortunate few and the struggling many.

History and the Present

The brilliant design of checks and balances in our government was developed to prevent despotic abuses of power by making sure that no branch of government could become too powerful. The U.S. Constitution was created to divide power between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, and includes various limits and controls on the powers of each branch. When one party manages to gain control of all three branches of government, it allows a culture of corruption to fester, and opportunities for tyranny to reign.

Ruthlessly shutting opposing political parties out of power is an extraordinarily detrimental unethical gambit, for it is contrary to democratic fairness and personal freedoms. When political power is dominated by a single
political party, it allows greed-driven compulsions to propagate, and protections to be decimated, ambitions to
go unchecked, authority to be usurped and abused, political corruption to proliferate, wealth to be increasingly
concentrated in the hands of the few, and exploiters of public lands and mineral resources to proceed full speed
ahead, treacherously externalizing costs, socializing risks and tragically damaging the commons. Such were the
outcomes of Democrats having been shut out of power from January 2107 to January 2019. Treacherous Trump
Republicans have demonized Democrats, to boot, rashly ignoring voices that propose excellent solutions, like a
carbon fee to intelligently and fairly internalize costs currently being externalized onto society, or a better
deal for working people in place of the current Bad Deal most workers are experiencing. Our leaders must cope
more honestly with big challenges like economic inequalities and climate injustices, and with the unimaginably
dire and costly consequences of an insidiously unfolding greenhouse gas double-glazing of our home planet. We
must come together and demonstrate much greater regard for future well-being and sustainable existence.

Far-reaching corruption in electioneering and governance are currently undermining fairer representation of the
people and violating the common good, rendering Republican rule really illegitimate. The GOP political machine
has been formidable in its zealousness for gaining control and abusing power, and their primary way to achieve
this has been by pandering to rich conservatives and illicitly allowing Big Money to corrupt our elections and
lawmaking. Republican politicians have been ruthless in their use of hyper-divisive tactics and distorting
propaganda to brainwash its followers, telling them Big Lies and deceiving them and distracting them from big
issues. "Conservative" politicians are betraying the vast majority of the American people through bait-and-
switch treachery and their fiscally irresponsible Tax Cut scam, financed by borrowing trillions of dollars from
all taxpayers in every future year. They have engaged in this “casino capitalist” hyper-stimulus of the economy
to goose profits and funnel them to the few, and to drive unemployment down while ramping up materialistic
resource depletion and the damaging exploitation of public lands. In this, they are foolishly sacrificing future
well-being and sustainability to gain short-term advantages for themselves and their cronies.

The GOP political machine has been ruthlessly formidable under Donald Trump. Republicans have demonstrated
they will do anything to win, no matter how unethical and immoral, and no matter how divisive and antithetical
to creating a more perfect union, and contrary to the general welfare of the American people, and damaging to
domestic tranquility, and undermining of individual and national security, and tragically harmful to the common
good, and insidiously threatening to hopes for securing “the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”

These understandings are not “fake news”. It should be clearly recognized that journalists and investigative
reporters in the free press -- “the Fourth Estate” -- make the media vitally important to democracy for
informing the public and serving as a check on abuses of power in Congress, the White House, the judiciary and
the corporate world. Great reporting is coming out of the Washington Post and the New York Times, and on
MSNBC, serving our democratic republic commendably in this moment of unfolding constitutional crisis. In
pathetic contrast, Fox News and conservative talk radio hosts are confusing the national dialogue, giving cover
to abusers of power, rationalizing wrongdoing, pushing fake news and Big Lies, whipping up violent rhetoric,
promoting hate, and using divisive tactics to push a far right agenda and the politicization of the judiciary.

The devious master manipulator Donald Trump tells his own narcissistic version of stories, using bizarrely self-
serving and self-aggrandizing spin to impose a twisted and solipsistic narrative on every happenstance. He tells
stories that bitterly attack anyone who criticizes him and tend to be real whoppers — WITCH HUNT! — FAKE
NEWS!! — and he tries to skew public opinion into a cult-following-like belief system in his tall tales and bent
rhetoric. This creates starkly oppositional camps of hosanna-chanting believers and apologists on the one hand,
and outraged folks who see the radical contrast between his dishonest interpretation and fairer and more
expansive visions of reality.

In our extraordinarily short attention span world, Trump’s bizarrely selfish demagogic solipsistic tweets have
gained surprising traction, and had terribly tragic effects. He is like a Trojan horse for the few, echoing the
disingenuous, dissembling, deceitful, manipulative and extremely divisive preaching of emotion-manipulating skills
on Fox News, Inc. and other conservative media outlets.
Since the legitimacy of leaders in our democracy relies on the consent of the governed, and since Republicans represent only a minority of the people -- and considering that the 2016 elections involved much devious intrigue and downright illicit activity -- Republican leadership in the White House and the U.S. Senate right now is cast in the stark light of infamy. It should be acknowledged that most of the people who supported Trump gave their consent only after being subjected to an unprecedented barrage of deceitful, divisive and manipulative propaganda that hijacked their emotions, goaded their fears, stoked resentments, scapegoated immigrants, propagated malicious cyber-attack disinformation, promoted a raft of really Big Lies, riled up racial prejudices, caused hate crimes to spike, and stoked white male nativist nationalist tribalism in millions of individual echo chambers across the land of the semi-free. And they have indulged in unethically debilitating, anxiety-inducing and effectively diabolical machinations targeted to make people believe the Supreme Court should be stacked with anti-gay and anti-choice Republican judges who just happen to side with giving overriding prerogatives to corporations and the rich instead of pushing for the best interests of the majority.

Not only did Republicans achieve their 2016 election wins through a long litany of illegitimate means rather than by offering people fairer representation of their best interests and the common good, these scheming hyper partisan politicians have governed with ruthless unreason. They have double-crossed the American people by ruling with unrelenting deceit, cunning chicanery, discriminatory zeal, widespread conflicts of interest, risky fiscal irresponsibility, contempt for rules of law, extreme ecological myopia, un-Jesus-like moral turpitude, many extremist rulings in legal cases targeted to enable wide-ranging malfeasance, and an anti-egalitarian agenda that panders mercilessly to the elite few, with little evidence of honest integrity or caring for the many. And they have shut down the federal government for a record long period, and declared an illicit national emergency.

From January 2017 to January 2019, the Trump administration and the Senate and the House were all run by narrow majorities of conservative politicians elected by a minority of the people. And these politicians ruled as if they had won a landslide mandate to impose a harsh right-wing agenda. In this, they have abused authority and rashly refused to compromise with representatives of significantly more than half of the people. Given the illegitimacy of such rule, federal courts are the best hope for the people to be protected from a myriad of harms and wrongdoing. Unfortunately for all, the foundational independence of the judiciary is being seriously compromised by Republican politicians right now, for they are stacking federal courts with young "conservatives" judges for life-long terms who tend to injudiciously favor patriarchal sexism and "right-wing social engineering" and an exploitive economic agenda that helps facilitate corporate corruption and an anti-egalitarian and anti-environmental and undemocratic crusade against the common good. Let's demand more mainstream justices!

A Spotlight on the Crucial Role of the Supreme Court

Chief Justice John Roberts has declared that the Supreme Court is "apolitical." Oh, right. This is a colossal Big Lie, as revealed in its partisan ruling to overturn lower court decisions against the broadly corrupting influence of gerrymandering. The Roberts Court had already betrayed the American people with its Citizens United ruling in January 2010, which sold our democracy to the highest bidders — rich people and giant corporations. In that ruling, the narrow 5 to 4 majority of "conservatives" overturned restrictions on corporate spending in elections dating back more than 100 years — and they had the brazen effrontery to try to justify their action by using the flimsy assertion that "independent expenditures do not lead to, or create the appearance of, quid pro quo corruption." In the nine years since then, it has become damningly crystal clear that Big Money is profoundly corrupting our elections and rashly skewing our national policies and priorities.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts had engaged in a revelatory Twitter dispute with Donald Trump in November 2018 after Trump tweeted about an "Obama judge" having made a decision against the constitutionality of an effort to keep desperate migrants from applying for asylum. "We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges," Roberts said in a statement released on Thanksgiving eve, "or Bush judges or Clinton judges. What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them. That independent judiciary is something we should all be thankful for."
Trump almost immediately reacted by tweet from his vacation home in Florida: “Sorry Chief Justice John Roberts, but you do indeed have ‘Obama judges,’ and they have a much different point of view than the people who are charged with the safety of our country.” That was really maniacally twisted spin!

Both of these “eminences” are partially right. Roberts was right, we do need to be thankful for the judiciary still being somewhat independent, though Brett Kavanaugh’s rushed confirmation is another step backwards because it strengthens domineering rule by the minority party, and many legal cases in our country show that our criminal justice system treats people better if they are rich and guilty than if they are poor and innocent. And Trump was also right, our judiciary has indeed become too politicized -- but it is Republican judges that are the most biased toward enabling abuses of minority power and giving excessive influence and advantages to rich people and corporate entities and crony capitalist robber barons and religious fundamentalists.

I appeal to each and every judge in the federal judiciary to really honestly and honorably try to do their fair-minded “level best” by keeping consequential ethics in mind and Big Picture considerations like those evaluated in See Clearly. Supreme Court Justices should much more honestly honor the oath of office they have sworn to, that they “will administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich.”

Trump has appointed more judges than any president in history, thanks to the machinations of Mitch McConnell and other Republicans in the U.S. Senate who refused to allow President Obama to fill more than 100 vacancies on federal courts and one on the Supreme Court. And biased “Trump judges” will be tilting the scales of justice for decades to come, reprehensibly reinforcing the status quo of corporate power, uncompromising extreme partisanship and improprieties in campaign financing and voter suppression, along with patriarchal sexism, racial discrimination and a general culture of corruption that is spreading like a cancer, corroding the foundations of our society. Trump judges will tend to make partisan rulings that favor rich people over poor people, capitalists over workers, corporations over communities, Republican politicians over Democrats, men over women, white people over people of color, rigged elections over fair elections, partisan advantage over ethical propriety, those who gerrymander over those disadvantaged by gerrymandering, dishonest propagandists over honest journalists, fearful citizens against immigrants and asylum seekers, gun rights fanatics over those who support sensible efforts to reduce gun violence, irresponsible profiteers over common sense protections of public lands and the environmental commons, evangelical religious zealots over women and gay people, Christians over Muslims and Jews and agnostics and atheists, an extreme agenda over the general welfare of the people and progressive national plans, reckless short-termism in letting resource exploiters deplete natural resources instead of championing conservation, the Republican Party over the Country, and climate crisis deniers over those who advocate for wise precautionary principles and the greater good and sustainable well-being.

Efforts by Republicans to entrench a right-wing majority on the Supreme Court are targeted to make sure that the “Roberts Five” majority will continue to be able to impose its will over the people by making more narrow 5-to-4 rulings that side with the Few over the Many. In the biggest scheme of things, Republican politicians want to have a majority of far right judges on the Supreme Court who are most predisposed to allow Donald Trump to get away with breaking election laws, violating provisions of the Constitution and rules of law, and engaging in intrigue with Russians who used cyber-attacks to help him get elected and destroy our democracy.

This is corruption incarnate! Seeing clearly, the American people should renounce this stacking of federal courts with Republican partisans. Donald Trump chose Brett Kavanaugh over all other possible nominees because he is biased toward acting as an enabler of abuses of power rather than as an independent check against corruption, sexual misconduct, violations of women’s rights, growing inequality, fraud, political malfeasance, influence peddling and the anti-democratic litany of right-wing Republican agenda priorities.

Kavanaugh is a lifelong Republican partisan who will be deciding people’s fates on the highest court in the land for a generation or two. He suspiciously happens to be far outside the judicial mainstream in having professed the belief that courts should show great deference to the presidency, possibly even when power is being used contrary to the law, ethical norms, fundamental values or ideals espoused in the Constitution itself. He should not have been confirmed as a Justice because of the fact that he is likely to side with protecting Trump from accountability for his lying, breaking campaign finance laws, emoluments profiteering, obstruction of justice,
cover ups and various power abusing violations of the Constitution. Right now, with so many misdeeds being uncovered related to the 2016 elections and Trump administration activities in office, it is the wrong time for Republicans to have succeeded in appointing a cunning judge to the Supreme Court who will take the side of the Roberts Five in rationalizing, enabling and facilitating much of the egregious wrongdoing that is taking place.

The Supreme Court should act as an effective and ethical check against abuses of power. We simply can't trust Congress and the President to act morally and constitutionally, since right now the current Administration and rogue Republicans in Congress are acting like functionaries enabling wrongdoing. So we must choose judges who will fairly and impartially decide cases in ways that reasonably limit inimical abuses of authority by rich conservatives and giant corporations and the scheming politicians they have bought. We simply can't trust the Supreme Court right now, and that makes it too illegitimate to accept.

We the People have historically feared attacks from abroad, so it is ironic that we are now experiencing such existentially big threats to our democracy from within. We can no longer tolerate Republican politicians in Congress abdicating their responsibilities of honestly representing the people and serving as a check against Trump’s abuses of power and the permissive reining culture of corruption.

A Biblical Perspective

Since the goal of establishing a government with strong checks and balances that can stand for time immemorial against both domestic despotism and foreign tyranny is at the very heart of the U.S. Constitution, it is tragic that our democratic republic, dedicated in founding ideals to serving the common good and the general welfare, has devolved today into an illegitimate state by allowing a demagogue and his co-conspiratorial minions to seize power and brazenly abuse authority and conspire with foreign autocrats like Putin in Russia, Erdogan in Turkey and Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia. This is antithetical to the best interests of all citizens.

According to Proverbs 6:16-19 in the sacred Bible, there are six things the LORD hates, and a seventh that is an abomination unto Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to evil mischief, a false witness who speaketh lies, and a person who sows discord among brothers. In light of Donald Trump’s manipulative demagogic evil genius strategies and narcissistic character disorders, the Goddess of Irony grumbles ominously, and sounds of singing reverberate through our consciousness, moving our attention inward and subtly swaying our consciences. Listen! It is the voice of the marvelously melodious singer-songwriter and activist Holly Near, voicing these evocative lyrics: “I ain’t afraid of your Yahweh. I ain’t afraid of your Allah. I ain’t afraid of your Jesus. -- I’m afraid of what you do in the name of your God.”

Republicans are putting their Party over country by using terribly divisive tactics to succeed in sacrificing the common good to the monomaniacal pursuit of power, profit and personal advantages in our corrupted crony capitalist system. In so doing, these politicians are causing excessively myopic and consequentially harmful impacts. It is no wonder that many folks judge their worse-than-Machiavellian schemes as “acts of evildoers”.

Think honestly of the long litany of profoundly corrupt scams and unethical swindles and shrewdly illicit schemes that “conservatives” have used to win elections and grab power. Keep in mind that most religious evangelicals are supporting Trump Republicans, in an egregious instance of hypocrisy. These politicians have engaged in almost every possible illegitimate ruse, rather than more genuinely trying to promote the greater good and improve the general welfare of the people. They have suppressed voting, purged voter rolls, restricted early voting and made extreme gerrymanders of hundreds of congressional districts, all to advance their self-interest and treacherously do the scurrilous bidding of rich people and giant corporate entities. They have refused to take steps to prevent influence peddling and limit the corrupting effects of Big Money given by donors, often in secret, to decide elections and rig our laws and pervert our system of justice. They have cheated, repetitiously told falsehoods, divisively stoked hot button cultural issues, taken advantage of people’s fears and grievances to emotionally manipulate them, and engaged in duplicitous smear campaigns, character assassinations and dirty electioneering tricks. They have traitorously encouraged Russian cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns to help them get elected, and promoted fake news and inimical political conspiracy theories, denied facts and
expertise to push their short-sighted and corrupt agenda, threatened their opponents with jail or violence, and broken laws by using hush money to cover up Donald Trump's scandalous adulteries. Yikes! Let us meditate.

See clearly what's happening here, and why it's so seriously wrong. Wealthy donors, led by secretive Koch conclave co-conspirators and other well-heeled cronies, have colossally corrupted our economic and political systems, using Big Bucks and Dark Money. Encouraging this corruption, the conservatives on the Supreme Court gave their stamp of approval with their narrow Citizens United ruling that Big Money in our elections cannot even create the appearance of corruption. Really! They expressed this erroneous opinion despite the plainly evident extent of corrupting influence in allowing rich donors to decide almost everything. "Not a puppet, not a puppet!", Trumpian characters exclaim, in almost comically disingenuous diabolical denial.

All of these indignities are being exacerbated by the fact that many of the scams being perpetrated are sad examples of malfeasance and activities that bend or outright break rules of law, and even violate the great Enlightenment Era ideals upon which our Constitution was founded. The American people are being subjected not only to this litany of ruses and outright frauds, but to deep psychological distress and insecurity due to the extremely divisive nature of the Demagogue-in-Chief's attempts to blame others, insult opponents, stoke racial prejudices and pit people against each other. "United we stand; divided, the despots win." The Underground Mole shouts out, "Reject these uncivil, decency-deficient, unpatriotic and anti-democratic villains!"

In light of all the misguided and illicit actions being taken by Trump Republicans in the world today, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain proclaims: "If Donald Trump really had a shred of moral integrity, he would repent of his dastardly deeds, admit his sins, fire Vice-President Mike Pence and then resign from office. The Constitution stipulates that their successor will be the Speaker of the House -- Nancy Pelosi, since January 3, 2019. As for Brett Kavanaugh, he should be replaced on the Supreme Court by the well-qualified consensus candidate Merrick Garland, allowing fairer representation in the halls of power.

Ideas like this are expansively evaluated in See Clearly. Note that there are plenty of excellent solutions to all the big challenges we face, and we urgently need to begin undertaking them. They should be guided by a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, and by Intelligent Precautionary Principles Enunciated. And they should be informed by the propitious worldview and recommendations made in my first book, Common Sense Revival.

Chaos in the White House is dangerous to national security, and the revelations about it resemble an intrigue-packed thriller novel. The respect-deserving investigative journalist Bob Woodward has painted a harrowing portrait of the Trump presidency in his latest book Fear: Trump in the White House, which is based on many in-depth interviews with officials in the administration and other principals. Bob Woodward relates the dramatic story of Trump's lawyer John Dowd peppering him in the White House residence with questions about the Russia investigation, "provoking stumbles, contradictions and lies until the president eventually lost his cool." Trump finally erupted, "This thing's a goddamn hoax", and launched into a half-hour-long rant that finished with him saying, "I don't really want to testify" to the Special Counsel Robert Mueller and his team of investigators. I guess not! After all, his then lawyer John Dowd reportedly warned him that he would likely end up in prison wearing an "orange jumpsuit" if he were to testify under oath in the Russia investigation. He should know!

Republicans in Congress have evaded their Constitutional duty to exercise oversight over the President and members of his administration. In response, Democratic Attorney Generals have been filing lawsuits against the rogue regime at a record pace, blocking Trump's cruel "zero tolerance" child separation policy, defending women's reproductive rights and fighting for protections of the environment, which is critically important in sustaining us and everyone in the future. Many state Attorney Generals are thus acting to create accountability that is crucially needed to stop the worst harms of the domineering self-interested Republican agenda. "The inability and unwillingness of Republicans in Congress and state legislatures to hold this administration and others in power accountable means that our system of checks and balances rests with state attorneys general, who are filing lawsuits against Trump when he violates tenets of the Constitution and rules of law."

What We Must Do About the Excessively Risky State of the Status Quo
Republicans assert that their agenda is being undermined by "a vast left-wing conspiracy" and "an angry, left-wing mob". In sharp contrast, Hillary Clinton famously declared back in the 1990s that there was a "vast right-wing conspiracy" against her and President Clinton and progressive causes. Since every American is being veritably bombarded with an intense barrage of competing claims and obfuscating propaganda, it is hard for us to know what really to believe. We need to think straight, and see clearly.

It is crucial for us to ferret out the essential truth of this matter, since the consequences for our lives and for the lives of all humans forever hereafter will be profoundly affected by the environmental, ecological and climatic decisions being made today, and by our resource depletion activities and the extent to which we allow cost externalities like pollution, toxic wastes and associated medical care to be foisted onto society, instead of demanding that our representatives take effective steps to prevent and alleviate such harms. Likewise, the impacts of our economic, business, financial, regulatory, social and political activities powerfully affect people living today, and will affect the fate of all people in future generations. So our systems should be redesigned to be more in accord with visionary progressive understandings like those articulated in this manifesto.

To figure out whether the biggest threats to us will be found in left-wing schemes or right-wing schemes, let's be smart and "follow the money". Look what's happening here. Left-leaning politicians are calling for better and more affordable healthcare, improved public education, lower interest rates on student debt, comprehensive immigration reform, greater fairness in political representation, stronger protections from corporate wrongdoing, smarter regulations to prevent harms and cost externalizing schemes, bigger investments in the country's infrastructure, urgent climate actions, big reductions in the amount of money borrowed by the government to finance tax cuts for the top 1%, a fairer and less racially unjust system of criminal justice, better solutions to the deadly opioid crisis, lower prices for prescription drugs, the end of punitive marijuana laws, thorough investigations into election malfeasance and violations of rules of law and the Constitution, and international cooperation to pay forward economic stability and more broadly shared prosperity for our heirs.

In glaring contrast, right-wing politicians are using outrageously divisive tactics to grab and keep power, and staunchly opposing campaign finance reforms and expanded voting rights and fairer representation of the people. They are trying to entrench corrupt governance through partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts. They are abusing their illegitimately gained power by dangerously running the country into trillions of dollars of additional debt to reward wealthy donors with huge tax cuts. They are trying to obstruct justice and cover up wrongdoing by Donald Trump and his crony co-conspirator Republican politicians. They are stacking federal courts and the Supreme Court with far right conservatives who inimically favor wealthy people over poor people and corporations over workers and citizens. They are giving coal and oil companies more privileges to push their products and spew more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, with inevitably damaging and catastrophically costly impacts related to global warming. These impacts include more intense storms and extreme temperatures, worse droughts and wildfires in many places, ominous rises in sea level and storm surges, and growing numbers of people worldwide devastated by extreme weather-exacerbated natural disasters.

In the big picture, unprincipled Republican politicians have used twisted trickery in the form of an egregious bait-and-switch scheme in which they promise to champion the best interests of the working class and people on Main Street, and then do the bidding of rich people and corporate entities by crippling the ability of workers to collectively bargain for fairer treatment. At the same time, they try to impose austerity measures on the masses by cutting spending on healthcare, public education, environmental protections and many other hallmarks of a civilized society. And they simultaneously give lavish benefits to rich people and Wall Street banks and usurious Payday loan lenders and other corporate interests, to the detriment of the vast majority of the people. In these rash schemes, they are undermining the common good and the general welfare, sabotaging the environment, mortgaging the future, and courting "catastrophic and irreversible consequences" by failing to take effective steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

The Way It Is

Our Founders loved liberty, and hated despotic usurpations and abuses of power, so the brilliant Constitution they created featured checks and balances to prevent tyranny, and to ensure a more perfect union dedicated to
an expansive vision of the general welfare of the people and their liberties and the nation's security. Fast forward to right now. See Clearly is an ultimate Big Picture exposé of the wide-ranging wrongdoing involved in the way the status quo is currently rigged. In seeing clearly, we realize how long a litany of corrupt schemes and illicit scams and unethical con jobs are being perpetuated by power abusing "conservatives" against We the People. By seeing clearly, we recognize the vital importance of wide-ranging farsighted progressive change.

It is my strongly felt conviction that we can no longer afford to allow conservatives to run roughshod over the greater good by ruthlessly dominating our churches and federal and state governments. We need to collectively pledge allegiance to unifying policies, greater good goals and smarter national priorities. We need to demand a peaceful revolution that will ensure our representatives give us more honorable and just national plans, and more inclusive and egalitarian national priorities. Our representatives in Congress should start by enacting legislation that effectively reverses the corruption-facilitating Citizen's United ruling that allows Big Money to corrupt our elections and lawmaking. And let's ratify the eminently fair-minded Equal Rights Amendment!

Only a misled minority of Americans consents to Republican governance today. People see that these usurpers of power prioritize profits over people's health and well-being, and that they are engaging ecological insanity. People see the treachery of Big Money-bought puppet politicians, and the ultimate wrongheadedness of those who rationalize helping domineering CEOs and crony capitalists impose their excessively profit-obsessed plans on the people while promoting a crusade against a safe environment and fairer treatment of working people. Sensible folks see that all of this is crazily contrary to the health of providential living conditions for human beings and life on Earth.

The culture of corruption in Crazytown seems to be spreading like cancer. What we really need is a new reality that features better management. We need fairer leaders who are not pushing a divisive agenda or striving to benefit from partisan rancor and chaos in the administration of what should be proper governance. We need leaders who are less obsessed with exploiting workers, cheating consumers and using up limited resources at the fastest possible rate. We need leaders who are not creating a Reality TV drama that allows them to get away with excessive profiteering and widespread malfeasance, and who are not propagating a tsunami of distractions from all the unscrupulous, self-serving, self-dealing, self-aggrandizing and harmful goings on, right here and right now. The Big Brother government that George Orwell imagined in his dystopian novel 1984 sure has come in an ugly, cruel, deceitful, condemnation deserving, and transcendently irresponsible form! Let's reverse course. Instead of getting rid of all the vitally important functions of government and opening the barn doors to individual and corporate cost externalizing and unethical scheming, let's do the opposite!

Today the specter that haunts humanity is transmogrifying, and it is a specter of corporatocratic capitalism run amok. It is a misfortune that We the People are being deprived of greater fairness in the "social contract". It is sad that the eminently wise aspects of Golden Rule reciprocity principles are being arrogantly abrogated. It is tragic for we Americans to be forced to suffer the consequences of the Tricky Trumpster's naked greed and the terrible detrimentality of his money-obsessed crusade for self-dealing and maximized benefits for himself and the few -- always at the expense of the many, the lazy bums. Too, it is sad to have scandal and distraction and misinformation and divisiveness trump all, and to have the people be subjected to poisonous psychological games being played by a leader who exhibits a deficiency of empathy and an absurdly narcissistic hubris and a dangerous lust for cultivating the good graces of the world's worst despot. Our Founders would have fits!

Let's give Donald Trump the Actor of the Century Award, which he so richly deserves for his leading role in a Feature Drama portraying a Twitter-mad demented demagogue in a modern reality show adaptation of Sinclair Lewis' It Can't Happen Here. Let's do this in a star-studded celebrity ceremony sometime soon, and then let's usher him off the stage and out of the glare of the revealing spotlights. He is simply too great a danger to justice and people's civil rights and peace in our democratic republic and around the world.

Let's stop aiming our slings and arrow at each other, and stop allowing scheming Dividers to exploit the people, for that only ensures excessive amounts of outrageous misfortune. Once we See Clearly, we will know more.

The Profiteer-in-Chief is trying to make damned sure that he himself will be the biggest beneficiary of his
corrupt national priorities. He and his cronies, like the damned Mercers and the ruthless billionaires Charles and David Koch and their network of wealthy right-wing donors, the titans of industry. Yes, titans of giant power-abusing oil companies and brazen drug companies engaged in excessive profiteering, and Wall Street banking institutions and real estate tycoons. All of these modern day barons meet in secretive conclaves twice a year, where they hatch and further their schemes to rig affairs to their maximum advantage by eliminating regulations, artificially goosing profits in the short run, and making real sure that the top dogs who are doing the deciding will be the ones that get the lion’s share of the spoils.

Also often in attendance at the conspiratorial Koch conclaves like the annual ones in Palm Springs are U.S. Senators and “Representatives”, along with cunning conservative journalists, media propagandists and scheming Republican Party operatives. Two Supreme Court Justices have also attended the meetings -- Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia. Impeach Clarence! He simply has too many conflicts of interest, and his judicial record demonstrates unequivocally that he readily violates his Judicial Oath of Office. He seems to have conveniently forgotten that he solemnly swore he would “administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich.” Also, Clarence Thomas has repeatedly supported the assertion, absurdly, that he cannot see any corruption or even appearance of corruption in anti-democratic ruses implicit in the Citizens United ruling, which was a wrongly decided case that basically allows politicians to make our system a “one-dollar-one-vote” political system and NOT a much fairer one-person-one-vote system. This is corruption incarnate! And the consequences are proving to be catastrophic for the USA, and for humanity.

Most people would probably prefer that our leaders were chosen in fairer elections by citizens uniting to elect representatives who most honestly appeal to the broadest expression of the general welfare of We the People. That necessarily means NOT almost exclusively the best interests of the few, corruptly enabled and unethically prioritized. This is What’s the Matter with Kansas. “It’s about the Corruption, Stupid!”, screamed a headline.

A few practical voices among conservatives occasionally warn about excessive injustices that may lead to serious or even revolutionary conflicts, but with strong police forces and the world’s most powerful military, and with an oppressive Incarceration Nation injustice system -- and authoritarian despots in power -- they seem satisfied that they will be able to continue to overplay their hands, as if they figure that the critical resulting problems will lie somewhere down the road, perhaps after they are out of office or dead. Their election losses in November 2018 finally are resulting in some investigative oversight by House Democrats, and an unraveling of Republican complicity in all manner of wrongdoing. Let’s honestly understand what’s going on here.

Dateline July 24, 2018, one week after the Helsinki Summit

Something suspicious is happening here. Donald Trump held a secretive summit with Vladimir Putin in Helsinki that was followed by a revealing press conference in which Trump sided with Putin in denying that either of them could possibly have been involved in underhanded efforts to rig the 2016 election outcome in favor of Republicans. By taking that deceitful stand, Trump was almost treasonously denying extensive evidence that makes all our American intelligence agencies convinced that Russia was deeply involved in influencing our 2016 national elections. How? One way was through Russian hacking of Democratic Party communications and voter information, along with voter profiling like that provided by Cambridge Analytica, and then the propagation of emotion-hijacking fake news, conspiracy theories and character assassinations through micro-targeted ads on social media platforms. There were also many other Russian cyber-attack strategies designed to divide people and to demoralize them through what a recent KGB defector called “ideological subversion, active measures, or psychological warfare.” By thus eroding people’s trust in democracy, these villains strive to triumph.

Trump deserves the exposure of his corruption by investigators and reporters in an approaching dénouement to what he often ridiculously refers to as “fake news” and a “Witch Hunt”. Hmmm. As Parkland High School student Emma Gonzales stated, “We call BS.” There were dozens of indictments and 7 guilty pleas in the Mueller probe, and Republicans are materially distorting the findings in the final report and deceitfully spinning it as “exonerating”. We face a constitutional crisis, and our political leaders should be more honest with us about the Mueller investigation and criminal efforts made to cover up shenanigans and obstruct justice. Let’s hang tight, my fellow Americans, as this crisis unfolds. Let’s get better organized to really actualize greater
good goals. And let's use the new management in the House of Representatives to expose the true nature of all the malfeasance that's going on, and to put an end to it.

To start, we should demand that the improper confirmation of the excessively partisan Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court be reversed, and put a reasonable moderate onto the high court, like the good consensus choice before Republican Senators went nuclear on the judiciary -- Merrick Garland, who is an eminently well-qualified and reasonable Chief Circuit Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Let's demand that he be appointed as a first step in Republican restitution on account of the profound illegitimacy of the scandalous coup d'état that Republican politicians perpetrated to gain power. Keep foremost in mind the extent to which the crowing victors have been egregiously misusing their power.

Once we See Clearly, we will also know that we must reverse the debt-financed Tax Cut swindle that was passed by exclusively Republican Senators and treacherous "Representatives" in December 2017. The fact that these politicians achieved their election victories using nefarious means makes their swindles doubly offensive. This highly regressive debt-financed Republican Tax Cut scam should be rescinded, and it should be rightly replaced with a fairer plan that results in balanced budget impacts, not spiking amounts of debt! The new law should give Not One More Cent in tax breaks to people in the top 1%, compared to tax rates in effect before the rogue Republican law. After all, the legislation gave America's 5,000 richest families an average tax cut of more than $80 million each per year, which future taxpayers will have to pay for, in interest costs, every year, forevermore. And the new law should be designed to provide more generous funding for schools, infrastructure, healthcare for all, social safety net programs, environmental protections, the environmental justice-oriented Green Climate Fund, and foreign aid and international diplomatic missions to help ensure peaceable coexistence.

Conclusion

Survival is the ultimate moral good for our kind, and Big Picture perspectives are needed to help ensure our human survival and flourishing. Such perspectives should be comprehensive, and they should take into account the best understandings of deep ecologists and scientists in every discipline, and of spiritual leaders. They also should not deny the most ethically aware worldviews, or the latest and most accurate scientific understandings. Survival involves indefinitely sustained biological existence. We humans need to clearly recognize and respect the fact that we cannot continue to consume more than can be supplied by natural resources and regeneration in healthy ecosystems. The carrying capacity of damaged ecosystems is much less than that of healthy ones, so it is an overarching necessity for us to act to prevent harms to habitats. Otherwise, by upsetting the providential balance in nature, we will degrade the indispensable foundation of our flourishing and survival.

"Après moi, le deluge" attitudes did not work out well for the power-abusing nobility in France, because they cavalierly treated the masses too ruthlessly, provoking the French Revolution in 1789. And it sure didn't prove to be propitious for King Louis XVI, who was guillotined in January 1793. It was even indignantly worse for "Let them eat cake" Marie Antoinette, who met the same fate nine months later. Republican efforts today to roll back environmental protections, and to reject global responsibilities under the Paris Agreement on climate change, are essentially a dead end "Après nous, le deluge" attitude. Revolutionarily positive change must come!

Big Picture perspectives should be better informed by a Buddha-like triumvirate of Right Mindfulness and Right Understanding and Right Action. They should be guided by foresight and respect for the long-term greater good, like that imbued in a Bill of Rights for Future Generations. Greater concern should be given to social justice and environmental justice, and to the proper stewardship of Creation. More respect should be given to attitudes like the compassionate caring manifested by spiritual leaders like Jesus Christ and the Dalai Lama.

I feel strongly that all people should try to pay forward some good deeds to our heirs in the future generations to help create improved and safer prospects for overall well-being for everyone.

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
"What we are before is like a strait, a tricky road, a passage where we need courage and reason. The courage to go on, not to try to turn back; and the reason to use reason; not fear, not jealousy, not envy, but reason. We must steer by reason, and jettison -- because much must go -- by reason."


I, Dr. Tiffany Twain, am convinced that we Americans could easily create a healthier, happier, fairer and more inclusive country that would give us greater cause for hope for a better future, and a country much more secure for its citizens. A main obstacle to this providentially positive potentiality is the opposition to such an eminently salubrious status by "conservative" rich people who want our economic and political systems to remain rigged in their favor, so that they are able to gain an increasing monopoly on the profits made through the exploitation of working people and natural resources.

A well-informed electorate is a prerequisite for ensuring that a democracy is healthy and offers all its people truly reasonable representation. This simple understanding makes both humorous and viscerally provocative a political cartoon by David Sipress that appeared in New Yorker magazine soon after the 2016 elections. In this cartoon, a woman ruefully observed to her male companion, "My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane." Ha! Tens of millions of Americans find themselves in this predicament today as the Trump soap opera becomes increasingly anxiety inducing, and as Donald Trump becomes more unhinged, demagogic, and dangerous to individual and national security, and bizarrely contrary to true American values.

A tumultuous two years have passed since Trump took office, and consequential matters have become critical. It may be an odd idea that we are best advised to laugh out loud during such times, but humor can help us remain sane, so let's keep our eyes peeled, our ears open and our skepticism vital, and feel free to watch today's great comedians for perspective, especially Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher, John Oliver, Seth Meyers, Trevor Noah, Jimmy Kimmel and the folks at Saturday Night Live. And watch some episodes of Colbert's Our Cartoon President, to enjoy some humorous relief.

In Buddhist philosophy, one key to proper conduct is right understanding. This is regarded as the first step on the Noble Eightfold Path toward enlightenment and Nirvana, a form of liberation in Buddhist philosophy. In our terribly conflicted world today, the common good and the general welfare are being drastically undermined by the anti-egalitarian priorities of the ruling classes in their relentless efforts to gain ever-more money and decision-making influence, and more benefits and privileges for themselves. After right understanding, the seven other practices considered proper in the Noble Eightfold Path are right intention, right speech, right action, right effort, right livelihood, right mindfulness and right concentration. Right, right, right, right, right.

Last year Donald Trump made the extraordinarily Orwellian declaration, "What you're seeing and what you're reading is not what's happening." Wow! The Deceiver-in-Chief thinks he can lie with impunity and get away with his deceit by attacking critical news media, but he is only evoking echoes of a passage in George Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-Four about Big Brother thought-control schemes in a dystopian world: "The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command." Yikes! Not long after
Trump’s perplexing and deceitful declaration, the once respectable lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who is currently an all but comical Trump TV propagandist, jumped on the Orwellian bandwagon with his twisted observation, “Truth isn’t truth.” Let’s rise above, and see self-evident truths!

**Ecological Sanity**

Donald Trump and his family are emulating the scheming Once-ler, the cantankerous exploiter in *The Lorax*, a great cautionary fable written by Dr. Seuss. In this story, the Lorax is a character who “speaks for the trees”, and the clever tale concerns the danger that corporate greed poses to the natural world. Dr. Seuss uses such personifications to give life to industry in the persons of the Once-ler and his “thneed”-producing family, and to the environment in the majestically calm and wise Lorax.

*The Lorax* was Dr. Seuss’ personal favorite of his books, for he was able to create a story addressing economic and environmental issues without it being dull. “The Lorax”, he explained, “came out of me being angry. In *The Lorax*, I was out to attack what I think are evil things and let the chips fall where they might.” In a similar way, the scandalous behaviors and manipulative deceptions and eco-villain shenanigans of the Trump regime make me hopping mad; inspiring my passion to convey greater clarity to what’s going on right now, and to introduce into the public consciousness a holistic integral worldview in this manifesto. We are all Gaia; chips are falling furious.

At this crucial moment in history, it would be wise to mindfully remember the findings set forth the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report, in which more than a thousand experts in 95 countries had spent four years assessing ecological conditions on Earth at the turn of the millennium. The conclusion they reached was that human activities are having harmful impacts by unsustainably consuming natural resources while simultaneously significantly damaging ecosystems upon which we depend. These experts sensibly warned that humanity should develop a better managed economy and better methods of governance, so that in the course of living our lives we will at the same time better protect the vitality of our environment and the future prospects of life on Earth. Let’s come together to accomplish such eminently farsighted goals!

The fact of the matter is that money rules in our government-by-the-wealthy plutocratic oligarchy, which is unfortunately becoming less and less a democracy due to the people being betrayed by scheming exploiters. About 95% of election contests are won by the candidates who spend the most money, and environmental organizations are vastly outspent -- by a factor of 30 to 1 -- by special interest groups intent on rigging the system ever more favorably for themselves, to the detriment of the citizenry. This pathetic state of affairs dangerously undermines all the bedrock American environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Wilderness Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the strategic life-respecting Endangered Species Act.

Scientists tell us that now is the time to protect our nation’s natural heritage and most cherished places. They say that humanity enjoys something like $50 trillion every year in vital “ecosystem services” benefits that nature provides to people worldwide. The U.S. is already one of the most mine-friendly countries anywhere, according to an assessment by the Fraser Institute -- and we’re mining, poisoning, depleting and wasting with ridiculously alarming abandon, as if there will be no tomorrow. The Damsel Tomorrow quakes on tremulous knee.

The famous naturalist Sir David Attenborough recently observed, “Right now we’re facing a man-made disaster of global scale, our greatest threat in thousands of years: climate change. If we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon.” Attenborough spoke these words at the beginning of the two-week climate conference in Poland where emissaries from nearly 200 nations met for two weeks in early December 2018 to determine how the world can dramatically scale back carbon emissions to abide by the landmark Paris climate agreement, and by doing so, stave off some of the most calamitous impacts caused by the greenhouse gas-induced climate crisis. *Our Planet* needs greater respect!

We should rightly redesign our economy so that it works better for everyone, or else it inevitably will be worse for all. Joe Brewer, who describes himself as “a change strategist working on behalf of humanity”, wrote a fascinating article in July 2017 titled *Do You Still Feel Capitalism Dying?* In it, he characterizes our society today as being afflicted by “a mental disease of late-stage capitalism”, writing that this is causing “deep worry
and anxiety, prompting feelings of severe isolation and humiliation, combined with a profound sense of powerlessness for millions of people around the world." Brewer points out that we are on a path to "planetary-scale collapse", and that we need to reckon with it in our lifetimes, and the sooner, the better. He writes, "Earth's climate is ramping up for a phase transition that threatens our entire civilization." The cause of this ominous development is the rash irresponsibility of leaders in our political duopoly system, dominated as it is by politicians who collaborate with those who want to hyper-stimulate growth and maximize private profits at the expense of the greater good. Evaluating all the enabling "Global Architecture of Wealth Extraction" schemes, I do declare, "Let's admirably remodel."

As the Republican Party descends into chaos in their dastardly bargain with the amoral right-wing corporate-dominated devil of consumerism, profiteering and despotic abuses of power, a superb array of more progressive, positive, inclusive, honest, visionary, achievable and fair-minded common sense ideas are laying around, as extensively articulated in this manifesto, seeking to assume a resurgence of power, persuasion and sustainable effectiveness. To prevent ever more dire developments, let's demand that our leaders take action to implement smart reforms, like ones recommended in One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies.

The values of consequential ethics judge demagogues harshly, especially when those who divide to conquer push a treacherous self-serving agenda that severely undermines the common good and harmfully discriminates against the majority of people and is cunningly calculated to concentrate wealth and power more extremely in the hands of a ruthlessly anti-democratic few. It is disgustingly dastardly for demagogues to hijack people's emotions and drive wedges between people to gain power and abuse that power, torpedoing the great benefits of social cohesion that are found in fairer and more unifying courses of action.

Trump is shamefully obsessed with getting "wins" for himself, even though these victories reprehensibly come at the expense of the vast majority of the American people and to the serious detriment of everyone in future generations. Grotesquely, the driving motives for these "wins" are generally self-serving and self-aggrandizing. Trump had proclaimed to voters during the campaign, "We're going to win so much, you're going to be so sick and tired of winning." Fast forward 3 years and most reasonable Americans are really sick of the way Trump has been winning, and of the collateral damages he is inflicting on our country, its citizens, and humanity at large.

With inequality worse right now than almost ever before in American history, it is pathologically wrong for Trump Republicans to take advantage of anti-abortion and anti-gay and anti-immigrant sentiments, and gender biases and racial prejudices, with the primary corrupt intent of giving rich people more money and more power. Really wealthy conservatives are using portions of their ill-gotten debt-financed Tax Cut money to elect more scurrilously reliable con men enablers, so that they can more easily foist their treacherous agenda on the people. This agenda, sadly, stupidly sacrifices natural ecosystems and the ecological commons for the purpose of artificially maximizing profits in the short run. This course of action is leaving a terrible legacy to our heirs.

Public Corruption, Graft and Crony Capitalism

On October 29, 2018, ten days before the 2016 elections Donald Trump spouted out a demagogic diatribe at a bombastic campaign rally, deceitfully declaring: "A vote for Hillary is a vote to surrender our government to public graft, corruption and cronyism that threatens the very foundations of our constitutional system."

Really!? Public corruption, graft and cronyism! That was an ironically preposterous whopper. Let's laugh aloud, heartily, for Hillary Clinton could never have gotten away with even a tiny fraction of the brazen lies, divisive politicking, personal profiteering, misuses of public funds, outrage-provoking scams, conflicts of interest, violations of the Constitution's foreign emoluments clause, and way-worse-than-Machiavellian abuses of authority and breaches of ethical norms that Trump and his immorally unprincipled cronies are guilty of.

Look how it is turning out, thanks in part to Vladimir Putin, the NRA and Fox News, Inc., and to countless slanderous anti-Hillary headlines on the screaming cover of Trump co-conspirator David Pecker's supermarket tabloid, the National Enquirer. The self-described "dirty trickster" Roger Stone has also been vilely complicit, cunningly advising Republican politicians to do whatever is necessary to win, no matter how contrary to the common good. "Attack, attack, attack. Never defend," says Stone, an arch villain who wages smear campaigns
and pushes falsehoods to promote far right lobbyist propaganda. And what better line of attack is there, one might wonder, than vociferously charging your opponents with exactly what you yourself are most guilty of. Busted! The king wannabe is not wearing any clothes, and it is revolting. Citizens, revolt!

Under Crooked Trump, there is a pathetic plethora of public corruption, especially by climate altering fossil fuel interests. And there are many instances of graft in highly unscrupulous uses of the Trump family’s power for personal gain, and in blatant cronyism, ramped up influence peddling, campaign finance violations, misuses of the Trump “charitable foundation”, unprecedented nepotism, and an unfolding constitutional crisis over election malfeasance, illegalities and sneaky conspiratorial attempts to cover them up. In addition, things are much worse than would have been experienced under a Hillary Clinton administration, for with Trump Republicans we have ruthless assaults against core human values like inclusiveness, fairness of opportunity, honesty, decency, political moderation, Golden Rule reciprocity, good neighborliness, social cohesion, personal security, true national security, fairer justice, peaceable coexistence, responsible controls on deficit spending, sensible protections of the environment, judicial wisdom and valiant efforts to actualize common good goals.

The whole scope of malfeasance, misconduct and illegal shenanigans by Trump campaign officials before the 2016 election, and in poorly governing ever since, shines a glaring light on the absurdity of this devious characterization by Trump of his general election opponent. Trump and many members of his administration are demonstrating an astonishing lack of integrity. Seeing this, one hears a jarring refrain of twisted hypocrisy in this declaration by Trump about Hillary, who he cheated out of the presidency. “Lock HER up!”?

In Trump’s pre-election harangue, he went on to claim that he would “drain the swamp” in Washington D.C., and remedy the sad state of affairs in which public corruption and cronyism are causing voters to lose faith in their government. From the day he took office, however, numerous observers and ethics experts and honest persons have persuasively made clear that many of the activities that Trump and members of his Cabinet have engaged in have been outrageously antithetical to his vow to clean up Washington D.C.

In this speech, Trump said, “We must and we will save America. And that is why my contract with the American voter begins with a plan to end government corruption and to take our country back from the special interests and the donors.” This was a preposterous prognostication, and stunningly suspicious, considering how much Trump Republicans are doing to give more benefits and power to special interest groups, including energy, mining, ranching and farming concerns, even though this patronage involves sacrificing our public lands, National Monuments and the global commons. Also, super wealthy donors are giving huge sums of money to conniving Republican politicians in legalized bribes that have been sanctioned by 5 Supreme Court “conservatives”. The Big Money gushes comes from a small number of system-corrupting individuals, notoriously including the Koch brother billionaires and their shrewd network of profiteering capitalists, and the socially irresponsible Robert Mercer and Rebekah Mercer, and Sheldon Adelson, Foster Friess and the nefarious ilk of these rich individuals.

For these puppet master special interest groups, no sacrifice is too great for getting bigger opportunities to exploit public lands and take unfair advantage of working people. The public, meanwhile, is being distracted by the latest manipulative tweets, or by the most recent scandalous outrage or treacherous fusillade of impropriety, or by some new instance of a Republican loyalist standing by their man despite his having betrayed the American people by collaborating with Vladimir Putin and Mohammed bin Salman and other autocrats abroad. The tsunami of insidious distractions seems to be approaching a sensational crescendo, thanks to Republicans in D.C., which Trump is turning into "Crazytown".

Another facet of treachery by Republican politicians is their monomaniacal focus on eliminating regulations and making corporate-friendly changes to rules that were sensibly designed to protect both people's health and the natural world. These insidious actions wrongly facilitate the misbegotten goal of allowing large amounts of costs to be externalized onto society. These politicos are opposing clean energy initiatives and utterly failing to make responsible efforts to mitigate the disastrous impacts of a warming planet. These schemers are also sneakily striving to undermine transparency and accountability requirements, impeding efforts toward creating a sustainable future. All of these things are far-reaching betrayals of the greater good.
The Republican Party has adopted a "winning is the only thing" stance, "willing to place an individual who at best is an embarrassment and at worst a serious danger to the health and security of our nation in the position of leader of the free world. -- 'Party before country': -- one can only look on with disgust." Well, Mark Twain's great-granddaughter looks on with chagrin, and launches a chuckling fusillade of comically spiteful ridicule. As those persistent pharmaceutical drug ads on television always urge a perplexed public, "ask your doctor if this treatment may be good for you." (Don't bother reading the small print.)

Many members of the Trump administration have been engaged in an astonishing amount of dramatically self-serving misconduct. The fingers point particularly at Scott Pruitt, Ryan Zinke, Steve Mnuchin and Wilbur Ross, along with Mitch McConnell, Devin Nunes and most other members of the Trump cabal. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and the finally fired Attorney General Jeff Sessions and his fraudulent replacement Matt Whitaker and then William Barr add icy frosting on top of the tainted cake. Let the people eat healthier cake!

Trump's deceitful allegations against Hillary Clinton resemble the rantings of a tinhorn dictator in a banana republic. So do those moronic cultist chants of "Lock her up" at Nazi-like Trump rally events. This rhetoric is ugly and exceedingly dishonest, and misdirected, and it turns out to be another of many instances of what is known as "psychological projection", which apply much more to Trump himself than to Hillary. Trump is much more guilty of what he charges his political opponents with. The English language is deficient in this regard, for there is no word sufficient to describe this pathologically deplorable phenomenon. Hypocrisy just isn't nearly adequate. Why is it that so often when the pot calls the kettle black, it turns out that the pot itself has been carbonized over open flames, instead of being sensibly shiny from sitting only on hot coals. Huh?

"Public corruption, graft and crony capitalism!" Well, when a fuller extent of the profound illegitimacy of the scandalous rule by "conservatives" finally becomes crystal clear, what course of action shall we chart? Our Founders had not formulated a parliamentary system style "vote of no confidence" that would flexibly allow for quick alterations of course when a disastrous regime has seized power, so what shall we do? How can we pivot to governance that is markedly more sensible, fair-minded, collaborative, law-respecting, constitutional, truly just, peaceable and sustainable? Control of the House by Democrats is a good start! Please read on.

Trump also proclaimed in his speech just ten days before the fateful election, "Public corruption is a grave and profound threat to a democracy. Government corruption spreads out like a cancer and infects the operations of government itself." He added, "If the corruption is not removed, then the people are not able to have faith in their government." Sensational -- Trump was right. There is no reason to trust leaders who engage in so much fraud and corruption. Surely, such leaders should be removed from office. Let's demand that they resign! And let's replace them with much more honorable, responsible and progressive representatives, so that we can get on with the critical business of creating a healthier and saner society, and a sensible legacy of a livable world.

Until Trump became the official nominee of the Republican Party, the "powers that be" in the Party had declined to support him. Many declared, "Never Trump." But then most of them have fallen in line to give him enabling support. The reason for this "change of heart"? Unbridled ambition and fears for their careers! Plus a zealous quest for power and campaign contributions at any cost. Some of these flip-floppers are self-serving politicians in Congress who are eager to serve corrupt right-wing causes to satisfy misplaced loyalties to despotic causes.

Remember that Trump and Pence won the Electoral College by a miniscule margin of less than 78,000 votes in three decisive states -- Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan -- and that they lost the popular vote by almost 3 million votes. Curiously, this total is about equal to the entire population of the American colonies when the courageous colonists rose up in disgust at despotism on July 4, 1776 and declared independence from the power-abusing authorities of the British Empire. Remember that 12 years after declaring independence, these fractious freedom-loving people in the New World forged and ratified a great Constitution to create a form of fairly representative government that would allow a liberty-loving people to prosper hopefully ever thereafter.

Trump, sensationally, is now acting as a subversive against our democracy. This is creating great risks to Party and country, due to uncertainty resulting from this impulsive, insult-hurling officeholder of the most powerful position in the world. All of this evidence makes the rule of Trump and Pence excessively illegitimate.
Incidentally, the U.S. Constitution is indeed great. But it also requires some new modern amendments to keep it adaptive and effective in dealing well with changing circumstances. An amendment on campaign financing is required, as advocated by the Move to Amend coalition of public interest groups. This amendment would remove corporations from positions of overweening power and influence, and salubriously give more influence to We the People. And a broadly fair-minded Bill of Rights for Future Generations is needed to provide us with safer guidance in all our national decision-making. This should become a cornerstone Amendment to a more providential Constitution that proves to be better capable of guiding us intelligently toward leaving a legacy of a fairer and more sustainable future.

A Thought-Provoking Warning from Former U.S. Senators

Trump Republicans threaten our democracy and the institutions that protect our freedoms and security and collective well-being, right now and for every person in the future. A group of 44 former U.S. Senators that includes 10 Republicans, 32 Democrats and 2 Independents joined together to publish a compelling Opinion article in the Washington Post on December 10, 2018, in which they implored current Senators to defend democracy in the face of this dire threat.

"Dear Senate colleagues," they wrote. "As former members of the U.S. Senate, Democrats and Republicans, it is our shared view that we are entering a dangerous period, and we feel an obligation to speak up about serious challenges to the rule of law, the Constitution, our governing institutions and our national security."

"We are on the eve of the conclusion of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's investigation and the House's commencement of investigations of the president and his administration. The likely convergence of these two events will occur at a time when simmering regional conflicts and global power confrontations continue to threaten our security, economy and geopolitical stability. It is a time, like other critical junctures in our history, when our nation must engage at every level with strategic precision and the hand of both the president and the Senate. We are at an inflection point in which the foundational principles of our democracy and our national security interests are at stake, and the rule of law and the ability of our institutions to function freely and independently must be upheld."

"During our service in the Senate, at times we were allies and at other times opponents, but never enemies. We all took an oath swearing allegiance to the Constitution. Whatever united or divided us, we did not veer from our unwavering and shared commitment to placing our country, democracy and national interest above all else. At other critical moments in our history, when constitutional crises have threatened our foundations, it has been the Senate that has stood in defense of our democracy. Today is once again such a time. Regardless of party affiliation, ideological leanings or geography, as former members of this great body, we urge current and future senators to be steadfast and zealous guardians of our democracy by ensuring that partisanship or self-interest not replace national interest."

As these 44 former Senators wrote this Op-Ed, the legal jeopardy of the Trump family and their loyalists increased due to unfolding revelations by Special Counsel investigators. And with stock market turbulence and the resignation letter from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on 12/20, things are looking bleak. I call on every one of our political representatives to more honestly put the interests of Country first, not their political Party.

Here's the Scoop, Folks!

Republican rule is not only illegitimate due to the ruthlessly fraudulent means used to gain power, but it is anti-American due to the distinctly treacherous extent to which Republican politicians are indulging in a long litany of wrongheaded scams and bait-and-switch cons and egregious harms, as outlined and incisively assessed herein. What shall we do in this dangerous moment of unfolding constitutional crisis? The profound illegitimacy of Republican rule cries out for a truly fair-minded resolution. So too does the egregious extent of abuses of authority being perpetrated by “conservative” politicians, and by system-corrupting wealthy people who are buying the commitment of puppet politicians to cut their taxes. Mark Twain would scoff, and query, “This is the best government money can buy?”
A good far-reaching fair-minded remedy is called for. In a just world, strict amends would be required for all the Republican wrongdoing. As the multiple investigations close in on Donald Trump and his loyalists, the American people face an unprecedented constitutional crisis, and we have an overarching need for a sensible solution to this serious challenge. Don’t doubt for a minute that Trump and his sycophants have made increasingly evident attempts to prejudice all potential juries and obstruct justice by covering up their nefarious deeds with a noxious smokescreen of lies and deceit.

In July 2018, Professor Robert Reich proposed a principled stopgap plan to save the republic, suggesting that one or more of four Republican Senators -- John McCain, Jeff Flake, Bob Corker or Susan Collins -- should stand up and say “Enough!” -- and abandon the Republican Party to caucus with Democrats and independents, thereby honorably restoring constitutional checks and balances to our government and protecting our democracy from attacks on it by arrogantly authoritarian abusers of power. Since then, John McCain died, and Flake, Corker and Collins were too cowardly to have voted against the partisan Republican Brett Kavanaugh in his bid to get a lifelong gig on the Supreme Court to probably decide issues in general against the people.

I, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, believe we should go further, and demand restitution from the Republican Party for its wide-ranging wrongdoing. The solution we need should be based on the salubriously civilized concept of fair-minded compensatory restorative justice for wrongdoing, rather than the more primitive idea of retribution against those responsible for malfeasance (or simply locking up the guiltiest ones).

Right now, at this turbulent juncture in history, it is time for us to take sensible actions to save ourselves from the infamy of yielding to the implacable forces of treachery and despotism. As Thomas Paine famously put it in his revolutionary pamphlet Common Sense, “Now is the seed-time of continental union, faith and honor.” And, “we have it in our power to begin the world over again.”

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, had set forth the essential principles upon which our government was founded, and he referred to these visionary principles when he sensationally stated, “The wisdom of our sages and the blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them 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.”

Give fair consideration to this great solution that is surfacing right here, right now. Many women have been cheated out of the opportunity to lead in the USA by conniving male politicians and their puppet master donors, who have used Supreme Court-sanctioned legalized bribery to give domineering advantages to wealthy donors and white males in our overly rigid patriarchal society. Stacey Abrams in Georgia was most prominent in 2018.

Here’s my latest plan: “Call it the Duopartite Justice Solution. Let’s give Donald Trump his deserved Academy Award for incredible acting as a narcissistic demagogue and despotic ruler, and demand that he, Mike Pence and Mitch McConnell all resign from power, effective SOON, in disgrace for having conspiratorially taken extremely unfair advantage of our corrupt campaign financing system and then perpetuating fraudulent scams and acting to torpedo greater good goals and undermine the general welfare. Constitutional succession stipulates that the Speaker of the House will then become president, so let’s demand that the incoming President Nancy Pelosi champion progressive governance for the next two years. Republican politicians will have had more than two years of their illegitimately seized rule, and then Democrats will have the rest of Trump’s term until January 21, 2021, so when national elections are held in November 2020, American citizens will have an eminently good basis for evaluating which party has done the better job in governing, during their split-term rule, based on the contrast of how competing ideologies and contrasting ruling priorities and performance have impacted our country. Is it likely to be Republicans in 2017-2019, or Democrats in 2019-2021? Let’s find out the truth!

I recommend that leading roles be given in the new administration to progressive Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Kamala Harris, and maybe Zephyr Teachout as Attorney General and environmentalist Katie McGinty as EPA Chief. This house cleaning should be accompanied by the resignation of Clarence Thomas from the Supreme Court. #MeToo. And the presidential power apologist Judge Kavanaugh should be replaced with President.
Obama's consensus candidate for the position, Merrick Garland. The climate change denier Senator James Inhofe should resign in disgrace, along with the far right uncompromising Tea Party stalwarts Senator Ted Cruz and Reps. Mark Meadows and Jim Jordan from the House. And turncoat Trumpist Lindsey Graham.

Here's the kicker. We cannot rely merely on gerrymandered, voter suppressed, Russian subverted, micro-targeted manipulative Big Lie deceived and emotionally hijacked voting alone. As pointed out above, we must establish a way to guarantee cheated progressives majority power in the Senate and the House, and on the Supreme Court. After all, this is exactly what the USA would have had if Republicans had not violated laws and skirted propriety so blatantly in the 2016 elections, with their litany of illegitimate tactics.

The title of this essay is cynically satirical. Note that the greatly respected writer Mark Twain valued satire and ridicule as weapons of skepticism against folly, ignorance, superstition, fanaticism, irrationality, small-mindedness, myopia, prejudice, impropriety, despotic abuses of authority and blind adherence to dogmas. This is what Mark Twain meant when he famously asserted, "Against the assault of laughter, nothing can stand." Yet laughter at modern political absurdities alone is insufficient to providentially alter the course of history, for abusers of authority are exerting domineering influence over many peoples, and they are perpetuating too many corrupt scams -- and the ramifications associated with their retrograde and tyrannical policies and priorities are too deadly serious to rely on satire to guarantee the safety, security and well-being of the people.

The midterm elections in November 2018 are a good step toward correcting this state of affairs. Democrats, having gained House control, will now set the agenda and exert majority influence and have subpoena power. This will allow them to fulfill the Constitutional responsibility of Congress to exercise oversight of the Executive Branch and any malfeasance it commits. Republicans in Congress have been glaringly derelict in fulfilling this constitutional duty. This shortcoming makes them complicit in enabling corruption, and their loyalty to Party is broadly disloyal to the American people -- and treacherous to democracy and fairness, integrity and ethical responsibility in governing. Let's demand that a stop be put to partisan gerrymandering, voter suppression and corrupting money in elections and lobbying!

The Need for Positive Change

The famous economist Milton Friedman once famously declared: "Only a crisis -- actual or perceived -- produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable." Milton Friedman is right that some of the best opportunities for dramatic change arise in a crisis. But Friedman advocated "conservative" ideas that are wrongheaded in many aspects, due to the consequential extent that they tend to undermine democracy. Friedman's ideas concerning money supply policy, deregulation, cutting taxes, privatization, "free trade" and supply-side economics have significantly influenced government policies since the early 1980s, helping rationalize unacceptably retrograde priorities pushed by conservatives.

I believe that the best plan, by far, would be to collect the best ideas together, and to seek out comprehensive understandings, ones informed by prudence, reasonable egalitarianism, fair-mindedness, and consistency with the greater good and expansive concepts of freedom. In other words, we need well-articulated progressive ideas, not reactionary conservative ideas, and these ideas need to be articulated clearly and forcefully to save us in the face of far right policies that are proving to be disastrous to the general welfare and current and future well-being. Consider, for instance, the ideas outlined in my Progressive Agenda of a More Sane Humanity. The entire Earth Manifesto is dedicated to the idea that some day, after we have stuck with a lot of other options that are inimical to the greater good, a growing consensus will develop that is centered on propositions like those contained in this manifesto. Like the fact, for instance, that much better cooperative problem solving is needed in civilized societies to achieve goals consistent with the common good. Let's accomplish this, instead of allowing Big Money and poorly accountable corporate entities to corrupt our political system and create monopolies and pursue excessively ruthless free-for-all race-to-the-bottom competition.
Economic and ecological ruin, after all, will be the "tragedy of the commons" outcome of an insistence that competing interest groups should have unlimited freedom of action to exploit the global commons. Don’t doubt that more costly bailouts are a-comin’! For best guidance, remember -- common good, yes! Tragedy of the Commons, no! Watch the sensationally beautiful documentary Our Planet, for appreciation!

The ideas Milton Friedman wanted to incubate were a form of gospel-like economic fundamentalism that has been shown to be potentially disastrous, as when adverse impacts resulted from ruthless economic imperialism, bubble economic policies, deregulated exploitation, anti-egalitarian national priorities, fraudulent activities and reduced accountability, all of which contributed to wreaking far-reaching hardships on billions of people around the world during the financial crisis and recession of 2008 and 2009. Milton Friedman and folks in his Chicago School of Economics championed ideas that could most easily be imposed during economic or political shocks like recessions, financial panics, periods of revolutionary instability, military coups or other subversions of fair-minded governments. These ideas are subject to manipulative propaganda by reactionary conservatives, who employ them for unfair, undemocratic and system corrupting political purposes.

In her book The Shock Doctrine, activist Naomi Klein criticized some of Friedman’s economic ideas, identifying them with the principles that guided the economic restructuring that followed harsh military coups in Chile and Argentina in the 1970s. The great linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky agreed with Naomi Klein in pointing out that policies supported by Friedman have contributed to increasing inequality and widening disparities in income and wealth. Both of them conclude that such outcomes are problematic and have been exploited by conservatives as an ideological cover for rationalizing capital accumulation by rich people and giant corporations.

Climate Action

A U.S. government report published in November 2018 declared that climate change is real, and human activities are primarily to blame. This report by 13 federal agencies unequivocally contradicted Donald Trump’s claims that climate change is a hoax. The report instead confirmed that the evidence is unambiguous that increasing damages and risks are being driven by man-made causes, principally including emissions of greenhouse gases and the chopping down of vast tracts of forests, especially rainforests in equatorial regions. The report concluded, "evidence for a changing climate abounds, from the top of the atmosphere to the depths of the oceans."

Stern warnings have also been repeatedly issued by the world’s leading climate scientists at the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, indicating we have less than 12 years to take bold steps to keep global warming at a level beyond which risks will cataclysmically worsen of extreme heat, severe droughts, disastrous floods, terrible wildfires, and dire poverty for hundreds of millions of people. Unprecedented urgent changes are needed to prevent this tragedy. Scientists give us hope by speculating that these actions are both affordable and feasible, and that we must take action at the most ambitious end of the Paris Accord pledges. It is wrong for the Trump administration to make budget cuts to climate research and mitigation programs, and to repeal Obama-era rules focused on carbon emissions, and to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords -- and to stint on contributions to the eminently fair Green Fund to offset our harmful climate impacts on billions of persons in other countries.

The U.S. has experienced more than 230 weather and climate disasters since 1980 that have cost in excess of $1.5 trillion in total damages. In 2017 alone, some of the most intense hurricanes in history caused damages exceeding $300 billion in Texas, Florida, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Carolinas and other states. And terrible wildfires in Northern California have been more lethal than ever in recorded history in the past two years. "Great economic stimulus", Trump can be imagined to exult upon hearing this news. Globally? COSTLY.

In addition to spiraling costs, scientists say the climate crisis could render parts of planet Earth uninhabitable within this century, and heat waves in places like the Pacific Northwest, the Southwest, Europe and Asia in the summers of 2017 and 2018 are a harbinger of much worse things to come. The time is now to take bold action to prevent the worst scenarios associated with failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We should make dramatic shifts to mitigate climate change, and alter our efforts from being voluntary to being collective action
through powerful incentives and green fees, as advocated by organizations like the Citizens Climate Lobby and proponents of bold climate actions like Al Gore in An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power.

We should all support a real clean energy revolution. As former Vice President Al Gore points out in his tireless efforts to train large numbers of climate champions to influence U.S. and international climate policy, he is inspiring people with the responsible understanding that the stakes have never been higher, and yet the worst perils of the climate crisis could be overcome with human ingenuity, passion and proper commitments.

Scientists are right that the truly responsible thing to do would be to leave a much larger proportion of fossil fuels in the ground, and to conserve energy and use it more efficiently and find better methods for greening our ways. This should be accomplished by implementing powerful incentives that will help make the inevitable and necessary transition to greener forms of energy -- ones that are renewable, less destabilizing to global climate patterns of precipitation and storms, and more indefinitely sustainable. Reforms are better, in general, when they involve incentives and disincentives in market pricing, rather than more intrusive regulations.

Those who have been indoctrinated to strongly oppose government regulations should be willing to have sensible incentives and disincentives put into place to fairly price goods and services. After all, such market mechanisms would have the common sense salubrious effect of preventing costs from being insidiously socialized through the success of cantankerous exploiters in externalizing costs onto the populace. As Trump and his climate denying cronies strive to roll back fuel efficiency standards on vehicles in the U.S., they are basically acting to implement plans that will rashly and irresponsibly waste fossil fuels at a faster pace. This is epic foolishness.

Huge multinational corporate entities involved in extracting fossil fuels from deep beneath Earth’s surface are excessively overproducing these non-renewable energy resources, and they are mining these large quantities of dirty fuels at artificially cheap prices because they do not include the mounting costs of pollution, oil spills, associated adverse human health impacts, climate disasters and the real adversities being foisted onto people in the future through the rapid depletion of these resources. The fact that we are over-producing these fuels only to burn them profligately is wrong, especially in light of the fact that scientists tell us we should leave 80% the known reserves of these combustible materials in the ground during the remainder of this century. Right now, we are poised to burn through this carbon budget within 20 years or so. Let's demand climate solutions that help prevent calamitous costs of global warming and disasters caused by extreme weather events and other climate disruptions, and ocean acidification and the decimation of coral reefs, and coastal calamities that will result from warming temperatures causing inexorably higher sea levels and storm surges. This state of affairs persists because unacceptable degrees of political corruption infuse oil politics. This observation is confirmed by the fact that, instead of establishing effective incentives to strongly promote conservation and more efficient uses of these dirty resources, perverse incentives have been put in place in nations worldwide to give enormous subsidies and depletion allowances to gigantic corporations involved in extracting fossil fuels. Such subsidies are bigger for fossil fuels than almost any other commodities, due to the widespread "rent seeking" corruption involved in these highly lucrative pursuits. We have a real responsibility to burn fossil fuels more frugally, so as to conserve them AND mitigate the dangerously detrimental impacts associated with spewing tens of billions of tons of greenhouse gases into Earth’s atmosphere every year.

Think again about Mark Twain's satirical statement that we have the best government money can buy. In recent years, our leaders have failed miserably at establishing campaign finance limits and sensible controls over lobbying, so our democracy has been subverted into divided coalitions in which underrepresented Americans cede control to wealthy conservatives and profit-obsessed corporate executives. The bottom line result is to give us an absurd "kakistocracy", a system of government run by some of the worst, most poorly qualified and most unscrupulous persons. This is a part of the biggest con in history, which is unfolding right before our eyes. This scam played on the American people features an ultimate bait-and-switch scheme in which a dangerously unfit demagogue managed to grab power by a litany of scurrilous means. He and those in his cabal are trying to impose their agenda of austerity on the masses to finance new rounds of tax breaks for the rich, and their agenda can clearly be seen to be anti-egalitarian, anti-progressive and anti-environmental.
Images assault our senses. The Bible tells believers to beware of false prophets who perform great wonders to deceive even the faithful. Those who are wise will see clearly, and follow the money, and watch the real deceitful machinations of self-serving, excessively profit-prepossessed abusers of power and privilege. They will understand that false prophets make reprehensibly poor leaders. Let's overthrow these scheming overlords!

To Do the Right Thing, or Not To Do the Right Thing, That Is the Question

The great epic poet Dante might have condemned Donald Trump to wander the descending corridors of Inferno forever, consigning him to spend time in the Second Circle of Hell for his lust, or the Third Circle for his gluttony, or the Fourth Circle for his greed, or the Fifth Circle for his thin-skinned propulsive anger, or the Seventh Circle for his propensity to threaten violence to those who oppose him, or the Eighth Circle for his hypocrisy, deceptions and sowing and exploiting of discord. Or Dante would have consigned him to be frozen in a lake of ice up to his neck in the worst-of-all Ninth Circle of Hell for his treacherous co-conspiratorial scheming to seize power and betray community ties and stoke bigotry, fear and hatred, and wreak havoc with financial scams and his drive to satisfy his money-grubbing compulsion to bully others and exert authority.

Too Much on Trump

Our cartoon president was caught two months before the election on a tape recording conspiratorially asking his fixer-lawyer Michael Cohen if they should pay off a woman in cash who Trump had had an affair with, while his third wife Melania was nursing their child Barron. "No, no, no, no, no," exclaimed his fixer Cohen, who recorded the conversation. This is real news, a smoking derringer attesting to the man's profoundly unethical deceit, and another in the long litany of illegitimate ways he managed to succeed in triumphing over We the People.

Since the optics of this real news looks so bad, with Cohen pleading guilty to eight counts of federal crimes, and Paul Manafort being found guilty and all, Trump's current almost comical media lawyer-fixer Rudy Giuliani tried to spin it as Trump having actually suggested they make payment by check. "Listen to it three times to hear it my way," intoned Giuliani, in a ridiculous attempt to get cult-like Republican stalwarts to believe his suspicious version, rather than the clear evidence that anyone actually heard upon listening to the tape, which has been played repeatedly on national TV. This is Orwellian intrigue, emblematic of the moral turpitude of the regime.

Authoritarian Trump hates criticism and frequently mocks and denigrates newspapers and journalists, especially ones with progressive viewpoints like those articulated on MSNBC, or balanced perspectives provided by CNN or Public Broadcasting. He is not the first demagogue in American history to distort political discourse through falsehoods and innuendo that exploit public fears and biases. In the early 1950s, Joseph McCarthy, a first-term Republican Senator from Wisconsin, ruthlessly manipulated people's fear of communism, and was only brought down because a courageous journalist named Edward R. Murrow understood that a bully like McCarthy could not be dealt with by traditional reporting.

Candidate Trump promised to change libel laws in a way that could undermine first amendment rights of free speech and erode the freedom of the press. Once in power, however, he has found it preferable to bully and intimidate to chill and confuse reasoned discussion. And he indulges in tweet storms to distract and deceive people to try to keep them from clearly seeing all the bad stuff that's going on. Trump thinks he is not like other people, but "Actually, the U.S. Constitution says Trump is exactly like other people, because under the Constitution, we are all equal before the law. There is no Donald Trump Exception clause anywhere to be found. Even the Founding Fathers had to take their lumps from their critics. But we get where he is coming from -- the political milieu of fascism. Fascist dictators -- even wannabe fascist dictators -- cannot abide criticism."

Following the money, federal investigators have granted immunity to the longtime Chief Financial Officer of the Trump Organization to find out about the shenanigans that have taken place since the 1970s in Trump's affairs. And with former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn cooperating, along with Paul Manafort and Michael Cohen, and revelations in the New York Times about the Trump family's criminal tax evasion and Trump's outlandish lies and his Charitable Foundation fraud, these are more reasons why Trump must resign from power.

Reflections on Religion
Most religions tell their faithful flocks how to behave to be saved from eternal punishment in an imagined afterlife. In this regard, religions provide solace for the hardships people endure in their lives, but they also serve to enable injustices in the world right now. Curiously, religions thereby distract people from demanding that their representatives in government act to honestly make the world a fairer and safer place today. And established religions function as an opiate to the people, contributing to divisiveness that keeps people from uniting to throw corrupt and deceitful politicians out of office, and from demanding and getting substantial reforms to our rigged economic and political systems to make them better for the populace, here and now.

Religions are good when they provide positive effects like closer community relationships and a reverence for the natural world, but they are bad when they serve to prevent people from taking responsible steps to ensure that we leave a saner legacy in the real afterlife of our children’s and grandchildren’s lives and the lives of everyone to be born in future generations. To dutifully wait for salvation in some hypothesized afterlife in the hereafter is a much worse plan than demanding -- and getting -- fairer national policies in the world right now. A bumper sticker seen on a dusty old car identifies another reason that established religions often serve to rationalize and perpetuate the status quo: "RELIGION is what keeps the poor from murdering the rich."

In an astute political cartoon, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared that the mullahs in Iran only care about money and power, not religion. Really? That is another odd instance of Republican leaders accusing people they regard as enemies with what they themselves are most guilty of, for surely Trump is not an honestly religious man, and the radical Religious Right in the USA has sided with those who seek money and power and control over those who care about the poor and the downtrodden. Jesus would be horrified. The GOP doesn’t believe in evolution, but sure enough, it has de-evolved, going from the honorable Abraham Lincoln to the conniving crook Richard Nixon to the blatantly deceitful and treacherous demagogue Donald Trump.

People’s adherence to religious dogmas is, in some ways, a barbarous waste of moral energy. As John Fowles observed in his philosophical treatise The Aristos, misguided religious thinking and actions are “like keeping ramshackle water mills on a river that could serve hydroelectric dynamos.” Much more positive outcomes could be achieved if these formidable energies, along with the enormous amounts of time and money devoted to churches, were to be redirected into more moderate, salubrious, wholesome and peaceable channels. Imagine, for instance, if we could transcend the horrible conflicts over religious supremacy that are taking place between Christianity and Islam in the world today, as manifested by the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the U.S. and the retaliatory War on Terror and military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the on-going disastrous war in Syria, and the drone assassinations of Islamic extremists (and assorted innocents in the vicinity) in places like Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. The American military has used air supremacy for years to bomb insurgents, yet terrorist extremism gained excessive influence. The costs of these conflicts are terribly high in a world so much in need of smarter and more salubrious investments of money and energy.

Think how different the world would be if more people studied big picture open-minded progressive ideas, future-respecting ideas, insightful ideas and enlightened ideas, rather than closed-minded, myopic and narrowly partisan and parochial thinking. The synapses of our brains have a remarkable neuroplasticity, and maybe with broader ways of seeing, these synapses would build new circuits and snap onto new and providential perspectives and understandings that would revolutionarily affect our societies in positive ways. This might even make it easier for us to work together to achieve greater good goals!

We need a spiritual renaissance in the world today, and if authorities in established religions are not willing and able to lead in honestly righteous directions, they should get out of the way. Specific plans for actually creating a more propitious world are articulated in the essays of the Common Sense Revival - Book One of the Earth Manifesto. See these detailed recommendations also in Part Four of the Earth Manifesto online.

Truly, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
"My Country, Right or Wrong"?

Mark Twain made extraordinary observations about loyalty, unthinking patriotism and imperialistic nationalism in his provocative essay *Glances at History*, in which he called the phrase My Country, Right or Wrong "an insult to the nation." He wrote this thought-provoking piece, quoted below in full, in 1906, four years before he died.

The great philosophic author and celebrity had also weighed in on these issues of loyalty and patriotism almost 20 years earlier in his 1889 novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, when he wrote, "You see my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its office holders. The country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing: it is the thing to watch over, and care for, and be loyal to; institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body from winter, disease and death. To be loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to worship rags, to die for rags -- this is loyalty to unreason, it is pure animal; it belongs to monarchy, was invented by monarchy: let monarchy keep it."

Democracy in the USA today, in its turn, is what needs to be cared for, and loyalty should be given to inclusive fair-minded representation of all constituencies. This is particularly crucial at this juncture in history because our democracy is under assault by authoritarians, demagogues, swindlers, con men and rogues. Carl Schultz, a German immigrant who served as a military general in the Civil War, and as a Republican Senator from Missouri, and later as Secretary of the Interior, expressed the more honorably patriotic sentiment back in 1872 that, "My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right." That's a real good call.

Today, wealthy conservatives are strongly opposing efforts to right wrongs in their drive to push for more and more perks for themselves and their cronies, and for an ever-bigger monopoly by the proverbial few on the total accumulated wealth in the United States. This is a bizarre and rash top priority due to the brilliantly simple understandings articulated by Nick Hanauer in his article *The Pitchforks Are Coming … For Us Plutocrats*. In this piece, published as a 2014 Memo "To: My Fellow Zillionaires", Hanauer makes it clear that it is in the best interest of all Americans, rich and poor alike, to create a fairer society than we have today, so that justice and peaceful coexistence have a better chance of reigning in the land of the free.

The ruthless agenda of wealthy people is reckless due to the focus of Republican politicians on shredding the social safety net and making big cuts in public funding for healthcare in order to pay for more tax breaks for the highest income earners. They are accomplishing this retrogressive goal by perpetrating scandalous scams: First, by imposing austerity measures and unnecessary hardships on the vast majority of Americans, who they are mercilessly cheating and lying to, and effectively stealing from -- at a terrible cost to the overall well-being of the populace. Along with this forced austerity comes a diminished democracy, a degraded environment, serious Tragedy of the Commons harms, spiking public debt, and pathological assaults against Golden Rule fairness principles, which in contrast are commendably championed by proponents of more broadly shared prosperity and social justice, environmental justice and peaceable coexistence.
A main way that the super-rich are getting away with their über-swindle against the common good is by driving up the national debt every year. This is an insult to the nation because these folks have already gotten away with paying historically low tax rates since Ronald Reagan radically reduced the top tax rates in the 1980s from a long-standing 70%, or higher, to only 28%. They achieved this treachery by successfully pushing a “trickle-down” Big Lie, claiming that low tax rates on the highest levels of income would be the best national plan. Fast forward three decades, and this reckless strategy has been a principal factor in unconscionably driving up the debt from less than $1 trillion in 1981 to a staggeringly risk-laden $22 trillion in early 2019.

It is colossally foolish to give more debt-financed tax breaks to rich people, because this heightens the risks of a severe debt crisis. It would have been much smarter and fairer to respect the sentiment that “NOT ONE PENNY MORE” be given in Tax Cuts to the top 1%. It is crazy to allow rich people to add any more to the national debt to increase their fortunes and the glaring disparities in income and wealth between them and all others.

Mark Twain also focused in his essay *Glances at History* on the propensity for the U.S. to become involved in wars. This issue rings with a particularly poignant and important clarion call in the world today due to the findings of a National Security Poll conducted by NBC News in July 2017 that found a stunning 76% of the American people are worried that the USA will become engaged in a major war within 4 years. Since then, with all the saber rattling threats between the Twitterer-in-Chief and North Korea’s “supreme leader” Kim Jong-un and the religious theocrats in Iran, this concern has perhaps increased. And though the Singapore Summit in June 2018 partially defused this danger with North Korea, there has been so much turmoil and chaos in national politics since then that the likelihood is increasing of a Wag the Dog-like war to distract people from domestic shenanigans and glaring injustices and all the investigations into malfeasance by Republicans.

Mark Twain was upset at U.S. militaristic imperialism when he wrote *Glances at History*, and specifically at the terrible injustices perpetrated by our military in the Philippines. He was committed to speaking out as Vice President of the American Anti-Imperialism League against harsh injustices against peoples abroad, especially during and after the Philippine-American War from 1899 to 1902, so he penned this brilliantly satirical polemic to persuade readers of the reality of his way of understanding the situation. He was no doubt also irked at the time because of the bigger context of that era of profound economic inequities that prevailed due to the excessive power of giant corporate entities (“trusts”) and “robber barons” in those days. Listen in:

***Glances at History***

We, free citizens of the Great Republic, feel an honest pride in her greatness, her strength, her just and gentle government, her wide liberties, her unsmirched flag, her hands clean from oppression of the weak and of malicious conquest, her hospitalable door that stands open to the hunted and the persecuted of all nations; we are proud of the judicious respect in which she is held by monarchies ... and proudest of all of that lofty patriotism which we inherited from our fathers, which we have kept pure, and which won our liberties in the beginning and has preserved them unto this day. While that patriotism endures, the Republic is safe, her greatness is secure, and against them the powers of the earth cannot prevail.

I pray you to pause and consider. Against our traditions we are now entering upon an unjust and trivial war, a war against a helpless people, and for a base object -- robbery. At first our citizens spoke out against this thing, by an impulse natural to their training. Today they have turned, and their voice is the other way. What caused the change? Merely a politician’s trick -- a high-sounding phrase, a blood-stirring phrase which turned their uncritical heads: *Our Country, right or wrong!* An empty phrase, a silly phrase. It was shouted by every newspaper, it was thundered from the pulpit, the Superintendent of Public Instruction placarded it in every schoolhouse in the land, the War Department inscribed it upon the flag. And every man who failed to shout it or who was silent, was proclaimed a traitor -- none but those others were patriots. To be a patriot, one had to say, and keep on saying, “Our Country, right or wrong”, and urge on the little war. Have you not perceived that that phrase is an insult to the nation?
For in a republic, who is “the Country”? Is it the Government which is for the moment in the saddle? Why, the Government is merely a servant -- merely a temporary servant; it cannot be its prerogative to determine what is right and what is wrong, and decide who is a Patriot and who isn’t. Its function is to obey orders, not originate them. Who, then, is “the Country”? Is it the newspaper? Is it the school superintendent? Is it the pulpit? Why, these are mere parts of the country, not the whole of it: they have no command, they have only their little share in the command. They are but one in the thousand; it is in the thousand that command is lodged; they must determine what is right and what is wrong; they must decide who is a patriot and who isn’t.

Who are the thousand -- that is to say, who are “the Country”? In a monarchy, the king and his family are the country: in a republic it is the common voice of the people. Each of you, for himself, by himself and on his own responsibility, must speak. And it is a solemn and weighty responsibility, and not lightly to be flung aside at the bullying of pulpit, press, government, or the empty catch-phrases of politicians. Each must for himself alone decide what is right, and what is wrong, and which course is patriotic and which isn’t. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide it against your convictions is to be an unqualified and inexcusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let men label you as they may. If you alone of all the nation shall decide one way, and that way be the right way according to your convictions of the right, you have done your duty by yourself and by your country -- hold up your head! You have nothing to be ashamed of.

Only when a republic’s life is in danger should a man uphold his government when it is in the wrong. There is no other time. This Republic’s life is not in peril. The nation has sold its honor for a phrase. It has swung itself loose from its safe anchorage and is drifting, its helm is in pirate hands. The stupid phrase needed help, and it got another one: “Even if the war be wrong, we are in it and must fight it out: we cannot retire from it without dishonor.” Why, not even a burglar could have said it better. We cannot withdraw from this sordid raid, because to grant peace to those little people on their terms -- independence -- would dishonor us. You have flung away Adam’s phrase -- you should take it up and examine it again. He said, “An inglorious peace is better than a dishonorable war.” You have planted a seed, and it will grow.

Wow! -- These understandings are a sly way of speaking real truth to power! These words reverberate off the interior walls of the echo chambers in which we are ensconced, suddenly competing to focus our attention and put a spotlight on all the epic distractions, which notably include the Master-Manipulator-in-Chief’s tweets and our online social feeds and the scandalous and scandal-obsessed daily news that features ranting-and-raving Rush Limbaugh and the ideological extremist Sean Hannity and Fox & Friends, for millions of people, and Rachel Maddow, Lawrence O’Donnell, Brian Williams, Washington Post’s excellent Daily 202 and generally more honest and accurate progressive perspectives, for millions of others. As author Michelle Alexander put it: “The right to speak truth to power is the foundation of democracy and must be vigilantly protected and defended. Now more than ever.”

The following perspicacious ideas explore and elaborate upon these ways of seeing things, and are brought to bear to help explain what is going on in our world today, and how and why we find ourselves in such dauntingly dilemma-filled straits, and what we should rightly do about it.

Today, extreme partisanship is dominating our politics to such a degree that the vast majority of Americans are unable to get their representatives to act in their best interests. This is because we have a “political duopoly” system of governance in which the wealthy few are able to sow acrimonious divisions amongst the many, thereby helping them satisfy their narrowly selfish drives for a bigger monopoly on wealth and power.

Behind this apparent bitter divisiveness in our politics today lies a deeper bipartisan consensus in which Big Money donors have bought our democracy and staunchly oppose any real changes to the pathetic planks that are foundational to this fraud. This is why the social security safety net is being shredded, and it is why urgently needed reforms have not been made. This is how the interests of the wealthy few are advanced while those of the majority are harshly undermined. This is why the worst provisions of the Amazing Disgrace debt-financed Trump Tax Folly were enacted without a single vote of support by Democrats in Congress. As a sad result, the
voices of tens of millions of Americans are being arrogantly ignored, and their personal security is being sacrificed. These times are definitely trying our souls.

Charles Ferguson writes about aspects of this situation with incisive understanding and persuasive insight in his book Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America. He makes this point that moneyed interests dominatingly control our political duopoly system in the U.S., and consequently the government generally acts in matters related to Wall Street and both tax and environmental policy to primarily benefit the wealthy few. They do this in part by manipulating public opinion using the influence of people in deeply ideological “conservative” think tanks and unbalanced media outlets like Fox News that shrewdly affect public opinion in harm-engendering ways, and pathologically help enable the swampy corrupted status quo.

And there’s no question about it: Money talks, and by hook or by crook -- and with ruthlessly brazen hands tipping the scales of justice -- people with Big Money have been allowed to have far greater influence than the vast majority of the people. Donald Trump has served as a treacherous Trojan horse for rich conservatives to seize power and use it oppressively, and to facilitate abuses of influence by plutocrats, allowing them to dominate our national decision making in the USA.

The wise Athenian lawmaker Solon earned the reputation of being "the father of democracy" for having been effective in forging adequately fair compromises between the rich and the poor in classical Athens, saving the republic from revolutionary strife. We would be smart to see this lesson of history, and to emulate it. Let’s join together and seek consensus solutions to all our biggest challenges!

Americans everywhere on the political spectrum love personal freedoms, from leftist radicals and hippies of the Sixties to Libertarians and "Don’t Tread on Me" protestors and hyper-partisan anti-government Tea Party types and members of the right-wing Freedom Caucus faction. So it is ironic that manipulative politicians have managed to push policies that are contrary to individual liberties and the overall well-being of the people. It is truly bizarre how successful they have been at sabotaging live-and-let-live Golden Rule reciprocity principles, and at giving excessive wealth and power to the top 1% at the expense of everyone else.

Let’s open our eyes, and demand action to reduce the influence of Big Money in our elections with sensible campaign finance restrictions and reforms related to gerrymandering, voting rights and lobbying. Enact the anti-corruption initiative, H.R.1, and let’s also adopt fairer, more steeply graduated national tax policies and act to ensure more inclusive live-and-let-live social attitudes, and rise up in salubrious solidarity to positively change the current retrograde state of affairs!

In a world still reeling from the exceedingly high costs of the severe credit crisis and subsequent recession of late 2008, and an on-going ominous explosion of public debt, I again consulted Charles Ferguson’s red-jacketed book with the preposterously provocative title, Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America. Ferguson, after all, had directed the illuminating documentary film, Inside Job, which exposed some pretty ugly and damning culpabilities that contributed to the cathartic calamity of the financial crisis. On the very first page, Ferguson did not disappoint, providing food for thought with the understanding that the financial crisis that struck during those panicky days was caused by a variety of factors that notably included massive fraud, and yet not a single financial executive has gone to jail, “and that’s wrong.” … “Nor has there been any serious attempt by the federal government to use civil suits, asset seizures, or restraining orders to extract fines or restitution from the people responsible for plunging the world economy into recession” -- despite the fact that this profiteering malfeasance cost many trillions of dollars.

On Page 2 of Predator Nation, Charles Ferguson makes an intriguing statement that since the release of Inside Job, “a large amount of new material has emerged that reveals that many bankers, including senior management, knew exactly what was going on, and that it was highly fraudulent.” … “The evidence is now overwhelming that over the last thirty years, the U.S. financial sector has become a rogue industry.” And Ferguson was only getting started. As he delved into the meat of the matter, the details were sensational. This state of affairs is facilitated by a political duopoly of Republicans and Democrats that allows such swindles, and gives the preponderance of all benefits of economic activities to a small elite of influence-abusing rich people. We should
take our cue from the great Declaration of Independence, in which our Founders bemoaned “a long train of abuses and usurpations” by the British monarchy and asserted the right of the people to institute a new system of governance “laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

Today, after Republican politicians used a scurrilous litany of basically illegitimate means to seize power, they are acting like “evil doers”, reversing the consumer protections hammered out in the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, in addition to sacrificing the environment to benefit polluters and profiteers in the short term. So the pendulum is swinging backwards, and this is bad news for humanity!

Revealingly, Wall Street banks are among the biggest beneficiaries of the Republican Tax Cuts boondoggle. “In fact, fresh off getting caught lying about millions of fake accounts and systematically ripping off its own customers, Wells Fargo got a $3.35 billion windfall. The other Big Banks are expected to fare almost as well. It takes an army of lobbyists to get these kinds of results from Washington. And the sad truth is that you may be paying for that army.”

There’s something happenin’ here
What it is ain’t exactly clear
I think it’s time we stop
Children, what’s that sound?
Everybody look at what’s going down.

--- For What It’s Worth, Buffalo Springfield, 1967

One of the main strategies of “conservatives” in Congress and the Administration is to reduce protections of the environment so that big corporations can treat our home planet like a business in liquidation, rather than as a healthy going concern. In the brilliantly satirical 1935 novel It Can’t Happen Here, the character Buzz Windrip is a demagogic authoritarian who takes over the U.S. government, and the triumphant Windrip declared that there would thereafter be only one political party, the American Corporate State and Patriotic Party (“no!” he added, “with something of his former good-humor, there are to be two parties, the Corporate and those who don’t belong to any party at all, and so, to use a common phrase, are just out of luck!”)

Revealingly, entrenched interest groups exploit resentments, confusion, misunderstandings, apathy and despair to prevent common good reforms. They encourage modes of thinking that lead us to believe problems are not solvable, that nothing we do will matter, or that issues are too complex for there to be even an opportunity for change. Alex Steffen wrote in The Politics of Optimism that “it is a long-standing political art to sow the seeds of mistrust between those you would rule over.” Nice going, guys! “Mitch McConnell, you’re disgusting.”

Cynicism is often seen as a rebellious attitude in Western popular culture, but in reality, cynicism is an attitude that often is complacent in conformity to the desires of those in power. In this regard, cynicism can be seen to be a form of inadvertent obedience. As for pessimistic attitudes, ponder these words from the great ecologist, environmentalist, aerial photographer and filmmaker Yann Arthus-Bertrand, in his extraordinary film Home: “In the past 200,000 years, humans have upset the balance of planet Earth, a balance established by nearly four billion years of evolution. We must act now. It is too late to be a pessimist. The price is too high. Humanity has little time to reverse the trend and change its patterns of consumption.”

Alex Steffen also expresses the idea in The Politics of Optimism that optimism is a political act: and that great movements for social change always begin with statements of great optimism. This is one reason why I, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, so passionately propose providentially good solutions to problems throughout the Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto. Steffen wrote: “Optimism, by contrast, especially optimism that is neither foolish nor silent, can be revolutionary. Where no one believes in a better future, despair is a logical choice, and people in despair almost never change anything. Where no one believes a better solution is possible, those benefiting from the continuation of a problem are safe. Where no one believes in the possibility of action, apathy becomes an insurmountable obstacle to reform. But introduce intelligent reasons for believing that action is possible, that better solutions are available, and that a better future can be built, and you unleash the power of people to
act out of their highest principles. Shared belief in a better future is the strongest glue there is: it creates
the opportunity for us to love one another, and love is an explosive force in politics."

Hallelujah! Let us adopt a philosophic attitude -- I invite readers to exit their echo chambers and accompany
me into a Big Picture arena informed by comprehensive understandings, and to make honest efforts to see how
potentially positive these extensive understandings really are. Keep in mind that all the policy proposals made in
these writings honor social justice and environmental justice, and therefore all these recommended plans are
fair-minded, and are structured in highly progressive ways rather than in regressive ways.

Quite unfortunately for the American people, the Republican Party represents entrenched special privilege, and
worse, Republican politicians have allowed their extreme right-wing fringe to come in from the cold of their
deserved exile, and to seize power with their Chaotic-Decider-in-Chief and strategists like the diabolically
cunning Steve Bannon (from January until August 2017) and the bigoted Stephen Miller. In this bizarre
Republican regime, Bannon had grabbed a seat as the most influential White House advisor for the first seven
months of this Trumpian era of folly. Bannon went back to being the head of the emotion-exploiting, conspiracy
theory-propagating Breitbart News, a far-right news, opinion and commentary website that he described in
2016 as "the platform of the alt-right". This group pathetically rejects mainstream conservatism in favor of
white nationalism and extreme right ideologies.

Steve Bannon had a tumultuous tenure as the Chief Strategist in the White House, and then after being ousted
from his rabble-rousing position of power and immediately returning to Breitbart, he declared he felt “jacked
up” and ominously declared war with the words, “Now I’ve got my hands back on my weapons.” Fire and Fury!

These developments cause me to hear a refrain that keeps on coming like a reverberating voice from heaven,
again echoing the extraordinarily prescient novel It Can’t Happen Here, which was written by Sinclair Lewis in
1935. Lewis was America’s first Nobel Prize winner for Literature, in recognition of the cogent stories he told
about middle class folks and their struggles during the Roaring Twenties. The novel It Can’t Happen Here
concerns a shrewd demagogue named Buzz Windrip who runs against Franklin D. Roosevelt and others in the
national elections of 1936, and managed to triumph by using demagogic rhetoric and manipulative actions to
seize power. Not long after he took office, Windrip imposed dictatorial rule, and enforced it with terrorizing
paramilitary militia forces (“the Minute Men”). Some say that this couldn't happen in the USA today. The
book's refrain echoes in the interstices of my mind, "The hell it can't!"

The man who seizes totalitarian power in It Can't Happen Here happens to be the Democratic candidate for the
presidency, and that makes it a dramatic contrast to the Populist-Demagogue-in-Chief who has taken over the
Republican Party. It is revealing that Donald Trump was a registered Democrat as recently as 2009, so indeed a
demagogue could almost as easily have come from the fringes of the Democratic Party as from the fringes of
the Republican Party. But it just happens that Trump managed to usurp power in the Republican Party, for that
political institution offers the most fertile soil for the sprouting of authoritarian impulses. As Bob Altemeyer
asserts in his online The Authoritarians, conservatives tend to be most easily manipulated because they exhibit
the psychological trait of tending to feel comfortable being “authoritarian followers”, as he defines in a dozen
specific retrogressive tendencies.

Could the good old USA actually become a repressive authoritarian state? To quote and paraphrase and
extrapolate on the words of the central character Doremus Jessup in It Can’t Happen Here, "Why, there's no
country in the world that can get more hysterical -- yes, or more obsequious -- than America. Listen to the
divine oracles on the radio and in the media. Remember all the episodes of Tammany graft and Chicago gangs
and crooked Wall Street bankers. Remember the million-dollar evangelists and the Ku Klux Klan and our Red
scares and war hysteria and wartime censorship of honest newspapers. Bad as Russia! Remember when the hick
legislators in certain states, in obedience to William Jennings Bryan, who learned his biology from his pious old
grandma, set up shop as scientific experts and made the whole world laugh itself sick by forbidding the teaching
of evolution? Remember how trainloads of people have gone to enjoy lynchings? Not happen here! Prohibition -
- shooting down people just because they might be transporting liquor -- no, that couldn’t happen in America!
Why, where in all history has there ever been a people so ripe for a dictatorship as ours!"
Today, the world has become increasingly vulnerable to anti-democratic authoritarian rule, due to the ease with which anti-immigrant fervor can be exploited. This sad state of affairs is being accompanied by a rising tide of refugees, desperate asylum seekers, ethnic strife, political instability and spiking sentiments of tribal factionalism, nationalism and stoked sectarian religious fanaticism. And all of this is unfolding in a context of the hegemony of a system of what Naomi Klein calls Shock Doctrine "disaster capitalism". A sad feature of the undesirable rise to power of operatives promoting disaster capitalist outcomes is that there is a spike in extremes of inequality between rich people, on the one hand, and poor people and those in the increasingly insecure middle classes, on the other.

The Deceiver-in-Chief frequently attacks journalists, saying that reporters often make up "fake news" using unnamed sources, and he has repeatedly described them as being "the enemy of the American people". These ruses, and his many "alternative facts", are antithetical to our democratic values. Donald Trump distorts the truth and tells more lies than any president in history, as evidenced by a long list of these untruths summarized for readers by the New York Times in Trump's Lies, The Definitive List. And by mid-December 2018, the Washington Post Fact Checker "lie trackers" had counted more than 7,500 false or misleading claims made by Trump in his first 700 days in office. The environmental advocacy organization NRDC commendably evaluates some of the most consequential of Trump's lies, revealing a reality that urges us to oppose his consequential villainy. "O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!", said Sir Walter Scott.

Good investigative reporting is invaluable in a democracy, as can be seen with the unraveling of glaring omissions and apparent lies that Donald Trump Jr. and Attorney General Jeff Sessions and others in the Trump circle have told about their involvements with Russians interfering in our 2016 elections. Treacherously, Trump's allies on Capitol Hill have been escalating their efforts in recent months to undermine Robert Mueller's investigation and to impugn the integrity of career law enforcement professionals in the FBI and the Justice Department.

The succinct words of President Harry Truman warn us: "Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear." Good citizens in a democratic republic support their leaders when they do the right things -- those consistent with the common good -- and they oppose their leaders when they do the wrong things. Perhaps it is true that understandings of right and wrong have been contested and convoluted ever since God supposedly banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden for having eaten the fruit from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". According to astute psychologist Stephen Pinker, opinions have become "loyalty badges for one's tribe". In the confines of our echo chambers, we often don't see other viewpoints or big picture perspectives.

But truer understandings of right and wrong can be easily found. For instance, the perceptive Professor Robert Reich articulated the things that honestly constitute good citizen goals in his book Supercapitalism, contrasting them to narrower and more selfish goals of consumers wanting cheap prices and investors wanting higher returns on their money. I have conveniently summarized these things online in The Common Good, Properly Understood. Robert Reich's latest book The Common Good also contains excellent insights, and I recommend my own Common Sense Revival - Book One of the Earth Manifesto.

In the biggest picture perspective, humanity should rightly be loyal to the future well-being and survival of our kind, rather than to the officeholders in our government and the priorities of their narrowly-focused corporate backers and wealthy campaign contributors. As British philosopher Bertrand Russell once declared, "The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts." Don't doubt that strategies to divide people are an all-too-effective way to undermine their general welfare, and that blaming the wrong people or causative factors is a seditious ploy used by savvy propagandists to gain and abuse power.

Master manipulators have savagely divided the American people into antagonistic camps residing in their own separate propaganda-informed echo chambers. Facts have become slickly fluid, and the leaders who have gained control of the government are demonstrating an arrogant disdain for rules of law and civil norms, and the president is telling brazenly manipulative lies. Social media has served to exacerbate these dangerous divisions
by promoting selective spin on news stories and negative conspiracy theories, and journalists are being threatened for doing a good job of investigative reporting. The independence of the Justice Department is being undermined, and the Supreme Court has been waylaid by ideologically extreme appointees. This will likely get worse with the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy and the subsequent controversial confirmation of the long-time Republican partisan Brett Kavanaugh. Conservatives have refused to compromise, and political sycophants are loyally marching to the tune of a crazed alpha male wannabe whose demagogic actions have given him great power and influence in spite of the fact that his priorities are radically self-serving and his character seems to be in a state of egomaniacally narcissistic arrested development, and he cares much more for money and himself and his family than for the true greater good of the people, and he disdains democratic fairness, and seem not to give a damn for the future well-being of the USA and life on Earth.

The right thing to do would be to act in ways that are honestly most likely to put the top priorities of country and people over political party, and to choose the common good of the American people over loyalty to Trump and Pence and McConnell and the Republican Party. Republicans in Congress should stop disgracing our nation with faithful claptrap loyalty to Trump, right or wrong. Our representatives should rightly stop helping the administration cover-up the Trump campaign's involvements with Russia's meddling in our elections to help him win. And our representatives should change course and stop enabling the rash ruses described in See Clearly.

Republican politicians today demonstrate that they are driven by one overriding principle, and that is to gain and maintain power by pandering to rich people who want to perpetuate the system that gives them outsized benefits while skimping on more important national priorities. This is why they push to cut spending on social safety net programs and protections of the environment, and allow high costs to be foisted onto the masses and all folks in the future. To accomplish this, they unconscionably contribute to continuing to run up the national debt to finance tax cuts and poorly managed federal spending. These stalwart politicians in the D.C. swamp are stubbornly dedicated to this tax cutting Santa Claus strategy in political economics, despite its terribly tragic implications for the health, well-being and future security of the American people and all of humanity.

Adolf Hitler declared that absolutism was desirable to achieve totalitarian goals, uttering these words: "The greatness of every mighty organization embodying an idea in this world lies in the religious fanaticism and intolerance with which, fanatically convinced of its own right, it intolerantly imposes its will against all others."

One of the most serious ways Trump is trying to cling to power and perpetuate a long-term extreme influence over American society is by stacking federal courts with ideologues who he hopes will be reliably loyal to his corporate friendly, wealthy-people favoring, discriminatory and anti-egalitarian agenda, and his resource exploiting allowances and environment harming plans. He is appointing judges who are relatively young, with an average age under 50 years old. "That is surely no accident. Like George W. Bush before him, Trump appears to favor younger nominees who will remain on the bench for decades -- and serve as a farm team of future Supreme Court picks. With a friendly Senate and a defanged filibuster, this strategy ... ensures that Trump's nominees will shape American law for generations to come, no matter how his own presidency ends." The payoff for proponents of the far right agenda was increasingly obvious at the end of June 2018, when a string of 5-4 rulings was made by the high court, with politically chosen Neil Gorsuch representing the deciding vote.

Extreme ideology should have no place on the Supreme Court or in federal district courts. After all, every judge or Justice of the United States is required to take an oath of office in which they solemnly swear that they will administer justice "without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich ... So help me God." Let's demand that Supreme Court Justices honestly do equal right to the poor and to the rich!

The Narcissist-in-Chief values loyalty over all other qualities -- loyalty to him, that is. In contrast, he seems to be quite willing to abandon anyone whenever it is convenient for him personally. He told the FBI Director James Comey privately, before firing him in an apparent act of trying to obstruct justice, "I need loyalty. I expect loyalty." He often expressed intense anger at his Attorney General Jeff Sessions for having recused himself from the investigation of the Trump campaign's coordination with Russia to help Trump and other Republicans get elected. It is exceedingly curious that a man so sensitive to the issue of loyalty would be so eager to betray the best interests of millions of struggling Americans who voted for him by giving huge tax breaks to the rich,
and by jeopardizing millions of people’s healthcare and shredding the social safety net and eliminating protections of consumers, a habitable environment, and women, children and people in racial minorities.

Today, with Donald Trump demanding loyalty from others, yet throwing anyone under the bus that displeases him, we can see clearly that it is profoundly misguided to be loyal to politicians who engage in self-serving conflicts of interest and broad abuses of power. We should rightly be loyal to the principles upon which our great democratic republic was founded, as spelled out in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution: “… to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity”.

Those Americans who are part of the Resistance against power-abusing Republican politicians are the true patriots in America today, and those who proudly wear “Make America Great Again” caps are often manifesting a foolishly blind obedience to “conservative” politicians who are double-crossing them and betraying greater good goals, and in many instances undermining the moral good of human social groups.

To help win his campaign for the presidency, the Ruthless-Art-of-the-Deal-in-Chief enlisted the help of Steve Bannon because he was an expert at exploiting people’s emotions through the resentment-filled “bile factory at Breitbart News”. Steve Bannon had been able to mine the “deep Web” to dig up dirt on the Clinton Foundation for Peter Schweizer’s 2015 gossip- and innuendo-filled book Clinton Cash. Trump and Bannon received lavish financial support from the nefarious billionaire Robert Mercer and his daughter Rebekah, and exploited information from the data-analytics firm, Cambridge Analytica, an offshoot of a British company “that advised foreign governments and militaries on influencing elections and public opinion using the tools of psychological warfare.” According to information on Wikipedia, the role and impact of the company’s data analysis activities on both the Trump campaign and the pro-Brexit campaign in Britain “has been disputed and is the subject of ongoing criminal investigations in both countries.”

The dark figure of Steve Bannon is illuminated by Joshua Green in his book Devil’s Bargain - Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency. Green tells the story of Bannon acting as “the shadowy President of the United States” who utilized insights into people’s involvements on the Internet for his political purposes and developed “an apocalyptic narrative of righteous warriors waging an end-of-days battle by all necessary means against assorted enemies: jihadists, progressives, Acela-corridor Republicans, the Clintons.”

Among the shrewd strategies that demagogues utilize to seize power, one of the worst is making unrelenting efforts to create divisive wedges between people by blaming others and scapegoating them, and by promoting crude stereotypes. “Animals!” These ruses are contrary to unifying principles and the common good, and they can be better understood as a part of the twelve main tactics and manipulative schemes used by demagogues to stir up fanatical support, as examined in Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy.

Favorite targets of those who scapegoat throughout history have alternately been communists, socialists, immigrants, poor people, people in racial minorities, Jews, Gypsies, feminists, dissenters, investigative reporters, journalists, liberals, marijuana users, long haired hippies in the Sixties, heretical religious folks, Muslims and terrorists. Since 9/11, trillions of dollars have been devoted to destroying terrorists and assorted freedom fighters around the world, many of whom have been driven to their violent opposition by extreme injustices perpetrated by those who decide that one of our nation’s top priorities should be to spend trillions of dollars waging this offensive.

Of the many villainous ploys demagogues use to grab power, the exploitation of people’s racial and ethnic biases is one of the most ethically deplorable. In It Can’t Happen Here, Senator Windrip sets forth his political platform during the very first week of his campaign for the presidency, issuing a proclamation, “The Fifteen Points of Victory for the Forgotten Men.” Among his fifteen planks was one that prohibited all Negroes “from voting, holding public office, practicing law, medicine, or teaching in any class above the grade of grammar school, and they shall be taxed 100 per cent of all sums in excess of $10,000 per family per year which they may earn or in any other manner receive.” This preposterous proposal basically condemned black people, and for
a simple reason: “since nothing so elevates a dispossessed farmer or a factory worker on relief as to have some race, any race, on which he can look down.” That’s downright Trumpian!

Ever since slaves were freed in the 1860s and black people were subsequently given more expansive civil rights in the 1960s, there has been a racial backlash against blacks and their rights to vote. This was the basis of the Southern Strategy developed by Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon to increase political support among white voters in the South by appealing to racism against African Americans. This strategy has stubbornly persisted to help Republican politicians gain a narrow majority in all the branches of government (until Jan. 3, 2019).

Non-Hispanic whites are continuing a long-term demographic decline from about 90% of the population in 1950 to about 60% today, and it is estimated that white people will slip below 50% of the population in maybe 25 years. It sure would be a good time to set a precedent for treating minorities more fairly, given that whites will become a minority as these demographic changes continue long-term trends. Given that rates of childbearing are much higher for females in racial minorities, why don’t Republicans strongly support contraception?!

Give close consideration to the underlying reasons that the U.S. has waged a harsh “War on Drugs” for the last 40 years. There is one overriding reason that this prosecution is pursued so ruthlessly and with such zeal. It is hinted at in a simple statistic -- only about 12 percent of the U.S. population is African-American, but 36 percent of people in jails and prisons are black. Harsh drug laws are enacted by authority-abusing law-and-order conservatives in order to control and repress the masses. Such laws are also designed to keep desperate underclasses from developing an enthusiasm for revolutionary change. This is why reasonable folks want to make our society truly fairer by helping overturn the unjust status quo.

Seeing that Attorney General Jeff Sessions tried to ramp up the War on Drugs again, while he was in office, with harsher penalties for the use of marijuana, the satirical Onion imagined a guy asking, “Shouldn’t we at least fail at a couple more new ideas, before going back to something we already know doesn’t work?”

A friend of mine from North Carolina relates the story of her time in the South in the 1960s, when anti-cohabitation laws between unmarried adults were used as a pretext to justify raids on the homes of long-haired young people to try to bust them on drug charges. This in turn was a pretext for oppressing hippies, student activists, liberal professors and people in racial minorities, especially including blacks and Latinos.

Almost half a million people are locked up in prisons and jails right now due to drug offenses, and many millions have been convicted over the years. Tellingly, individuals convicted of a felony are not eligible to vote while incarcerated or on parole, or on probation, or for two years after the completion of all supervised releases. Here is yet another coldly-calculated means of suppressing votes of those who oppose injustices.

On a positive note, Florida voters decided in the November 2018 midterm elections to restore voting rights to convicted felons who have served their time. This ballot initiative was a huge victory for the ACLU and other activists, potentially expanding voting rights to more than 1.5 million Floridians, and may possibly tip the scales toward Democrats in what may be "the country’s most significant swing state."

Demagogues also exploit people’s nationalistic feelings to gain support. Trump manipulatively took advantage of people’s feelings of nationalism by proclaiming "America First" during his campaign. When America First means being bad neighbors and mercilessly exploiting others and undermining social cohesion and using extreme divisive tactics, and pompously declaring that we must build a huge wall on the border with Mexico and "Mexico will pay for it", and separating children from their parents who are seeking asylum, and insanely wreaking havoc on Nature, it is morally wrong. It is wrong to treat people in other countries shabbily, or to maintain an attitude of arrogant imperial hubris. It is also wrong to, in effect, wage a war on the poor to further enrich the rich. Empathy and compassion may be the key to positive change, and surely it is a terrible plan to act like an asshole toward "shithole countries". While it may be a convenient expediency to adopt asshole attitudes, such stances are grotesquely antithetical to American values, and it is cartoonishly foolish to dangerously antagonize others instead of treating them in ways that are more just, inclusive, fair, egalitarian and mutually secure and peaceable for all concerned. More generous international assistance would be a smarter plan than oppressively pushing other countries toward being failed states. Instead, the Trump administration has declared that it will
slash hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to retaliate for what it regards as their lack of help in reducing the flow of migrants to the U.S. border. This intentional temper tantrum is bizarrely short-sighted, for in the long run it would only worsen conditions in those countries and uproot more desperate families from there, making our “border crisis” worse.

Donald Trump made a big deal out of Made-in-America Week in July 2017, leaving many observers perplexed at the depth of his hypocrisy in using products manufactured abroad in all of his American hotels and golf resorts. They were stunned to hear he had requested more than 230 foreign workers for his Florida properties alone since the day he launched his presidential campaign. And it just doesn’t square up for Ivanka Trump to have had all the goods she sold made in Asian countries that have cheap labor and often dangerous working conditions. Come on, Ivanka, tells us real economic truths! And take fair-minded and ethical steps to institute stronger controls over abusive labor practices and child labor in the factories that produce the goods you sell.

Clear understandings can inoculate us against “alternative facts” and deceptive spin and blatant lies in our “post-truth” world. Think about the sensational words of Eugene Robinson, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, who penned this stinging observation on July 17, 2017 in The Country Deserves Much Better than Trump:

It’s exhausting, I know, but don’t let outrage fatigue numb you to the moral bankruptcy and gross incompetence of the Trump administration. This ugly departure from American norms and values must be opposed with sustained passion -- and with the knowledge that things will probably get worse before they get better.

Heaven help us, look where we are. We have a president -- commander in chief of the armed forces, ostensibly the leader of the free world -- whose every word is suspect. President Trump is an inveterate liar. He dismisses provable facts as “fake news” and invents faux facts of his own that bear no relationship to the truth. He simply cannot be trusted.

We have a president whose North Star is naked self-interest, not the good of the country. Trump cares about his family, his company and little else. He dishonors the high office he holds, then reportedly spends hours each day railing against cable-news coverage that he finds insufficiently respectful. His ego is a kind of psychic black hole that devours all who come into its orbit.

Another of many quotes attributed to Mark Twain, perhaps apocryphally, was this: “It’s easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled”. This is a concept that rings true today, when so many Trump and Pence supporters are sticking with their hoped-for saviors, despite all evidence that demagogic con men are double-crossing them. Maybe this quote was actually uttered by that wily phrase-smith Yogi Berra. He was, after all, known not only for his exploits on the baseball field, but was perhaps even more famous for his paradoxical and whimsical quotes about life in general. He once declared, “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, baseball bat to the face.” Ouch!

Mark Twain suffered many personal tragedies in his family and many financial setbacks, but he was still able to articulate this fine sentiment: “A healthy and wholesome cheerfulness is not necessarily impossible to any occupation.” In light of this auspiciously holistic attitude, let’s breathe deep, and let go, and honor the counsel in the Bible, “in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer.”

One character in It Can’t Happen Here observed that another did not seem to be depressed by the election of a rogue authoritarian as president, and seemed instead to be quite cheerful about it. “Depressed? Why good Lord, Mr. Jessup, I thought you knew your revolutionary tactics better than that … Depressed? Why, can’t you see, if the Communists had paid for it they couldn’t have had anything more elegant for our purposes than the election of a pro-plutocrat, itching militarist dictator like Buzz Windrip! Look! He’ll get everybody plenty dissatisfied. But they can’t do anything, barehanded against the armed troops. Then he’ll whoop it up for a war, and so millions of people will have arms and food rations in their hands -- all ready for the revolution!”

Today, Republican politicians in particular cannot be trusted to support their country or the majority of the American people over their political party and the entrenched special privilege for which it stands. Walter
Shaub, the head of the Office of Government Ethics until he resigned in disgust in July 2017, pointed out that actions by Donald Trump and other White House officials have created a “historic ethics crisis,” and he called for major changes in federal law to combat this threat by expanding the power and reach of the oversight office. Shaub said the Trump administration had flouted or directly challenged long-accepted norms in a way that threatened to undermine the United States’ ethical standards, which were once admired around the world.

“It’s hard for the United States to pursue international anticorruption and ethics initiatives when we’re not even keeping our own side of the street clean. It affects our credibility,” Mr. Shaub stated. “I think we are pretty close to a laughingstock at this point.” In his Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 2 (University of California Press, 2013), Mark Twain wrote: “The glory which is built upon a lie soon becomes a most unpleasant incumbrance. ... How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and how hard it is to undo that work again!”

Jonathan Swift wrote in The Examiner in 1710: “... as the vilest Writer has his Readers, so the greatest Liar has his Believers; and it often happens, that if a Lie be believ’d only for an Hour, it has done its Work, and there is no farther occasion for it. Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it: so that when Men come to be undeceiv’d, it is too late; the Jest is over, and the Tale has had its Effect ...”

The Internet and “data analytics” profiling on social media have immeasurably magnified this malignant effect. “In our clickbait-driven, post-truth media environment, a lie can travel around the world several times before the truth has had a chance to check its Twitter feed.”

Misunderstandings can have catastrophic consequences, so we need courageous patriots who are loyal to their country over their political party, and we cannot afford to have contemptible politicians fawning over and helping enable ruthlessly authoritarian leaders who do not respect norms and rules of law.

President Theodore Roosevelt advocated a Square Deal for the American people, saying, “We must treat each man on his worth and merits as a man. We must see that each is given a square deal, because he is entitled to no more and should receive no less.” He honorably added, “Let the watchwords of all our people be the old familiar watchwords of honesty, decency, fair-dealing and commonsense.” And he had pointed out in September 1903 that “The welfare of each of us is dependent fundamentally upon the welfare of all of us.”

Let’s demonstrate solidarity with the national motto of France, Liberté, égalité, fraternité!

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Postscript. See A Fusillade of Philosophy, which sprang forth from an earlier Addendum to “My Country, Right or Wrong”, for an elaboration on the perspectives of Charles Ferguson on the nature of deregulatory zeal and the power-abusing Wall Street financial sector, along with more ideas about the increasing concentration of economic power in corporate hands and the sad implications of these trends, which constitute a Great Bargain for rich people and a Bad Deal for everyone else.
Broadly Peaceful Progressive Revolution Arrives -- Scathing Critique Continued

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, creator of the Earth Manifesto
June 2017, with updates through July 1, 2019

We should all laugh out loud together at the perceptive insight in a wry cartoon that appeared in The New Yorker magazine: "My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane." An existential Ha! Humor is good for the soul, but make no mistake about it, these are trying times for our souls, and the information and perspective in these essays could change the world, and do so in a Solon-wise way that could providentially and positively resolve our unfolding national nightmare and set our country onto a more star-spangled course than the direction in which it seems to be headed today. At this crucial juncture in history, American citizens cannot afford to shrink from engaging and participating in our democratic decision-making.

Humanity is in great need of better guidance, spiritually, environmentally, politically and fiscally. Instead we have a profoundly undesirable state of corrupt, unethical and immoral misguidance, and we are being led by those who mislead us to accomplish their selfish narrowly-focused goals. Thomas Paine wrote, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again", and it is our duty as voters and responsible citizens to choose more honest leaders to guide us sensibly into a future that is fraught with increasingly challenging predicaments.

I invite everyone to read all 16 essays in See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times, so that better understandings will materialize that cast a bright light on all the rash ruses that the ruling class is perpetuating against the American people. And in light of these clear realizations, I urge every voter to vote in every future election for moderate and progressive candidates, and more honest representatives, and give a stern rebuke to all incumbent politicians who are engaging in deceit and scandalous malfeasance, or who are blinding following Donald Trump in his insidious efforts to abuse power in his position of authority by imposing hardships on the populace.

Skullduggery Is A-Goin’ On

Rich people want to pay less tax, and thus scrimp on the safeguards provided by social insurance policies that could save their own necks from revolutionary strife. They are staunchly opposed to paying increased marginal tax rates on the highest levels of their earnings, even for some of the best investments they could make for society in greater well-being for everyone concerned. The most egregious instance of this antagonistic stance is found in the current Republican drive to slash spending on the social safety net and protections of public health and the environment, while at the same time ramping up military spending and cutting taxes to mainly benefit the highest income earners. This is dangerously misguided policy.

It is important to note that our nation’s Founders believed that “a well-informed public is best equipped to root out corruption and, over the long haul, promote liberty and justice.” One way that Donald Trump has violated our founding principles is by attacking the free press. A.G. Sulzberger, the publisher of the New York Times, has warned that Trump's savage attacks on reporters and investigative journalists, and on news organizations like CNN, the Washington Post and the New York Times, are creating significant danger to reporters. These reckless authoritarian attacks are calculated to give cover to merciless and corrupt authoritarian leaders in nations around the world, including in Russia and Turkey and Saudi Arabia, where despotic rulers are engaging in ruthless actions to suppress the freedom of the press, transparently to make it easier to abuse power. The
macabre murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian embassy in Istanbul may have been facilitated by this attitude and by this journalist being a critic of hard-line rule in the Saudi kingdom -- and of Donald Trump.

Some say that those who choose to indulge in acts of infamy like this are being judged by God, so what might happen at "the Pearly Gates of Heaven"? Dante scholars would likely assess the situation skeptically, and try speculatively to determine which circle in Dante's Inferno -- Hell -- each and every one of these dastardly usurpers and abusers of power should be destined to reside in, for the rest of eternity, after they die.

Forget the afterlife! Let's demand fairer economic, social and legal justice in the here and now. Let's all throw open our windows and holler "I'm not going to take it anymore!" Let's demand new management, and insist that their only legitimate top goal is to better meet the needs of all the people. Trump Republicans should resign in disgrace, admitting they have been unwilling to honestly take the steps necessary to create a fairer, more fiscally sound society that is more just and more egalitarian, and therefore safer and more secure and peaceful.

One of Mark Twain's most famous essays is Corn-Pone Opinions, which concludes: "In our late canvass half of the nation passionately believed that in silver lay salvation, the other half as passionately believed that that way lay destruction. Do you believe that a tenth part of the people, on either side, had any rational excuse for having an opinion about the matter at all? I studied that mighty question to the bottom, and came out empty. Half of our people passionately believe in high tariffs, the other half believe otherwise. Does this mean study and examination, or only feeling? The latter, I think. I have deeply studied that question, too -- and didn't arrive. We all do no end of feeling, and we mistake it for thinking. And out of it we get an aggregation which we consider a boon. Its name is Public Opinion. It is held in reverence. It settles everything. Some think it the Voice of God." Hmmmm ... This perspective puts a new spin on conformity and people being "politically correct".

Each and every one of us exists in our unique individual bubble chamber, particles and energy zipping through. Our personal worldviews are powerfully determined by the circumstances of our birth, our upbringing and whatever hands the fickle fingers of fate have dealt us. But to an extent, each of us does have some degree of free will, and it would be an excellent idea for us to give a larger measure of respect to facts and evidence, and to scientific reality, and to ecologically sane courses of action. One of my pet theories is that it would be better for everyone to strive to see more clearly -- in ways that are more comprehensive, more inclusive, more sustainable, and much more visionarily fair-minded.

A Focus on the Common Good, Properly Understood

Let these words serve as a powerful call to action. Our democracy is under concerted assault, and it is becoming crucial for us to restore sanity by voting for more responsible and broadly inclusive representatives. This is our overarching civic duty because "conservatives" have been dishonorably betraying the vast majority of the American people for their own power, profit, privilege and ruthlessly domineering control. They have succeeded in this nefariously selfish goal by perpetrating many scams against the people, diabolically dividing us, broadly deceiving us, cheating us, manipulating people's emotions, pitting people against each other, stoking resentments, running us into debt, and taking deleterious advantage of people today while leaving a harmful legacy to all people in future generations. This legacy is one of inequality, disempowered workers, harsh corporate hegemony over national decision-making, depleted resources, a polluted environment and destabilized climatic conditions. These are sad consequences of millions of Americans being Blinded by the Right.

Let's come together, y'all, and anyone who supports the Cult of Trump, please stop emulating obedient followers of authoritarians, as astutely characterized by Bob Altemeyer in his online book The Authoritarians. Please strive to see more clearly, and don't mindlessly nod at every tweet or biased segment on Fox News broadcasts.

Here's another reason that patriotic Americans should vote for progressive political representatives. Copious quantities of irrefutable evidence confirm that Republicans strongly favor unfair elections that are corrupted by voter suppression tactics, extreme gerrymandering of congressional districts and the distorting influence of Big Money and Dark Money spent by wealthy conservatives. Trump Republicans also favor the contortions and perversions and manipulation that can be accomplished by taking advantage of the dark side of people's emotions
through social media using fake news, disinformation, fear-mongering, race-baiting, brazen distractions, false conspiracy theories and character assassinations on sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Trump Republicans are violating the public trust by abusing the narrow majority power they have seized illegitimately, and they are compounding their treachery by transforming this ill-gotten power into assaults against the greater good by pushing an agenda that rewards the rich, cheats the people and makes the vast majority of people more vulnerable and insecure. They are pushing regressive tax laws that require huge amounts of money to be borrowed to give most of the spoils to the top 1%, and to political donors to this cause. The bottom line effect of this fiscally irresponsible scam is to increase the concentration of wealth, power and privilege ever more exclusively in the hands of the few. These ruthless partisans are siding with corporate entities that soullessly strive with monomaniacal focus on keeping working people minimally paid and meek in their insecurity.

And these schemers staunchly oppose regulatory safeguards and environmental protections. These facts make it clear that Republican conservatives are pushing twisted priorities, and that we cannot afford to continue to allow power-abusing politicians to treat our home planet like a business nearing bankruptcy and in the process of liquidation. We must demand that every single one of our representatives in Congress starts to side with the true best interests of the people.

We Americans should rightly demand that our leaders make an overarching commitment to an eminently fair-minded Bill of Rights for Future Generations, as specifically set forth in this manifesto. We should stop unleashing the powerful profit-obsessed engines of exploitation that are so wastefully stoking materialistic demand, depleting natural resources, damaging habitats, sacrificing public lands and externalizing a myriad of costs onto society. This folly is basically a way to socialize costs, including costs related to pollution, toxins, hazardous wastes, medical care for resulting adversities, and disasters made worse by extreme weather events.

Crucial Ecological Issues

Make no mistake about it, there is an even worse aspect of the Republican agenda and the shrewd schemes they are pushing to reward hyper-privileged partisans for their political support and campaign contributions. This is in the arena of environmental protections. Republican politicians want to slash spending on protections of clean water, clean air, food and drug safety, environmental science, the Environmental Protection Agency and NASA. And they are striving to torpedo efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. By these actions, these politicians are acting like Conservatives without Conscience, condemning countless numbers of people right now, and for all future years and decades and centuries, to radically increased risks of more calamitous hardships, resource shortages, food supply disruptions, deprivations, damaged habitats and worsening natural disasters exacerbated by anthropogenic global warming.

The harshly negative impacts of these retrogressive initiatives on human health can be categorized into a broad array of effects that saliently include climate change factors like extreme heat, severe weather, air pollution, diminished water quality, shortages of fresh water, spiking risks of diseases, exposures to increasing amounts of allergens, rising sea levels and a worsening degradation of the environmental commons, which just happen to serve as a providential underpinning for overall human and biotic well-being. It is colossal folly to court such catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and life on Mother Earth. Big picture understandings contained in Climate Change Considerations, Carrying Capacity and Population Overshoot are crucially important, so they are included herein by this reference.

Pope Francis issued an important ecological encyclical on climate change in June 2015. In it, he made a strong moral case for the need to mobilize people of faith and others into action to seriously address climate change. The Pope centered his environmental protection theology on the biblical creation story in the book of Genesis, in which God is said to have created the world and declared it "good", and charged humanity with its care. Pope Francis tied the ongoing environmental crisis to misguided economic schemes and the mindless exploitation of the planet by a wealthy minority, and he emphasized the social injustices that these trends cause while wreaking detrimental damages onto the downtrodden and the poor and powerless. Jesus Christ!
Pope Francis has called for climate action as a moral imperative because of the perilous effects of global warming trends, which will cause the harshest devastation to poor people and folks in vulnerable developing countries, who happen to be contributing the least to factors that are disrupting the global climate. Smarter and fairer policies are needed to achieve truer environmental and social justice. All developed countries should make bigger contributions to the Green Climate Fund to mitigate the impacts of climate injustices. Most of all, the United States should contribute much more money, because it has been responsible more than any other country for the increasingly rapid build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in the past century.

The smartest path forward would be to implement Pigouvian incentives such as a carbon fee-and-dividend plan that would reduce the profligacy of wasteful usages of fossil fuels. Plans like this would have the effect of giving "extraordinary encouragements" and "extraordinary restraints" to businesses and individuals. The basis of this idea was first advocated by the insightful British economist Arthur Cecil Pigou, who promoted the idea of implementing subsidy incentives and tax disincentives because such mechanisms have the salubrious effect of properly reflecting both social benefits and costs to society that are not accounted for in private transactions. This would be a good means for influencing people's activities and behaviors in sensible ways. A carbon fee-and-dividend plan, progressively designed, would have added benefits of helping reduce inequalities in our society by returning some of the carbon fees generated to all Americans in a highly egalitarian way.

Conservative leaders seem to want us all to stick our heads in the sand. Instead of making honest vulnerability assessments to the unfolding adverse impacts associated with juiced-up fossil fuel profit making, they are firing environmental scientists, eliminating the best scientific understandings from government websites, dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency, and trying to pull the wool over our eyes. Crazytown!

I implore all politicians to remember the meaning and value of honorable public service, and to consequently stop their efforts to sacrifice future well-being merely to pander to narrow goals of corporate executives, fossil fuel profiteers, opponents of collective bargaining rights for working people, religious fundamentalists, uncompromising gun rights extremists and wealthy ideologues like Robert and Rebekah Mercer, Charles Koch, David Koch, Foster Friess, David Pecker and Sheldon Adelson. The Koch brother billionaires have exerted more influence over our democratic American republic than perhaps any other individuals in history. They think Republican healthcare plans are simply not "conservative" enough, and before the midterm elections in 2018 they were "gearing up to target vulnerable Democrats on the ballot in 2018, pledging to spend upwards of $400 million ...". Senator Kamala Harris indicated that Koch organizations were "specifically coming after some of the most effective voices in the fight to save the Affordable Care Act, like my colleagues Senators Chris Murphy and Bill Nelson." The gamesmanship of extremely partisan politics should not ignore human ethics and morality, and the common good should not be sacrificed with such ruthlessness in the pursuit of money and power.

There are extraordinarily good reasons to cultivate a miraculous healing for the Earth that "awaits this planet once we accept our new responsibility to collectively tend the Garden, rather than fight over the turf." So say Bruce Lipton and "Swami Beyondananda" in their insightful book Spontaneous Evolution.

Breaking News in early September 2018

The Reality TV-like suspense is getting more dramatic by the moment. Who was the author that secretly wrote an Anonymous Op-Ed article in the New York Times in early September 2018 that savaged the Trump White House? Speculation ran wild. The author stated that a resistance has arisen within the administration because many officials are deeply concerned about the destabilizing and dangerous chaos that is going on.

The Anonymous author wrote in this Op-Ed, I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration, that many officials realize Donald Trump's impulses are rooted in anti-democratic beliefs and convictions that trade tariffs and aggressive anti-immigrant policies are proper plans, and they consider Trump's priorities and alarming conduct, fraught causes and risky behaviors to be dangerous to the country. So they have shot ideas down or taken things off Trump's desk or otherwise tried to contain Trump's maniacally volcanic impulses.

Perplexed observers wonder if members of this inside resistance are patriots helping keep the American people safe, or if they are treacherous unelected rogues illegitimately asserting power and control. An increasingly
unhinged Trump regards them as traitors, and wants the Department of Justice to get involved to ferret out the culprit who wrote the Op-Ed article, so that Trump can vent his vitriol by firing the traitor for his or her disloyalty to him personally, and he’s sure interested in figuring out who to purge from his regime.

Insightful Opinion Columnist Thomas Friedman made incisive observations in his article, ‘Anonymous’ Is Hiding in Plain Sight. Friedman indicated that the anonymous members of the resistance within the Trump administration are persons who are trying to save our country from too severe a degree of catastrophe and chaos. Curiously, the sentiments expressed by the mysterious Op-Ed author implicate each and every one of the large group of people who have helped Republicans usurp and abuse power. This includes members of a big “G.O.P. crowd who accepted the devil’s bargain.”

Those in this resistance are not progressive renegades working against the Republican agenda. In fact, the Op-Ed writer extolled the orthodox virtues of deregulation and tax breaks and a military build-up. They seem to be Movement Conservatives who are establishment-like in their scheming, and more honest in seeing the dangers posed by having a leader who is a lying, cheating, manipulative, unprincipled, narcissistic, mercurial demagogue.

Dozens of officials distanced themselves from any involvement in writing the Op-Ed, or of participating in resistance activities, because they fear the wrath of the Supreme Leader, whose highest value is loyalty to him. Vice-President Mike Pence readily declared he would take a lie detector test “in a heartbeat” to prove he has not betrayed his loyalty to his alpha male master, being an adoring sycophant, as he cravenly seems to be. And well should he be concerned, for the fireworks would be incendiary, should the Trumpster’s suspicions be aroused about the person next in line to replace him in the presidency at any time, as whispers about removing him from office in accordance with the provisions of the 25th Amendment reverberate in the background.

The threat to the Trump presidency is real as he becomes more obviously unhinged and unfit to fulfill the duties of the presidency. Section 4 of the 25th Amendment stipulates, “Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.”

The highly respected investigative reporter Bob Woodward wrote about the nature of the resistance against Trump from within by various staff members in the administration, in his best-selling book FEAR: Trump in the White House. One of Woodward’s mentors once told him, “The truth emerges”. And so it does, but it often takes time for the full story to come to light. However, one thing is sure, the truth is NOT the friend of duplicitous people like untrustworthy Trump and his Republican loyalists. Trump’s war on truth is falling flatter than a pancake, from the perspective of those who choose to see clearly. And his mad impulsivity was exposed with the provocative resignation letter by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on December 20 that shook the world.

A prolific award-winning author named Richard North Patterson has written a succinctly vituperous summary of the Crazytown condition of the Trump administration in his scathing article, With This Cast of Characters, No Wonder Trump’s White House Is a Toxic Mess. He observes, “Those surrounding Trump aren’t real to him—they are disposable props in the malign psychodrama of a man without knowledge; judgment; decency; empathy; ethics; respect for law; regard for institutions; interest in governance; tolerance for dissent; or loyalty to country or office.” Wow, that’s acerbic! But, in truth, the summary judgment is justified.

Remember Mark Twain’s observation in 1901, during the Philippine-American War in which revolutionaries in the Philippines fought for independence: “It would be an entirely different question if the country’s life was in danger, its existence at stake, then -- that is one kind of patriotism -- we would all come forward and stand by the flag, and stop thinking about whether the nation was right or wrong: but when there is no question that the nation is in any way in danger ... then it may be that on the question of politics the nation is divided, half patriots and half traitors, and no man can tell which from which.”

The African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass once made the nature of power dynamics explicitly clear by declaring, “Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will.” We must make proper
demands. Let's demand that an end be put to the widespread wrongdoing that's going on right now! Some say, "It's Mueller Time". A gauntlet is thrown down: peaceful revolution demanded. Keep subpoenas a-coming.

With these ideas as prelude and context, and as rationale for incisive evaluations of American leaders, read on.

Riff on the Undesirability of Extreme Inequality

Inequality today is more extreme than it has been at almost any time in U.S. history. The gaping gap between the rich and the vast majority of everyone else is worse than it has been at any time since the Roaring Twenties or the tawdry Gilded Age that Mark Twain wrote about. And this state of affairs will continue to get worse, for a variety of reasons, according to French economist Thomas Piketty in his blockbuster tome on economics, Capital in the Twenty-First Century.

During his presidency, the respect-deserving Barack Obama called increasing inequality a "defining challenge of our time." One reason this is true is because of the daunting implications of an observation attributed to the brilliant Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis: "We must make our choice. We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both." Brandeis, born of Jewish parents who had emigrated to the U.S. from Bohemia, was a commendably powerful champion of progressive social causes.

If the American people are truly committed to pledging allegiance to an indivisible democratic republic, a nation that really stands for liberty and justice for all, then we need to remedy the extreme imbalance between rich and poor. We need to heed the cautionary words penned by Plutarch, a famous Greek essayist, who declared some 19 centuries ago that such imbalances are "the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics."

In their fascinating book The Lessons of History, the great historians Will and Ariel Durant wrote that, when the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest becomes too extreme, as has happened periodically throughout the centuries, such an "unstable equilibrium generates a critical situation" that results in either "legislation redistributing wealth or revolution distributing poverty." It seems obvious that the best choice for We the People would be to demand that our leaders champion plans that would reduce inequality through intelligent legislative actions, guided by fairness, honestly egalitarian policies, precautionary principles, farsightedness and greater empathy for the suffering of those whose interests are underrepresented in our societies.

The wise Athenian statesman and lawmaker Solon saved Athens from debilitating conflict by forging sensible compromises between the rich and the poor at a juncture in time when inequalities of wealth and power had reached extremes in ancient Greece. Solon is regarded as "the father of democracy" for the fair-minded progressive reforms he instituted way back in the 6th century BCE. Historians say that Solon repealed almost all the earlier harshly draconian laws that had been enacted by an Athenian legislator named Draco.

Today, inequalities between the top 1% and the masses of poor people and those in the declining middle class are reaching historically unprecedented new extremes in the USA. This state of affairs is creating critical risks that require bold, honest, intelligent, farsighted, democratically fair and Solon-wise reforms to prevent our great country from sliding into dire straits and violent strife. Unfortunately, "conservative" politicians have seized power in Washington D.C., as well as in a majority of state governments, and they are taking steps to impose draconian austerity on the populace to defend the status quo of excessive privileges for elites and low tax rates on the highest levels of income, capital gains and inheritances.

Nowhere is this neo-Draconian approach more pronounced than in healthcare reform efforts, where right-wing ideologues are striving to destroy the Affordable Care Act and roll back progressive steps taken by President Obama. Conservatives are pushing mean-spirited healthcare laws that would slash federal spending on Medicare and Medicaid, and allow increased discrimination against poor people and women and children and old people and anyone with "preexisting conditions" -- in order to help pay for more gigantic tax breaks for rich people.

In a cynical modern twist, the Draconian Party is trying to spin their severe policies as having "heart", giving lip service to populist concerns, but at the same time they are brazenly handing out more regressive debt-financed tax cuts. Their other top priorities are to ram through narrowly-focused corporate benefits and curtail the collective bargaining rights of workers, and reduce protections of the health and well-being of people who work
for a living, and expand opportunities for artificially inflating private profits by allowing the costs and harms of pollution and climate-disrupting greenhouse gas emissions to be "socialized" (i.e., rashly foisted onto society and people in the future). In general, they are committed to myopically sacrificing public lands and the environmental commons to increase profits and achieve other short term-oriented goals.

With Republicans in Congress having demonstrated a willingness to put tens of millions of American lives at risk by repealing the Affordable Care Act and giving ultra-wealthy people a massive tax cut, Barack Obama made an observation that applies much more broadly: "After all, this debate has always been about something bigger than politics. It's about the character of our country -- who we are, and who we aspire to be. And that's always worth fighting for." Let's fight for it! Anyone who attends another Trump rally, boo out loud!

In a persuasive book titled The Crisis of the Middle-Class Constitution - Why Economic Inequality Threatens Our Republic, the legal scholar Ganesh Sitaraman expresses a conviction that extreme levels of inequality are existentially dangerous to the existence of our democratic republic. A strong middle class, he writes, "inspires a sense of shared purpose and shared fate, without which the system of government will fall apart." Since ancient times, when a small minority of the populace is allowed to become very rich while ignoring large segments of the population that are much worse off, it leads to two undesirable probabilities. The downtrodden may rise up and confiscate the wealth of the rich, or the masses, given little opportunity for social mobility or for improving their prospects, are susceptible to turning to a manipulative demagogue "who would overthrow the government - only to become a tyrant. Oligarchy or tyranny, economic inequality meant the end of the republic."

Risks of revolution also rise when rich people impose their rule with little regard for poor people and those in the middle class, especially when they disenfranchise a majority of the populace and effectively enslave them with excessively aproprobius tight control over wage laborers. In a review of Ganesh Sitaraman's book, Angus Deaton observed in It's Not Just Unfair: Inequality Is a Threat to Our Governance: "Sitaraman reviews many possible correctives, including redistribution to reduce inequality; better enforcement of antitrust laws; campaign finance reform to break the dependence of legislators on deep pocket donors; compulsory voting; and restrictions on lobbying, including the possibility of 'public defender' lobbyists to act on behalf of the people."

Let's seize the bull by the horns and address this critical challenge by adopting these remedies!

To achieve a more peaceable world, we need to create more just societies with more fairly shared prosperity, and more broadly shared security and freedom. And our concept of freedom should be expansive and more inclusive, not merely the freedom to spend unlimited amounts of money on political influence, or the freedom to not buy medical insurance, or the unrestricted freedom to own guns. President Franklin D. Roosevelt articulated such an expansive vision of freedom in his 1941 State of the Union address, when he declared that there are four fundamental freedoms that people "everywhere in the world" ought to enjoy: "the freedom of speech, the freedom of worship, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear." Stand and Deliver, ruling elites! Give the people expanded security and freedoms and greater overall societal well-being, for Christ's sake!

Excessively unequal societies become unstable and are unsustainable. An adequately strong social safety net is needed to provide social insurance policies against revolution, and it is riskily wrongheaded to promote ideological rationalizations that serve to make inequality worse and worse. Sixto Rodriguez, the surprising singer and songwriter featured in the excellent film Searching for Sugar Man, struck a resonant chord with his cogent insight: "I have a thesis: oppression equals revolution." Let the progressive revolution begin ASAP -- and let it be peaceable.

Sometimes the Goddess of Irony materializes in our midst, and she can be enlightening. A powerful reaction to Trump Republican roguery is spreading across the land of the free, constitutionally dedicated as it is to democratic values of fairness and expanded liberty. This is a progressive reaction, unlike reactive deluded right-wing populism, and one that is a rational reaction against political corruption, extreme economic inequities and environmental folly. This progressive revolution should honor policies and top priorities that are consistent with the general welfare of all the people and the common good. NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW!
Look again at what's going on here. Republicans in Congress shoveled through a Tax Cut Act in December 2017 without public hearings and without honestly considering the real consequences of the action, and here's what it will do. The public treasury will borrow an additional $2 trillion or so over the next 10 years, running up the already dangerously high $22 trillion national debt, and the law will give most of the spoils of this money-borrowing swindle and economic stimulus to the top 1%. The interest costs of this con job obligation will be owed by each and every taxpayer in every future year, basically forevermore, in light of the fact that none of the borrowed principal will likely ever be repaid. The fact of the matter is that the interest costs will almost certainly compound, as we continue deeply irresponsible deficit spending ways, year after year after year. The interest expense on the additional $2 trillion will total $2 trillion every 20 years or so, over and over again, conservatively assuming that the prevailing rate of interest on long-term government borrowings averages only 4%. This is a treacherous Santa Claus political strategy that is profligately generous to wealthy system-corrupting beneficiaries, to the dire detriment of the people.

A side effect of this swindle is increasingly extreme inequality. Since fairness is a founding principle in our democratic republic, spiking degrees of inequality between the few and the many threaten our democracy and our collective well-being. Such injustices also put our personal freedoms at more serious risk, as well as our individual and national security. Peaceful coexistence in American society will not be achieved through more unjust laws or more severe austerity measures, or more prisons, or authorities waging a harsher war on drugs and poor people. Or by bankrupting the government or slashing government spending on healthcare, education, the social safety net and the country's physical infrastructure, which is crumbling in too many places. Skimping on sensible protections of the environment is also a fool's errand.

All these swindles compound the folly of We the People allowing these consequential scams in the rigged status quo to continue. Those to blame for enabling these outcomes, which are so radically harming millions of people, are deeply irresponsible.

To save us all -- and their own necks -- the wealthy ruling class should discover a new urgency in finding much better ways of fairly sharing the profits generated through the exploitation of natural resources and the stingy treatment of working people. Billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer would concur, judging from the brilliant and simple insights he conveys in his 2014 article The Pitchforks are Coming ... for Us Plutocrats. In this 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."

Let's right the wrongs! Balance, moderation, Right Mindfulness and Right Action are called for. Let's demand that our leaders act much more responsibly. See Common Sense Revival – Book One of the Earth Manifesto for a fuller comprehension.

Time's Up -- Give More Rights to Women in Our Patriarchal Society

The French aristocracy was overthrown in the French Revolution that began on what has become known as Bastille Day on July 14, 1789. This historic event launched a decade-long period of intense social and political upheaval in France and its colonies. Notably, 1789 was the same year during the Enlightenment "Age of Reason" that our courageous and honorable Founders ratified the truly great U.S. Constitution, thereby creating an enduring framework for our freedom-championing democratic republic, and it has served as a powerful beacon to humanity of aspirations for opportunities, personal liberties and fairness for 230 years since then.
A commendable French feminist and activist wonderfully named Olympe de Gouges was outraged because women were overlooked in the reforms following the French Revolution, so she proclaimed a bold Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen in September 1791 to expose the failures of leaders to establish gender equality during the revolution. Let's embrace greater equality NOW!

Listen, guys. Violent revolutions are exceedingly bad for almost everyone involved, so what we should do now, at this crucial focal point in history, is to come together and champion a noble, earthshaking, broadly beneficial and admirably peaceful revolution that embraces the Equal Rights Amendment, which simply states, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”

This fair-minded Equal Rights Amendment had first been proposed soon after women won the right to vote in 1920, but it took until the Women’s Movement in the 1960s for it to finally gain traction. The U.S. House finally approved it in 1971, and then the Senate in 1972. As stipulated in the Constitution, two-thirds of all state legislatures were then required to ratify the Amendment, and during the following 5 years, 35 of a necessary 38 state legislatures had ratified it. But then conservatives mobilized against the bipartisan initiative, derailing it, “arguing that the ERA would disadvantage housewives and cause women to be drafted into the military.”

With more outrages of domineering male privilege now being exposed through the #MeToo movement, and by the desperate deceits of officials like Donald Trump and Brett Kavanaugh, sex discrimination can be seen to have been perpetuated in our society for much too long, and is now being exposed as being unacceptably treacherous against the female half of the populace. Let us now come together and guarantee fairer treatment to Female Citizens in the world today. #MeToo. #HeForShe. #TimesUp!

Let's do this by unanimously declaring greater respect for women by supporting the Equal Rights Amendment, and turn our expectatious eyes on each and every one of the states that have failed to ratify this sensibly fair Amendment because they are controlled by dominion-demanding male conservatives. The world turns its eyes on you, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia. And the world looks with pregnant expectation on the five state legislatures that originally ratified the Equal Rights Amendment but subsequently voted to revoke their ratifications -- Idaho, Kentucky, Nebraska, Tennessee and South Dakota.

When the courageous Dr. Christine Blasey Ford gave her powerful testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sept. 27, observers were struck by how overwhelmingly old, white and male the Republican members of Congress were, whom she had to face. The consequences of dominating GOP control in Washington D.C. -- and unfortunately also in the majority of states -- are profoundly affective and highly negative for the majority of Americans, and humankind, and life on Earth.

Instead of trying to be reasonable, Republican politicians are doubling down on their treacherous dealings, having taken cunning advantage of the willingness of Democrats to compromise and now taking ruthlessly uncompromising stands. The self-proclaimed “grim reaper” Mitch McConnell pathetically leads the way.

With the exposure of the Kavanaugh character, the legitimacy of the male patriarchy is crumbling before our very eyes. Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh and Donald Trump have all declared they have been subjected to “a witch hunt”, but now, astonishingly, extraordinarily and stunningly, these witch hunts have been revealed to have discovered all but malignant privileged male witches. These are deceitful men who are eager to fool the people to get power and usurp that power, and to deprive other more deserving people of positions of authority, especially women who are more honest, honorable, legitimate and moral. Brett Kavanaugh made a belligerently zealous stand in sworn public testimony proclaiming his innocence of charges of sexual misconduct because he desperately wanted to join the highest ranks of the male patriarchy, a cult of men who are driven to abuse power with an indignant sense of entitlement. These men tend to exploit women and dictate to them, and take advantage of gender and racial prejudices to impose their will on females. These are men who for decades have been exploiting hot button social issues of reproductive rights and social control of women, and of people in racial minorities, to entrench themselves in power.
One of their most inhumane injustices has been to sabotage the Affordable Care Act in order to benefit the wealthiest Americans, and in general to spew out a smoke screen to obscure their role in undermining the common good. This is morally indefensible. Doctors have sworn to the Hippocratic Oath for more than 2,000 years, swearing in this earliest expression of medical ethics, according to popular understanding, to "First, do no harm." The GOP, in astonishing contrast, first makes coldly calculated efforts to fool the people, and then strives to get away with all the harms it can, on behalf of their donors, who President Theodore Roosevelt critically characterized as "malefactors of great wealth". In the closing weeks before the November 2018 midterm elections, the lies skyrocketed, with Republican politicians pretending they want to defend people against being deprived of medical care due to pre-existing conditions, despite having tried for the previous eight years, over and over again, to repeal the provisions of the Affordable Care Act. Disgusting hypocrisy!

Perspective on Anti-Egalitarian Ruses

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a five-star general hero in World War II and then a Republican president, provocatively declared in 1954: "Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes that you can do these things. Among them are a few Texas oil millionaires, and an occasional politician or businessman from other areas. Their number is negligible and they are stupid."

It seems like Dwight Eisenhower is being proved wrong today, now that diabolical deceitful politicians have managed to gain narrow control of the U.S. government by brainwashing a strident minority into giving them power. Ike appears to have been wrong because these hyper-partisan politicians are pushing policies that rashly undermine the social safety net in order to primarily enrich the already rich. But the "arc of the moral universe is long" and it tends to bend toward justice, as Martin Luther King once said, and Trump and Republican politicians are beginning to get their comeuppance, so their efforts to enact their anti-egalitarian agenda are flailing. Of course they should responsibly change course -- but no! Instead, they dangerously double down.

Since our democracy has been corrupted by their trickle-down Big Lie and a corporate-friendly betrayal of the best interests of working people, Republicans are destined to lose power soon unless they begin to be more honest and strive to really make America fairer again. Shall we not hold their insidious offenses against them?

"Gee, I don't think we have to get all that radical, Tiffany!"

--- the underground mole

Understanding Movement Conservatism

The Democratic Party is a coalition of interest groups that share some views and also have many differences of opinions, and Democratic politicians tend to get ahead by making compromises and finding acceptable solutions to the problems and challenges experienced by the citizens they represent. Republican politicians, in contrast, have for decades been part of a more monolithic structure called "movement conservatism" that has a rigid ideology advocating tax cuts for the rich above all other priorities. Other aspects of this monolithic structure include a captive media like Fox News that pushes the party line almost all the time and promotes alternate facts, deceptive talking points, emotion-exploiting spin and alternate realities that are at odds with truth, balanced perspective and fair-minded understandings.

This monolithic structure is lavishly supported by a small number of very wealthy people who reward loyalty by politicians who promote their causes. Nearly all Republicans in Congress today are "apparatchiks", or politicians with no principle higher than party loyalty and shrewd commitments to corrupt abuses of influence. Such loyalty to chaos-generating Trump and the unfolding revelations of his administration's wrongdoing may prove disastrous for the American people, as dissatisfaction grows with their power-abusing ways and law-violating propensities.

Movement Conservatism has been surprisingly successful in gaining excessively domineering power and control in American society by its unrelenting focus on this overarching goal of giving dominating insider influence to the
highest income earners and the wealthiest people, who invest hundreds of millions of dollars in contributions to scheming politicians to gain hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks. This success has been realized by using a litany of corruptly uncompromising, power abusing and anti-democratic methods, the most significant of which has been by pushing Big Lie propaganda that purportedly proves that lower taxes on rich people and giant corporations are the best way to create jobs, stimulate economic growth and achieve greater good goals.

This trickle down ideology basically claims that everyone will do better when rich people pay less tax. Of course, the tautological truth is that everyone will do better when everyone actually does better. The benefits of economic activities and resource exploitation and worker productivity should be much more widely shared, rather than being allowed to be excessively monopolized by capitalist elites. While Movement Conservatives disingenuously claim to care mainly about the best interests of constituents they represent, in reality they are betraying them by making commitments to a far-right agenda of debt-financed tax cuts that heavily favor the well-to-do while imposing austerity measures on the masses. This betrayal contributes to creating a society where inequality of opportunity and wealth are spiking, and economic insecurity is becoming more widespread.

Movement Conservatism drives a divisive wedge between American citizens by promoting an extreme ideological framework that includes a whole constellation of Strict Father values, and it undermines opposing Nurturing Parent values of showing empathetic concern for people and protecting them from harms and abuses of power by corporations and governments. This perspective is evaluated in greater detail in the Original Earth Manifesto in 2004 (Book Nine of the Earth Manifesto), which concludes with the understanding: "These family morality worldviews cannot be judged definitively 'right' or 'wrong', according to the perceptive linguist George Lakoff. A main difference is that the highest goal of conservatives is to achieve and perpetuate their own ends of exerting dominating control, regardless of whether the means are fair. Therefore, conservatives are much more willing to have people suffer harm to achieve their goal of greedily usurping and abusing power."

Now, in the age of immoral, deceitful and emotion manipulating Trumpism, a shrewd demagogue has seized power and is engaging in dictatorial abuses of power. It Can't Happen Here? "Like hell it can't!"

Concluding Observations about Legitimacy and the Supreme Court

Progressive-minded people are getting tired of losing out to reactionary corruption-enabling "conservatives", so tinderbox political conditions are developing. The majority of Americans is getting dang tired of seeing Trump Republicans lie and cheat and threaten and bully to gain and usurp power, and to blatantly abuse it. They are real tired of realizing how the greater good is being sacrificed for partisan advantage and special privilege for the few, at the expense of the many. They are exasperated at women being deprived of fair representation. They are tired of having Republicans mortgage the future by engaging in the fraud of borrowing trillions of dollars to give most of it to the richest 1%. They are increasingly angered by the Republican war on egalitarian policies and sensible precautionary principles and protections of the natural world, which serves providentially as a foundation for human prosperity, health and well-being and the biological diversity of life on Earth.

Indelible in the minds of progressives is the gloating nervous laughter of triumphant Republicans on account of the remarkable success of their abuses of power, which they are perpetuating as they took one more treacherous step into infamy by ramming through the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh onto a lifetime position on the Supreme Court, where his record shows he will side with the "Roberts Five" that has made dozens of extremely partisan decisions in favor of the Republican agenda. Three decisions stand out that have enabled this corruption of American politics by giving domineering influence to wealthy people and giant corporations, and all were made by a narrow 5-4 majority of partisan Republicans. First was the Citizen's United ruling in 2010 that has allowed huge quantities of corrupting money to help Republican politicians win elections -- and to allow lobbyists to determine most of our national policies and priorities. The second was the 2013 shredding of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which has allowed legislatures in states dominated by Republican majorities to pass many new laws to restrict voting by constituents who would vote against Republicans because they so narrowly represent the rich and powerful. And third was the ruling that gives the green light to state legislatures to continue creating extreme gerrymanders of congressional districts, serving to deprive millions of Americans of fair representation.
Republicans are winning Pyrrhic victories over the common good, and in this war that they are waging for the dominance of male privilege over female dignity, the optics look exceptionally bad. First, it was the far right Judge Clarence Thomas against Professor Anita Hill. Then, it was the partisan Republican Brett Kavanaugh against Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford. In the dark background is adulterer and sexual assaulter Donald Trump, who is brazenly denying allegations made against him by porn star Stormy Daniels and almost two dozen other women who have courageously spoken out against the most notorious liar in American political history.

The Kavanaugh hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sept. 27, 2018 contained testimony that should have been disqualifying for any consideration of confirming Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. “That testimony didn’t come from Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. It came from Kavanaugh. Because his statements didn’t just show a man who was emotional and angry. They showed a man who was completely embedded into a machine whose central purpose was attacking Democrats and creating a false narrative of conspiracy to fuel partisan rancor.” Kavanaugh’s temperament was revealed to be belligerent and disrespectful toward U.S. Senators who are Democrats and more liberal minded. This character flaw practically disqualifies him from being independent, fair-minded and capable of making judgments and rulings that are not politically partisan.

The legitimacy of the Supreme Court as an independent judiciary institution had taken a severe hit when Mitch McConnell refused to allow President Obama to fill a vacant seat on the high court for almost a year, and then used the “nuclear option” to reduce the requirement for confirmation of Supreme Court Justices from 60 to 51 of the 100 U.S. Senators. Now the legitimacy of the Court has been damaged by Trump Republicans with the Kavanaugh shenanigans. Not only has Kavanaugh demonstrated that he is a highly partisan Republican who has a hostile bias against liberals and Democrats, but he also treacherously believes the Court should show deference to a Republican president, who he will probably try to protect from accountability and criminal liability.

Conservative columnist Jennifer Rubin wrote incisively, “I want to focus on what may be the most significant issue -- whether Kavanaugh’s ‘big reveal’ that he is an angry partisan who thinks Democrats conspired to get him -- now disqualifies him to sit on any court, let alone the Supreme Court.” ... “The ‘ politicization’ of the court, as many call it, didn’t start with Kavanaugh. However, before the parties were entirely polarized and the filibuster destroyed, there was some requirement to reach bipartisan consensus on nominees. The judiciary’s role in vital, hot-button issues has increased, making the Supreme Court seats precious, but the Senate acted as a brake, ensuring that qualified and temperamentally fit people were confirmed. Then the GOP became a right-wing, radical party that eschewed long-held principles such as truth, humility, decorum and respect. Republicans radicalized, and with no filibuster to sift out the political operatives from the judges, we get Kavanaugh’s nomination.”

Stop the sham scam, impeach Brett Kavanaugh, and appoint Merrick Garland to the Court!

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
Contact at SaveTruffulaTrees@hotmail.com
A Fusillade of Philosophy

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
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“A healthy and wholesome cheerfulness is not necessarily impossible to any occupation.”

--- Mark Twain

The great philosopher Plato lived in Athens from 424 BCE to 348 BCE in the times of Classical Greece. A wise man, he was an aristocrat who did not particularly like democracy, mainly because it was periodically prone to violent revolution against excessive injustices. Plato also saw that oligarchies of rule by wealthy elites often tended to become excessively unjust, and rich people generally demonstrate a propensity to jealously protect their wealth, privilege, power and control, so they harshly repress all perceived threats to their dominance.

Plato reckoned that the best situation for human societies would be to have rule by a benevolent philosopher king. This is a great ideal! Unfortunately, fair-minded philosopher kings are hard to find among the ranks of suitors driven to seek money, power, glory and satisfaction of their raging ambitions by means of “public service”.

The United States of America is a great nation, as seen through such disparate things as top-notch universities and the establishment of many beautiful National Parks and protected Wilderness Areas. It’s a marvelous place of opportunity and ingenuity, producing a remarkable cornucopia of material goods, and it is a colossal historic success in democratic governance, assuring liberties to the people and championing a reasonable respect for human rights. But our American liberties and egalitarian ideals are under furious and unrelenting assault today by the top dogs in our society. Sidebar: They stubbornly refuse to compromise, which makes their rule illegitimate.

Here we find ourselves, a little more than 2,000 years after the Lord was supposedly born in a lowly manger in Bethlehem in fulfillment of an Old Testament prophesy, and many faithful folks in the USA are in effect collaborating with the government to impose strict moralizing control over the people. Authorities of the Religious Right are thus being complicit with the right-wing fringe in Republican politics in efforts to impose reactionary control. They are crudely contorting the deeply humanitarian message that Jesus Christ championed, thereby taking his name in vain, in a rationalization of actions by authority abusers who are treacherously undermining the compassionate things Jesus preached. Jesus was a poor peasant who notably became a social revolutionary in the Holy Land, and he spoke out in favor of poor people and the marginalized, and against Roman abusers of power and the shenanigans that went on with moneychangers in Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was opposed to religious authorities in the Temple who collaborated with ruthless Romans and their oppressive tax collectors and idolatrous religion. Today, the true spirituality of America’s current Zeitgeist has been deeply distorted by the politicization of religious establishments by conservatives, and our national priorities are being perverted by dishonesty, elitist abuses of authority and materialistic values.

Here we stand, hands on our hips, elbows akimbo, with a quizzical expression on our faces. This last year has witnessed powerful images and disturbing sound recordings of terrified children and their anguished parents near the border with Mexico, and in detention facilities around the country. Authorities in government have attempted to prevent these affective images from surfacing, knowing that outraged protests will intensify if the insidiously dire dimensions of these heartless actions become more viscerally clear.
This is unfortunately only the tip of the iceberg of a multitude of nefarious actions being perpetrated by authority-abusing conservatives in the Homeland today. These acts exacerbate social inequities, undermine the common good, cause social cohesion to fray, rashly erode the liberties of freedom-loving people, and discriminate against almost everyone who is not a white male. Meanwhile, these cunning folks are insensibly wreaking tragic damages on the providential commons, upon which all of humanity relies for sustenance and survival.

These issues are confusing and contentious, but let’s come together and adopt a philosophic attitude. Breathe deep, and let go. Visualize again the great political cartoon by David Sipress that has been broadly shared in this tumultuous Trumpian era: “My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane.” Seeing things the way they really are, from a well-informed and comprehensive perspective, and supporting the right causes, are amongst our most important responsibilities as citizens.

Each and every one of us exists in our unique individual bubble chamber, electrons zipping past. Our personal worldviews are powerfully determined by the circumstances of our birth and our upbringing, and by whatever hands we have been dealt by the fickle fingers of fate. But to an extent, each of us does have a degree of free will, and it would be a great plan for us to give more respect to scientific reality, and to ecological sanity.

The true moral good values the goodness or rightness in intentions, decisions or actions. In essence, the moral good is like the Golden Rule, best for the whole human social group. Things that are most propitious for human flourishing and survival are thus the ultimate moral good. The status of social cohesion is a good gauge for evaluating the moral good, helping us see beyond the confusing fray of contested concepts of it.

Right and wrong are somewhat relative. The best way to judge the rightness or wrongness of any action is to accurately assess the overall consequences the action has on other people - and how beneficial or harmful.

We can no longer afford to allow Dividers to grab power and rule so ruthlessly. The trickle-down Big Lie has become far too successful a con job. Complicit in this state of affairs, Fox News beams its brainwashing broadcasts to the populace, serving as a misguiding Corporate State Propaganda Machine that is helping perpetuate corrupt dealings in our government. Fox is also stoking antagonisms and creating harsh divisions and hatred of others. Check out Jen Senko’s documentary film The Brainwashing of my Dad, to better understand how Fox News can negatively transform people, like it did Jen Senko’s father, from being a nonpolitical life-long Democrat to a fanatically angry right-wing fanatic.

Let’s stop kowtowing to Dividers, and come together to propitiously promote the greater common good, and to actualize a vastly improved general welfare. This will help us improve fairness and social cohesion.

We the People are losing faith in our dominant institutions -- governmental, corporate and religious -- and for good reasons. First, the government is increasingly corrupted by wealthy super-elites, who are eager to impose a particularly harsh and inimical agenda on a freedom-loving people, as can be understood in detail throughout See Clearly - Sanity During Insane Times. Second, corporations are acting like psychopaths, as made clear by Joel Bakan in The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power -- and as defined in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. And third, authorities in established religions are too often incestuously siding with reactionary authority-abusing politicians, and too many are compounding this sin by molesting children and acting in ways that foment conflict, intolerance and violence.

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution outlines the primary goals for which the Constitution was ordained and established. These noble purposes were informed by Enlightenment Era principles, and include striving to form a more perfect union, establishing justice, insuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare and securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Mark Twain would have guffawed with wry and sardonic amusement at the onward trajectory from his astute observation that “we have the best government that money can buy.” Charles Ferguson succinctly noted, “Unless America reverses course, things will end badly, at least for the bottom 90% of Americans, and possibly for the wealthy who consider themselves safe.” The proverbial pitchforks will eventually come out if we fail to enact
smart and far-reaching fair-minded reforms, and sooner rather than later. Or the bubble will burst first. Let's take promising steps to fix this!

We should invest more money in what are, in reality, reasonably priced and measurably propitious social insurance policies like those that involve improved healthcare, more affordable medical insurance, less costly prescription drugs, and better protections of forests, wetlands, farmlands, public lands, coral reef communities, the oceans, a stable climate and a safe gaseous composition of Earth's atmosphere itself.

Consider the current state of the large-scale decline in democracy that has been taking place in all-too-many countries around the globe over the course of the past decade. This backsliding is, of course, an ethically bankrupt and sadly retrograde trajectory, following as it does many marvelous years of colonial independence movements and the advance of Enlightenment Era ideals. Think of the amazing and laudatory forward strides that have been made since 1776 toward more fairly representative governance of peoples in fortunate nations whose leaders acted more honorably than those in despotic colonial regimes, harsh dictatorships, authoritarian religious-ruled theocracies, regimes led by fascist demagogic Strong Man types, or corporatocratic oligarchies.

Look what’s happening here. Great wealth is being generated in the world today through business activities that emphasize the maximum achievable exploitation of natural resources and working people. The benefits of these activities should be shared much more broadly, in the interest of promoting the general welfare and the common good and more inclusive well-being. We simply must drastically alter the rules and policy priorities that are the basic enabling characteristics of Thirteen Main Methods Used to Increasingly Concentrate Wealth and Power. See that essay linked to the Earth Manifesto website.

Increasingly exacerbated social inequities are ultimately bad for everyone. Refer to the story about the wise lawgiver Solon back in the city-state of Athens during ancient times, more than 2,500 years ago, a story told repeatedly throughout this manifesto. Solon succeeded in forging reasonable and responsible compromises between elite factions and the masses during a particularly tumultuous time in ancient Greece, thereby saving the republic from revolution. Surely, it would be best even for rich people to not push their luck so damn hard, because of real risks of revolutionary unrest and violent conflicts on account of the unbelievable extremes of inequality, unconscionable overreach and outrageous abuses of money, influence and power.

Here’s a basic problem with this whole deal. As David Klion points out in his incisive July 2018 article Russiagate Is Far Wider Than Trump and His Inner Circle, Russia interfered in U.S. elections to help Donald Trump grab power, and this “isn’t just the narrow story of a few corrupt officials, or even the story of a corrupt president. It’s the story of a corrupt political party, the one currently holding all the levers of power in Washington.” The worsening malefaseance in Washington D.C. makes the “culture of corruption” wrong and surreal.

Self-dealing is among the worst forms of political corruption. This is why a large majority of Americans indicated to pollsters that they regard it as “serious” or “very serious” that more than 50 Republicans in Congress would “get an average tax cut of over $200,000 each from a single loophole” -- one they sneakily added to the December 2017 tax bill at the last minute, just before passing it without a single vote from the opposition political party. Revelatory investigative books intrigue the imagination, with titles telling the story, like It's Even Worse Than You Think, by the brilliant tax expert David Cay Johnston.

A laser focus on the Trump regime’s corruption, and on Republican rash schemes in general, rightly helped give a powerful boost to Democrats in gaining a majority in the House of Representatives during the 2018 midterm elections. Honestly patriotic citizens voted to help make this happen. Support progressives!

A Big Picture Perspective
Throughout the incomprehensibly long sweep of geologic history, massive changes in the natural environment have subjected many species to conditions of existential stress. Many have perished, and at accelerated rates during some impressive mass extinction events like the Permian Extinction 250 million years ago, and the Cretaceous Extinction 65 million years ago, and during the current unfolding Anthropocene Extinction. The individuals and groups best suited to adapt are the ones that survive to reproduce. Whatever animal could adapt best is able to continue on. This is natural selection in a nutshell.

Charles Darwin once observed: “In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too), those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.” He also said, “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

We are at a juncture in world history where adaptation is the key to our survival. For 10,000 years, humans have been parlaying subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry into today’s astonishingly successful global civilization. Our population has increased from maybe 300 million at the time of Christ to one billion in the year 1800 -- to more than 7.7 billion as the year 2019 unfolds. But the writing is on the wall. The damages that our huge -- and growing! -- population is inflicting on our beautiful home planet are transcendentally foolish, and they are without a shred of doubt unsustainable. Precautionary principles counsel wiser decision-making and courses of action. See the link to Intelligent Precautionary Principles Enunciated - Holy Cow!, on the Home Page of the Earth Manifesto to gain a fuller understanding of these ideas.

We have built amazing economies to provide an extraordinary array of food and consumer products, using big advancements in exploitive technologies, and we have coupled this with an astonishing overarching lack of mindfulness, so we find that we are insidiously destroying the natural world. One reason for this folly is for the sake of a zealous preoccupation with monetary wealth and status. This shortsightedness is putting our home planet’s health at risk, as well as its ability to sustain life for all of its creatures, including ourselves.

What we humans need to survive here in the 21st century is greater adaptive ability. We need to honestly face the problems troubling our planet and our species, and create real and lasting and auspicious solutions, aimed both locally for our families and friends, and globally for all of humanity and life on Earth.

Pope Francis has called for urgent collective action to repair the planet. He gave his blessing to ‘citizen pressure groups’ to organize ahead of a Global Climate Action Summit that took place in San Francisco in September 2018. On September 8, thousands of people came together for the largest climate march the West Coast has ever seen. In advance, activists stated: “We will demand Governor Jerry Brown and other California leaders take bold action on climate change and commit to a Fossil Free world.”

Republican politicians seem to be strongly opposed to efforts to leave a more secure and providential legacy to our children and grandchildren, judging from the scurrilous agenda they are pursuing. The organization League of Conservation Voters sounded an alarm in July 2018, revealing that Republican leaders in Congress had just “moved to backdoor a series of anti-environment provisions into law. Their plan includes a policy to weaken public land protections without public review or input.” These schemers are pushing for a massive expansion of mining operations, and trying to gut the Endangered Species Act, and undermining protections for wolves, whales and other mammals. They added these provisions to the National Defense Authorization Act bill, a must-pass military bill that rightly should not include riders that reduce protections of the environment. And they failed to reauthorize the vital Land and Water Conservation Fund for many months, despite the fact that it is a smart program that uses a fraction of fees paid by companies drilling offshore for oil and gas to acquire and protect lands for all Americans.

A petition at change.org opposes Republican efforts to go to almost any length to maintain their narrow majority power. They are even trying to distort history to preserve their domineering power. To wit: “The Michigan State Board of Education is considering revisions to K-12 social studies standards that endanger not only our past, but our future. By altering the standards for teaching history in Michigan, they cut many people out of history — and silence the work of those who have worked to fulfill the American promise of liberty and justice for all. The changes would severely cut references to the movement for civil rights, the women’s movement,
and the movement for LGBT equality. They would eliminate references to climate change, and remove discussion of America’s core democratic values.”

Let’s emerge from behind our tribal barricades, my fellow Americans, and viscerally recognize and acknowledge the profoundly pernicious threat that Republican rule represents for current and future well-being, and to the general welfare of the citizenry. Another reason why it is pathological for extreme “conservatives” to have seized power and then begun broadly abusing this authority is because in the process they are opposing fairer representation in our democracy and sabotaging the core values that democracy really represents. Let’s repudiate Machiavellian masters of manipulative misguidance and scandalous malfeasance, and don’t let them get away with their schemes by believing all the obfuscating fusillades of mass distraction on Facebook and Twitter.

Passions were running real high in 2018, and with propulsive reason. The naked immorality of Donald Trump and his administration’s “zero tolerance” family separation policies and Republican anti-immigrant actions caused mass protests to break out during the summer of 2018. Almost 600 protesters were arrested on Capitol Hill on June 28, and then more than 700 protests were held on June 30, taking place in all 50 states in opposition to Trump’s unempathetic border policies. We rightly should not need to engage in such mass protests against authority-abusing men who are pushing a regressive and repressive agenda that is antithetical to the liberties, overall well-being and true security of the people. Numbness to outrage advantages exploiters.

During many protest marches around the United States in the past few years, crowds almost good-naturedly revealed their simmering outrage, with some chanting “No Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA!” A swelling number of courageous resisters are standing up and declaring that the emperor has no clothes, that Trump’s rule is corrupt, that his emotion-exploiting blame-shifting tactics are immoral, that Republicans are making accomplices and fools of their supporters, that the wrongdoing of their debt-financed Tax Cuts scam is woefully fiscally irresponsible, and that their anti-environmental policies are treacherous to everyone in the future—and to most forms of life on Earth. In this, they are profoundly betraying truly honest pro-life stances.

In incredible contrast, the Trump base is in a protective crouch, pretending their leader is as innocent as the driven snow in all matters being investigated, and besides he’s too busy cozying up to authoritarians to be bothered by this “total fabrication” stuff. A large proportion of these loyalist Republicans tell pollsters they support Trump despite his deceitful invective, lies, wrongdoing and sins, and despite the danger he is creating by allying himself with a new Axis of dictator-types who treat their people terribly. At the same time, Donald Trump is undermining our traditional NATO allies who defend democracy and promote personal liberties.

The former self-proclaimed Party of the Moral Majority has astonishingly abdicated its moral compass, and done so for the sake of naked expediency. These folks are triumphantly pleased to finally get some respect--POWER! Never mind that this power was illicitly obtained and is being abused with such discriminatory disgrace and authoritarian zeal. They want us to ignore the long litany of illegitimate means they used to grab power and achieve this domineering end in the first place, as set forth in dastardly detail in Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy: Is the Pen Mightier than Illegitimate Authority?

The esteem-worthy President Obama promised young Dreamers who were brought to the U.S. as children that they would be protected, for they know no other home. But cunning Republicans are using these vulnerable young people as another bargaining chip to help them impose their hard-right agenda on the populace.

What a fate! Let’s laugh ruefully -- and come together to champion broadly fairer and better governance. The eminently respect-worthy Dalai Lama delivered a compelling observation during the 2009 Vancouver Peace Summit, asserting that, “The world will be saved by the western woman.” With the election of a record number of Democratic women in November 2018, the prospects for this have dramatically improved. Let it be! Positive change must come. John Lennon and Paul McCartney sang their inspiring lyrics, recommending the idea, “Come together right now, over me.” -- “One thing I can tell you is you got to be free.”

An Aside on the Supreme Court

A provocative political cartoon by the brilliant Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist Tom Toles showed an imposing facade of the GOP SUPREME COURT with a democratic rabble in front hoisting an indignant protest
The Supreme Court failed to take a stand against the far-reaching structural corruption inherent in extreme gerrymandering when it sided, in effect, with hyper manipulative Big Money interests near the end of their 2018 term. The court system should rightly provide stronger checks and balances against abuses of power being perpetrated by the executive branch of government. Instead, the high court ducked this difficult issue on technical grounds and let the status quo stand. In addition, the final rulings of the Supreme Court before the "swing vote" (barely!) Justice Anthony Kennedy retired at the end of June 2018 were decisions to uphold the Trump travel ban, and to deal major blows to labor unions and women's reproductive rights. These were narrow 5-4 rulings that make it clear that there are serious implications for our civil liberties to have the Supreme Court dominated by a narrow majority of ideological conservatives. The Supreme Court must rule against partisan gerrymandering!

Mitch McConnell and his Republican co-conspirators in the U.S. Senate wielded the illegitimate and power-abusing tactic of denying President Obama's choice to replace Antonin Scalia with the eminently qualified Merrick Garland. They instead managed a year later to get the far right judge Neil Gorsuch appointed to a position of judicial power. The honorable organization EarthJustice observed that the Trump administration, "through its agenda of corporate greed, its divisive and hateful rhetoric, and its inhumane policies ... has made it crystal clear that it seeks to undo the very rights and liberties we've fought so hard to achieve and defend."

When it came to replacing Anthony Kennedy on the Supreme Court, New Jersey Senator Cory Booker set the tone for elected Democrats by saying outright that Donald Trump is the subject of a criminal investigation and has conflicts of interest in choosing a new Supreme Court Justice. A new Justice should not have been chosen until after the investigation is concluded, said Booker, for the high court will likely be involved in issues deciding the power of the Executive Branch with respect to subpoenas, presidential pardons and other aspects of suspected collaboration by members of the Trump campaign with Russian operatives interfering in our elections, and other matters of Russian intrigue and financial malfeasance and environmental treachery.

Anthony Kennedy was a conservative, but in some cases he sided with more liberal justices to check the zeal of social conservatives. When he retired, an already right-leaning Supreme Court "is now poised to become the most conservative institution in the entire history of America's government." That is definitely not good! The very legitimacy of the Supreme Court is now up in the air with Trump marching lockstep with reactionary social conservatives to cement in place extreme right-wing judicial rulings for generations. Trump nominees outside the mainstream will likely "lead to a Supreme Court that sacrifices the rights of the most marginalized people in favor of the wealthiest and most powerful Americans. Of the greatest concern are the implications for workers and consumers, a woman's right to choose, and the LGBTQ community's right to marry and live freely."

A Blue Wave in the November midterm elections should help curb the despotic abuses of power that Trump's instincts tell him he can get away with, because he has until now had an adequate number of unprincipled and cowed loyalists and legislative and judicial collaborators to help enable his authority-abusing agenda.

Hearteningly, a majority of voters demonstrated in November 2018 that they prefer the next Congress to be a check on Trump rather than a booster for his policy priorities, and only about a third believe Donald Trump deserves to be re-elected, according to polls taken before the midterm elections in Arizona, Florida and Ohio by NBC News and Marist College. "In Arizona, 52 percent of registered voters say they'll use their vote to send a message that the country needs more Democrats to serve as a check on Trump, while 36 percent said the nation needs more Republicans to pass his agenda." This is good cause for hope, and will make 2019 an epic year.

Another Big Picture Perspective

In 1949, the English novelist and political philosopher George Orwell famously imagined a dystopian future in London in Nineteen Eighty-Four in which a repulsive and pervasively controlling authority-abusing Big Brother government ruled ruthlessly by brainwashing, deceiving, misinforming, exploiting and repressing the people.

Fast forward to workers' May Day 2019, and who would have guessed that we would have a 21st century form of
oppressive Big Brother governance in the USA today, and that it would be led by a greedy, empathy-deficient, self-serving con man Strict Father Bad Dad. Compounding this brutal indignity is the fact that this Demagogue-in-Chief is a diabolically cunning master manipulator of people’s emotions -- for his own aggrandizement.

Donald Trump is making increasingly desperate efforts to distract people from the unraveling details of the illegitimacy of his ascension to power, and of the far-reaching misdeeds of his self-dealing and the widespread corruption manifest in his administration. This manipulative Twitter-crazed charlatan spins the news with a bizarre plethora of exorbitant lies, preposterous propaganda, diversionary claims and political scandal, and he foments anger at reporters and journalists, especially during his zealous demagogic political rallies, where he blatantly tries to undermine a tremendous amount of factual reporting by repetitiously claiming that all criticisms are “fake news” promoted by a media that is “the enemy of the people.” This is exactly wrong!

John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan both regarded freedom and the welcoming of immigrants and hard-pressed refugees to the United States as core American values. They both expressed admiration for John Winthrop, a Puritan who led the first large wave of immigrants from England to North America in 1630, and who referred to the first American colonies in biblical terms as being like “a city on a hill”. As President-elect in 1961, JFK declared “that we shall be as a city upon a hill -- the eyes of all people are upon us. ... For of those to whom much is given, much is required ...”.

And Ronald Reagan said in his farewell speech to the nation in 1989, “I’ve spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don’t know if I ever quite communicated what I saw when I said it. But in my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity. And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That’s how I saw it, and see it still.” A great image!

Then along came Donald Trump, who cunningly realized that he could gain personal power and influence -- and money! -- through diabolically acting as a fear-mongering white nationalist demagogue who ruthlessly exploits divisive strategies of blaming immigrants for our problems and using them as scapegoats.

We the People, in honesty, understand that this power-abusing narcissist has seized the reins of power through an unbelievable litany of illegitimate means, and that he is imposing upon us his own bizarrely selfish form of oppressive and outrage-engendering Big Brother authoritarian governance. This self-dealing authority figure is being propped up by rich people and a cowardly phalanx of self-serving and devious sycophants in Congress who are collaborating with the hair-trigger emotion-expoiting despot to cunningly take advantage of the emotions of the people, stoking their anger, grievances and fear, and demonizing and scapegoating vulnerable asylum seekers, migrants, refugees, Muslims, women, children, powerless poor people and most Americans in non-white racial minorities. In a pathologically grandiose irony, the leader of this Big Brother government is a crass celebrity who is excessively impulsive and immoderately promiscuous, and who has always treated women shabbily, to boot.

Both despot-inclined demagogues and the submissive authoritarian followers that abjectly kowtow to them are manifesting an excessive fervor for dictating an absolutist morality onto society, condemning gay people and judging women harshly for wanting to have the right to get a legal and safe abortion during the first trimester of a pregnancy.

The Titanic Struggle between Liberals and Conservatives

In Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think, the insightful linguist George Lakoff explains how the competing influences of Strict Father worldviews contrast to the worldviews of Nurturing Parents (and especially of good mothers). Whole constellations of propensities are associated with the conflicting political camps of Strict Father adherents and Nurturing Parents. Sensible parents see that being too permissive can ruin a child, but that excessive discipline and harshness in Strict Father ideologies may be worse for the family and the child, and society as a whole. George Lakoff points out that the politics of both liberals and conservatives are deeply influenced by different ideas of the family, and that these two contrasting models of
the family “give rise to different moral systems and different discourse forms, that is, different choices of words and different modes of reasoning.” And different levels of compulsion to impose tight control.

One important thing to understand here is that propensities of conservative folks just happen to be favorable to authoritarians who like to assert domineering control and abuse the power of their ill-begotten authority. Conservative worldviews lionize discipline, self-control and loyalty, so they tend to attract what Bob Altemeyer calls “authoritarian followers”. Altemeyer, a now-retired Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, writes that these folks tend to be loyal to tribal allegiances that can get in the way of the desires of freedom-cherishing Americans to properly balance individual liberties and the greater social good. In so doing, they prevent true greater good goals from coming to fruition. Authoritarian followers submit too much to authoritarian leaders, and trust them too much, and give them too much leeway to do whatever they want -- "which often is something undemocratic, tyrannical and brutal."

Republicans won many 2016 election contests and gained power not by proposing effective plans to improve the greater good of the American people, but by scaring people, stoking cultural resentments, hijacking people’s emotions, fostering division, demonizing others, promoting deceptive ideological dogmas, using negative attack ads, exploiting hot-button wedge issues, stoking red hot cultural biases, taking advantage of microtargeted fake news on social media, and raising huge sums of contributions from wealthy conservatives, Big Oil, Big Coal and giant corporations that seek lower taxes, fewer regulations and more opportunities to foist the costs of pollution, healthcare, natural disasters and environmental damages onto the public. It is a simple and deplorable fact that conservative politicians are currently ascendant in majority control of the federal government only because they have gained this domineering position by seizing power through this litany of illegitimate means. And they are critically abusing this power.

It is exceedingly odd how willing conservatives seem to be, despite being generally averse to change, to go along with extreme risk-taking in national policies. This is the case with their opposition to democracy-enhancing reforms as well as many other issues, like denying the apocalyptic risks of the climate crisis, allowing building in flood plains, promoting profligately depleting uses of natural resources, supporting policies that sacrifice the greater good, and depriving tens of millions of people of healthcare in order to reduce taxes on rich people. Tens of millions of them voted for a leader who is a smugly duplicitous plutocrat who abuses privilege, violates trust and is dangerously self-centered and reactively vitriolic -- and who even risks revolutionary conflict by facilitating the predations of wealthy elites who keep driving inequality and inequities to worse extremes.

P.J. O’Rourke’s famous remark has always resonated with me about Republicans saying government doesn’t work and then managing to get elected and making sure that government doesn’t work well for the vast majority of the people. But in the last two years, a new desperate confirmation of this understanding has been materializing. Yes, conservative politicians have strived with monomaniac zeal to gain power and domineering control, and used illegitimate means, and they certainly seem to be showing inadequate interest in governing fairly or reasonably, or inclusively, or at all well. They have fallen for a very low type of man to win power who is masterful at exploiting divisions, but he is fragmenting the nation as if trying to push a fragile Humpty Dumpty off a great wall, and it is proving to be increasingly difficult to put America back together again. The man and his enabling cronies are serious threats to the security and well-being of the American people, and to the liberty-loving republic for which we yearn. This is on account of their desperate deficiencies of fiscal responsibility, trustworthiness, honorable integrity, self-discipline, empathy, commitment to egalitarian inclusiveness, humility and visionary understanding. Donald Trump demonstrates egomaniacal narcissism and a lack of respect for norms and codes of conduct -- or seemingly for women, other than as sex objects! These pathetic qualities make him a terrible leader. And those waiting in the wings to assume power once he resigns or is impeached, or otherwise is removed from the scene, are almost more dangerous for their fervent obedience to a hard right agenda and catering to wealthy donors and deluded grassroots supporters.

In Strangers in Their Own Land, sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild tells the story of years she spent in arch-conservative Louisiana bayou country, listening to Tea Party folks to find out why they support national policies that seem to liberals to be so cantankerously contrary to the common good. She found that people in red states
have been indoctrinated to feel that it is the government, not giant corporations, which has been primarily responsible for their woes, because the government has helped people like immigrants, refugees, women, gay people and others to cut ahead of them in line in their hopes of achieving the American Dream.

We need a much healthier two-party system. Severe imbalances like those that have existed since Trump and Pence came to power are not only unhealthy, but exceedingly dangerous to the general welfare and the national security and peaceful coexistence. Trump has played his supporters as suckers, and has played to a “T” the role of being a divisive emotion-manipulating deceiving demagogic dictator-wannabe male chauvinist who is plunging the world into unknown but not wholly uncharted paths. Let’s stand up and not go along! Academy Award!

Here’s a better idea: Let’s compromise on a whole raft of win-win solutions to problems. There are plenty to choose from. See One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies for some of the best ones.

Smart Strategic Initiatives

Linguist George Lakoff wrote about "strategic initiatives" in his enlightening book Don’t Think of an Elephant. He pointed out how ideological conservatives use such strategies in which changes in one issue have automatic effects over many other issues. For example, tax cuts leave less money for social programs that conservatives disapprove of anyway. Or think about legal tort reforms that are designed to limit future lawsuits that enforce environmental regulations, thus rewarding business cronies with bigger profits while depriving lawyers who tend to support progressive politicians of money and reducing campaign funding for Democratic politicians.

Note that there are contrasting good examples of strategic initiatives that advance progressive causes. The Endangered Species Act, for instance. Or legislative requirements that environmental impact reports must be completed before real estate developments are approved, so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how all stakeholders will be affected. One such truly transcendent plan would be to make an overarching commitment to a Bill of Rights for Future Generations. This visionary initiative would serve to reduce inter-generational treachery and protect the prospects of people in the future from valuable resources being foolishly squandered at the fastest possible pace, and from the predatory behaviors of wealthy people who are driving up the national debt and abusing their ill-gotten power.

There is one clear distinction between strategic initiatives promoted by conservatives and those advocated by liberals. Conservatives have a primary goal of maximizing profits and getting and wielding domineering power, so their strategies are oriented toward pandering to rich people who favor a selfishly right-wing agenda, while the strategic initiatives promoted by liberals tend to more honestly reflect greater concerns for the common good.

Another of the main strategic initiatives employed by Republicans is to hyper-stimulate military spending. This is a spending arena that is notoriously hard to control, or even to properly account for, because national urgency and secrecy provide a good cover for hiding waste and fraud. Such profligate spending serves to inject a big shot of adrenaline into the bloodstream of profiteers. It is easy to get people to go along with this plan by scaring them with repeated assertions of threats from abroad. This strategy allows a government to shift resources from other domestic spending priorities into profit-engendering preparations for war. Similarly, parallel efforts are made to build up domestic police forces, prisons and detention facilities that may prove to be necessary to be used against the people when revolutionary turmoil arises against power-abusing authorities and the malfeasance they are perpetrating against the masses. These deceptions and deceivers distract the public’s attention to cascading scandals, making it easier for them to eviscerate regulatory agencies that should be protecting people against financial chicanery and corporate abuses of influence and cost externalizing schemes that harm people’s health and despoil the environment.

Military Keynesian ideological arguments are easy to peddle to the people, as made clear by Herman Goering, the head of Adolf Hitler's storm troopers and later of the German Air Force during World War II. Goering told a psychologist after the war, during the Nuremberg War Crime trials, that a nation’s people can always be manipulated into supporting and fighting wars by their leaders, famously declaring, “Naturally the common people don’t want war. But after all, it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy, and it’s always a simple matter to drag people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a
communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. This is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and for exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country."

Proof that this is a top Republican strategic initiative can be seen by a look at the "hard-power budgets" pushed by the Trump Administration. Sure enough, they contain huge increases in military spending, combined with draconian cuts to funding for regulatory agencies and State Department diplomacy. These budgets stimulate military and Homeland Security spending while slashing funding for many things, including conservation initiatives and enforcement of federal regulatory and Executive Branch accountability and oversight activities.

Think more deeply about the nature of these Crony Capitalist scams. First, we allow moneyed interests to have undue influence in determining our national policies and priorities, with the result that the top tax rates on the highest incomes are reduced to unaffordably low levels. This contributes significantly to a spiking increase in inequality, which is stoking deep discord in the USA today. Second, we allow huge corporate entities to maximize profits by squeezing employees, often foisting costs of their medical care onto taxpayers. We also allow big corporations to ruthlessly prevent American workers from gaining any meaningful portion of increases in their productivity that have been realized in the economy since 1980. And we finance these swindles in an inter-generational debt scam that is far reaching in its unjust, highly unethical and risk-laden impacts. All considered, this is a consequentially serious fraud. Revealingly, this scam is facilitated by shrewd corporate executives and politicians and spinmeisters who propagate rationalizations and ideological dogma.

These scams constitute a betrayal of the people by the top dogs in our society, and especially the top 1% of Americans who excessively monopolize the spoils of resource extraction and the exploitation of working people. And these swindles have an even more deplorable angle. Vested interest groups indulge in another rash ruse: cost externalizing, or "the socializing of costs". The rigged rules that govern corporate entities allow Big Businesses to foist a variety of costs onto society, with the overriding goal of artificially boosting profits. These externalized costs include polluted air and water, respiratory afflictions and other negative impacts on human health, environmental damages and adverse effects of greenhouse gas emissions on the global climate.

More than two-thirds of the capital gains that result from these corporate scams are received, tellingly, by the top 1%. And guess what! -- these folks pay really low capital gains tax rates of only 15% on these ill-begotten profits. And even more outrageously, their heirs may pay zero percent tax on these gains after a rich person dies because the "cost basis" of all investments is revised to their actual value at the date of death, allowing these gains to be transmitted indefinitely forward to every person who inherits any of these investments.

In the course of these swindles, humankind is brutally hacking away, dangerously and irresponsibly, at the trunk and many branches of the tree of life, severely pruning its limbs by obtusely failing to take global action to protect wildlife habitats. Sensationally, the latest Living Planet Report, updated by the World Wildlife Fund in 2018, startlingly revealed that about 60% of the numbers of 10,000 representative species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish on Earth have disappeared in the 48-year period from 1970 to 2018. More than 75% of the populations of freshwater species have astoundingly been lost in this short period of time, along with almost 40% of the populations of both marine species and terrestrial species. The primary factors that have contributed to this dire development are mankind's reckless damaging of vital habitats in connection with our voracious exploitation of natural resources and our inadequate commitment to preserving the health of natural ecosystems.

An earlier Living Planet Report stated: "Our current global situation is that since the 1970s, humanity has been in ecological overshoot, with annual demand on resources exceeding what Earth can regenerate each year. It now takes the Earth one year and six months to regenerate what we use in a year. We maintain this overshoot by liquidating the Earth's resources." We must come together and say, "Enough is enough." As Utah Phillips once declared, "The Earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses."

Politics has sadly and necessarily become an outsized factor in the lives of people living in the USA now that conservatives have seized control of our government. Good God, politics! It seems wrong for our leaders to
rudely sow division and antagonisms between people through manipulative propaganda, dastardly demagoguery and an underhanded hijacking of people’s emotions and then impose wrongheaded national policies and priorities.

In theory, our representatives in Congress are the ones We the People have entrusted with setting our national priorities, and we should demand that they work to actualize the best interests of the people. How, then, has it turned out that the political leaders we choose are so preposterously prepossessed with the drive to satisfy their own selfish ambitions and power drives? Why are these priorities more important than helping to improve people’s lives?

FOLLOW THE MONEY! Our representatives give the heaviest emphasis to getting their own outsized portion of the spoils of the on-going Corrupt Conniving Crony Capitalist Con. This is what is described as "the biggest financial swindle in history" in Demagoguery and the Definite Dangers of the Demise of Democracy.

An investigative reporter at Truthout named Mike Ludwig identifies a correlated problem in Trump’s Plan to Crush the EPA is a Symptom of a Bigger Problem: Polluters refuse to pay for pollution controls and clean up, and leaders of both parties lack the courage to hold them accountable. Another facet of this corporate scheme is the push to shift more costs to local and state governments by slashing federal government spending. This ruse ratchets up the instability of the already dangerously fragile social safety net that keeps millions of people out of desperate degrees of deprivation and poverty and risk of calamities to their health and personal security.

Privatization schemes are another way that profits are often made at the public’s expense. Donald Trump’s conniving 2017 plan for infrastructure spending, for instance, would have been based on a two-for-one scam of giving huge tax incentives to private corporations to undertake infrastructure improvements at the expense of taxpayers, and then it would have allowed the private businesses to make money on the projects by adding tolls or other fee-generating income from the public each and every year, too often at an inflating rate.

Save the World!

On the cover of the October 2, 2017 issue of Time Magazine, a bloated elephant painted red, white and blue was sucking a small donkey into its trunk, and the headline read:

SHRUNK.
DEMOCRATS ARE IN THEIR WORST SHAPE SINCE 1929.
CAN ANYTHING SAVE THEM?

Sad story! Fortuitously, the recent electoral Blue Wave has begun to rectify this undesirable imbalance. We liberty-loving Americans sure do need a healthier two-party system to ensure that more people are fairly represented. It is negative for society as a whole to have our representatives so outrageously beholden to the rich. We do not need -- OR WANT, damn them! -- authority-abusing demagogic control freaks who repress the populace and cheat us, lie to us, put us at greater risk, perpetrate various frauds at our expense, corrupt our politics and mislead us with naked untruths, bad management and shortsighted foolhardiness.

The fact that the Democratic Party was in its worst minority position of influence since 1929, right before the “Great Depression”, was ominous. Democrats in the House beginning in early January 2019 started to turn the ship of state away from perilous straits (hopefully). It is ominous for the future of the USA that the progressive party has been sidelined so effectively through many ruses that include structural ones of extreme gerrymandering, blatant vote suppression in states led by Republican politicians and excessive purges of voter rolls. A big contributing factor is the brazen misuse of Big Money, right-wing propaganda and spin by often dishonest shills like Sean Hannity at Fox News and Rush Limbaugh’s head-nodding “dittoheads”, and crafty manipulators of people through negative ads, misinformation and false conspiracy theories on social media.

Let’s save ourselves! We know how. Throw the bums out of office! Indivisible groups are fighting Republican abuses of power and overreach by organizing together in every single congressional district in the USA, and they are using protest and pressure tactics to fight Republican corruption and malfeasance. They greatly
helped Democrats gain 40 seats in the House of Representatives, effective January 3, 2019, so reforms and checks on power abuses are coming! Unfortunately, they are encountering extreme fierce Republican opposition.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIVISIBLE GUIDE

"Donald Trump is the biggest popular-vote loser in history to ever call himself President. In spite of the fact that he has no mandate, he will attempt to use his congressional majority to reshape America in his own racist, authoritarian, and corrupt image. If progressives are going to stop this, we must stand indivisibly opposed to Trump and the Members of Congress who would do his bidding. Together, we have the power to resist — and we have the power to win."

"We know this because we've seen it before. The authors of this guide are former congressional staffers who witnessed the rise of the Tea Party. We saw these activists take on a popular president with a mandate for change and a supermajority in Congress. We saw them organize locally and convince their own Members of Congress to reject President Obama's agenda. Their ideas were wrong, cruel, and tinged with racism -- and they won."

"We believe that protecting our values, our neighbors, and ourselves will require mounting a similar resistance to the Trump agenda -- but a resistance built on the values of inclusion, tolerance, and fairness. Trump is not popular. He does not have a mandate. He does not have large congressional majorities. If a small minority in the Tea Party could stop President Obama, then we the majority can stop a petty tyrant named Trump."

Republican politicians are acting treacherously against the true best interests of our democratic republic, and definitively deserve to be relegated to minority status for generations to come, on account of their arrogance, right-wing agenda, failure to rein in rapidly increasing public debt, mindlessly unempathetic and in effect malicious malfeasance, and resource-wasting environment-damaging climate-altering ways. The price to be paid for putting our great American values at risk must be paid now, before accelerating harms excessively worsen.

Columnist Thomas Friedman, who often articulates Big Picture perspectives, wrote in June 2018, "The U.S. Republican Party has blown up in all but name, going overnight from an internationalist, free-trade, deficit-hawk party to a protectionist, anti-immigrant, deficit-dove party -- all to accommodate the instincts of Donald Trump and his base. As the former House Speaker John Boehner noted: 'There is no Republican Party. There’s a Trump party. The Republican Party is kind of taking a nap somewhere.'" (This was in Friedman’s article Why Are So Many Political Parties Blowing Up?)

I fancy these words as representing plain truths and Common Sense. See the plethora of intelligent and fair-minded assessments of eminent common sense contained in Common Sense Revival, Book One of the Earth Manifesto.

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
Welcome to the Earth Manifesto. Let’s all emerge from our echo chambers and “Don’t Believe Everything You Think” -- and strive to see clearly. And let’s undertake to understand comprehensively and expansively. And to feel with our hearts, not just to think with our easily emotionally-hijacked brains.

That wry rascal Mark Twain once satirically stated that we have the best government money can buy, and it behooves us to look closely at this sly assertion, for we are paying an exceedingly high price for our government every year, and it sure seems like the majority of Americans are getting a real Bad Deal, in general, in return.

It is a tautological truth that everybody will do better when everybody does better. We should demand that our representatives honestly create a fairer society that is really characterized by a more broadly inclusive prosperity. It is a wrong approach to put top priority on further enriching the already rich while imposing increasing hardships on the many, and depleting resources and raining havoc down on the ecological commons.

The right thing for us to do collectively would be to “pay forward” an auspicious legacy to our heirs in the future by contributing to leaving a stronger democracy and better protections of people’s rights, expansively assured. And to leave an economy that works better for the vast majority of the people, not just the wealthy ones. And to responsibly prevent politicians from burdening all taxpayers in the future with excessive amounts of public debt, corruptly engineered. And to leave a more sustainably providential natural world.

Remember the philosopher Plato, who established an extraordinary Academy located in a grove of olive trees in Athens and dedicated it to Athena, the Greek Goddess of Wisdom. Plato asserted in the Socratic dialogues of his famed book The Republic that truly just dealings are the most important thing for a government in its rule, and he reckoned it would be most desirable to have a benevolent philosopher king to govern fairly. Yep, that sure would be better than self-serving demagogues who tell manipulative lies to the people about the purposes and desirability of their radically ruthless “conservative” actions and priorities. Benevolent philosopher kings are unfortunately exceedingly hard to find!

How then have we managed to be subjected to governance by politicians whose actions, objectively measured, are detrimental to most Americans, and therefore seem drastically more malicious than beneficent? We must rise up as one, and honor our colonial ancestors’ distaste for despotism, and declare that we want our representatives to honestly represent the greater good. If we really had a fair democracy, wealthy interests would not be able to prevail so triumphantly over workers and the general public at every turn.

Most people validly see how harsh it is for our leaders to push policies that make economic inequalities more extreme, and that rig the tax system ever more favorably for the few. Most people also see the ominous writing on the wall of unleashed capitalist predations, debt-financed tax cut scams and externalized costs of pollution, toxins, medical care, exacerbated weather extremes, ocean acidification and the devastation of the richest biotic habitats on Earth -- tropical rainforests and coral reef communities around our beautiful home planet. Let’s act to protect Mother Earth!

A Commanding View from on High
There is great wisdom in the proverbial saying, "moderation in all things", which suggests a justly balanced way of living. This essential thought was found in the work of the ancient Greek poet Hesiod, somewhere around 2,700 years ago, who recommended, "observe due measure; moderation is best in all things." The edifice of the great temple of Apollo at Delphi bore a similar inscription that translates as "Nothing in excess". Public policy should embrace such wisdom.

The Tragedy of the Commons that Professor Garrett Hardin wrote so insightfully about in 1968 has morphed into a global catastrophe of assaults against the common good today. This terrible imbalance involves rich people and giant corporate entities exerting a detrimental, destructive and excessively domineering hegemony of rapacious control over people in communities and state and federal governments. This socially unacceptable imbalance features not only dangerous extremes of inequality, but also a sad state of spiritual affairs in which established religions form an unholy alliance with Economic Elites by supporting abusers of authority who all too frequently engage in divisive and discriminatory drives for dominion at the expense of fairness, peaceable coexistence and greater good goals.

I appeal to all evangelicals with respect the stewardship of creation, this consequentially crucial aspect of our civilizations. I applaud the evangelical organization Interfaith Power and Light for representing Right Action and Right Understanding with regard to energy efficiency, conservation, addressing climate change and such issues. They importantly say the same thing as Pope Francis: caring for creation is a basic human obligation.

As in every arena, hyper-conservative fundamentalists in evangelizing religions are too fanatic to be allowed to grab and abuse power. This is why the revelatory five-part Netflix documentary series The Family, released in August 2019, is so scary and ominous in implication. It tells the story of a secretive initiative by Christians who, in the name of Jesus, insinuate themselves into the halls of power and exert insidious influence and domineering and often unjust control over the populace. These evangelical fundamentalists, innocent-seeming acolytes of Jesus led for decades by Douglas Coe, "the stealth Billy Graham", have gained insider access in the halls of power and exerted outsized influence with powerful political leaders in the U.S. government, and in countries around the world. In this fundamentalism, powerful men exhibit missionary-like zeal to exert overarching power over the fates of billions of people, sometimes for good purposes but just as often to undermine democratic fairness and betray people's trust in fair-minded governance.

These folks have been siding with the rich and powerful in economic issues, to the dramatic detriment of the poor and downtrodden that the Bible says Jesus loved. It is supremely ironic that acolytes of Jesus are spreading a gospel so at odds with conventional understandings of Jesus, and that "The Family" so zealously supports officials like Donald Trump and "Moscow Mitch", who take advantage of faithful religious folks to push a corrupt agenda that involves dividing people and acting in bad faith on a wide range of crucial issues.

Jeff Sharlet criticizes the theology of The Family as an "elite fundamentalism" that fetishizes political power and wealth, and consistently opposes labor movements in the U.S. and abroad, and teaches that laissez-faire deregulatory economic policy is "God's will." He also criticized their theology of instant forgiveness for powerful men, pointing out that this provides a convenient excuse for elites who commit misdeeds or crimes, and allows them to avoid accepting responsibility or accountability for their actions.

Sharlet's book The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power was initially published in 2008, and just one year later sensational news stories broke about sex scandals involving prominent members of the Family. The then Nevada Senator John Ensign and South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford thrust the notoriously secretive organization into the national spotlight, along with accusations that the Family was illegally subsidizing the rent of members of Congress on C Street, and was involved in the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which would have imposed the death penalty for homosexuality in Uganda.

These evangelicals have used the annual National Prayer Breakfast since the days of Dwight Eisenhower for much more than a religious gathering. The event, which involves a series of meetings, luncheons and dinners, has taken place since 1953, and is typically attended by something like 3,500 guests, including international invitees from over 100 countries. It is designed to be a forum for the political, social, and business elite to assemble
and peddle influence, and as such to insert religion into politics and offer foreign leaders and lobbyists a chance to "pay to play".

**Fair-Mindedness Is the Overriding Answer**

Fair-minded democracy is crucial to protections of freedom and our collective hopes for flourishing. According to a V-Dem Annual Democracy Report 2018, the outlook for democracy is in decline in countries affecting 2.5 billion people. The V-Dem Project is "the largest-ever social-science effort to measure democracy around the world," and experts working on the project focus their assessment on a Liberal Democracy Index that assesses (1) whether there are free and fair elections in a country, (2) whether leaders are constrained by the rule of law and oversight by legislative bodies and the judiciary, and (3) whether civil liberties are protected. The findings show that in the world today, "One-third of the world’s population lives in a backsliding democracy, and within that tally of declining democracies is the United States itself."

These experts compared the United States' democracy score in 2017 with its average score over the previous 10 years, and described the pathological backsliding against liberal democracy in the USA as "precipitous and unprecedented". This is largely due to the weakening of constraints on the executive branch, which seems to cherish the freedom to abuse authority at the expense of the people.

A multitude of threats to American values and government are deepening. Brazen voter suppression and gerrymandering and cyber-threats to election security are proliferating. As a result, overarching commitments are required of us to repair and defend our democracy, so that personal liberties and fairness of opportunity can be ensured and the prospects are improved for the general welfare of the people. Strengthening our democracy is also necessary so that the legacy we leave to our descendants will have a greater likelihood of being auspicious.

One particularly effective assault on democracy for the next generation or two is found in the Republican stacking of the federal judiciary with young, and too often unqualified, right-wing judges. The breakneck speed with which Mitch McConnell has ushered these judges through the Senate confirmation process "should send shockwaves across the nation," the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights tweeted recently.

"Republicans are counting on these judges to dismantle reproductive rights, marriage equality, and the separation of church and state, and also to shred the New Deal and regulations that protect people from corporate power," according to Marge Baker of the organization People for the American Way.

Kristine Lucius, executive vice president for policy and government affairs at the Leadership Conference, issued a statement singling out Texas district court nominees Jeffrey Brown and Brantley Starr, who she said are "hostile to voting rights, LGBTQ equality, reproductive rights, and immigrant rights."

"Senate Republicans will stop at nothing to stack the courts with partisan judges who will push their radical agenda through at any cost," Lucius said. "In doing so, they are not only degrading our courts, but also endangering our democracy."

The legitimacy of the Supreme Court has already been cast in the light of infamy by a triumvirate of partisan 5-to-4 decisions in favor of political corruption by rich people and influence-abusing giant corporations. This antidemocratic and exceedingly unfair troika of rulings is shown to be consequentially wrong because it threw open the floodgates for Big Money to corrupt our politics in the 50 states and in the federal government in 2010, and then eviscerated the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and now has ruled in favor of extreme partisan gerrymandering. These rulings give official injudicious sanction to corrupt politics that allows politicians to choose their voters and disenfranchise tens of millions of people by depriving them of fair representation.

These developments are astonishing in light of the fact that our colonial ancestors were incensed at British taxation without fair representation. This was the basic reason for the Boston Tea Party uprising that was protesting the Tea Act of May 1773, which allowed the British East India Company "to sell tea from China in American colonies without paying any taxes, thus undercutting local tea merchants."
By allowing anti-government ideologues to grab excessive influence, extreme partisans have allowed rich people and undemocratic corporations to corruptly wield power over the people, betraying their best interests. It seems like unscrupulous con men are everywhere, especially in the highest echelons of government and business. Religious fundamentalists, for their part, bizarrely proclaim from the pulpit that God approves of this.

In another dastardly ruse, the Trump administration is continuing to try to skew the results of the upcoming 2020 census, evidently still devoted to using whatever citizenship data it can collect for a post-census reapportioning of federal power more heavily favorable toward predominantly white communities. The files of a deceased GOP operative who advised officials on adding a citizenship question to the Census revealed that he clearly regarded it as a way to confer electoral advantages on whites and Republicans. This plan had been pushed early on by Steve Bannon and Kris Kobach, two of Trump's most virulently anti-immigrant advisers.

Free Ourselves from Unnecessary Stress

We human beings have always been besieged by deep existential anxieties. John Fowles, in his great philosophic outline *The Aristos*, explained: There are esoteric metaphysical anxieties and practical daily anxieties. There are fundamental universal anxieties and special individual anxieties. John Fowles then lists sixteen categories of anxieties in *The Aristos*, and wrote, "To be alone in an office -- dozens of telephones all ringing at the same time. These anxieties should make us one. We all feel them. But we let them isolate us, as if the citizens of a country would defend it by each barricading himself in his own house."

Every person faces a wide array of existential anxieties, so in solidarity with other fellow human beings, we should all unite in empathy and Golden rule wisdom to either help ameliorate the anxieties of others or strongly support leaders who will most honestly try to not make them worse. Unfortunately, great advantages can be gained by scheming swindlers and demagogic exploiters who manipulatively amplify people's anxieties and help create conditions that exacerbate stresses for the vast majority of the populace. The fact that they do this brings the treachery of their actions into stark relief, and it can clearly be seen that they are pushing their luck by acting with excessive selfishness. Ethical, moral and spiritual right action is called for!

Breaking News: *It Is Happening Here*

Attention here and now! The following poignant perspectives are not just philosophical words, but important and consequential ideas and understandings.

In order to hold in place national policies and priorities that dramatically increase inequality and make social injustices worse, the ruling class will of necessity impose increasingly repressive measures on the people. And to enforce this rude and rash imposition, stronger police and military forces will be used. This is not good for you and me, and it is drastically detrimental to peaceable coexistence and the overall well-being of the American people, and treacherous to our hopes to enjoy our liberties and individual pursuits of happiness.

The one arena where ruling Republicans want to spend much more money is on the military and weapons and preparations for war, and on police forces, prisons, deportation forces and detention facilities. So, It Can Happen Here! And we are right in the middle of a maelstrom of its actually happening. Let's sharpen our focus.

Let's not look narrowly. Consider closely the words that Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke in January 1941 in his Four Freedoms speech. Talking about military expenditures just before the United States entered World War II, FDR declared that the American people would need to pay more money in taxes. "In my Budget Message, I will recommend that a greater portion of this great defense program be paid for from taxation than we are paying for today. No person should try, or be allowed, to get rich out of the program; and the principle of tax payments in accordance with ability to pay should be constantly before our eyes to guide our legislation."

In stunning contrast, at a time when military expenditures are at the highest ever in the United States -- and increasing -- Republican politicians cunningly rammed through into law a Tax Cut plan in December 2017 that authorized borrowing $1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. The devil is in the details: the law will give most of the benefit of this public debt-burdening swindle to the top 1%. This is a diabolical scam because, in effect, it
bribed the public with relative crumbs to gain support, giving almost everyone a small fraction of the spoils of this risk-laden largess, and did so to deliver the lion's share of this public borrowing scheme to the already rich.

Trump is always obsessed with getting "a win" for himself, but perversely chooses anti-progressive priorities like sabotaging the Affordable Care Act and undermining protections of the environment, and discriminating against minorities and immigrants and asylum seekers, even though such small-minded egomaniacal triumphs will have real harmful impacts on millions of people's health, well-being, personal security and psyches. See clearly: Pyrrhic victories like this negatively affect salubrious social cohesion and the general tone of civility in the USA, and they betray christian good neighborliness, and indeed the general welfare, domestic tranquility and our cherished liberties, along with potentials for all to pursue more authentic happiness, now and in posterity.

In the face of all these goings-on, House Republicans came up with what is in effect a cynical new slogan in July 2018: "BETTER OFF NOW". Really? One observer on Daily Kos gave swift consideration to the Russia scandal and Trump tariffs, skyrocketing national debt, immigrant children being taken from their parents, declining democracy, hyped-up divisive partisanship, Big Money abuses of power, demagogic propaganda and corporate despoliation, etc., etc., etc., and remarked: "I could go on forever, but really … HAHAHAHAHAHAHA." 

In fact, the majority of Americans will be Better Off only when the majority of Americans really are better off, not just when the rich are richer and white male hegemony over the masses is approaching a zenith.

There's something goin' on here, and what it is, is becoming ever more abundantly clear. Republicans represent the "grifter class" in our plutocratic republic. These are folks who benefit the most from the way the economic system is rigged. They work tirelessly to rig the system more and more advantageously for themselves. This is ultimately negative for society because their success comes at the expense of everyone else, so this is a brazen overreach by the swindling grifter class. This overreach involves not just shredding the social safety net but also putting everybody's future at bigger risk and mortgaging the country to achieve wrongheaded goals.

The changing demographics in the USA make it clear that this will likely be the last opportunity for arrogant white guys to exert a monopoly on power and make hay while the sun glares reprehensibly on their discriminatory abuses of power. And a consequential day of reckoning is coming, due to their rashly risk-laden debt-financed schemes.

Hyper spending on the military is a racket that is good for excessive profit-making, and for the ability of the government to impose severely undemocratic authoritarian control over the masses, the lazy bums. The people may protest, but that just confirms to those who rule that the protestors are not sufficiently patriotic in their refusals to loyally march lockstep with their every dictate.

The great philosopher Voltaire incisively expressed this opinion: "I always made one prayer to God, a very short one. Here it is: 'Oh, Lord, make our enemies quite ridiculous.' God granted it."

As an aside, Voltaire was famous for his wit, and was a commendably outspoken advocate for expanded civil liberties, despite the risk this placed him in, as a consequence of strict censorship laws of the time in France. He was a "satirical polemicist" who frequently made use of his works to commendably criticize intolerance, religious dogma and the oppressive French religious and governmental institutions of his day. Hear, hear!

What's Happening?

Win-win politics would be VASTLY BETTER for everyone than the Republican's modern brand of win-lose politics and Trump's profit-prepossessed triumph-at-any-cost con game. Some say they are getting real tired of this "bad actor" and his crowing about the brilliance of his "wins", due to their fiscally irresponsible, environment damaging and socially wrongheaded agenda focus, and the hubris of defying laws, subpoenas and the Constitution.

Let our eyes of lament touch the souls of our fellow countrypersons. Let's give this desperate man his Academy Award for gilded demagoguery, and usher him and his crony co-conspirators off the stage!

Republicans are making fools of their white middle class, blue-collar and poor supporters, and also making them
accomplices to a profound treachery against the common good by pushing extreme short-termism in fiscal, social, political and environmental policies. They are abusing power and perpetrating Big Lies about trickle-down economics, and acting as con men to mortgage the public good for the benefit of the excessively rich. This is one of the reasons that Theodore Roosevelt spoke out passionately in favor of an Estate Tax, “increasing rapidly in amount with the size of the estate”, so as to prevent the increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few, where it is invariably abused. This is good guidance for We the People to be assured that dastardly despots will be prevented in the future from illegitimately seizing power and abusing authority.

The November 2018 elections came after an unbelievable barrage of political propaganda, conflicting opinions, sneaky disinformation, attack ads and distortions about the desirability of a generations-long dominance of the Supreme Court by conservatives. The newly elected Democratic majority in the House is encountering stonewalling in its efforts to investigate Trump and his corrupt Cabinet members, who are taking advantage of the current permissive regime to gloss over their conflicts of interests. It is imperative for our Constitutional system to check corrupt activities in the executive branch. In all future election contests, I urge all voters to rightly turn out to vote for more moderate and progressive-minded representatives in Congress -- ones with significantly more honesty and integrity and moral character.

It is normal for a majority party to lose seats in Congress in midterm elections. This is because people are generally not happy with the political party that is wielding power, and elections are one way to hold those in power accountable to the people. But never in the history of our democratic republic has a regime abused its power so egregiously as the Trump Administration, and it is getting worse as the legitimacy of the ruling party is undermined by malfeasance. Republican politicians deserve to also have lost many seats in the Senate, and should be relegated to minority status for their egregious assaults against democratic fairness, more inclusive egalitarian values, the rights of people in racial minorities, the reproductive and healthcare rights of women, the dignity of gay people, and sensible protections of the environment.

We must wage hard-fought battles for fairer representation because domineering incumbent Republicans will fight tooth and nail for their positions of power, and they will push their selfish agenda with the blaring help of gargantuan sums of system-corrupting campaign cash from the Kochtopus political machine and wealthy people who will use an ugly barrage of deceitful spin, Big Lies, character assassinations and dirty tricks to achieve their anti-democratic goals. Supreme Court conservatives must stop being accomplices!

**Racism and Sexism Persist in the Supposed Land of the Free**

What is happening over there? Look! Republicans are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to sneakily promote national policies that distinctly and measurably disadvantage black people, brown people and women. Social conservatives who indignantly protest that they are not racist or sexist are disingenuous when they in effect act to support politicians and figures in positions of power who abuse the power of their influence.

Getting votes through demagoguery is socially wrong, because the primary strategy is to divide the citizenry in order to succeed at torpedoing governance “of the people, by the people and for the people.” It is sad to see these folks staunchly striving to trump the common good, and to replace it with an illegitimate authoritarian hegemony of Trojan horse politicians and their puppeteers -- crony capitalists like the nefarious billionaires Charles and David Koch, and the Mercers and Sheldon Adelson and their right-wing-cause championing ilk.

Social conservatives, in particular, thou doth protest too much thy innocence and rectitude. You do not deserve respect when you support politicians who impose harmful and discriminatory policies on the people.

There is a deep level of deceit, corruption, fraud and anti-egalitarian intrigue in Republican gerrymandering, voter suppression, fear-mongering, scapegoating, repetitious propaganda, encouragement of interference by foreign countries in our elections, and religious hypocrisy. None of us should continue to trust “conservatives” to rule fairly, reasonably, honestly or fiscally responsibly, for they do not seem to be cognizant of the sadly far-reaching Tragedy of the Commons impacts that their Machiavellian intrigues are having against democracy and the common good. #MeToo!
Rule by a minority of extreme ideological and plutocratic interests has increasingly become the Republican's modus operandi: gerrymandering, voter suppression, and congressional loopholes show they are not shy about using any means necessary to stay in power. We are seeing what's possible when a con man like Donald Trump takes advantage of these anti-democratic tactics. “Trump has not hesitated to embrace white nationalists and give racists power -- just look at Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller, and Jeff Sessions -- which is exactly why it's prime time for Roe v. Wade to come up on the chopping block.”

Think about the four freedoms that President Franklin D. Roosevelt set forth in January 1941 that people “everywhere in the world” should be given -- the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom of religious belief, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear. Fast forward more than 78 years, and it behooves us to assess how the USA is doing in the era of Trump Republicanism.

Look what Republicans are giving us. We have reasonably good freedom of speech rights, despite the fact that whistleblowers who expose corporate and government malfeasance are inadequately protected, and protesters who are engaged in courageously speaking out against malfeasance are too often treated badly. Also, curiously, conservatives have suddenly found new respect for the freedom of speech, expanding it to mean the right of religious people to disregard the self-evident natural rights of others, especially the rights of women and gay people. And they regard as inviolable the dogma that says big corporations and rich people have a Constitutional right to spend unlimited amounts of money to corrupt our political process, both in elections and in lobbying for laws that narrowly benefit them. Status of the freedom of speech - Grade = C-minus.

With regard to the freedom of religious belief, this is reasonably well assured, though Donald Trump is villanizing and scapegoating Muslims and working to ban people from coming to the USA from Muslim-dominant countries. Status of the freedom of religious belief - Grade = B-minus.

With regard to the freedom from want, inequalities have almost never been as extreme as they are in the USA today, and more than 40 million Americans live in poverty. Things are likely to get severely worse because the collective bargaining rights of wage earners are being emasculated, and extremist judges are excessively championing the interests of Capital over Labor in this long-fought battle. The sound of the mantra, "jobs, jobs, jobs" rings in our ears, and an apparition floats into our collective consciousness of this as a cartoon-like distraction of working people from the fact that almost all gains from productivity increases are being monopolized by the top dogs. And we are going backwards by mortgaging the future to give tax cuts to the top 1%, because this is putting powerful pressure on our representatives to slash spending on the social safety net that keeps tens of millions of people freer from want. Status of the freedom from want - Grade = C-minus.

With regard to the freedom from fear, the Duplicitous-Demagogue-in-Chief and his minions are using fear and falsehoods and insecurity and intimidation and divisive strategies to strengthen their grip on power, and this is stoking deep resentments and heightening fears, and causing widespread discontent and revolutionary discord, and risking a severe debt crisis. Status of the freedom from fear - Grade = D-minus.

An Aside on the Vital Importance of a Non-Ideological Supreme Court

The political shenanigans are roundly reprehensible that have given an excessively narrowly focused, backwards and rightward tilt to the Supreme Court. All Americans today rely on the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and fair-minded rules of law to assure us of the current degree of freedom we enjoy in the USA. But freedom requires vigilance, and we need real patriots to strongly support fair-minded laws and more honest lawmakers.

Republicans are gloating over their power and success in altering the Supreme Court for a generation or two, thereby helping undermine fair decision-making. And they are crowing about their rash debt-financed economic stimulus. Their huge tax cuts for the top 1%, at a time of very low unemployment, is making the famous economist John Maynard Keynes turn over in his grave at the egregious distortion of his understanding that times of strong economic growth are the time to pay down the national debt, not to engage in new salvos of political opportunism by hyper-stimulating the economy using enormous amounts of borrowed money, at high costs and mountain financial risks.
When Trump announced that Brett Kavanaugh was his Supreme Court nominee to replace Anthony Kennedy upon his retirement, attention was suddenly focused on the implications of having a more politicized and excessively conservative Supreme Court, and one more lenient with regard to the exercise of presidential power. Soon after the announcement, concerns spiked that health care, reproductive rights, voting rights and workers’ rights would all be at risk if the Senate approved such a proven Republican partisan. “What we know of D.C. Circuit Court Judge Brett Kavanaugh’s judicial record is troubling. Kavanaugh has consistently ruled against environmental protections, struck down EPA protections under the Clean Air Act, opposed efforts to fight climate change, and stood against protections for clean water. Kavanaugh has also favored limiting the power of federal regulatory agencies and has argued for restricting the rights of people to access our court system.”

In a revealing barrage of 5-4 rulings at the end of the Supreme Court’s October 2017 to June 2018 session, there was proof in the light of a detailed analysis of decisions that political conservatism has yielded negative outcomes for the majority of American people. Ever since the Bush vs. Gore ruling gave the presidency to George W. Bush instead of Al Gore, despite Bush having lost the popular vote, it could be seen that a politicized right-leaning majority on the court yields decisions that are, on the whole, contrary to the general welfare of the people, and antithetical to an honestly expansive guarantee of personal freedoms. And again at the end of the Supreme Court session that ended in June 2019 with their 5 to 4 decision to do nothing about extreme partisan gerrymandering, it was clear that the conservative Justices do not side with fair representation.

We stand at a pivotal point in the history of our democratic republic, and with the right-wing having succeeded in cementing a hard right hegemony on the Supreme Court, this check on abuses of power by the Executive Branch will become more like a rubber stamp of complicity. The extreme political partisan Kavanaugh was chosen for the court because manipulative Big Money has corrupted our politics, and this is almost the last straw, because it will further prevent decisions that would help change the anti-democratic and anti-progressive domination of our national decision-making by rich people and cash-flush giant corporations.

The worst aspect of this situation is that corporate-friendly Supreme Court decisions are threatening the providential boon of natural ecosystem services with an ominous intensification of assaults. “Conservative” Justices misguidedly favor giving a green light to giant corporations and their prerogatives to pollute and foist dangerous increases in externalized costs onto society. We need a more progressive court system, especially because the Administration is failing the majority of the people by imposing anti-egalitarian dictates on them. This arrogant regime is working overtime to pander overly exclusively to its political base, which they are playing for fools by hyping up their resentments and supercharging their emotions while implementing policies that are contrary to their true best interests.

Additionally, with the Supreme Court likely to soon face cases that involve Robert Mueller’s investigation into malfeasance by Donald Trump and members of his administration and a bunch of Russian operatives, Kavanaugh’s extremely partisan role in obsessively investigating President Bill Clinton is seen through the eyes of infamy. And his hypocrisy will be exposed if he narrowly sides with Trump in any matters that involve the more consequential wrongdoing by Trump and his minions. Kavanaugh has expressed an absurdly expansive view on presidential powers by questioning the Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in the 1974 case U.S. vs. Nixon, which forced President Nixon to turn over his Watergate tapes to a federal district court.

All concerned citizens should demand that their Senators protect people’s rights and oppose any future Supreme Court nominee that would be likely to criminalize abortion, rollback health care, decimate civil rights or harm the environmental commons and workers, or undercut rules of law that protect people from the predations and cost externalizing schemes of corporate entities and big banks and their lobbyists.

Those who know Brett Kavanaugh say it is difficult to vilify him personally. Hey, I trust that he may be a good guy. But the American people should demand a moderate tilt to the Supreme Court, not a rightward one. It is revealing that Kavanaugh’s father was a lobbyist for the cosmetics industry who used money and connections to fend off demands for consumer protections, safer products and better transparency about ingredients in cosmetics. While this may have been real good for his well-heeled clients, and a boon for industry profits, it was inimical to the public health, especially of women, and it was subversive of the common good.
All the names on Trump’s list for possible nominees to the Supreme Court have been provided by the archconservative Federalist Society. The implications of having a more rigidly conservative Supreme Court are frightening. What precedents could be overturned? What civil rights and civil liberties are at stake? According to Wikipedia, Federalist Society members generally choose not to criticize Trump. Politico described the Society membership as “elite, conservative lawyers who have generally chosen to give Trump a pass on his breaches of long-cherished legal norms and traditions, in exchange for the gift of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch.” That particular gift is proving damaging to We the People and our general welfare.

During the battle to get another extreme conservative on the Supreme Court, Brett Kavanaugh cunningly tried to evade questions focused on determining if he respects precedents like Roe vs. Wade, which gave a fair-minded guarantee to all women that they could get a safe and legal abortion during the first trimester of a pregnancy. In photographs of the Supreme Court Justices, they all stare toward the camera, and conservatives among them seem to be disdaining the common law legal principle of stare decisis, the idea that a judge is bound by, or should give considerable respect to, decisions of earlier judges that render issues as “standing decided”.

Recall that during the nomination approval processes by the Senate of Chief Justice John Roberts, and also of Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch, these judges deviously proclaimed that they respect long-established precedents of fair-minded laws. Yet once they succeeded in gaining their prestigious lifelong tenures on the high court, they have overturned precedents on what can accurately be seen as partisan grounds. They have thus used deceit to gain lifelong positions of power, and are using this power to betray the American people by siding with corporate interests and religious zealots instead of fairly representing the best interests of the people, especially in rulings like Citizens United that are destroying our democracy by allowing Big Money to corrupt our government. I enthusiastically encourage people to listen to Senator Sheldon Whitehouse’s extraordinary remarks about the narrow decisions made by the “Roberts Five”, which he made in the opening proceedings of the Senate Judiciary Committee’s confirmation hearings on September 4, 2018.

Sensationally, 83 ethics complaints have been filed against Brett Kavanaugh and yet he has not been held to account. Many of the complaints allege that Kavanaugh made false statements under oath during hearings on his nominations to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in 2004 and 2006 and to the U.S. Supreme Court last year. Other complaints concern prior confirmation hearing statements by Kavanaugh about Guantanamo detainees and hacked emails.

These are serious allegations. The complainants include lawyers, doctors, professors and concerned citizens, but so far Kavanaugh has gotten off the hook. First, a judicial council in Denver led by Judge Timothy Tymkovich, a man on Trump’s list of potential new conservatives to possibly be appointed to the Supreme Court, dismissed all 83 misconduct complaints in December 2018, citing a lack of jurisdiction. Then a committee of federal judges dismissed them all again in early August 2019 because Supreme Court justices are not subject to the judiciary’s ethics review process. These are convenient technicalities for Kavanaugh, but the issue should not just fall by the wayside. The only body that can discipline Kavanaugh now is Congress, and it should rightly look into the facts.

**Opening a Modern Pandora’s Box of Inequities**

Ideas as old as the hills reverberate through the arcane interstices of my mind, buffeted by conceptions as young and vibrant as a gusty wind that heralds the coming of a tempestuous storm. Charles Ferguson’s ideas come to mind from his book *Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America*. The images evoked by this in-your-face title might make one think that this is probably a book chock full of suspiciously partisan invective and conspiracy theories, and maybe even a heavy dose of “liberal pabulum.” But no! It turns out to be a fascinatingly insightful perspective.

In a startling contrast to the sensible trust-busting era that President Theodore Roosevelt led in the early 1900s, corporatocratic proponents of laissez-faire ideologies gained traction when Ronald Reagan’s tenure as president began. Charles Ferguson relates this story in *Predator Nation*: “The era of deregulation pioneered by the Reagan and Clinton administrations removed virtually all restrictions on trading, mergers and industry
consolidation; the few remaining restrictions were then quickly stripped away by the Bush administration, along
with any threat of sanctions from either criminal prosecution or civil suits to recoup illicit gains." ... "And, in
fact, bad things started to happen almost immediately. Beginning in the 1980s, the United States began to
experience financial crises and scandals in a scale not seen since the 1920s. But deregulation continued,
culminating in major laws passed in 1999 and 2000. Once completely freed, the bankers very quickly ran their
institutions off the cliff, taking much of the global economy with them. Not only did they create and sell a huge
amount of junk, but they turned the financial system into a gigantic casino, one in which they played mainly with
other people’s money.”

When Ronald Reagan became president, tax cuts and deregulation were the order of the day. “Even from the
start, though, there was a big element of dishonesty in Reagan’s strategy. He cut taxes, but not government
spending, so America’s economic recovery came in part from unsustainable deficits. Administration officials
claimed that tax cuts would pay for themselves, which they knew was a lie. And what they called ‘deregulation’
was often simply political corruption. Lobbyists and industry executives were appointed to run government
agencies, and several industries sharply increased their spending on political donations, lobbying, and revolving
door hiring. Nowhere was this clearer than in finance. It was in financial services that Ronald Reagan initiated
America’s descent into criminality, financial crisis, political corruption, inequality and decline.” Sensational --
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Criminality, financial crisis, political corruption, inequality and decline! These words sound like really outrageous
hyperbole, but when you read the actual details of the many financial scams perpetrated in the past three
decades, this characterization suddenly doesn’t seem like an exaggeration at all. Charles Ferguson continues:
“It was in large measure the financial sector’s political activities that gave us deregulation, abdication of white-
collar law enforcement, tax cuts for the wealthy, huge budget deficits, and other toxic policies. These are the
aspects of our econopolitical system that have allowed the U.S. financial sector to become a rogue industry”.

The financial sector began a period of astounding consolidation when sensible regulations like the Glass-Steagall
Act were repealed. The amorphous shark-like octopus of the oligopoly began a feeding frenzy. Every segment
of the financial sector was affected, creating huge financial conglomerates. “And the main source of this
broader consolidation was not the organic growth of the successful: rather it was mergers.”

Economic power has become increasingly concentrated since 1980 due to the radical ramping up of deregulation
efforts. This is true particularly in banking, energy, telecommunications, automobiles, media, agribusiness and
retailing. This trend has been the result of abuses of influence as corporate money has neutered antitrust
policy and corrupted our political system, and even swayed the supposedly objective expert opinions of a
minority of people -- but all too many -- in academic institutions. Such concentrated power undermines the
power of We the People, and it contributes to the sadly increasing and politically dangerous extremes in income
and wealth inequality between the top 1% and the other 99%.

Rich people and top corporate managers together exert an unwarranted influence on our country by using wealth
and solidarity of selfish purpose to wield political power that shelters themselves, their families, their personal
assets and their businesses from competition, effective regulation, proper corporate governance, prosecution
and taxes. This situation is unfair and will eventually prove to be disastrous for the vast majority of the people.

Beneath the intensely rancorous sound and fury of partisan strife, the nearly unassailable battlements of a
political duopoly system monopolize our national decision-making. The actors in this duopoly stand resolute in
dictating rules that establish a Great Bargain for rich people and a Bad Deal for everyone else. The overriding
success of our representatives is astonishing when it comes to policies related to giving tax breaks that heavily
favor wealthy people. Conservatives excessively succeed in reducing regulations, preventing sensible common
good reforms and facilitating an on-going consolidation of corporate power through mergers and acquisitions.

Perhaps this should be no surprise, because influence peddling is not only legal, but a fundamental facet of the
way our political system operates in modern times. So, sadly, by a vote of 5 to 4, the Supreme Court might
declare null and void the entire substance of these remarks. They continue to refuse to overturn the wrongly
decided *Citizens United* ruling that has helped wealthy people corrupt our elections and rashly pervert our national priorities and distort our decision-making. And they are contemplating the merits of overturning Roe vs. Wade abortion rights and forcing pregnant women to deliver, in effect championing teetotaler-like abstinence as the preferred method of family planning. In this consequential deliberation, they keep foremost in mind their own narrow politically partisan biases and personal power.

Charles Ferguson has commendably created an evocative new exploration of what happened with the Nixon Watergate scandal in a thought-provoking film titled *Watergate: Or, How We Learned to Stop an Out-of-Control President*, a film that debuted at the 2018 Telluride film festival. Watch it! -- and think about "Tricky Dick" and what should be done as a new crisis-provoking Saturday Night Massacre approaches today with Attorney General Bill Barr being held in contempt of Congress and Trump obstructing justice and expressing his contempt for the rules of law every day.

**The Fox Propaganda Machine**

Trump spoke commendable words in his election victory speech but they ring every hollow in light of the scurrilous tactics he used to get elected. His words provided a momentary ray of hope that, perhaps, he really might try to act as a fair-minded president for all Americans and heal the country, but this hope did not last long, for he set about soon thereafter to choose the most extreme Cabinet and federal agency officials ever.

How can the American people help ensure that common sense will prevail? The mainstream media and right-wing news outlets like Fox News have been complicit in creating a misinformed public. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have become prominent influences in our elections, and they suffer from being dangerously unbalanced and simplistic. Too, they often serve to promote fake news and erroneous points of view. Every faction has its own media now, where partisans can be "affirmed, not informed," as pollster Frank Luntz puts it. The outcome is that our great nation is being held together only "by the thinnest of threads", and the USA seems to be devolving into being a conflict-torn Idiocracy.

The intentional propagation of fake news and false beliefs has contributed to this serious assault on fair representation of the best interests of the people. Part of the fault with this state of affairs is that there is no Fairness Doctrine in the mainstream media like there was between 1949 and 1987, or in the more seriously skewed alt-right media, and it is exceedingly difficult for social media to control devious misinformation. The Fairness Doctrine was a federal policy in the U.S. that required television and radio broadcasters to present contrasting viewpoints on controversial issues of public interest and importance — and to do so in a manner that was honest, equitable and balanced. The demise of this Fairness Doctrine is a contributing factor to the rising level of divisive party polarization in the United States.

Trevor Noah gave brilliant insights into how the media needs to improve its performance in saving our nation on a November 2017 *Daily Show* segment, *Adapting to Donald Trump’s Lies*. Watch it right now for some good laughs and illuminated understanding of Trump’s toddler-like thought processes.

It is human nature for people to psychologically identify with those within their ‘tribal’ in-groups, and to regard those in out-groups with suspicion or hostility. Right-wing politicians exploit the out-group status of immigrants and related anti-immigrant sentiments to gain power.

Ever since Trump took the down elevator into contention for the presidency, he has frequently used divisive tactics and offensive rhetoric to gain media attention. His scandalous behaviors have been "normalized" by attention fatigue and traditional media outlets that are more interested in ratings and profits than in important big issues and honestly comprehensive Big Picture assessments of these issues. Now, as Trump is abusing his power, many people in the mainstream media and conservatives on social media and white supremacist groups are attempting to normalize Trumpism and give legitimacy to his self-interest-dominated authoritarian-tinged rule.

We must recognize how essential a free and independent media is in our democracy. Trump is trying to destroy that freedom and independence by using 7 of the principal unprincipled techniques that despots have employed throughout history to undermine media independence. Robert Reich provides this list of insidious techniques:
1. Berate the media. Trump called two-dozen TV news anchors and executives to the Trump Tower soon after he was elected -- including Lester Holt, Charlie Rose, George Stephanopoulos and Wolf Blitzer -- to chew them out about their reporting during the election.

2. Blacklist media that criticize them. Trump favors Fox News, and hates CNN and MSNBC, and has maintained a blacklist of news outlets to which he has refused to grant press credentials.

3. Turn the public against the media. Trump refers to journalists as "dishonest," "disgusting" and "scum."

4. Threaten the media. Trump says he'll "open up our libel laws, so when they write purposely negative and horrible and false articles, we can sue them and win lots of money."

5. Block media access. Trump prefers rally events to news conferences, and often blocks the media from traveling with him, or knowing whom he's meeting with, or what is said in secretive meetings like the instantly infamous one with Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.

6. Establish their own alternative controlled media. Trump sends messages through the "alt-right" Breitbart News and the unfairly unbalanced Fox News and hard-right talk radio show hosts.

7. Bypass the media and communicate with the public directly. Trump tweets incessantly, and tells incredible numbers of falsehoods and outright lies.

In 1980, there were thousands of independent media outlets in the United States, but today, there are only six multi-national global media mega corporations in control of more than 90% of the content that Americans see on TV, hear on the radio, watch at the movies, and read in books, magazines and newspapers. These corporate entities are Time Warner, VIACOM, CBS, Walt Disney, News Corp and General Electric. All of them are gigantic corporations, and together they own television and radio broadcast networks, cable and satellite channels, financial news publications, video news, magazines, book publishers, the major entertainment theme parks, movie studios, sports entertainment, integrated telecommunications and communications satellites themselves, wireless phones, video games software, electronic media, record labels and the music industry.

Almost everything you believe, more or less, is delivered to you by this establishment of media moguls who run these corporations. The CEOs of these giant organizations "play golf together. They plot and scheme together. They are members of the same clubs and organizations ..." -- and they decide what the American people "should believe and what attitudes they should have about everything".

The best way to counter propaganda is to understand the methods and techniques that are being used to sway public opinion. George Orwell explained some of the many clever tactics and powerful techniques that are used to "catapult the propaganda", as George W. Bush put it. They can be read online to understand this important influence on our worldviews and national decision-making -- see George Orwell's *A citizen's guide to understanding corporate media propaganda techniques*.

These techniques are being used on the American public and the world population by the corporate mainstream media and the "alt-right" fringe media, and by many partisans on social media. "Having familiarized yourself with these techniques, you will be able to spot them as they are being deployed against you," wrote George Orwell.

This will all likely end badly, especially for millions of white working class voters who have been deceived into supporting Trump, thinking that he would "drain the swamp" in Washington D.C. instead of opening the floodgates to a retrogressive cadre of operatives and ideologues. Though as a candidate Trump trumpeted "Drain the swamp in D.C.", look at what has happened. A narrowly focused electorate, deceived by Machiavellian intrigue, voted to keep almost all the corrupt alligators in the congressional swamp, and now Trump has filled his Cabinet with loyalists who represent a perpetuation of more of the same policies that have hurt and angered the populace. And his policies seem almost exclusively oriented around self-interest, not the common good.

Fox interviewer Maria Bartiromo "is an embarrassment to the integrity of proper financial perspective in her efforts to suck up to Donald Trump on Fox News," according to an online post. Bartiromo engaged in a "love-fest" with Donald Trump on an interview in 2018, saying, "Here we see your lovely press secretary getting asked
to leave a restaurant. We see Peter Fonda and Robert De Niro having 'Trump Syndrome.' They're going crazy. All of this vitriol in this country. As the commander-in-chief, as the President of this great country, what can you do to bring us together?"

Bizarrely, instead of expressing any opinion as to how to unite Americans, Trump bragged about his base and made an overt threat to any American citizen who dares to disagree with him. The online commentator quoted above observed, "Oh, the poor beleaguered (and lovely) Sarah Sanders, an unabashed lie dispenser, has been the victim of naughty Hollywood actors going crazy. Bartiromo completely ignores the fact that Trump himself is the source of more vitriol than anyone currently in public life. The chat continues, but it is notable that Trump never answers the question about how he would bring the country together. In fact, he goes the other way entirely with a not-so-subtle threat: 'Well some of them do it for publicity, I hate to say it. ... our people are so incredible. You know, there's probably never been a base, in the history of politics in this country, a base like my base. I hope the other side realizes that they better just take it easy. They better just take it easy because some of the language used, some of the words used, even some of the radical ideas, I really think they are very bad for the country. I think they're actually very dangerous for the country."

Ralph Peters, a retired Army lieutenant colonel who frequently appeared as a strategic analyst on Fox News until he resigned in March 2018, said he felt compelled to explain why he chose to leave Fox News. "Four decades ago, I took an oath as a newly commissioned officer. I swore to 'support and defend the Constitution,' and that oath did not expire when I took off my uniform. Today, I feel that Fox News is assaulting our constitutional order and the rule of law, while fostering corrosive and unjustified paranoia among viewers. Over my decade with Fox, I long was proud of the association. Now I am ashamed. In my view, Fox has degenerated from providing a legitimate and much-needed outlet for conservative voices to a mere propaganda machine for a destructive and ethically ruinous administration. When prime-time hosts -- who have never served our country in any capacity -- dismiss facts and empirical reality to launch profoundly dishonest assaults on the FBI, the Justice Department, the courts, the intelligence community (in which I served) and, not least, a model public servant and genuine war hero such as Robert Mueller — all the while scaremongering with lurid warnings of "deep-state" machinations — I cannot be part of the same organization, even at a remove. To me, Fox News is now wittingly harming our system of government for profit."

Peters incisively continued: "As a Russia analyst for many years, it also has appalled me that hosts who made their reputations as super-patriots and who, justifiably, savaged President Obama for his duplicitous folly with Putin, now advance Putin’s agenda by making light of Russian penetration of our elections and the Trump campaign. Despite increasingly pathetic denials, it turns out that the 'nothing-burger' has been covered with Russian dressing all along. And by the way: As an intelligence professional, I can tell you that the Steele dossier rings true -- that's how the Russians do things. The result is that we have an American president who is terrified of his counterpart in Moscow."

Another strategy that Republicans favor is to use wedge issues to rile up people's emotions in a classic bait-and-switch scheme of huge proportions. The Trump base is being sold a pathologically devious bill of goods by apologists who say Trump is keeping his promises. But his loudest promise was to build a huge wall between the U.S. and Mexico -- and force Mexico to pay for it. He continually milks this divisive and distracting plan, even though he now wants American taxpayers to fork over $25 billion to pay for this wall. Meanwhile, with all the sound-and-fury of partisans up at arms over this issue, Trump has treacherously pushed through colossally large debt-financed Tax Cuts that mainly benefit the top dogs, and he is pushing an agenda sacrificing the environmental commons to further enrich the rich. He is also pushing for cuts in spending on a thousand facets of a civilized society while building up the military and police forces and deportation forces, and he lies through his teeth about making people safer. Meanwhile, he is undermining the economic prospects of working people and fighting with our allies -- while cozying up to authority-abusing foes of democracy like Putin in Russia, Xi Jinping in China, Kim Jong Un in North Korea, Erdogan in Turkey, and Duterte in the Philippines.

Roman hands and Russian fingers -- and lying eyes -- do not inspire much confidence in the righteousness of these scheming leaders who are prepossessed by money, eager to engage in debt-financed Tax Cut scams,
abusers of authority, despotically controlling and righteously zealous to discriminate against the majority of Americans. For this indulgent skullduggery and these base qualities, they sure do deserve the condemnation of those being taken advantage of. Powerful people who heartlessly exploit vulnerable people through a wide variety of scams and swindles are consumed with an ethical rot.

To really see what is going on, "Watch what they do, not what they say," Donald Trump claims he wants to Make America Great Again, but a close analysis of his actions reveals that what he really means is to Make America More Favorable to the Few, and also to give white males more power at the expense of everyone else. To accomplish this goal, Republicans are stacking federal courts and the Supreme Court with extremely partisan conservatives, making it harder for women to get contraceptives and forcing women who get pregnant to have children even if they don't want them. And under cover of the support they thus receive, they are rigging the tax structure to be more regressive, stimulating economic activities through a debt-financed mortgaging of the future, and giving undemocratic corporations more power to exploit workers and deplete natural resources and externalize costs onto society. They are also cutting spending on social safety net programs and other things that are hallmarks of a fair-minded society. They are imposing tariffs, waging trade wars, scapegoating Latinos, Muslims, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, deceiving people using misinformation and the repetitious telling of Big Lies, using inflammatory rhetoric and hot button wedge issues and other divisive tactics to gain and maintain power, demonizing liberals, holding fervent emotion-manipulating Nazi-like political rallies, building up the military, condoning police misconduct, inciting gun owners to fear and suspicion, and strengthening ties with undemocratic strong man autocrats abroad while weakening ties with democratic allies. All of this is distinctly wrongheaded!

The Role of Deregulation in Enabling Malfeasance

The reason Republicans promote deregulatory propaganda so fervently, and with such lavish financial backing, is to make it easier for corporate polluters, scam perpetrators and con men to succeed, along with those who take advantage of expanded opportunities to exploit conflicts of interest, no matter how much harm they engender. This notably includes Trump family members and persons in his Cabinet who exploit the advantages bought by operatives using Big Money, Dark Money and corruption enabled by the Citizens United ruling.

The Trump administration demonstrates an unbalanced zeal for deregulation, especially his appointees to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. It does so to give big benefits to a relative few by artificially inflating profits of mining, fossil fuel extractors or chemical conglomerates, and yet such actions harm large numbers of powerless people, so this is a pathetic type of heedless Tragedy of the Commons outcome. It is wrong to allow big companies to foist terrible costs onto vulnerable people in the form of respiratory ailments or exposure to toxic chemicals, or to fail to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that will have detrimental impacts on billions of people and will cost trillions of dollars. Short-term expediencies are inimically imprudent for the future.

The remarkable and great thing about scientific understandings is that they are progressively adaptive, always improving through the investigatory mechanisms of the scientific method. The latest best understandings are true whether or not those with self-serving interests in denial believe them. When pathological deceivers and greedy Merchants of Doubt have a deep vested interest in persistently questioning whether there is harmful and consequent cumulative greenhouse effects on climatic conditions due to our spewing about 100 million tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere every day, this effort to deceive people for private profit does not alter one iota the science of physics and our unfolding knowledge about how greenhouse gas emissions are causing accelerating costly impacts on people worldwide, and negative impacts on most species of life on Earth.

One thing the Trump administration has been good at is trying to roll back protections of the environment. Fortunately, though it is true that Trump's first EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt tried to weaken or get rid of more than 40 rules, he wasn't very successful due to strong challenges in court to many of his attempted rollbacks. "If all these deregulations actually came to pass, we'd see astounding effects on public health: an additional 80,000 deaths and well over a million cases of respiratory illness over the next decade. And that's an 'extremely conservative' estimate, according to Harvard professors who tabulated the numbers in the Journal of the American Medical Association."
In a notable victory for environmental protections, after Pruitt declared his intention in June 2017 to reverse methane emission limits placed on the oil and gas industry in 2016, the Environmental Defense Fund and partners filed a motion challenging this action, and courts subsequently ruled that the EPA could not suspend the methane emissions rules for new oil and gas wells. They sternly cited Pruitt's decision as "unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious", and the D.C. Court of Appeals overwhelmingly ruled to uphold that decision.

There are unfortunately all too many radically irresponsible ideological extremists who are eager to continue Trump’s environment-assaulting agenda, to weaken environmental protections and deny the reality of climate change, and to undermine the very purposes for which the Environmental Protection Agency was established. Their eagerness stems from their narrow self-interest in power and profits, and comes at the expense of having polluters spew toxic wastes into the air and streams, and to allow profit-maximizing corporations to foist the terrible costs of their activities onto countless numbers of people right now, and in the future.

A cynic could easily conclude that the main expertise demanded for employment in the Trump Administration is the ability to succeed in implementing a deregulated, private profit maximizing, anti-egalitarian and insidiously anti-environmental regime on the masses. And the main character quality desired is an unquestioning loyalty to Donald Trump, even at the expense of broadly betraying the greater good.

Just after July 4, 2018, Scott Pruitt was forced out of his job as EPA chief. That was a positive step. It is high time that this worst-ever Cabinet member was fired. The bad news is that a climate change denier and coal industry shill is now the new EPA chief, and most of Trump's Cabinet Secretaries are guilty of multiple misdeeds, from extravagant and excessive use of taxpayer dollars, to cronyism and nepotism, to using their position to increase their personal wealth. “What are Republicans in Congress doing about this? Why, investigating Hillary Clinton, of course!”

Richard Painter, the chief ethics lawyer under President George W. Bush, declared, "Goodbye Scott Pruitt, the worst Administrator in EPA history and perhaps the word cabinet member ever. Fake science, fake ethics and fake religion (complete with a cultish theology of planet destruction) all rolled into one." The worst scandal of the Pruitt era was not the numerous brazen instances of unethical personal corruption -- "not the millions spent on personal security or the thousands spent on a soundproof phone booth. No, the enduring scar left by Scott Pruitt is the political dismantling of the EPA itself. In year one, he rolled back regulations protecting clean water. He scrubbed away references to climate change and stopped collecting data on methane emissions. He blocked regulations designed to cut emissions from cars and power plants."

“Making America Great Again did not, to him or to the Trumps, extend to protecting the land, the waters, the oceans, the forests, the wildlife, the air we breathe or the stability of climatic conditions on Earth.”

Upon his resignation, Scott Pruitt sent a cravenly flattering communiqué to Donald Trump, stating: “It is extremely difficult for me to cease serving you in this role, first because I count it a blessing to be serving you in any capacity, but also because of the transformative work that is occurring.” Really?! In reaction to this odd utterance, Mark Sumner incisively observed, “That transformative work includes allowing coal mines to dump waste into streams and rivers, relieving oil and gas companies of the pesky business of letting anyone know when they leak huge plumes of methane into the air, allowing factory farms to flood streams with animal waste without even having to report on water or air quality. All of which is truly transformative for people who live downwind or downstream. And there are the pesticides that Pruitt saved from cruel regulation, the power plants now free to produce more acid rain and bring the blessing of holy mercury to the nation's diet. Yea, verily, these are blessings which are expected to leave 88,000 Americans transformed to the state of holy deadness over the next decade, and leave millions more with the gift of asthma or nerve damage.”

Pruitt continued in his obsequious letter, “My desire in service to you has always been to bless you as you make important decisions for the American people. I believe you are serving as president today because of God’s providence. I believe the same providence brought me into your service.” Wow! Mark Sumner scoffed: “Scott Pruitt didn’t just spend millions on first-class travel to spread the gospel of how to turn the planet into a soot-stained outhouse, it was a holy calling. That wasn’t a private army he built, it was soldiers of the lord-what-a-
load.” … “If you were wondering why Pruitt lasted so long in a White House where the average tsetse fly exceeds the lifespan of a cabinet officer, take a look at that note again. That’s some serious shiny-knees knob polishing. It’s that level of suck-up-i-tude that allowed Pruitt to weather almost any storm. Because you can imagine just how much Donald Trump loves hearing this crap. … Other cabinet officers should keep this around as a handy reference.” With this letter, Scott Pruitt’s most notable accomplishment has ascended right up there with VP Mike Pence’s look of vacuous adoration at hearing the Commander-in-Chief deviously pontificate.

**Political Observations**

At a surprise news conference on Friday, July 13, 2018, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein announced that the Justice Department was charging twelve Russian intelligence officers with a wide range of offenses, including conspiracies to hack the Democratic National Committee and state election systems and other targets. This brought the total number to 32 of the people charged in connection with the Mueller investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

House Republicans grilled and unfairly castigated Peter Strzok, an FBI counterespionage agent, in a hearing that prompted Walter Schaub, former director of the Office of Congressional Ethics, to send out this tweet: “This congressional attack on the Russia investigation definitively answered a few questions: Do these Members of Congress love America enough to put country before politics? Will they ever stand up to Trump? Have they any sense of constitutional duty? Have they no shame?” His simple declarative conclusion: “No.” These personal attacks on Peter Strzok made House Republicans look ridiculous. “This is like watching something out of the McCarthy era. Maybe the lowest moment yet in the House GOP’s attempts to interfere with Mueller.” Republicans’ real goal was to continue to try to turn public opinion against the Russia investigation. This is why Peter Strzok rightly said the hearing was “another victory notch in Putin’s belt and another milestone in our enemies’ campaign to tear America apart.”

Trump Republicans obviously fear -- for very good reason -- that Mueller found extensive evidence of contacts between the Trump campaign and the Russian government and many instances of apparent attempts to obstruct justice by covering them up. And then Trump appointed Bill Barr as his new Attorney General in February 2019, and soon thereafter the Mueller investigation was brought to a conclusion and Barr blatantly misconstrued the findings. This act demonstrated loyalty to Trump, but not to the truth or the American people.

It can clearly be seen that Trump and Republican members of Congress worked hard to discredit and derail the Mueller investigation, levying claims that the investigation is unconstitutional, and that Donald Trump can pardon himself no matter what form of wrongdoing he engages in, and that he should be allowed to break laws and obstruct justice with total impunity. One or more of these arguments will almost certainly reach the Supreme Court, and with Justice Anthony Kennedy’s retirement, Trump has chosen to replace him with a man who is loyal to the doctrine of courts giving more expansive power to the Executive Branch of government. Not good!

The Special Counsel investigation is not looking into a hoax, and it is certainly not a witch hunt, in contradiction to the repeated assertions by Mr. Trump. Trump and his Republican enablers’ are making efforts to discredit established facts, but this only emboldens Putin’s Russia and invites further cyberattacks on our country. Let us stand up, my fellow Americans, and rightly demand that our representatives patriotically demonstrate greater probity, integrity, honesty and concern for their country!

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

August 21, 2019
Core Values of Democracy - and How to Thwart Conspiratorial Threats Against These Values

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
July 14, 2018, with updates May 5, 2019

“Happy first day of Spring!”, I originally wrote. And soon thereafter, “Bravo, my fellow Americans, as we joyously commemorate this Independence Day on its 242nd birthday! Our democratic republic has much to celebrate, but we currently face one of the most consequentially serious sets of crises in our history, and we must deal honestly, honorably and effectively with this colossal challenge.”

Let’s all exit our echo chambers, and congregate in the middle to seek collaborative compromises that improve our hopes for realizing greater good goals. Let’s listen, and talk and debate respectfully, and seek common ground in principles most likely to contribute positively to The Common Good, Properly Understood.

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I’ll meet you there.”

--- Rumi

This essay is dedicated to a clear understanding of the core values of a true democracy, and the many threats against these propitious values. The fundamental tenets of democracy include an overarching commitment to common good goals and personal liberties; a reasonable modicum of equality of opportunity and justice for all; fair dealings toward everyone in their individual pursuits of happiness; popular sovereignty that assures fair representation and power to the people; inclusiveness in diversity; virtue in public service; fiscal responsibility; honesty and patriotic dedication to human rights and to these core values of democracy. In the United States of America, these Enlightenment Era-informed values are laudably set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and in evolving rules of law and a good many significant documents, speeches and writings.

The word crisis is represented in Chinese by two characters that roughly translate as “danger” and “opportunity”. Manipulative and deeply dishonest politicians have gained extremely narrow but domineering control of our country through a long litany of illegitimate means, and they are arrogantly abusing this power for a variety of tyrannically wrongheaded purposes. We the People should rightly seize the day and use this period of dangerous opportunity to right our ship of state and restore assurances of expansive freedoms, cohesive unity and future well-being. We must recommit our nation to important values, and reclaim the virtues of good government by throwing off the shackles of the hegemony of excessively narrowly focused, profit prepossessed and anti-democratic rule by the wealthy. And ecologically sane ways of living are called for.

There are many enemies of democratic values. They include authority-abusing leaders and freedom-infringing opportunists and others who support excessive power for the rich against the common good interests of people in the middle class and the poor. There are those who assault truth and undermine the freedom of the press, those who champion primary privileges for white males at the expense of females and people of color, and those who champion corporate power over the rights, safety and well-being of individuals. There are way too many extreme conservatives in the judiciary, and demagogic leaders who take ruthless advantage of people’s emotions to gain narrow personal benefits and power. Many influence peddlers and others engage in pay-to-play politics and self-dealing and other forms of political corruption that are subversive of core values of democracy.
One specific category of enemies of core democratic values are authoritarians abroad who interfere in our domestic affairs, especially including Vladimir Putin in Russia, who worked to help Donald Trump get elected and give power to reactionary authority-abusing conservatives. Let's start here, with Putin and Russia. The initial title of this essay was The Odd Conspiracy Between Scheming Republican Politicians and Russian Subversion by Vladimir Putin, so one focus of these ideas is on the nefarious influence of Russia on our elections and society.

The U.S. all but bankrupted the Soviet Union during the exceedingly costly internecine competition of the Cold War arms race in the years between 1945 and 1990. This was a very dangerous hyper-militarized confrontation between nuclear superpowers, and it was colossally costly in terms of money, lives lost, skirmish wars fought, incalculable quantities of natural resources wasted, and the many opportunity costs associated with squandering so many resources on misdirected priorities. Now Russia seems to be exacting a serious measure of revenge by interfering in our elections in a “sweeping and systematic fashion”, and thereby undermining our democratic institutions, perverting our national decision-making and helping enable rich people and giant corporate entities to get away with many anti-democratic schemes. These abusers of power are intimidating and oppressing those who oppose them, and sowing discord to deprive the American people of greater unity, tolerance, egalitarian fairness, security and personal liberties.

Russian trolls and bots have engaged in cyber-attacks on the USA, churning up antagonistic divisions between Americans. This was proven in the immediate aftermath of the assault rifle massacre by a teenager at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on February 14th, 2018, when a surge of inflammatory social media activity bombarded millions of Americans. Quite a Valentine’s Day present, Vladimir!

Revealingly, General Valory Gerasimov, the chief of staff of Russia’s armed forces, published an article in 2013 that identified how Russia should engage in new methods for waging war against the United States and other Western democracies. He basically said that information warfare and disinformation should be used to weaponize political divisions in other nations, so that hackers and skilled propagandists could replace riskier and much more costly head-on interventions by the army and air force against perceived enemies. In other words, Russia shifted from its main Cold War geopolitical tactics, and began planning “a wide-ranging, multifaceted campaign to attack Western institutions and undermine Western democracies. The clandestine operation was to include cyberattacks, information warfare, propaganda and social media campaigns. Here was the Gerasimov doctrine at work.” This observation was made by Michael Isikoff and David Corn in their book, Russian Roulette - The Inside Story of Putin’s War on American and the Election of Donald Trump.

We should remember Abraham Lincoln’s warning that a house divided against itself cannot stand. A populace divided more easily falls victim to the power-abusing predations of democracy-undermining demagogues, con men, authoritarians, cantankerous exploiters and despots. Vladimir Putin knows even better than Donald Trump and Republican politicians that success in driving wedges between people is a key to imposing authoritarian control over a people, for he has used this internecine tactic very effectively against his own people.

Enabled by this shrewdly manipulative understanding, Russian operatives are weaponizing social media platforms to exploit polarizing wedge issues. Woe the fact that the evil influence of Putin in the 2016 elections in the U.S. helped give domineering control of our government to uncompromising deceitful demagogic “leaders”, who are now vigorously promoting oligarchy and bankrupting the country with irresponsible debt-financed tax cuts. These regressive efforts are sadly being coupled with aggressive efforts to make draconian cuts in social safety net programs and budgets for almost every savvy aspect of civilized society. This includes budget cuts related to public education, affordable health care, smart green energy initiatives, sensible social insurance plans, public service-oriented public broadcasting, protections of public lands and the environment, and even funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Too greedy!

“Conservatives” in the United States are not only working hard to harshly impose austerity measures on the masses, but also to bolster corporatocratic power and imperialistic militarism and authoritarian police and deportation forces, and to sacrifice the global ecological commons and convert Earth’s assets to cash at the fastest possible rate to goose profits. And they are rigging the de-regulated laissez-faire capitalist economy ever more unfairly, so that a grotesque preponderance of the ill-begotten and artificially maximized profits will
continue to be funneled into the unprecedentedly large bank accounts of the richest 1%.

It is unconscionably irresponsible for Republican politicians to have run up the national debt by $21 trillion since 1980 with their irrationally regressive debt-financed Republican Tax Cut swindles. They rationalize this con job by trying to sell people on believing in their Trickle-Down economic theory, but this swindle is based on a Big Lie, and clearly, what has actually been trickling down since Ronald Reagan’s reign is not propitious benefits and widespread prosperity, but spiking extreme inequities, poisonous divisions, hard-nosed austerity for the masses and risky levels of debt, in addition to the harmful effects of toxic wastes, polluted air and water, environmental despoliation and depleted natural resources. Don’t buy this Big Lie!

Please, treacherous American leaders and Vladimir Putin, relent! Dante would have consigned you all to spend your afterlives in one of several of the nine circles of his Inferno for your greed, propagated harms, abuses of power, deceit and treachery. Look what you have given us. As Professor Robert Reich wrote some months ago, “The GOP under Mr. Trump isn’t the first political party to bend its principles to suit political expediency. But it may be the first to jettison its principles entirely, and over so short a time.” Surely we should throw this authority-abusing tribal cult out of power so that we will be able to more definitively pursue greater good goals.

Robert Reich added: “If Republicans no longer care about the federal debt, states’ rights or Russian aggression, what exactly do they care about? What are the core principles of today’s Republican Party?” His answer: “Winning and getting even. But as a year with Mr. Trump as president has shown, this is not a good formula for governing. Most press coverage says that the Republican Party has moved to the right, but this is not exactly accurate. The party has become increasingly sycophantish toward the mercurial Trump, who is altering modern conservatism into his more nationalistic mold and making what was historically a movement of ideas into, mostly, a cult of personality. The conservative party of Republicans is actually decreasingly conservative and increasingly reactionary.”

Trump treats government “as purely a tribal battle between one side and the other, and expects public servants to put loyalty to him before loyalty to country or the rule of law. Republican congressional leaders should not remain complicit in this debasement,” states the Washington Post’s Editorial Board.

There is a long list of Trump scandals, but in the big picture they are all a part of a single mega-scam, “the corruption of the American government by the president and his associates, who are using their official power for personal and financial gain rather than for the welfare of the American people, and their attempts to shield that corruption from political consequences, public scrutiny, or legal accountability.” Mr. Trump is desperately trying to protect himself by utilizing “an authoritarian model of law enforcement, where the president personally decides who is prosecuted and who is not, based on his own political agenda”. He is doing this so that he will be able to shield himself and his inner circle from legal consequences.

Trump, like run-of-the-mill authoritarians, thinks he can get away with deceiving and distracting the people, and that he is above the rule of law, and that he cannot be held accountable. He had tweeted before the election, “I will Make Our Government Honest Again -- believe me.” That promise turns out to have been colossally dishonest! Subpoenas are coming, with Trump having refused to submit to an interview with the Mueller investigation team, and now that the House has a significant majority of Democrats since Jan. 3, 2019.

As reactionary Trumpism and extreme short-termism wreak havoc on the world, an opening springs to the spotlight. Heightened risks and declining security for tens of millions of individuals are accompanied, most fortunately, by great opportunities for a revolutionary shift to safer and more providential directions. This new path should be guided by sensible, adaptive, progressive, inclusive, sustainable and ecologically sane ideas.

Here is an illuminating understanding from an article titled Trump is finding it easier to tear down old policies than to build his own: “After being the ‘party of no’ during the Obama years, Republicans are still trying to figure out what they want to achieve in this unexpected Trump era -- beyond just rolling back what Obama did. Even some Republicans have raised questions about what the party now stands for, as opposed to what it is against. When Republican Senator Ben Sasse of Nebraska was asked during an interview for a Politico podcast what the Republican Party stands for today, he responded: ‘I don’t know.’”
Note to Senator Sasse: Oh, come on! You mean that you don’t know what moral principles Republicans stand for. But, duh! -- Follow the money! It is obvious what the Republican Party stands for. The top goal of Republican politicians is to gain and maintain power no matter what the consequences, so that’s what they stand for, and it is damnable that they pursue this single-minded priority by pandering excessively to rich people and cash-supercharged corporate entities. After all, what this often means is that the majority of people will be harmed, most folks even in the Republican base will be betrayed, the common good will be undermined, the unfolding climate disaster will be rashly exacerbated, overpopulation will compound, and existentially disastrous Tragedy of the Commons impacts and outcomes will be facilitated.

Somehow We the People have chosen, by hook or by crook, to make a bargain with the devil, and Donald Trump is milking it for all he can get. Authoritarian followers in the Republican base have enabled this outcome, as made clear by Bob Altemeyer, a now-retired Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Manitoba, who outlined the basic nature of authoritarian followers in his 2006 online book The Authoritarians. It is sad that these authoritarian followers have been so willing to go along with Trumpism and Art of the Bad Deal fraud. Sure, they are getting many partisan right-wing male judges appointed to federal court, some of whom the American Bar Association deems “not qualified”, who will often side against women gays, minorities, immigrants and progressives in favor of corporations, rich people and an overemphasis on Trump followers in red states. This, unfortunately for all, will prove to be a self-spiting lose-lose situation.

When the late Senator John McCain once urged his colleagues to reject the torture facilitator Gina Haspel’s nomination to lead the CIA, he uttered these thought-provoking words, “... as I have argued many times, the methods we employ to keep our nation safe must be as right and just as the values we aspire to live up to and promote in the world.” Trump, self-interested, apparently doesn’t give a damn about righteousness and justice.

We should make good use of understandings like this, because though inflammatory rhetoric is being used to divide us, we can utilize the resulting passion-stoked energy to transform feeling into remedial action and progressive positive change, and to turbocharge a new cooperative energy focused on enabling us to better address the sea of troubles in which we find ourselves.

Russia Bolsters Plutocracy and Oligarchy in the USA

Think about the words written by the incisive investigative historian Eric Zuesse in a scientific study titled US in an Oligarchy, Not a Democracy. The study’s opening question was, “Who governs? Who really rules?” in this country. The study found that the U.S. is no longer a true democracy, but instead a deeply corrupt oligarchy.

Zuesse provocatively observes: “Despite the seemingly strong empirical support in previous studies for theories of majoritarian democracy, our analyses suggest that majorities of the American public actually have little influence over the policies our government adopts. Americans do enjoy many features central to democratic governance, such as regular elections, freedom of speech and association, and a widespread (if still contested) franchise to vote. But when policy-making is dominated by powerful business organizations and a small number of affluent Americans, then America’s claims to being a democratic society are seriously undermined.”

Vladimir Putin is a democracy saboteur who began his career as a spy, having been a KGB foreign intelligence officer for 16 years before entering politics. But there is something more consistently diabolical than mere espionage and counterterrorism intelligence intrigue, and that is when sustained efforts are made to achieve subversion of foreign governments by influencing their domestic politics, interfering in their elections, sowing discord, exploiting racial antagonisms, demonizing immigrants, giving excess power to fossil fuel corporation treachery, and supporting reactionary political parties and schemes devised to divide people.

History tells us that Russia and the West have been practicing subversion for a long time, and Russians are said to still be angry over the “the Lockhart Plot” incident. This was a big deal late in 1917, when Latvian soldiers were paid by the British to launch a counter-coup against the Bolshevik government. Bolshevik revolutionaries had capitalized on the successful February Revolution of 1917 against Tsarist autocracy by staging their own armed insurrection in Petrograd, led by Vladimir Lenin. After that triumphant October Revolution, a number of British operatives allegedly tried to assassinate Lenin in an attempt at regime change sanctioned by the British
government, though this is still denied. The Bolshevik government reaction to this plot was to strengthen its secret police to protect against outside interference, and to send spies abroad to discern the plans and possibly evil intentions of others. We are paying a steep price for this totalitarian reaction in the USA today.

Lenin blamed the First World War on capitalism, contending rather convincingly that it was the workers who suffered the most in wars, while profiteering industrialists, weapons manufacturers and other collaborating capitalists made money at a terrible expense to the people, opportunistically making profits from the severe perils suffered by the working class. The First World War had caused horrible hardships in Russia, so Lenin sued for peace and pulled Russia out of the war. As a result of the treaty that ended the war in Eastern Europe, the aggressor Germans moved men from the Eastern Front to the Western Front, and the massive influx of soldiers greatly worried the leaders of the armed forces on the Western Front, so they sought to get Russia back into the war by means of the Lockhart Plot to assassinate Lenin.

Fast forward 99 years, and the Republican reaction to Russian subversive efforts in 2016 was actually to encourage it. When offered "dirt" on Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump Jr. declared, "I love it." Republicans wanted desperately to grab power and thereby push their fraudulent, profiteering, unjust, anti-egalitarian, debt indulging, anti-democratic and anti-environmental agenda. This subversive Russian interference was thus a treacherous conspiracy against the American people. Robert Mueller provides an elaborate picture of this intrigue. These same Republican con artists and others like the new Attorney General William Barr are deceitfully spinning the Mueller investigation in denial of the many scandalous schemes that have transpired. They are claiming Trump is above the law and too busy, despite all the time he spends watching TV and on golfing vacations, working to supposedly Make America Great Again, but in some perplexingly bizarre and counterproductive ways. No one should be above the law in our democracy, and especially not in getting elected, or in engaging in treachery or numerous instances of financial malfeasance.

While the British failed in their alleged plot to assassinate Lenin, Vladimir Putin is getting Russian revenge by succeeding in imposing a ruthless Republican regime on the people of the U.S. with an illegitimate puppet leader who has "conservatives" in Congress cowed and compliant and complicit. We the People must stand up and reject this rule! With the triumph of so many Democratic candidates in the House in November, the bright light of honest examination of all the Republican skullduggery is going to make the year 2019 fascinatingly tumultuous.

Vladimir Putin regards global geopolitical strife as a zero-sum game, according to Michael Isikoff and David Corn in their book, Russian Roulette. Putin also regards the United States as trying to impose a "unipolar" world on Russia and other nations, and he blamed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for turmoil in Russia after many protestors took to the streets credibly alleging vote fraud in connection with elections in Russia in December 2011. Putin used this occasion to crack down on dissidents and stir up nationalistic fervor to gain support -- and to engage in a relatively inexpensive campaign to torpedo Hillary Clinton's candidacy and get Trump elected.

**Big Money Is Having Destructive Impacts**

Far worse than the Russians, some say, is the nefarious influence of the "Kochtopus", the evocative name given to the billionaires Charles and David Koch and their network of cronies, "which for more than six decades has helped to finance and cultivate the ideological uprising that has now, at long last, established itself at the very heart of Republican power." Why was it, again, that God hardened the Pharaoh's heart?

The Koch organization announced it would spend $400 million to influence the 2018 election outcomes, partially as a thank you for the huge tax cuts the Republican Party gave them. They stated they want "to change the trajectory of this country." Bernie Sanders' gave an astute explanation: "The Koch brothers are the extreme right-wing 'libertarian' family. They are the third wealthiest family in the country -- worth some $120 billion. They also, unbelievably, have more political power than either the Republican Party or the Democratic Party."

By abusing the power of their unwarranted and corrupting influence, these two billionaires will gain more than $1 billion every year in tax breaks from the Republican tax cut bill, financed by borrowing money from every taxpayer in the future. So the Kochs could easily pay the $400 million on the 2018 election out of their own pockets and still come out way ahead. This is dastardly corruption incarnate, and it is made vastly worse by the
degree of harm that the agenda they are pushing is having on working people, the stability of the global climate, and the health of wildlife and the natural world. Some of their specific goals are to privatize the Department of Veterans Affairs, Social Security, Medicare and public education. In fact, they want to repeal virtually every piece of major legislation designed to protect working people, the elderly, children, the sick, the poor and the health of the environment that has been enacted since the 1930s.

Bernie Sanders also confirms that the U.S. is becoming an oligarchy, partly due to the Supreme Court’s narrow and extremely partisan Citizens United ruling. He points out, “we see one family not only making huge campaign contributions, but establishing think tanks, appointing university chairs and creating a number of organizations in almost every sphere of American political life. Their goal: to make the very rich richer at the expense of everyone else.” Their strategies inimically include suppressing the pay of working people, undermining collective bargaining rights of workers, and giving corporate entities bigger opportunities to socialize health and pollution costs and exploit public lands. Another of their nefarious schemes is to torpedo public transportation systems in the USA as an offshoot of their longstanding national crusade for lower taxes, smaller government and maximized profits for industries like those that produce oil, coal, natural gas and vehicles.

The early muckraking writer Frank Norris ends the first evocative chapter of his novel The Octopus with the sudden appearance of a lone locomotive bursting onto the scene, startling the perambulating protagonist in California’s Central Valley, scaring him to attention out of a reverie. “The speeding train engine was a “terror of steel and steam, with its single eye, cyclopean, red, shooting from horizon to horizon.” But then the observer imagined seeing the railroad engine “as a vast power, huge, terrible, flinging the echo of its thunder over all the reaches of the valley, leaving blood and destruction in its path (it had moments before barreled through a herd of sheep, crushing many of them): the leviathan, with tentacles of steel clutching into the soil, the soulless Force, the iron-hearted Power, the monster, the Colossus, the Octopus.” The Railroad monopoly!

The Kochtopus is surely less dramatic, but far more harmfully impactful on the lives of hundreds of millions of people. The vast wealth and political influence of billionaires Charles and David Koch are a driving force behind an influence network of system-corrupting rich people that has worked assiduously to get politicians to cut their taxes, rigidly control working people, eliminate regulations designed to protect the environment, corrupt our democratic processes, distort our national priorities, and severely skew our democratic decision making.

Fortunately, a study of history reveals that there have been many dark moments since 1776 when the politics of fear have been prevalent in the USA, yet the “better angels of our nature” have won the day. Jon Meacham provides many examples of this trend throughout American history in his compelling new book The Soul of American: The Battle for Our Better Angels. Now is the time to begin again heading in the right direction!

**An Aside on Hardened Hearts**

The pressure of outraged reaction at the inhumane treatment of migrant children grew so great in June 2018 that Trump was forced to reverse course and sign an executive order to end his policy of forcibly separating illegal immigrant children and parents at the border with Mexico. This ‘zero tolerance’ policy had been put in place a couple months earlier by Jeff Sessions and Stephen Miller, along with Trump and others in his group.

First Lady Melania visited immigrant detention sites in Texas in late June 2018, but the photo op was jarringly overshadowed by her wearing an in-your-face jacket en route that read in big capital letters on the back, “I REALLY DON’T CARE, DO U”. That was an in-your-face attitude for the wife of the man responsible for inhumane “zero tolerance” family separation policies, and stealthy efforts to shred the social safety net. Then on a second trip soon thereafter, the First Lady visited Arizona and expressed great sympathy to border control agents who are doing the hard job of enforcing her rogue husband’s child terrorizing, harm-engendering, virulently unempathetic, counterproductive and immoral immigration policies. Their jobs are compounded by the really bad optics of Stephen Miller’s patently racist hostility even to desperate asylum seekers.

Trump was forced to end his administration’s family separation policy because the optics revealed such outrages against decency and moral values, as well as a fascist-like and un-American ruthless lack of caring. Powerful pressure came from religious leaders and all five living First Ladies, as well as politicians in both parties. Even
Laura Bush was moved to express how horrifying she found this coldly calculating strategy. “Period.” At a meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops, Cardinal Joseph Tobin publicly urged that a delegation be dispatched as a “sign of our pastoral concern and protest against the hardening of the American heart.”

Trump’s executive order still mandates the jailing of migrant families seeking safety in the U.S., and it does not save or release any children from prison. “At best, it will ensure that children will be locked in family detention centers -- essentially internment camps -- with their parents, possibly indefinitely.” Trump is hoping that this remedial order will distract the public and kill the momentum building around stopping his administration’s cruel and harm-engendering detention policies of immigrants and asylum seekers.

In the story in Exodus, God says He will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and then He will multiply His miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt. But the Pharaoh would not listen. Then God rendered “mighty acts of judgment” against the Egyptian people, condemning them to the worst series of plagues in history, on account of the hard-hearted Pharaoh, even though that emperor was oppressing them, as well as the Israelites. The levels of injustice in this patriarchal tale run very deep.

Stephen Miller was the chief architect of the unchristian racist separation policy, and he should be fired. The story of Miller’s bigoted past, as reported about his high school days at Santa Monica High School, should have been sufficient grounds to disqualify him from his job as a White House senior policy advisor in the first place. It is a national disgrace that Miller is the type of person the Trump family wants to have in charge of national policy on such a serious and challenging issue as immigration.

Think about this understanding in an opinion piece by the New York Times Editorial Board titled The G.O.P. Built Donald Trump’s Cages: “We should rightly help address the root causes that are motivating migrant families to stream to the U.S. border.” In 2016, “more individuals sought affirmative asylum from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in the last three years than in the prior 15 years combined.” This is due to rampant violence in that region, and people being desperate to escape. “Helping these nations stabilize themselves is key to reducing the flow of asylum seekers. But Mr. Trump does not like complexity or long-term strategizing. He prefers casting blame and making threats. He has repeatedly vowed to cut off aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras unless they stem the flow of drugs and people into the United States.” ... “Dehumanizing undocumented immigrants may be one of Mr. Trump’s signature outrages, but it is hardly his only one. There is also his politicization of law enforcement, his attempts to undermine public faith in the democratic process, his attacks on the press, his family’s suspect business dealings and his habitual lying.”

The self-proclaimed “very stable genius” Trumpster wants to cut spending on foreign aid, even though “removing a financial lifeline from nations already in chaos is hardly a recipe for progress.” Trump seeks personal triumph and self-enrichment through emotion manipulation, deceit and his dastardly scapegoating of immigrants and refugees and asylum seekers. He makes wide-ranging efforts to discriminate against millions of people in racial minorities, indigent folks, pregnant women and poor children. But surely it would be a better world if our representatives acted with less partisan rancor, skulduggery and selfish advantage seeking.

Instead of allowing schemers to divide us, all stakeholders should come together to seek a consensus on sensibly comprehensive immigration reforms that address all the complexities of the challenge. People fleeing violence and poverty in Central America and elsewhere should be treated with humanity and compassion, rather than being subjected to family separation, military troops and criminalization.
Some may think it seems rather unjust for God to have supposedly hardened Pharaoh’s heart and then punished Pharaoh and the Egyptian people for what Pharaoh decided while under the opprobrious influence of a hardened heart. Why would God have hardened Pharaoh’s heart just so He could judge Egypt more severely and wreak His wrath upon them with so many horrible plagues? Religious authorities, of course, have an answer! “First, Pharaoh was not an innocent or godly man, he was a brutal dictator overseeing the terrible abuse and oppression of the Israelites, who likely numbered over 1.5 million people at that time. The Egyptian pharaohs had enslaved the Israelites for 400 years. A previous pharaoh — possibly even the pharaoh in question — ordered that male Israelite babies be killed at birth (Exodus 1:16). The pharaoh whose heart God hardened was an evil man, and the nation he ruled agreed with, or at least did not oppose, his evil actions. Second, on at least a couple occasions, Pharaoh hardened his own heart against letting the Israelites go: ‘But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart’ (Exodus 8:15). ‘But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart’ (Exodus 8:32). It seems that God and Pharaoh were both active in one way or another in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. As the plagues continued, God gave Pharaoh increasingly severe warnings of the final judgment to come. Pharaoh chose to bring further judgment on himself and his nation by hardening his own heart against God’s commands.”

Interestingly, in these biblical passages, pharaothic abusers of power chose to harden their hearts, presumably so that they would feel less compunction about ruling harshly and acting in ruthless and heedless ways, and in ways inhumane and severely lacking in empathy and compassion.

Cruel treatment of asylum seekers is pathological, and it is sad that Donald Trump is so coldly calculating as to regard children who have become wards of his government as bargaining chips that give him leverage in negotiations for billions of dollars in federal spending on an offensive wall that he wants built between the U.S. and Mexico, at the expense of American taxpayers.

Michael Brune of the Sierra Club observed just before the 2018 midterm elections: “Horribly, incredibly, the Trump administration has imprisoned thousands of innocent children at the border, but it doesn’t stop there. There are the innocent children of Puerto Rico. There are the innocent children of Flint, Michigan. There are the innocent children who are growing up with polluted air and unsafe drinking water across the country. Children whose future Donald Trump has tossed aside because it has no value to him.” … “Our nation’s immigration policies have been broken for decades. But instead of working on solutions that would treat human beings with respect, this administration has chosen a policy of intimidation and brutality. And though some of Trump’s congressional enablers profess they don’t have the stomach for what’s happening to these children, their spinelessness makes them just as culpable.” … “We can hope that near-universal public outrage will be enough to finally shame them into decency. At this point, though, hope is not enough. We must act. We must do everything we can this November to reject their vision of an America where the land of hope and dreams is transformed into a citadel for the privileged.”

Republican strategist Steve Schmidt renounced his membership in the Republican Party in June 2018 in disgust over the harshness of Republican politicians on this issue, declaring that leaders who are complicit with the establishment of internment camps for young children and teenagers “will carry this shame through history. These legacies will be ones of well-earned ignominy. They have disgraced their country and brought dishonor to the Party of Lincoln.”

An observation apocryphally attributed to Sinclair Lewis declares, “When fascism comes to America it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross.” A form of modern American fascism is indeed unfolding in the USA today, and it is happening in the form of a demagogic Trumpian cult that is harshly cranking down on migrants and refugees, subjecting them to indefinite detention, and cruelly separating children from their parents (until the optics of that outrage became too objectionable). This new form of right-wing hegemony over the people gains power by energizing a political base against honest journalists, a free press, and what Trump rails against as “fake news” that is critical of his policies, methods and scandalous behaviors.

The Shrewd Exploitation of Political Dishonesty

“If you don’t read the newspaper you are uninformed; if you do, you are misinformed.”
The unfolding "news cycle" is practically overwhelming, buffeted by a sustained cyclone of tweets, conflicting viewpoints, manipulative spin, inflammatory rhetoric and propagated disinformation and fake news on social media websites. Competing news networks on TV and online are interpreting scandalous developments to suit partisan agendas, but the astonishing tsunami of revelations and distractions are beginning to clarify into a very tangible thread that should make it clear what needs to be done to remedy the threats faced by the American people and indeed all of humanity.

Honest journalism is a great strength of democratic self-governance, crucial to the greater good. The Deceiver-in-Chief is making blatantly self-serving efforts to discredit those who are revealing the widespread malfeasance of his Republican regime. Journalists are the true patriots, NOT "the enemy of the people", despite what Trump has repeatedly asserted, echoing many dictators and autocrats over the course of the last century who have used this deceitful charge to delegitimize opposing voices and cripple the power of dissenters.

Meanwhile, Sean Hannity, Fox and Friends and Rush Limbaugh coddle the maniacally narcissistic and dishonest rogue, helping to advance his reactionary agenda no matter how rationally indefensible. So a thoughtful degree of objectivity and Big Picture perspective is needed to sort out the competing narratives, and I, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, aspire to provide such perspective in this manifesto.

Fake news is false information that has 3 main characteristics: It is factually inaccurate, it is often framed in demagogic ways that are emotionally manipulative, and it is optimized to be insidiously propagated by being shared on Facebook or other social media websites. Trump tweets about FAKE NEWS all the time, but what he means is real different. He has co-opted the term to apply to any news that reflects negatively on him, his self-serving motives, his dishonesty, his character flaws or the anti-democratic nature of his unjust policies and manipulative behaviors. Separating immigrant children from their parents -- how to spin this, in the face of widespread and growing condemnation and moral indignation at this abuse of toddlers and young people?

Many Republican politicians won their 2016 election contests partially by exploiting fears, stoking prejudices and propagating fake news, deceitful narratives and conspiracy theories that were forwarded on Facebook and other social media sites to millions of people. Trump now ironically charges that news stories are fake if he doesn’t like what they say, no matter how valid. Contrary to his claims, a news story is not fake simply because it is critical or inconvenient. It is not fake news merely because it calls into question a set of beliefs that some people cling to with fervent conviction. "It is not fake just because it's rejected by those in power. In fact, many of these are signs that the reporter is onto something."

Here's what we should do. Let's flatter the Trumpster by giving him a Special Oscar as soon as possible for his Outstanding Performance in the role of deceitful narcissistic hard-nosed immigrant-scapegoating blame-shifting demagogic con man who has triumphantly manipulated the populace with surreal evil genius and is ruling with brilliant deviousness, scandalous malfeasance, cunning swindles, blatant cronyism, unprecedented eagerness to deceive and lie about serving motives, his dishonesty, his character flaws or the anti-democratic nature of his unjust policies and manipulative behaviors. Separating immigrant children from their parents -- how to spin this, in the face of widespread and growing condemnation and moral indignation at this abuse of toddlers and young people?

The lies Trump tells are unbelievable. The Washington Post Fact Checker has tracked more than 10,000 false or misleading claims -- lies or distortions of truth -- in the first two years after he gained power. One of the most preposterous lies Trump tells is in regard to the impressive team of Robert Mueller and his fellow Special Counsel investigators: "TOTAL WITCH HUNT", he proclaims, despite those being found guilty all around him. Right, right, right -- Trump is as innocent as driven snow. And say, what a sensational turn-around it would be, if this were actually true, from the decidedly sordid details of his entire conniving career.

Consider this illuminating thing. The Grifter-in-Chief has brazenly used his "charitable" Trump Foundation for improper and illicit purposes. Under the pretense of raising money for tax-exempt organizations like veterans

--- Often attributed to Mark Twain
groups, Trump collected millions of dollars and then engaged in what the Solicitor General of New York Barbara Underwood has called, in a civil suit against him, “persistent illegal conduct, occurring over more than a decade, that includes extensive unlawful political coordination with the Trump presidential campaign, repeated and willful self-dealing transactions to benefit Mr. Trump’s personal and business interests, and violations of basic legal obligations for non-profit foundations.” Barbara Underwood also sent referral letters to the Internal Revenue Service and Federal Election Commission in June 2018 for them to make an investigation of violations of federal law, and for legal action by those agencies. Trump as usual deceitfully attacked back, falsely claiming that “sleazy New York Democrats” were suing him for no good purpose.

The Trump Foundation is a private charitable organization started by Donald Trump in 1987 with money he made from his best-selling book, The Art of the Deal. Up until about 2005, the foundation was primarily funded by Trump himself, but since then it has been bankrolled almost exclusively by donations from Trump’s friends and associates. The most prominent Foundation donors have been Vince McMahon, an impresario of professional wrestling, and a New York ticket-reselling mogul Richard Ebers, and NBC Universal, which aired Trump’s show The Apprentice. Many of the contributions to the apparently phony Foundation appear to be in lieu of payments to Trump himself. People Magazine gave $150,000 after it received rights to publish photos of Trump’s son, Barron. Comedy Central donated $400,000 after Trump appeared on one of its celebrity roasts. Revealingly, Donald Trump has not contributed a penny of his personal fortune to his Foundation for many years.

In 2009, the Trump Foundation gave $100,000 to the Clinton Foundation, possibly hoping to curry favor. The Clinton Foundation, despite right-wing attacks on it, is a vastly more reputable charitable foundation that has done much real good in the world, including having reportedly saved millions of lives around the world.

The Trump family has been involved in bigger schemes than cheating on charity. Special Counsel Robert Mueller has assembled a formidable all-star team of expert investigators and lawyers to get to the bottom of Russian meddling in our elections and other malfeasance. These lawyers, combined, possess a vast array of experience investigating financial fraud, corruption, money laundering, foreign bribery and organized crime, and they have already secured 22 indictments or guilty pleas. And Trump’s ex-campaign chairman Paul Manafort has been sent to jail for witness tampering. This makes it clear that consistent Republican assertions that the investigation is a "Witch Hunt" are patently preposterous.

The whole "witch hunt" assertions are part of Republican attempts to protect Trump and his minions from being found guilty of wrongdoing. As “60 Minutes” correspondent Lesley Stahl has said, Trump admitted to her that he attacks the press as part of a strategy to discredit reporters and news organizations so that he will be shielded from negative coverage. This negative coverage, which he inaccurately calls “fake news”, is earned and richly deserved, and journalists should be commended for striving to protect our democracy by shedding light on these compulsive schemes and efforts to distract the people from the malfeasance that is going on.

Tim O’Brien, the Executive Editor of Bloomberg Opinion, provocatively tweeted, “Worth noting the obvious: President Trump is using the same tactics against law enforcement, intelligence agencies, civil service and the judiciary that he deploys against the media -- trying to discredit all of them so institutions that question or check his power are undermined.” To more fully understand this, see The 15 Warning Signs of Tyranny that Professor Robert Reich articulated just before Trump took office.

According to John Feeley, the former Ambassador to Panama, Donald Trump has “warped and betrayed the traditional core values of the United States.” Feeley indicates that he was extremely dismayed by the Trump administration’s hostility to diplomacy, so he resigned and wrote an op-ed in the Washington Post titled Why I Could No Longer Serve This President. Something like 60% of the highest ranking diplomats in the State Department have left their positions, and the void was so marked that when Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was fired in March 2018, eight of the ten most senior positions at the State Department still had not been filled, “leaving no one in charge of arms control, human rights, trade policy, or the environment.” John Feeley had been a Foreign Service officer for 27 years, and like his peers, he advocates an ethos of non-partisan service. Yet Feeley sees it as too dangerous for the U.S. to cede its diplomatic leadership in the world, saying, “We’re not just walking off the field. We’re taking the ball and throwing a finger at the rest of the world.”
Additionally, Trump has offended U.S. allies with his bans on travelers from Muslim-majority countries, strident calls for a wall on the Mexican border, political bait-and-switch schemes with regard to the young immigrant Dreamers, withdrawals from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris Climate Agreement and the Iran nuclear deal, and his offensive attacks on allies like Justin Trudeau in Canada, as well as his cozying up to repressive authoritarians in many countries abroad. In addition, his heartless policy of separating children from their parents is causing widespread moral indignation, because as the UN human rights chief Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein declared, it is “government-sanctioned child abuse” that will cause “irreparable harm.” Al-Hussein added, “I am deeply concerned by recently adopted policies which punish children for their parents’ actions. The thought that any state would seek to deter parents by inflicting such abuse on children is unconscionable.”

Feeley sensed that Trump saw every unknown person as a threat, and that his first instinct was to annihilate that threat. “He’s like a velociraptor,” he said. “He has to be boss, and if you don’t show him deference, he kills you.” The emotionally trepidatious Trumpster seems to regard every perceived opponent as an enemy, so his narcissistically hyper-insecure reaction is to try to vanquish and humiliate anyone who objects to his tirades or criticizes his rash or immoral actions. No one should be so brainwashed or blindly loyal to cultish tribal identity as to go along with the ruses being perpetuated against us all.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions spoke in June 2018 in Fort Wayne, Indiana to a group that included many law enforcement officers and others in the community. He directly addressed “religious leaders” and “church friends”, and declared, “Illegal entry into the United States is a crime -- as it should be. Persons who violate the law of our nation are subject to prosecution. I would cite you to the apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13 to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of order.” Wow, really -- God supports the government, right or wrong?!

This tortured reading of the biblical passage in Romans 13 to justify his “zero-tolerance” policy that separates children from their parents as families seek to enter the United States “is exactly the strained interpretation that others have used before to justify slavery, segregation, apartheid and Nazism. The same interpretation could be used to justify Joseph Stalin, or Kim Jong Un.” One observer wrote, “A more complete reading and understanding of Romans 13 -- and the Bible more broadly -- reveals more love and care for neighbors and immigrants than Attorney General Jeff Sessions would have us believe.”

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, upon being asked about these remarks by Jeff Sessions, said: “It is very biblical to enforce the law.” A sensible observer noted, “This isn’t religion. It’s perversion. It is not the creed of a democratic government or political party but of an authoritarian cult.”

Eric Trump Weighs In

Eric Trump arrogantly characterized Democrats as “not even people” in June 2017 because they supported the investigation into his father’s election campaign and the suspicious enthusiasm of Republicans for having Russian operatives, oligarchs and social media trolls and bots interfere in our elections to help Donald Trump gain victory and thereby sabotage our democracy. The unfolding story of how this was done is complemented with an improving understanding of how pushers of fake news, conspiracy theories and character assassinations manage to succeed in their treachery. Little Eric is outraged at allegations that Donald Trump is abusing power and undermining American democracy and obstructing justice. “Not even people.” ZING! That’s worse than deplorable! Eric’s way of seeing is far from clear-eyed. In the heat of battle, conflicts intensify with deteriorating circumstances, and people say the craziest things!

Think about a fuller quote from Eric Trump: “I’ve never seen hatred like this, I mean to me they’re not even people. It’s so, so sad, I mean morality is just gone, morals have flown out the window we deserve so much better than this as a country.” MORALS? LOL! In See Clearly, the immorality of the many financial scams that rich people use to subject the masses are revealed and evaluated, and they make it clear that the real unethical and immoral actions are those that rich people are engaged in, and by persons and business entities that abuse the power of their influence for private advantage. And with regard to “hatred”, I’ll speak for millions of decent Americans in stating that the privilege-addled young Trump has got it all wrong. We progressives ARE
people, and we are a majority who do not support Donald Trump's egregiously irresponsible leadership. And it is neither hatred nor sour grapes that motivates us to oppose the unprincipled Republican power grab. It is instead fairness-honoring democratic values and respect for greater honesty and a truer patriotism than the focus of Trump Family First. It is not hatred, it is disgust at all the pathological scams and malfeasance that is being perpetrated on the American people, as provocatively set forth in See Clearly.

A "war on the poor" is in effect being waged through the federal budget, and the budget is also one of the main pressure points where public lands and the environment are being sacrificed. The majority of Americans is angry at the arrogant attempt to repeal Obamacare and replace it with a "mean" new plan that would have given rich people $800 billion in tax breaks at the expense of millions of Americans losing their healthcare coverage. The majority supports improving public education, not slashing funding for it to subsidize privileged people and their kids in private schools. The majority favors expanded women's rights and empowerment, and they oppose new limitations on contraception and safe abortion before fetal viability.

The majority supports environmentally sane planning and greater efforts to leave a more secure legacy to our children and grandchildren and every person in all future generations. The majority disapproves of leaders who panderm to those who profit from wasteful and polluting uses of fossil fuels and abdicate responsibility for taking smart steps to ameliorate the effects of climate disrupting greenhouse gas emissions. No matter what various members of the Trump family tell us, we must soon adopt good plans that will ensure we make an intelligent transition to cleaner energy and a greater reliance on the use of renewable resources.

"Little Eric obviously didn't inherit enough of his father's genes and domineering stature," scoffed Roberto, the underground Mole, upon hearing these words, "so he isn't capable of playing a convincing role as Central Casting's perfect insult-hurling demagogic deceiver. It must be admitted that his clueless narcissistic hubris is an effete echo of the devilish Donald, and he sure is demonstrating a tendency to be completely unconvincing and excessively jejune in his efforts to manipulate public opinion." Huh?!

Donald Trump has shown how little loyalty he feels to friends and allies who honor principles higher than his self-interest. As Time Magazine Editor-in-Chief Nancy Gibbs wrote in August 2017, "Most successful leaders, certainly most Presidents, preach an American gospel about freedom, justice, imagination, ambition. They invoke values in the service of both achieving goals and healing wounds. But that is not this President's liturgy. Instead of summoning our better angels, he strums deep chords of grievance and resentment: The world is not a community, it's a business. If you're not winning, you're losing. And anyone who invests in a common good or a shared sacrifice is a sucker."

Let's beg to differ, and redesign our great country to resoundingly refute these divisive attitudes!

"The pessimist complains about the wind: the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails."

--- William A. Ward

The rest of this essay examines the likely legacy being left to the American people by the treacherous subversion of our politics by Donald Trump, Mike Pence, Mitch McConnell, Paul Ryan and Vladimir Putin.

One Dastardly Result of Politicians Pandering to Giant Corporations

The Republican Party has become "dangerously extreme" in its denials of climate science. And this ideological denial is both cowardly and highly risky. The prominent economist Paul Krugman assessed the ramifications in an article in December 2015: "I'd urge everyone outside the climate-denial bubble to frankly acknowledge the awesome and terrifying reality. We're looking at a party -- the Republican Party -- that has turned its back on science at a time when doing so puts the very future of civilization at risk. That's the truth, and it needs to be faced head-on."

According to Nathaniel Rich, the climate crisis is an unfolding tragedy, but it is also a crime, "a thing bad people knowingly made worse, for their personal gain. That, I suspect, is one of the many aspects to the climate change battle that posterity will find it hard to believe, and impossible to forgive."
Think about this in the context of the Know Nothing attitude of Trump Republicans in slashing funding for NASA’s Carbon Monitoring System, and of the anti-intellectual scams of people like former Florida Governor Rick Scott and their efforts to suppress knowledge by prohibiting mention of the words climate change in all official state business.

Trump’s arrogant and extraordinarily myopic renunciation of the Paris Climate Agreement is a blatant refusal to responsibly work together with leaders in all other nations on Earth to address one of the biggest existential challenges ever faced by human beings. Bold climate action and true climate justice are needed now!

Twenty-eight-year-old Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who upset a prominent Democratic incumbent in a June 2018 primary, easily defeated her Republican opponent in the November elections in an overwhelmingly Democratic district. Alexandria has a degree in economics, and progressive sensibilities, and she has outlined plans to lead the United States in a transition to a 100% renewable energy system by the year 2035. “It’s a goal hailed by environmentalists as the last best hope of staving off the most catastrophic effects of human-caused planetary warming, and it’s one already adopted by a coalition of mayors representing 42 percent of U.S. electricity use and representing major cities such as Atlanta and St. Louis.”

What sets Ocasio-Cortez’s proposal apart is her plan to meet the target by implementing what she called a “Green New Deal,” a federal plan to spur “the investment of trillions of dollars and the creation of millions of high-wage jobs.” This slogan harks back to President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1930s New Deal program of labor reforms and infrastructure spending. Alexandria compared the program she envisions to the tens of billions of dollars spent on the rebuilding of Europe after World War II.

“The Green New Deal we are proposing will be similar in scale to the mobilization efforts seen in World War II or the Marshall Plan,” she told HuffPost by email. “We must again invest in the development, manufacturing, deployment, and distribution of energy, but this time green energy.” She has suggested that storm-ravaged Puerto Rico, still struggling to regain reliable electricity a year after the deadliest hurricane in modern U.S. history, could be a testing ground for such a policy. She indicated, “Our fellow Americans on the island have suffered horrendous losses and need investment at a scale that only the American government can provide.”

Cynthia Nixon, the former “Sex and the City” star who challenged the Democratic governor of New York in a primary election, endorsed and campaigned with Ocasio-Cortez. “This is a victory for the people over the powerful, for the grassroots over the establishment, for progressive Democrats over corporate Democrats,” said Nixon, who was at Ocasio-Cortez’s victory party in a Bronx cafe. “This is what happens when you give people a choice. They show up and they reject the status quo.”

Since the Republican agenda is to gain power no matter what means is required, Republican politicians show little concern for the negative consequences. The bottom line of their goal is to get control and money, no matter how harmful the impacts of their abuses of power, no matter how deceitful their tactics, and no matter how seriously they hurt people and undermine the common good. The proof of this contention is found in their shrewd double-crossing of their blue-collar supporters and poor people, their zeal to cut the social security safety net to give tax breaks to the highest income earners and the wealthiest people, and their ready willingness to betray the best interests of the American people and their healthcare and economic security and the decidedly providential soundness of the environmental underpinnings of our overall well-being.

Trump as a candidate made the preposterous assertion that he alone could fix the problems afflicting our country. He bombastically promised over and over again at maniacal rallies that he would “drain the swamp” in Washington D.C. He claimed he had plans to make sweeping ethics reforms, and he declared that he would get rid of corrupt political insiders, and eliminate government waste of public funds, and he actually did pledge to "make our government honest once again." What a farce!

Donald Trump is the last person to trust to fix the problems we face. Take immigration issues. In June 2018, the Trump administration ironically refused to take responsibility for his outrage-provoking “zero tolerance” policies that separate children from their parents, and he said Congress should fix the problem. He is using vulnerable children as bargaining chips to try to get Congress to authorize spending billions of dollars to build a
wall between the United States and Mexico. Trump's immigration policies are being driven by his chief policy advisor Stephen Miller, a 31-year-old Duke graduate who demonstrated "instance after instance of bigotry, xenophobia and homophobia" during his time as a student at Santa Monica High School. One student said Miller had "an intense hatred toward people of color, especially toward Latinos." Another student who attended elementary through high school with Miller called him "an unabashed racist," and said "he was constantly making disparaging remarks about the African American, Latino, and Asian students at our school."

And Trump will "make our government honest once again"? Laugh out loud!! These assertions were part of a colossal Big Lie, for all along and indeed throughout his career, he has been the antichrist of rectitude, a cheater and pathological liar, and his egomaniacal greed for money and power made it clear that he would engage in crass self-dealing and fill his Cabinet with schemers, Wall Street robber barons and other insiders who have blatant and unmitigated conflicts of interest in personal enrichment and the advancement of their own careers.

Let's demand that our representatives implement common good solutions to all the big problems we face! Good solutions abound, and they would be simple, though not easy to implement. Why are our representatives not taking honorable steps to help solve the biggest of our national and international challenges? Ah, yes, of course: such progress is being blocked by corrupt pandering politicians because their top priorities are to get financial support, advance their own careers, satisfy their own damned self-interest, and enhance their own fortunes.

The reason that solutions are not easy to implement is only because the hubris-filled domining few refuse to compromise, and they insist on imposing their wills upon the masses. They are making out like bandits from the Tax Cuts scam, excessive profiteering and cost externalizing gambits. Too, they are seeking excessively unfair political representation in their favor, and using deceit, demagoguery, fear mongering, divisive ploys, huge sums of advertising money, and the exploitation of workers' insecurities and vulnerabilities to impose anti-egalitarian national priorities. And they are staunchly opposing fair-minded collective bargaining rights and environmental protections by making anti-democratic efforts to torpedo progressive plans and politicians.

As American politics has become ever more unreasonably dominated by the reactionary right, it is inspiring more powerful passions for honest and effective solutions to the big problems that affect us all. With governmental control in the USA having been seized by politicians kowtowing to Trump, our national policies have lurched backwards, making our country less fair, more discriminatory, more disdainful of public health and safety, and more favorable to excessive profiteering by huge corporations, especially including fossil fuel exploiters, pharmaceutical companies, gun manufacturers, health insurance companies and corporations involved in the military-industrial complex.

A much better prescription for our overall health and well-being would be for all voters to demand more honest representatives, less corruption, less wrongheaded leadership, and more honorable representatives who really demonstrate an overarching concern for the true greater good. We need national policies that place higher values on precautionary principles, conservation and sustainability, and that are not so depletionary and opposed to conserving resources and generating clean energy.

Knowledge, not ignorance, is the key to human well-being and long-term prosperity. Unfortunately, conservative politicians are trying to slash funding for accurate knowledge on consequential issues like climate science, gun safety, environmental protections and research and development in many government agencies.

Deceit by climate change deniers does not override the laws of physics and probability, and the truth of scientific evidence is not diminished by denial. As Neil deGrasse Tyson points out, "The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it." Demagoguery cannot indefinitely triumph over reason, and the Age of Enlightenment cannot long be suspended by cultivating fear, division and abuses of power.

"Expertise, personal integrity and public service have all been debased and devalued in our dominant culture. That's how we wound up, for the first time in American history, with a president who had no prior governing or military experience but lots of liabilities that would have crippled previous candidates."
The Trump Administration has led a systematic rollback of consumer protections that could affect nearly every aspect of Americans' spending habits, according to reporters for the Washington Post. "At the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, for example, enforcement actions have dropped from an average of three-to-five each month during the past four years down to zero since a Trump appointee took charge of the agency in late November 2017. The Labor Department has delayed full implementation of a rule requiring financial advisers to act in their clients' best interest. And the Department of Education has withdrawn Obama-era regulations meant to strengthen protections for student borrowers. The new approach -- welcomed by banks and business leaders -- has alarmed consumer advocates who fear it gives an advantage to Wall Street and other powerful industries while leaving ordinary Americans more susceptible to fraud, discrimination and predatory lending."

These schemes are part of a colossal con job that is being perpetrated with the help of a whole host of anti-conservation conservatives in Congress, for their own benefit and that of their corrupt corporate beneficiaries.

One of the sneaky methods Republicans have used to impose their scams on the country is the Congressional Review Act. This is a law that empowers Congress to make expedited reviews of federal regulations and overrule them. The Republican Congress under Trump used this law to nullify more than a dozen rules enacted by the Obama administration. Prior to 2017, the Congressional Review Act had only been used once in 20 years. "If Trump and Republicans had not reversed these rules, then companies applying for federal contracts would have had to disclose their labor violations; coal mines would have had to reduce the amount of debris dumped into streams; telecommunications companies would have had to take 'reasonable measures' to protect their customers' personal information; individuals receiving Social Security payments for disabling mental illnesses would have been added to a list of those not allowed to buy guns; states would have been limited in the drug-testing they could perform on those receiving unemployment insurance benefits; certain hunting practices would not have been allowed on national wildlife refuges in Alaska; and states could have set up retirement savings plans for those who don't have the option at work."

Only by coming together to reject the manipulative dividers and exploiters, and their dastardly self-serving agenda, will we be able to adequately address the challenges of environmental desolation, reckless fiscal irresponsibility and rash efforts to undermine the general welfare. We can no longer afford to neglect extremes of inequality, desperate insecurity and gender discrimination, and we can't continue to allow our infrastructure to deteriorate, and we must deal farsightedly with issues like shortages of fresh water, homelessness, overpopulation, gun violence and the conditions that contribute to opioid addiction and overdoses.

May urgency and passion unite with peaceful revolutionary fervor to drive dramatic positive change for all Americans, and all peoples in other countries, and all life on Earth. To achieve greater prospects of peaceable coexistence, we should allow ourselves to be guided by reason, justice and moral Right Understanding.

Meanwhile, partially masked by an obfuscating avalanche of tweets, fake news, hype, lies, stranger-than-fiction scandals, epic malfeasance and incessant efforts to distract and misdirect attention from critical issues, Donald Trump is engaging in a Wag-the-Dog-like scenario. "For Trump, each bold stroke is like a spritz of Febreze on his narrative of domestic scandal, momentarily masking" the expanding investigations into his treacherous ploys with Russia and other aspects of his illegitimate electoral victory, including his efforts to conceal information about his involvement with porn star Stormy Daniels and other women. Philip Rucker, White House Bureau Chief at the Washington Post, continues: "By making brash and risky moves on the world stage -- from shredding the Iran nuclear deal to negotiating nuclear disarmament with the North Koreans to imposing tariffs on Chinese imports -- Trump has a chance to change the way voters evaluate his presidency." He figures he can fool the majority indefinitely. Let's prove him conclusively wrong!

"My whole life I've been greedy, greedy, greedy," declared Trump during the 2016 campaign. "I've grabbed all the money I could get. I'm so greedy. But now I want to be greedy for the United States." It turns out that being greedy is one of the few things Trump has been honest about. But Jonathan Chait makes it clear that "Since Trump took office, his pledge to ignore his own interests has been almost forgotten, lost in a disorienting hurricane of endless news. It is not just a morbid joke but a legitimate problem for the opposition that all the bad news about Trump keeps getting obscured by other bad news about Trump."
In the New York Magazine article It’s the Corruption, Stupid, which features Trump’s face on the cover with a grotesque pig’s nose, Jonathan Chait makes it clear that self-dealing and corruption, rather than Russia, may be Trump’s “Greatest Political Liability”. Chait’s cover story in the magazine was accompanied by a separate piece, 501 Days in Swampland, which was promoted online with the headline “501 Days of Trump & Co. Stealing America Blind.” Obviously, Trump needs “a fixer” like Michael Cohen more than ever, but unfortunately for him, Cohen has been convicted on numerous felonies for the fixing he has done for Trump (and other crimes).

Trump made a lofty promise in his inaugural address. “The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer,” he vowed. “For too long, a small group in our nation’s capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished -- but the people did not share in its wealth.” But then Trump has delivered another message, without saying it out loud, which was aimed at a much smaller, but very rich, audience. “The very first place Trump headed after being sworn in -- his true destination all along, in a sense -- was the Old Post Office and Clock Tower, which only 12 days before the election had been repurposed as the Trump International Hotel Washington. The elegant granite structure, whose architectural character Trump had promised to preserve, was now besmirched by a gaudy, faux-gold sign bearing his name. The carefully choreographed stop sent a clear signal to the foreign governments, lobbyists and corporate interests keen on currying favor in Washington: The rewards of government would now be reaped by a single man -- and the people would bear the cost.” Forced to reveal a little financial information, Trump’s May 2018 financial disclosure showed a $5 million profit on $40 million in revenues on this public property. It also showed that 59 political groups, 25 business groups and 7 foreign governments have paid for events or visits there.

“More than at any time in history, the president of the U.S. is actively using the power and prestige of his office to line his own pockets: landing loans for his businesses, steering wealthy buyers to his condos, securing cheap foreign labor for his resorts, preserving federal subsidies for his housing projects, easing regulations on his golf courses, licensing his name to overseas projects, even peddling coffee mugs and shot glasses bearing the presidential seal. For Trump, whose business revolves around the marketability of his name, there has proved to be no public policy too big, and no private opportunity too crass, to exploit for personal profit.”

Let’s demand that Donald Trump resign, along with all in his self-interested administration and all the Republicans in Congress who have been complicit with him in pushing such a wrongful and retrograde agenda!

More Aspects of Corruption Incarnate

It should come as no surprise that instead of ethics reform, Trump has filled his administration with almost 200 persons who were former lobbyists for industries that they are now acting as insiders to give maximized benefits to, almost always to the detriment of the people. This has led to many scandals as Trump has chosen industry shills like all-but-evil EPA head Scott Pruitt and treacherous public lands exploiter Ryan Zinke, and many of them have indulged in extravagant expenditures with the public’s money.

“This extravagant spending around public displays of status -- call it, with apologies to Thorstein Veblen, conspicuous corruption -- has become a trademark of the Trump administration”, wrote David Graham in his article A Cabinet of Conspicuous Corruption. “Wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars by several Secretaries follows a tone set by the president.” The Trump brand is not just tarnished, it is corroded and tipping into criminality. “There are so many cases of huge spending of taxpayer dollars by Cabinet secretaries that it’s easy to lose track of them all — or simply to become desensitized — so here’s a few of the lowlights.” Graham goes on to mention the ugly details of misconduct and corrupt practices by billionaire Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, former HHS Secretary Tom Price, former EPA head Scott Pruitt, former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and former Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin.

“The impulse to live luxuriously on taxpayer dollars has become a pattern for this administration. It is not the only form of impropriety on display. The president has surrounded himself with crooks and liars throughout his political career, and there are more traditional forms of corruption at play in the administration. There was Carl Icahn apparently using a post as a senior adviser to further his own personal interests. There’s Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross claiming he would divest holdings but not actually doing so (which of course echoes the
non-divestment of the president himself). There are warnings that Ben Carson could be using his position to advance his son's business interests." And let's not forget billionaire Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, who favors funding of private schools over public schools, and appears to care a lot more about the student loan industry than the excessive indebtedness of students.

Trump and Secretary of Energy Rick Perry plan to stick utility customers and taxpayers with the bill for bailing out failing coal and nuclear plants, and they try to justify the move as a matter of national security. In reality, this action would simply shift the financial burden away from polluters and onto families and businesses, which would be forced to shell out billions of dollars to keep these withering industries alive despite the fact that cheaper, cleaner and renewable sources of energy are readily available. And there are many other facets of swamp creature corruption, including influence peddling, pay-to-play politics, protection racket schemes of extortion and other highly suspicious activities that are coming to light.

"But why has extravagant spending around public displays of status become a distinctive form of corruption for this particular administration? It's probably impossible to answer that question definitively, but a few informed guesses make the excessive spending seem like a paradigmatic Trump administration scandal. One is that the president sets the tone for the rest of the administration. The George W. Bush administration began with a heavy focus on MBA-style management, reflecting its MBA-holding president. The Obama administration valorized Ivy League intellectualism. It stands to reason that in an presidency helmed by a man whose name is synonymous with decadent displays of luxury, and who is famous for flying around the country in a private jet with his name on the side, Cabinet members would seek to emulate the same luxurious jet-setting lifestyle, with their own first-class travel, stays in luxurious hotels, and imposing security details."

"The problem is that Trump's private jet was just that: private, and paid for by himself. What these Cabinet secretaries are attempting to do is to live a Trump-lite lifestyle on the taxpayer's dime. In so doing, they often break rules about spending, as in Carson and Shulkin's cases: even when they do not, it looks awful, since no one wants to see their hard-earned money put toward lavish travel by political appointees. (The costs of Trump's travel have also drawn deserved criticism, though the rules and expectations around presidents are different from Cabinet secretaries.)"

The Dastardly Duo of Donald Trump and Mike Pence

Conservative political commentator George Will wrote a scathing article in 2018 about Donald Trump and VP Mike Pence titled Trump is no longer the worst person in government. Listen to this excerpt of his incisive point of view: "Donald Trump, with his feral cunning, knew. The oleaginous Mike Pence, with his talent for toadyism and appetite for obsequiousness, could, Trump knew, become America's most repulsive public figure. And Pence, who has reached this pinnacle by dethroning his benefactor, is augmenting the public stock of useful knowledge. Because his is the authentic voice of today's lickspittle Republican Party, he clarifies this year's elections: Vote Republican to ratify groveling as governing." ... "There will be negligible legislating by the next Congress, so ballots cast this November will be most important as validations or repudiations of the harmonizing voices of Trump, Pence, Arpaio and the like. Trump is what he is, a floundering, inarticulate jumble of gnawing insecurities and not-at-all compensating vanities, which is pathetic. Pence is what he has chosen to be, which is horrifying." Here are more of George Will's scathing and sagacious words:

"..."
3 minutes: “I’m deeply humbled. …” Judging by the number of times Pence announces himself “humbled,” he seems proud of his humility, but that is impossible because he is conspicuously devout -- and pride is a sin.

Between those two Cabinet meetings, Pence and his retinue flew to Indiana for the purpose of walking out of an Indianapolis Colts football game, thereby demonstrating that football players kneeling during the national anthem (in protest of racism and police brutality) are intolerable to someone of Pence’s refined sense of right and wrong. Which brings us to his Arizona salute last week to Joe Arpaio, who was sheriff of Maricopa County until in 2016 voters wearied of his act.

Noting that Arpaio was in his Tempe audience, Pence, oozing unctuousness from every pore, called Arpaio “another favorite,” professed himself honored by Arpaio’s presence and praised him as “a tireless champion of … the rule of law.” Arpaio, a grandstanding, camera-chasing bully and darling of the thuggish right, is also a criminal, convicted of contempt of court for ignoring a federal judge’s order to desist from certain illegal law enforcement practices. Pence’s performance occurred eight miles from the home of Senator John McCain, who could teach Pence -- or perhaps not -- something about honor.

Henry Adams said that “practical politics consists in ignoring facts,” but what was the practicality in Pence’s disregard of the facts about Arpaio? His pandering had no purpose beyond serving Pence’s vocation, which is to ingratiate himself with his audience of the moment.

Hoosiers, of whom Pence is one, sometimes say that although Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky and flourished in Illinois, he spent his formative years -- December 1816 to March 1830 -- in Indiana, which he left at age 21. Be that as it may, on Jan. 27, 1838, Lincoln, then 28, delivered his first great speech, to the Young Men’s Lyceum in Springfield. Less than three months earlier, Elijah Lovejoy, an abolitionist newspaper editor in Alton, Ill., 67 miles from Springfield, was murdered by a pro-slavery mob. Without mentioning Lovejoy -- it would have been unnecessary -- Lincoln lamented that throughout America, “so lately famed for love of law and order,” there was a “mobocratic spirit” among “the vicious portion of the population.” So, “let reverence for the laws … become the political religion of the nation.” Pence, one of evangelical Christians’ favorite pin-ups, genuflects at various altars, as the mobocratic spirit and the vicious portion require.

It is said that one cannot blame people who applaud Arpaio and support his rehabilitators (Trump, Pence, et al.), because, well, globalization or health-care costs or something. Actually, one must either blame them or condescend to them as lacking moral agency. Republicans silent about Pence have no such excuse.

In a final point regarding our national anthem, Mr. Trump has broken tradition by not inviting players for the 2018 NFL champion Philadelphia Eagles or the NBA champion Golden State Warriors to the White House, snubbing them instead of commemorating their great success. Trump’s reactive reason for this is because courageous athletes on these teams have been outspoken critics of the injustices for which Trump stands.

**BREAKING:** Triple Crown winner Justify turned down an invitation to visit the White House. Asked why, the Triple Crown winner said, “if I wanted to see a horse’s ass, I would’ve finished second. Ha! - “LOL.”

**Another Look at Tax Scams**

Just before Christmas in December 2017, Trump and Congressional Republicans passed a tax scam that will run up the national debt by more than $1.5 trillion over a 10-year period. This Tax Cuts Act was not true reform, but a new rigging of the tax system that is highly anti-egalitarian and fiscally irresponsible!

Six months after the passage of this Tax Scam, here is what we know: 83% of the tax cuts will eventually go to the richest 1%, and only 4% of workers have gotten a wage hike or one-time bonus due to the tax cuts. Also, the cost of the tax cuts has ballooned from $1.5 trillion to $1.9 trillion, “emboldening GOP lawmakers to demand even more cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, education and more.” Predictably, “Prescription drug companies, health insurers, Wall Street banks and other major industries are getting huge tax breaks and not sharing the wealth with consumers or their employees.”

Despite these outrageous results -- ripping off the American people -- Trump and Congressional Republicans
were planning to double down before the November Election with a Tax Scam Round 2 that could have cost another $1 trillion and would mostly benefit the wealthy at the expense of working families, seniors, people with disabilities and hungry children. Tax Scam Round 2 would have been "another giveaway to Republican donors, wealthy business owners and real estate developers like Donald Trump who game the system at our expense."

Due to the wrongheadedness of these tax scams, the following pledge is advocated by the Economic Policy Institute's EPI Policy Center, Americans for Tax Fairness, American Family Voices, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Corporate Accountability, Daily Kos, Demand Progress, Democracy for America, Good Jobs Nation, the AFL-CIO, People Demanding Action, People For the American Way, People's Action, Progress America, Congressional Progressive Caucus Center, RootsAction.org and Social Security Works: "I am totally opposed to any new tax cuts that benefit the wealthy and result in cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, education and more. Instead, Congress should be voting to repeal the Trump-GOP tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations. I demand that you reject "Round 2" of Trump-GOP tax cuts that benefit the wealthy at the expense of working families."

Conclusion

Here's what's happening right now. Common good goals are being broadly undermined. This is being done to serve the top priority of our political representatives to further concentrate wealth in the hands of the few. We are sacrificing the primary postulates of sane governance by acquiescing to the desires of rich people, corrupt politicians, Big Money donors and big corporations making excessive profits. We are, by hook or by crook, allowing debt-financed tax cuts to be given to corporations and rich people, and allowing more costs to be externalized onto society as a whole. These gambits adversely affect countless numbers of people, prominently including the vast majority of working people in the Trump base, which has been duped by his misdirection, lies and misrepresentations. In connection with these schemes and wrongheaded priorities, spending is being slashed on public health, fairness of opportunity initiatives, public education, research and development, scientific understandings the criminal justice system, public service broadcasting, family planning, environmental protections, foreign aid, clean air and clean water, protected public lands, green energy and climate justice.

We must come together and diminish the influence of wealthy people like the Kochs, Mercers and Adelsons, and by corrupt politicians bought by special interests involved in the profit-prepossessed military-industrial-banking-corporate-congressional complex. We should limit Big Money in politics with effective campaign finance legislation and a Constitutional Amendment, as proposed by the patriotic organization Move to Amend, which would sensibly take personhood rights away from corporations "to firmly establish that money is not speech, and that human beings, not corporations, are persons entitled to constitutional rights."

Drain the Swamp! Now that Scott Pruitt and Ryan Zinke have been fired, let's get rid of Steven Mnuchin and Wilbur Ross. And let's demand that a Tax Remedy law be passed that will effectively eliminate every penny gained by all persons in the top 1% of taxpayers in connection with the debt-financed tax cuts that Republicans in Congress enacted in December 2017.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Postscript One - Gerrymandering

Republicans more than doubled their control of state legislatures in the U.S. between 2010 and 2018, and until the success of Democrats in the recent midterm elections, they controlled both legislative chambers in a record 32 states. Using this influence, they gerrymandered Congressional districts in such contorted manner as to give decidedly unfair over-representation to conservative partisans who control the redistricting process. This has resulted in a serious under-representation of the interests of progressives and liberals. Such exercises of extreme partisanship in drawing gerrymandered congressional districts constitute an egregious abuse of power, especially when doing so disenfranchises the majority of Americans.

The House of Representatives and the federal government have been severely corrupted by this practice of
partisan gerrymandering to give an overwhelming preference to "conservatives" and their excessively narrowly-focused agenda. The evidence of this is convincing. In Wisconsin, after Republicans redrew electoral maps of the state in 2011 using "the most precise technology available to dissect new Census Bureau data and convert it into reliably Republican districts", Republicans captured a 60-to-39 seat advantage in the State Assembly even though they got less than 49% of the statewide vote.

Federal courts have declared extreme partisan gerrymanders unconstitutional in states like North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio. This makes it suspicious that Justices of the Supreme Court agreed in June 2017 to hear a legal action concerning this extremely partisan gerrymandering in Wisconsin, but after slow-walking the considerations for a full year, the Justices then found narrow technical grounds to allow the corrupted status quo to continue. In so doing, they violated their oaths of office. They rightly should have ruled that it is constitutionally unfair for state legislatures to engage in extreme partisanship by drawing contorted congressional districts for narrow political advantages. A fair-minded ruling would strengthen voting rights and make our democracy fairer by forcing politicians to compete more honestly for votes, rather than illegitimately winning elections and ruling in a gerrymandered Congress.

Even worse, the Supreme Court in effect ruled that the Republican-controlled State of Texas can continue to use maps that a three-judge District Court had unanimously found were adopted for the purpose of preserving racial discrimination in congressional districts in Texas. This decision was tainted by a 5-4 vote that featured the politically partisan Neil Gorsuch as the deciding vote, and it means that, "after years of litigation and undeniable proof of intentional discrimination, minority voters in Texas -- despite constituting a majority of the population of the State -- will continue to be underrepresented in the political process."

Gerrymandering allows Republican politicians to impose their extremist ideological policies on the American people, skewing tax policy radically in favor of the debt-financed increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and undermining the social safety net, and sacrificing protections of the environment to natural resource exploiters, and depriving women of reproductive rights. This trend is seriously exacerbating inequalities, inequities and injustices in American society today, making "the land of the free" into a place where laws are too often antithetical to making our nation one "with liberty and justice for all."

Postscript Two - Inheritance Taxes

A century ago, the American people were living in a Gilded Age of ostentatious wealth and dizzying inequality. It was "wealth against commonwealth", as muckraker Henry Demarest Lloyd described it. It was in this context that Republican President Theodore Roosevelt recommended an estate tax as a means to keep wealth from being concentrated in dynastic fortunes. Roosevelt was an upper class patrician who honorably used the wealth he inherited to lead a life of public service rather than a life of leisure, and he always believed that the transmission of enormous wealth to heirs "does not do them any real service and is of great and genuine detriment to the community at large." What really mattered, he felt, was to have a national community based on citizens' political equality and relative economic equality and fair-minded interdependence. Inheritance taxes were thus a moral issue for Roosevelt, as well as an economic issue.

"The really big fortune", said Roosevelt in his New Nationalism Speech (1910), "the swollen fortune, by the mere fact of its size, acquires qualities which differentiate it in kind, as well as in degree, from what is possessed by men of relatively small means. Therefore, I believe in a graduated income tax on big fortunes, and in another tax which is far more easily collected and far more effective: that is, a graduated inheritance tax on big fortunes, properly safeguarded against evasion, and increasing rapidly in amount with the size of the estate."

The impetus for the estate tax was the grave threat that concentrated wealth and political power posed to our nation's fragile experiment in self-governing democracy. The voices calling for taxes on inherited wealth at the time ranged from rural populist farmers and urban reformers to enlightened industrialists. The wealthy industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie observed, "Of all forms of taxation, this seems the wisest."

In 1935, Franklin D. Roosevelt took up this crusade, striking out at great fortunes for both moral and economic reasons. "The transmission from generation to generation of vast fortunes by will, inheritance or gift is not
consistent with the ideals and sentiments of the American people,” he stated. “Inherited economic power is as inconsistent with the ideals of this generation as inherited political power was inconsistent with the ideals of the generation which established our Government.”

Only two-tenths of one percent of Americans have a net worth large enough to owe any estate tax at all upon their deaths, under current tax law. This is only two out of every 1,000 people! Such elitist policy makes it abundantly clear that tax laws are among the most politically determined laws of all, given the lavishly generous treatment of rich people after they die, and of the money their children inherit.

Since 1980, regressive changes in taxation in the U.S. have given wealthy people huge sums of money, and this unaffordable largess has been rashly financed by borrowing trillions of dollars from people in all future years. The top tax rate each and every year from 1936 to 1980 was 70% or higher. Then Ronald Reagan began a radical experiment of regressive changes in taxation in 1981, cutting the marginal tax rate from 70% to 28% by 1988. This political abuse of influence has been one of the main mechanisms by which wealth has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest few. Some of the worst and most socially undesirable consequences of this undemocratic concentration of wealth have been a dangerous increase in inequality in American society, a risk-laden piling up of national debt, and unnecessary financing pressures and austerity measures that constrain investments in things like public education, physical infrastructure, the social safety net, and protections of public lands, National Parks and a healthy environment.

The basic ways that our economic and political systems are corrupted to favor the wealthy are examined in Assessment: The Top Ten Ways Our System Is Unfairly Rigged. And the excessively consequential impacts of this corruption are examined in Thirteen Main Methods Used to Increasingly Concentrate Wealth and Power.

Republicans in Congress want to not only abolish inheritance taxes but also to weaken progressive income taxes. The American people should be hearing meaningful debate on taxing vast fortunes, and voices of moral outrage at the anti-egalitarian status quo should inspire “passionate reminders of the American ideal of equality.”

The 100th anniversary of the estate tax took place in September 2016. Now is a good time to assess our present inequalities, and to strive to reverse them. The persons on the Forbes 400 list of wealthiest Americans today have as much wealth as more than 60% of U.S. households. And in the first half of the 2016 presidential election, half of all campaign contributions came from 158 wealthy families. Given this corruption of our politics by Big Money, former President Jimmy Carter observed that we are becoming an oligarchy, and studies of social mobility reveal how the excessive concentration of wealth undermines equality of opportunity.

The estate tax has been under intense siege since 1997, when a number of dynastically wealthy families began to invest millions of dollars to save themselves billions, financing anti-tax lobbying groups and a campaign of slick communications to rebrand the estate tax as the “death tax.” The estate tax has historically raised substantial revenue from those with the greatest capacity to pay. Even in its weakened condition today, it will raise over $270 billion in the next decade entirely from households in the top one tenth of one percent. But revenue has always been a secondary consideration with the estate tax. Its primary purpose historically has been to put a brake on the build-up of concentrated wealth and the threat that this poses to our democratic institutions. The estate tax remains a piñata for anti-tax GOP politicians, and almost all of them want to repeal it. “But we should move in the opposite direction by closing loopholes and instituting a more progressive rate structure.”

Postscript Three – Let’s Reinvigorate Our Democracy!

When you see Republicans striving to win elections by tortuously gerrymandering congressional districts and passing state laws to restrict voting rights, it would be reasonable to conclude that one reason they do this is because they cannot win based on the force of the reasonableness of their ideas and national plans.

The most important thing to do to improve the prospects of democracy in the world “is to fix our democracy at home”, says Professor Larry Diamond, a democracy specialist who was named “Teacher of the Year” by the Associated Students of Stanford University for his excellence in teaching, which was judged to admirably transcend political and ideological barriers. Professor Diamond has been honored for his “passion for
democratization, peaceful transitions, and the idea that each of us can contribute to making the world a better place.” Hallelujah for that passion!

The “Great Divide” of growing inequality is having a tragic impact on the length of people’s lives. An article in the New York Times by Annie Lowrey explored this issue by comparing life expectancies in prosperous Fairfax County, Virginia and much poorer McDowell County, West Virginia. Men in the county of “haves” live an average of 18 years longer than men in the depressed coal area of the “have nots”, and even women in the richer county have an average life span 12 years longer than in the poorer county. “Poverty is a thief,” concludes a professor of social justice. Poorer people smoke more, have less access to health care, eat worse and so suffer higher rates of obesity, and suffer the “debilitating effects of more intense and more constant stress.”

This reveals that socioeconomic status is becoming an increasingly distinct factor in determining longevity, so the only fair course of action would be to providentially change our national policies so that they do not facilitate an ever-increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. This is the right thing to do!

The Project on Government Oversight (POGO) commendably fights to end pernicious forms of legalized corruption that allow a revolving door of easy access between government and special interests that puts industry profits ahead of the public good. In particular, the revolving door of defense contractors, moving in and out of government, is wrongheaded when it provides incentives of countless billions of dollars in wasteful spending on military procurement and war services. It is important to have independent government watchdogs like POGO fighting corruption and holding our government accountable. Whistleblowers are a first line of defense against corruption and abuses of insider influence in the government -- and yet government agencies like the Department of Justice are implementing policies that could prevent whistleblowers from courageously coming forward to advance the greater good.

A Collateral Overview - Economics for a Sustainable World

(The following three paragraphs have been moved for space considerations out from the end of Honestly Seeing It Like It Really Is, where they are intimately relevant.)

The fact of the matter is that even admired companies are excessively obsessed with profits at the expense of the greater good. Facebook, for instance, for a fee, helped optimize its platform for Republicans, and the company grabs lots of advertising income by facilitating the propagation of fake news, disinformation, false conspiracy theories and defamatory attacks. And Apple has evaded huge sums of taxes for years, patiently hiding them abroad since 2005 like countless other corporate entities, in wait for the next time Republicans would gain control and allow them to repatriate the money to primarily benefit CEOs and shareholders.

Perhaps “solidarity economics” is an idea whose time has come. This may have started with an idea expressed at the World Social Forum that “another world is possible”. Applying this concept to economics, the idea posits that it is possible to organize economies around fairer principles that are markedly different from those that characterize global capitalism today. The former Greek finance minister and professor Yanis Varoufakis, an expert in economics, asserts that capitalism is going to make itself obsolete through the increased prevalence of robotics, artificial intelligence and mechanization. Varoufakis warned that Karl Marx “will have his revenge”, saying technology is going to “destroy a lot more jobs than it creates”, and that capitalism will undermine itself because technology companies will make many other businesses and the private means of production obsolete.

Varoufakis has said the current system is unsustainable due to the fact that all the developed nations on Earth, astonishingly, will experience rates of job losses of nearly 50% in many industries within the next 20 years due to automation, artificial intelligence, the use of robots and other labor-eliminating technologies, according to an assessment made in 2013 by Carl Frey and Michael Osborne of Oxford University. To deal with this, Varoufakis says governments need to enact serious redistributive policies. One way they could do this, suggests the economist, is to put 10% of all future issues of shares into a “common welfare fund”, which would be owned by the people. From this fund a “universal basic dividend” could be paid to every citizen. This idea, remarkably, is consistent with a global wealth tax recommended by Thomas Piketty in Capital in the Twenty-First Century."
A Proposed Bill of Rights for Future Generations

“The status quo has many guardians, but the future is an orphan.”

--- Timothy E. Wirth, United Nations Foundation and Better World Fund

Congress passed the original Bill of Rights in 1789 to guarantee essential human rights and personal liberties to the American people. This great Bill of Rights consisted of the first ten amendments to the Constitution. As stated in its Preamble, these rights were added to prevent the “misconstruction or abuse” of the powers of the federal government over its citizens, and to extend “the ground of public confidence in the Government.”

Our Founders gave Congress the power in the Constitution to provide for the “general Welfare”. In the long run, the general welfare and the common good are completely dependent on fair institutions, somewhat egalitarian social policies, honest economic accounting, sensible fiscal discipline, the conservation of resources, and a healthy natural environment. These needs can be satisfied in the long term only by a rigorous framework of respected rights for our descendants in the future. Salubriously, this coincides with our ultimate human moral imperative.

People tend to compete ruthlessly to gain advantages. Many interest groups seek a variety of goals in our society, and a lot of them strive to get more perks and benefits from the government. Some groups are very well represented, like rich people and big corporations, while tens of millions of others are poorly represented. The interest groups that are most under-represented in our politics are young people under the age of 18, because they cannot vote, and every voiceless person yet to be born. To remedy the injustices and extreme inequalities that result from this disenfranchisement, we need to make an overarching commitment to fairer guiding principles in the form of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

“Each generation, sharing in the heritage of the Earth, has a duty as trustee for future generations to prevent irreversible and irreparable harm to life on Earth and to human freedom and dignity.”

--- Jacques-Yves Cousteau

Today, mindful that the well-being of all people in future generations is seriously threatened by short-term-oriented activities and present-day expediencies and greed-driven resource exploitation, this new Bill of Rights should be designed to ensure that future generations have reasonable prospects for prosperity, financial stability, dignity and a fair quality of life. This Bill of Rights should help ensure that irreparable harm is not done to Earth’s vital ecosystems, and that we do not too severely damage the diversity of life on our home planet by driving thousands of species of life to extinction.

Let us eat the fruit of a sublime Tree of the Awareness of Right and Wrong, and share it universally, and acknowledge together that the ultimate moral good is for us to leave a fairer legacy to our descendants in future generations than current trends portend.

To make it clear that we are vitally committed to the greater good in the long run, Congress and leaders in nations worldwide should “pay forward” some good deeds by enacting this new Bill of Rights. This would help ensure that the prospects remain bright for our children, and theirs, and theirs. This Bill of Rights could propitiously provide better confidence and trust in our governing institutions.
“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.”

--- Theodore Roosevelt

PROPOSED BILL OF RIGHTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Article 1. Sustainable Resource Use

Enact an Ecological Sanity Initiative that includes powerful incentives and smart green taxes that are designed to encourage resource conservation, cleaner energy, healthier forests, reduced reliance on non-renewable resources, protections of fresh water supplies, robust fisheries, the preservation of biological diversity, urban renewal, and protections of open spaces, parks and wilderness areas. This Initiative should give priority to safeguarding the health of natural ecosystems and the crucially valuable services they provide to humanity. This goal would best be achieved by investing in stronger protections of public lands, national forests, wetlands, marine sanctuaries and other wildlife habitats, and by striving to restore the resilience and symbiosis inherent in healthy biological diversity.

This Ecological Sanity Initiative would have twelve primary provisions, as enumerated in Three Bills of Right: A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good. See this essay in the Earth Manifesto.

Article 2. Pollution Control and Mitigation

Require corporations that pollute rivers, lakes, oceans and the atmosphere to pay for the prevention or mitigation of the harmful impacts of their pollution-causing activities. These costs should be included in prices of all products and services rather than being allowed to be externalized onto the public and future generations. Strong steps should furthermore be taken to ensure that big corporations and governments adhere to precautionary principles that require cost-effective measures to be implemented to prevent the degradation of the environmental commons.

Article 3. Prevention of Anthropogenic Climate Disruption

Levy a cost on carbon dioxide emissions to deal with the adverse impacts of global warming caused by greenhouse gases, and of related changes in storm and weather patterns. Use the funds generated by this plan for two purposes: (1) to create a “rainy day fund” that covers the costs of natural disasters associated with climate disruption, including intensified hurricanes and more widespread floods, droughts, wildfires, heat waves, cold snaps, “bomb cyclones”, ocean acidification, and rises in sea level; and (2) to provide generous financing for the incipient and necessary ‘green transition’ to a cleaner and more renewable energy future.

Article 4. Stabilization of the National Debt

Prevent the federal government from using the expediency of deficit spending to mortgage the future. People today should not be allowed to saddle future generations with high interest cost obligations on rapidly accumulating sums of borrowed money. This goal should be accomplished by establishing an effective mechanism that reduces the national debt to less than 100% of annual GDP, as it had been from the end of World War II until a few years ago. Such a proposal is outlined in a Balanced Budget Initiative proposed in One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies. This initiative would have a profound influence on the primary drivers of our national policies -- rich people and giant corporations -- by pressuring them to seek common cause with the American people rather than being stubbornly opposed to fair-minded and sensible solutions to our daunting budgetary challenges.

A significantly positive impact could also be achieved by implementing the proposals made in Radically Simple Ways to Make America Fairer, and to Fix Both Social Security and Health Care So We Can Move On to Address Much Bigger Issues. These proposals contain detailed plans on how we can help solve our tax, budget deficit, Social Security and healthcare challenges.

Article 5. Peaceful Coexistence
Strengthen international institutions to build peace between nations, and to prevent violent conflicts between countries over resources. Finance this effort to minimize wars by levying a surcharge on all U.S. sales of arms abroad. Target this surcharge to raise a total $100 billion per year. Also, seek to ratify nuclear arms control agreements with other nations, and dial down belligerence toward other countries, including North Korea and Iran.

**Article 6. Sensible Family Planning and Women's Reproductive Healthcare**

Significantly increase funding at home and abroad for women's healthcare clinics, family planning services, AIDS prevention, and free contraceptives for all women and men who want them. Support comprehensive sex education programs, and make sure they are medically accurate and socially sensible so that they will be successful in preventing sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted teen pregnancies.

**Article 7. Social, Environmental and Intergenerational Justice**

Increase the fairness of economic opportunity and economic security for all people by creating a more level playing field in our societies. Increase environment justice to assure that disadvantaged poor people not bear an undue burden of exposure to toxic wastes, air pollution, and environmental damages. Provide fair treatment and generous foreign aid to developing countries around the world to mitigate harms caused by irresponsible profiteering by multinational corporations. Ratify this Bill of Rights for Future Generations -- in the United States and in countries worldwide -- in order to protect the interests of those in the future from need-driven and mindlessly materialistic and irresponsibly greed-driven consumerism.

**Conclusion**

OK, here's the deal. We Americans supposedly have the right to choose good governance that truly represents government of the people, by the people and for the people. And we should be able to expect the leaders we choose to represent us honestly and demonstrate concern for liberty and justice for all, and a nation united, indivisible, rather than one whose citizens are divided against each other by master manipulators who use antagonisms and resentments to take advantage of the situation for their own personal gain.

Social cohesion is a public good, and when prosperity is more broadly shared, that is the surest path for creating this unifying bond. The nature of the status quo is proof that our representatives care more for their ambitions than for the public good. This makes our elections a terrible sham. The time has come for a radical revolution of values, informed by a strong commitment to a Bill of Rights for Future Generations!

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
January 1, 2017

**DEDICATION**

This *Bill of Rights for Future Generations* is dedicated to one of the most perceptive and visionary persons I've ever met, a man who died tragically of a sudden heart failure a few years ago at the age of 49. He was an eminently remarkable person who was boyish at heart and yet exceptionally aware, intelligent, energetic, alert, and gregarious. He greeted his friends and acquaintances alike with enthusiastic bear hugs, and conversed with them passionately about important causes and ecologically sane ideas, and he was quite commendably committed to making the world greener and more sustainable.

The idea for this Bill of Rights for Future Generations recognizes the vital inspiration of Eleanor Roosevelt, a champion of human rights who spearheaded the effort by the United Nations' Human Rights Commission to enact the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 in the aftermath of the Second World War. Eleanor Roosevelt called this Declaration the "International Magna Carta for all mankind". The Bill of Rights for Future Generations would fair-mindedly expand this respect for natural human rights to all people in the future.
“As people alive today, we must consider future generations. A clean environment is a human right like any other. It is therefore part of our responsibility toward others to ensure that the world we pass on is as healthy, if not healthier, than we found it.”

--- The Dalai Lama

“Freedom is not license but responsibility -- the gift we have received and the legacy we must bequeath. Although our sojourn in life is brief, we are on a great journey. For those who came before us, and for those who will follow, our moral, political and religious duty is to make sure that this nation, which was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all are equal under the law, is in good hands on our watch.”

--- The honorable journalist Bill Moyers

“We are living at the expense of future generations. In this respect, it is plain that we are living in untruth.”

--- Pope Benedict XVI, Light of the World

“Whatever happens to the Earth, happens to the children of the Earth ... All things are connected, like the blood that unites one family. Mankind did not weave the web of life; we are but one strand within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.”

--- Attributed to Chief Seattle in 1844, in a warning to the U.S. government against the misuse of land, water, air, and animal life.

“Behold my brothers, the Spring has come: the earth has received the embraces of the sun and we shall soon see the results of that love! Every seed is awakened and so has all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being, and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even our animal neighbors, the same right as ourselves, to inhabit this land.

Yet, hear me, people, we have now to deal with another race -- small and feeble when our fathers first met them, but now great and overbearing. Strangely enough they have a mind to till the soil and the love of possession is a disease with them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break but the poor may not. They take their tithes from the poor and weak to support the rich and those who rule. They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own and fence their neighbors away; they deface her with their buildings and their refuse. The nation is like a spring freshet that overruns its banks and destroys all that are in its path.”

--- Sitting Bull, a Lakota Sioux Chief, 1877

“Whatever you think or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”

--- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The conservation of resources should be a true virtue of conservatives. But these folks tend to be looking backwards and throwing their lot in with right-wing authoritarians whose top priority is to impose control over others and gain narrow advantages for themselves. To achieve these goals, they are willing to deny scientific facts and act in ways certain to be harmful to people in future generations, and to evade individual responsibility for their impacts.
One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies

Earth Manifesto proposals by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
October 2017, with updates in May 2019

The gap between the wealthiest Americans and the poorest is wider in the USA today than it has been since the Roaring Twenties and the tawdry Gilded Age before it, with its excessive conspicuous consumption and greedy robber barons. The richest 20 Americans have more wealth right now than the bottom 50% combined, and the top 1% owns more wealth than the bottom 90%. The Lessons of History teach us that such a condition of really excessive concentrated wealth creates an increasingly critical situation that should be addressed by enacting laws that make our society significantly fairer. Otherwise, social strife and revolutionary fervor will likely create a redistribution of poverty and insecurity for all, according to the philosophic historians Will and Ariel Durant.

Professor Jared Diamond made a valuable observation in his insightful book Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed. He contended that we need a paradigm shift in how our leaders think and act. America needs leaders with “the courage to practice long-term thinking and make bold, courageous, anticipatory decisions at a time when problems become perceptible, but before they reach crisis proportions.” We should rightly give stronger support to progressive leaders who will act accordingly!

Laudable pro-democracy movements since colonial days around the world have given broader freedoms to billions of people, and it is pathologically sad that ambitious and corrupt politicians are now trying to drive this movement in reverse. It is simply becoming too risky to allow politics-as-usual to be perpetuated without far-reaching reforms, or to accept any further steps backwards. What the world really needs now is farsighted, forward thinking and inclusive-minded collaborative problem solving, and not leaders who exploit anti-immigrant sentiments and engage in emotion-hijacking fear-mongering demagoguery to gain and abuse power in ways that are deceitful, discriminatory, anti-egalitarian, retrogressive and repressive. We should strongly support leaders who champion truly civilizing forces of fair trade, democratic governance and fair-minded principles, and reject leaders who are dangerously reactive and unreasonably authoritarian. There are already far too many plutocratic and oligarchic, totalitarian and dictatorial governments ruling in many countries around the planet, like in Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Philippines, China, India, Poland, Hungary -- and the United States.

When good sense prevails, moderate leaders pass fair-minded reforms, but when radically uncompromising courses are pursued, revolutionary discord can result in protracted class conflicts and civil war. Recognizing that a greater modicum of social justice is required to improve social cohesion and create more peaceable coexistence, the twelve detailed proposals that follow should be formalized by our representatives to create a healthier, more secure and more sustainable society. These are, in effect, needed social insurance policies that are surprisingly affordable -- and vastly preferable to excessive inequality, antagonistic conflict and chaotic instability.

These proposals are set forth to honor the hopes and prospects of humankind for fairer and saner societies. These ideas would help create a real Better Deal that would make all Americans more secure, and would work better for all, not just those who are the most privileged. These ideas should be regarded as well-considered ideas of a relatively objective observer, and a providential example of the “straggling thoughts of individuals” that Thomas Paine referred to when he offered his cogent ideas in Common Sense as the basis for wise and able
leaders to use in creating a fairer new form of governance.

These plans are particularly important in the USA today due to the terribly backwards, anti-progressive, anti-egalitarian and anti-inclusive directions in which our “conservative” leaders are driving us.

“Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good.”

--- Thomas Paine

To Do the Right Thing, or Not To Do the Right Thing, That is the Question!

1. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN. Implement an immediately effective Climate Action Plan to address the unfolding climate crisis by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This will involve assessing a Green Fee on usages of fossil fuels that should be designed to enjoy broadly based support by making it beneficially egalitarian and eminently fair-minded in a way that makes the bottom half of people in our society better off financially, rather than causing them increasing hardships. This Green Fee plan will thus avoid opposition to increased fuel taxes like that experienced in France by people in the Yellow Vest movement.

Design this plan to raise big sums of money to be invested in cleaner energy alternatives, which fortuitously happen to be indefinitely renewable instead of being limited in global reserves and tragically harmful in use. Assess a federal Pigouvian Green Fee of $1 per gallon on every gallon of gasoline sold. Include a fee-and-dividend feature similar to that proposed by the Citizens Climate Lobby that would make the bottom 50% of the populace better off with the dividends they will receive in excess of the cost of carbon taxes incurred for an average usage of gasoline. Also make sure that this plan will provide funding for natural disasters around the globe that are becoming more and more costly as increasing numbers of people are in harms way, and as more extreme weather events are taking place with increasing frequency, intensity and disastrous potential, due to the destabilizing impacts of atmospheric greenhouse gases on the global climate and communities worldwide.

This plan will serve providential purposes and have a dramatic positive effect by reducing the use of fossil fuels because the higher cost of oil will stimulate large investments in conservation, improved energy efficiency and clean energy alternatives. If such a plan had been put into effect in 2016, it would have raised more than $125 billion on the 3.2 trillion vehicle miles driven in the U.S., in total, during the year, assuming an average fleet mileage of 25 mpg. The projected $125 billion in revenues generated from this green fee should be allocated as follows:

(1A) Give a new tax credit of $500 per household to everyone filing a tax return that has a net income of less than $75,000. This allowance will offset the higher cost of gasoline for these people to drive 12,000 miles per year at an average 25 miles per gallon, plus a $100 bonus for supporting the implementation of this new Good Deal plan. For those who don’t drive, or drive less than 12,000 miles per year, or get better gas mileage, then “bully for you”! Keep the tax credit, and thanks from everyone for contributing less to growing traffic woes and excessive emissions. Estimated annual cost = $50 billion.

(1B) Invest enough money in carbon-offset programs to make the USA carbon neutral for all miles driven each year. It will cost just 9 cents of the $1 Green Fee per gallon for the USA to go “carbon neutral” by investing in carbon-offset programs. This will help the USA move toward independence from its addiction to the finite resources of non-renewable fossil fuels, which happen to be odiously polluting when burned, in addition to being climate destabilizing. Model this program on the outstanding organization Cool Effect that offers a dozen specific carbon reduction projects around the world, some of which have marvelous win/win collateral outcomes such as dramatically improving the respiratory health of thousands of appreciative people in Uganda who are given cleaner energy cook stoves for preparing their meals. Estimated annual cost = $12 billion.

(1C) Make investments in good public transportation, clean energy innovation, and subsidized international sharing of the latest and best technologies for renewable energy alternatives and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, along with better protections of tropical and temperate forests worldwide. Invest $15 billion each year under this program.
(ID) Make contributions to a Climate Disaster Relief Fund and the Green Climate Fund to pay for some of the
costs of weather-related disasters both in the U.S. and abroad, as advocated by the "Group of 77" developing
nations (established in 1964 -- it currently includes 134 countries). Poor countries in the developing world have
a good argument when they assert that richer developed nations have a moral obligation to shoulder more of
the costs of extreme hardships being suffered due to climate disasters in their countries. These natural
disasters include more powerful hurricanes, typhoons and tornadoes, torrential rains, coastal flooding, heat
waves, disappearing arable lands, intensifying wildfires and expanding desertification. Rich countries, after
all, have spewed the most emissions into the atmosphere in the last century, and thereby have contributed
most to the accelerating climate crisis. Invest $40 billion each year in this program.

(IE) Increase U.S. investments in humanitarian foreign aid, and in international family planning programs and
women's health clinics worldwide. Invest $8 billion each year in these programs. Cost summary:

**Green Fee Investment Recap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax credits to offset higher gasoline taxes</td>
<td>$ 50 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon offsets to make the USA carbon neutral for all vehicles</td>
<td>12 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments in green technologies and reforestation</td>
<td>15 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather disaster relief funding for people in communities worldwide</td>
<td>40 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign aid, family planning programs and women's health clinics</td>
<td>8 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$125 billion</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. FAIR TAXATION INITIATIVE. Give every taxpayer a tax cut on their first $75,000 of income by making
our system of taxation more steeply graduated. Do this by offsetting the reduced revenues associated with
this change by increases in taxes on all higher levels of income. In keeping with the sensible compromise of the
wise ancient Greek lawmaker Solon, the incomes of the wealthiest people should be taxed at rates that are 12
times the rates on the poor. Calibrate this reform to ensure that it generates enough revenue to balance the
budget and not add to the national debt.

It should be recognized that lower tax rates on the first $75,000 of net income for every taxpayer are very
fair because they give tax cuts to each and every taxpayer. The rates on incomes over $151,900 that are
proposed below are higher, but they are still a relatively good deal for high-income earners, considering that
the top rate was at least 70% for every single year from 1936 to 1981. During that period, broadly shared
prosperity prevailed, and the rate of economic growth was much higher than in the years since then. This may
be a surprise, and it refutes the trickle-down propaganda that rationalizes regressive changes in taxes as being
desirable because they supposedly contribute to stronger economic growth. (The top tax rate in 1980 was 70%
on all incomes over $600,000 in current dollars. The 60% rate proposed below generously applies only on
incomes over $25 million.)

These egalitarian changes in tax tables could be called the **Social Justice Taxation Act**. Here is a providential
recommendation for this restructuring of income tax rates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to $18,550</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Lower by 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18,551 to $75,300</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Lower by 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75,301 to $151,900</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151,901 to $231,450</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Higher by 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231,451 to $250,000</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Higher by 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250,001 to $413,350</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>Higher by 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>413,351 to $466,950</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Higher by 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>466,951 to $1,000,000</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Higher by 5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taxes on capital gains and on children's inheritances from rich parents should also be revised to be more steeply graduated. Here is an Estate Tax reform proposal: Allow a generous exclusion of a non-taxable amount for each estate of $2,500,000. For estates worth more than $2.5 million, a 30% tax should be assessed on the amount of estates between $2.5 million and $5 million, 40% on amounts between $5 million and $10 million, 50% on those amounts between $10 million and $25 million, and 60% on any amounts in excess of $25 million.

Three other strategies should be used to ensure that tax inequities are reduced, as adduced in Three Bills of Right - A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good. These include: (1) the elimination of tax loopholes that allow giant corporations to evade tens of billions of dollars in U.S. federal income taxes each year; (2) a new requirement for hedge fund managers to pay taxes at regular rates instead of ridiculously low capital gains rates; and (3) a reduction in tax advantages that investors receive for dividend income and capital gains in excess of $12,000 in any given year.

This progressive tax reform plan should be designed to result in a net increase in tax revenues that would generate $50 billion per year, to be used to reduce the social and environmental injustices that exist in our society today, including provisions that will prevent the externalizing of costs onto society, which are creating terribly harmful environmental injustices among poor people and minority communities. To reassure Americans that these tax changes will not result in a large and more wasteful federal government, an overarching commitment should be made to freezing the total government headcount for one year. Wasteful spending should be cut from the military budget, and anything suspiciously like crony capitalist pork barrel spending should be better controlled. Corporate welfare subsidies should be eliminated, and bureaucratic red tape should be evaluated and streamlined, consistent with long-term greater good values.

3. ECOLOGICAL SANITY. Make a revolutionary commitment to sustainable existence and a better quality of life for people today and in the future. To accomplish this goal, a farsighted Ecological Balance Initiative should be enacted that gives higher priority to smart ideas like those specifically articulated in Three Bills of Right.

4. ETHICAL POLITICS. Politicians and our government should be made more responsive to the needs of the people and to the longer term greater good of the largest number of people over the longest period of time. One way to accomplish this would be to enact effective campaign finance reforms to reduce the corrupting influence of Big Money in our elections and in the lobbying of our representatives in Congress. We should put into effect publicly financed “Clean Money, Clean Election” legislation nationwide. Also, the Congressional district lines for all gerrymandered districts should be redrawn by independent people or politically balanced commissions well before the 2020 elections, because extreme gerrymandering in the 21st century has given unfair over-representation to conservative partisans who completely control the redistributing process in more than half the U.S. states. Such exercises of extreme partisanship in drawing gerrymandered congressional districts are done to disenfranchise the majority of Americans, so they are egregious abuses of power.

Truly bipartisan initiatives should be implemented to reduce the influence of Dark Money and institutionalized bribery. In addition, a far-reaching Government Ethics Act should be enacted to prevent politicians in Congress and the White House from engaging in shady dealings and conflicts of interest in our Crazytown capitol, with its unconscionably proliferating “culture of corruption.” Perverse incentives and wrongheaded subsidies should be eliminated. The overarching power that big corporations have in Congress should be reduced, as convincingly advocated by the Move to Amend Coalition. And the interests of workers, women, children, minorities, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and future generations should be more strongly protected.

Our American democracy should also be strengthened by ensuring greater media diversity, and by protecting voting rights, and by reducing influence-peddling scams and wanton profiteering schemes. Deceptive practices,
rash risk-taking, favoritism for the rich, cronyism, short-term-oriented profiteering, media manipulation, nepotism and outright fraud should be more effectively constrained.

5. CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS. Our Constitution and its checks and balances should be defended from excessive infringements by the Executive Branch. The responsibilities of Congress and the civil liberties of citizens must not be unreasonably curtailed by aggressive expansions in the power of the Presidency, and the current administration must be forced to comply with subpoenas.

Also, Congress should start abiding by the Constitution in matters of war, as set forth in Article I, Section 8, Clause 11, which gives Congress, and only Congress, the power to declare war. The President is not given this power; the Constitution gives the President the power to direct the military after Congress declares war, in the capacity of Commander-in-Chief. Congress has been derelict in its War Powers responsibility ever since the last time they actually did declare war, right after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor. The good reason this provision was established by our Founders was to avoid undesirable foreign entanglements and to ensure that the President does not get the country into a war without public debate and broad assessment of ramifications, consequences and risks. In our political duopoly system, our elected representatives have deferred to the president in many wars, like those in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, and done so out of expediency and cowardice, and for one overriding unprincipled principal purpose -- profiteering! Follow the money!!

Citizens should be assured of reasonable privacy protections, and unwarranted secrecy should yield to greater openness. Those who exploit public fears and anxieties to divide people, and who gain power using treacherous deceit and misleading propaganda, should not be allowed to rule despotically, or to suppress dissent. Rampant spying on the American people with warrantless monitoring of communications should be curtailed. Violations of international treaties on torture should be renounced, and any future uses of “extraordinary renditions” of prisoners to offshore prisons should be prohibited. Secret military tribunals, the abridgement of habeas corpus rights, the obstruction of oversight and investigations, and disdain for human rights should be circumvented, and the military prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba should be closed.

6. MIDDLE CLASS FAIRNESS. Strengthen and expand the middle class and improve opportunities for social mobility. To do this, commitments should be renewed to policies that benefit the majority of people, not just policies that primarily benefit rich people. The health of the middle class has been significantly undermined in recent decades by unfairly regressive tax and social policies. To strengthen this vital segment of American society, we must once again implement strategies that helped build the middle class in the first place: (a) govern Big Business so that it primarily benefits “We the People”, not just CEOs, investors and wealthy people; (b) make higher education more affordable for everyone by providing inexpensive financing and a program similar to the G.I. Bill after World War II; (c) invest more money in improving our nation’s crumbling physical infrastructure, and less in wars abroad; (d) restore taxation that is more progressively structured; (e) create balanced incentives for home ownership that are fair to a maximum number of people; (f) enact and enforce laws that give workers more influence in their struggle against the abuses of capital; (g) create a social safety net of universal healthcare, and reduce the severe inequities that currently exist in medical care; and (h) provide for a true Social Security retirement insurance program that protects retirees from having their payroll taxes squandered by the government. These goals would be advanced by implementing the proposals in Radically Simple Ways to Make America Fairer, and to Fix Both Social Security and Health Care So We Can Move On to Address Much Bigger Issues.

7. A VIBRANT AND SOUND ECONOMY. Protect the economy by once again establishing sensible regulations on banks and the financial industry to prevent harms done by overly risky speculation and debt leveraging, corporate conglomeration, and unchecked conflicts of interest. It is high time that the unaccountable power of big corporate entities is more intelligently limited, and that loopholes are closed and deregulatory improprieties reversed that allow corporations to externalize costs and risks onto society and evade paying taxes. Broadly shared prosperity should be promoted, and effective steps should be taken to reduce the concentration of wealth and political power in the hands of the few. Stronger efforts should be made to prevent abuses of power and excessive privileges for insiders. Economically sound policies and innovative ideas should be
championed. Sensible public investments and prudent risk-taking and greater transparency should be encouraged. Human concerns and ecological values, not profits alone, should be given much more serious consideration in all economic decisions.

The overarching goal of the economy should be economic justice and farsighted environmental policies and the sustainability of our aggregate activities. We should stop pandering so exclusively to wealthy people and CEOs, speculators, economic fundamentalists, the reactionary religious right, war profiteers, polluters and stock market beneficiaries who often oppose common sense regulations, oversight and accountability. Trends in our society and government should be reversed when they create serious systemic risks, such as highly leveraged speculation, fraudulent swindles, fiscal irresponsibility, deceptive and discriminatory practices, dishonesty, and extreme partisanship. Government bailouts should be used only to safeguard the greater interests of the mainstream public, and not mainly the interests of investors and Wall Street banks. All economic stimulus and recovery efforts should contain just provisions and ecologically-sound plans.

The practice of maximizing profits by externalizing costs onto society should be constrained to help prevent serious misallocations of resources. Here is a fair recommendation for how to immediately begin accounting for real costs that are being unfairly and irresponsibly externalized onto society. An estimated $400 billion in costs are being incurred in the U.S. every year related to pollution, toxic wastes, associated respiratory diseases, harms to the environment, and natural disasters like intensifying storms, heat waves, wildfires, flooding and crop failures that are being made worse by global warming-exacerbated changes in natural weather patterns. This $400 billion represents about 2% of the annual U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

Proposal: Establish a Future Viability Assessment on all products and services. This action would require the inclusion of these real costs where they should properly be reflected. This should be done on a progressive scale with higher assessments for polluting industries involved in practices that are unsustainable, and lower assessments for greener industries. All industries should be classified by a panel of independent-minded economists according to the degree the industries contribute to unsustainable production and consumption. For instance, the most polluting industries should be required to include a 4% assessment, while the greenest industries would be charged a 0% assessment. To partially offset the regressive impact of higher costs on people who are least able to afford it, a $300 fee-and-dividend type payment should be given annually to every American taxpayer. This would offset the 2% higher costs on annual spending of up to $15,000.

Use the funds generated from this Future Viability Assessment to invest in pollution prevention and mitigation activities, the clean-up of toxins and pollution, coverage for medical costs related to asthma and other health adversities related to environmental damages, and mitigation efforts of costs related to climate change impacts and correlated natural disasters. Also, create more robust protections of forests, wetlands, rivers, oceans, coral reef communities, fresh water resources, National Parks, open spaces and wilderness areas.

8. BALANCED BUDGETS INITIATIVE. Stop the federal government from recklessly indulging in the short-term expediency of borrowing enormous amounts of money to squander it on tax breaks for rich people and fighting wars, financing corporate bailouts, or giving people overly-generous “entitlements.” Make a binding commitment to reduce the spiraling use of debt, and to stop the lavish waste of taxpayer funds and borrowed money. To achieve this positive goal, a new mechanism should be established that that will be effective in discouraging our expedient inclination to live beyond our means. We should create a Fiscal Responsibility Act that will force lawmakers and the executive branch to set honest priorities and end shortsighted government “borrow-and-spend” tactics that result in wasteful spending on pork barrel-like projects or misguided subsidies and socially irresponsible profiteering, as well as on wars of aggression and unaffordable entitlements.

The following five-year plan is guaranteed to be effective because it would give powerful motives to the primary deciders in our system -- wealthy people and big corporations -- to support annual budgets that are more nearly balanced. This plan should be implemented gradually over the next five fiscal years according to a fair-minded methodology: Require Big Businesses and the highest income earners to be assessed for federal deficits at the end of every fiscal year. For the fiscal year running from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019, assess 20% of any federal budget deficit as follows: half of this obligation will be assessed to businesses that earn net
incomes of more than $1 million, and the other half will be assessed to individuals with taxable incomes above $1 million. Allocate these assessments on a progressive scale with higher percentages for higher incomes. Then, in the following fiscal year, assess 40% of any deficits using the same methodology; and in the year after that, assess 60%, then 80%, and then 100% of any such deficits.

The powerful vested interests that have been the primary beneficiaries of the short-term-oriented and irresponsible expediency of mortgaging the future for narrow benefits should be the same interests that step forward to make our system better. This plan would cause these interest groups to shift from supporting deficit spending to finding much better ways of reining in the abuses involved in this exploitive scheme.

9. WAR AND PEACE. Only with truer justice will we have greater peace, at home and abroad. Our political representatives should courageously commit the United States to peaceful diplomatic resolutions of conflicts between all nations in the world. We need to pursue foreign policies that enhance mutual security for all, and that respect the sovereignty of other nations. We should reject wars for oil and other resources. Effective ways should be found to prevent military aggression, preemptive warfare and endless military occupations of other countries. Policy deciders should be prevented from waging wars to divert attention and money from domestic problems. We can't allow power to be rashly abused under the guise of a misleading and false national security. The use of sovereignty-violating unmanned drone aircraft armed with Hellfire missiles should be more strictly restrained. These supersonic missiles strike targets before the sound of their approach reaches their victims, and kill many innocent persons.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the war hero of World War II and U.S. President from 1956 to 1961, warned Americans about the military-industrial complex and the "disastrous rise of misplaced power". He emphatically and wisely counseled: "Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together." Security and liberty prospering together is good!

Full funding should be restored to State Department diplomacy missions, and a Cabinet-level Department of Peace should be created to promote collaborative problem solving and smart statesmanship on the international stage. This would help responsibly resolve current armed conflicts and prevent ones in the future. Stronger international institutions, agreements and laws should be supported to prevent wars, torture and genocide.

A summit of Middle East countries should be convened to develop good ways for solving conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen so as to be likely to ensure that these nations do not become failed states. A bold new plan should be developed to guarantee a safe homeland for Palestinians, and to make sure peaceful coexistence with Israel is assured. An initiative should be launched to reduce the influence of radical extremism and reactionary fundamentalism in religions worldwide. International social justice, sustainable development and human rights should be promoted as top priorities, along with these proposed peace-building initiatives. Significant taxes should be levied on all sales of guns, ammunition and military weapons, with funds generated by these taxes to be used to create fairer societies and to engage in proactive peace-building programs.

10. HONEST ACCOUNTING. Require the General Accounting Office to improve internal controls and accounting and reporting practices, with the goal of having an unqualified audit opinion rendered on the federal government to Congress and the American people. This audit opinion should certify that the financial statements of the federal government are fairly stated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. In connection with this audit, the GAO (or newly-created civil Grand Juries of distinguished and responsible citizens) should be empowered to make recommendations designed to make government spending -- and Defense Department spending in particular -- better controlled and more frugal, honest and accountable.

11. FAIR AND EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS. Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to give equal rights to women and men. The ERA was first proposed in 1923, and was once ratified by 35 of the necessary 38 states (3/4 of the 50 states). This cornerstone of fairness should be incorporated into our great U.S. Constitution. Likewise, a new Constitutional Amendment should be created to give gay men and lesbian women fairer treatment, equal civil rights, and reasonable protections under the law. And sensible and comprehensive immigration reforms should
be formulated instead of politicizing the issue. And the Constitution should be strengthened to make clear our common agreement that no Church should be able to impose its parochial dogmas on society, and that the First Amendment guarantees are strongly established that ensure a separation between Church and State.

12. POPULATION GROWTH. One of the fundamental contributing factors to all our social and environmental problems, and to many of the conflicts in the world, is the surging number of human beings on Earth. Global human population growth needs to be reduced from its current net increase of more than 70 million people every year. To accomplish this, we should provide free contraceptives to women everywhere who want them, including emergency "morning after pills", so that the incidence of both unwanted pregnancies and abortions will be reduced. Better education is needed, along with expanded opportunities for girls and women worldwide. Women's healthcare clinics should be established and generously funded. Initiatives like this would have a great humanitarian collateral benefit of reducing cervical cancer and the transmission of sexually-transmitted diseases like AIDS. Steps should be taken to ensure that the 'Global Gag Rule' never again restricts U.S. support for family planning programs abroad, and the United States should double its modest annual contributions to the United Nations Population Fund. Women should be guaranteed the right to make their own personal reproductive choices. Women who do not want children must not be forced to have them. To codify this fair-minded goal, an Amendment to the U.S. Constitution should be enacted that establishes reproductive rights for women, and follows the practical precedent of unrestricted rights for a safe abortion during the first trimester of any pregnancy, as set forth by the Supreme Court in the Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973.

Concluding Commentary

To accomplish these twelve big initiatives, We the People must demand that our political leaders act as reasonable, fair-minded and honorable representatives of the broadest interests of the American people. Politicians should be expected to keep the best interests of all people foremost in mind in every policy-making consideration. Effective changes need to be made to our political system to staunch the excessive influence of Big Money and to prevent our government from being controlled by those who represent outsized privileges for wealthy people, CEOs, war profiteers, polluters, deceitful demagogues and the reactionary religious right. We should rightly champion and celebrate honesty, and deny power to Machiavellian operatives who intentionally lie to people for personal gain and take advantage of their fears. We should choose leaders who promote policies that are fiscally responsible and egalitarian, and who oppose discrimination against people in minority groups or espouse exceedingly harsh approaches to vulnerable asylum seekers. These leaders should honestly avoid authoritarian abuses of power and military interventions, and reject ecologically unwise courses of action.

When many of these words were first written, this last paragraph concluded, "Specifically, Donald Trump and his grotesque tactics should be soundly defeated in his bid for power in the November 2016 elections." Now that we have failed at that, responsible and patriotic Americans should join together in opposing extremely anti-egalitarian, anti-progressive, anti-democratic and anti-environmental actions by all the Republicans in Congress and the Executive branch of government.

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Germinating in August 2019, and Seeking Inclusion in See Clearly

Golden Rule Democratic fairness is under concerted assault in the USA today, and a duped Republican base is giving staunch support to this sad state of affairs. They are assuming a bizarre defensive crouch, reminiscent of the fierce display of indigenous Polynesian Māori warriors of New Zealand, feinting militant intimidation, chanting and doing a lot of foot stamping and sticking out their tongues. Haka! This is backasswards!!
A beautiful rendition of the hymn Amazing Grace rings through 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

We humans are reaching a condition of Peak Profligacy, and must choose to adapt rapidly by embracing new national and global priorities as soon as possible -- ones that incontrovertibly respect precautionary principles and offer powerful incentives for more sustainable modes of living. We simply must make more effective efforts to conserve non-renewable reserves of many crucial natural resources, especially including fossil fuels and the mineral phosphorous, which is crucially important for fertilizing crops, and tropical rainforests, which serve as “the lungs of our home planet”. This necessary change should involve making a much faster transition to cleaner renewable sources of energy from our dangerous dependence on climate-disrupting oil and natural gas and coal.

The early history of efforts to protect the environment in our democratic republic was remarkably bipartisan. Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, was one of the greatest presidents ever for his laudable efforts to establish protections of public lands and the environment. After he became president early in the 20th century, he sought to protect America’s national resources from the greed of exploitive business entities, and one of his signature accomplishments during his time in office was to conserve the nation’s forests and fresh water resources and wildlife habitats. His conservation convictions were so strong that he succeeded in having 230 million acres of land set aside to be protected for the public in the form of five National Parks, 150 national forests, more than 50 federal game preserves and bird sanctuaries, 18 national monuments and 24 fresh water reclamation projects.

Then in the 1960s and 1970s, truly broad bipartisan leadership helped enact all the bedrock environmental laws, including the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. In the book Getting to Green, written by political independent Frederic Rich, the author explains that starting in the 1980s, a "Great Estrangement" began, with conservatives beginning a hard tack to the right and the Green movement drifting to the left. The sad result was that environmental issues underwent a disastrous transformation “from common cause to divisive wedge.” And in recent years, federal spending on environmental protections and conservation has been significantly reduced. The status in the Trump era: Shockingly worse! And dumbfounding in its backwards impulse.

We surely are in “a race between education and catastrophe,” as the English writer H.G. Wells declared back in 1920. And this race has become increasingly urgent since his day. Canaries in the global mine are dropping dead left and right, along with something like 60% of the populations -- since 1970! -- of a representative selection of
10,000 species of mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians and fishes, as the latest version of the Living Planet Report confirms. And we are “baking in” an increase in global average temperatures that guarantees excessively high costs of coastal flooding and extremely harsh natural disaster events. To mitigate these costs, we should rightly make bold efforts to alter this trajectory. We are already seriously threatening many species of life, including most in coral reef communities that are likely to suffer eternal extinction during coming decades.

The great David Attenborough intones in the extraordinary documentary film Our Planet, “For the first time in history, the stability of nature can no longer be taken for granted.” Nonetheless, “the planet can recover. Never has it been more important to understand how the natural world works, and how to help it.” Nick Schager writes about this new 8-episode Netflix documentary miniseries, “That ethos guides Our Planet from frigid tundra to bountiful forests to arid deserts to glistening oceans, adhering to a template that maximizes wonder, and then exploits it for both mournful critique and hopeful advocacy.” Check it out!

Nick Schager adds in his article about Our Planet: “The notion of symbiosis — of the interdependence of man, animals and ecosystems — is fundamental to Our Planet. Not an episode goes by that Attenborough isn’t explaining how one species’ behavior (or existence) is dependent on another’s, as well as how the environment works to sustain them all, and vice versa. It’s in that crucial respect that the series underlines humanity’s deleterious effect on Mother Earth. Awe-inspiring vignettes routinely double as cautionary tales about man-made climate change’s radical restructuring of age-old natural orders. From the snowy wastelands of Antarctica, where diminishing stretches of ice are impacting polar bears’ ability to hunt, to the arid plains of Africa, where droughts now force hippos to cover themselves in mud rather than water, to the Congo’s shrinking rainforests, where gorilla populations have been halved by poachers, the destructive impact of our own actions is always front-and-center.

We are near a peak maximum of wasteful ways, in aggregate, not because humans are going to suddenly clearly see the existential folly of these behaviors. We are near Peak Profligacy not because we are going to soon achieve zero population growth and are likely to bring our human numbers into a sustainable balance. We are simply approaching limits in the amounts of finite reserves of fossil fuels, fresh water and other critical natural resources available, and we are exceeding natural carrying capacity constraints on the harms being caused by spewing climate disrupting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. We are nearing the point where limiting factors will make it far too expensive for us to continue treating our home planet like a business in liquidation.

We can no longer be so exaggeratedly extravagant and unconscionably irresponsible with our resource uses, and we can no longer myopically allow greedy investors and big corporations to wreak havoc on the natural world. And we must find a way to prevent anti-conservation forces from ruling nations worldwide, and to remove demagogues and abusers of authority from power in many countries. Reactionary nationalist movements are corrupt in their essence and contrary to positive unifying features of social cohesion and collaborative efforts to make our existence fairer, healthier, safer, and more sustainable.

The brilliant physicist Stephen Hawking once declared, “Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.” By that evaluation, the cowardly self-serving politicians who go along with Donald Trump’s retrograde environmental policies are downright stupid in their efforts to promote the burning of increasing quantities of fossil fuels, for this will irreversibly increase the costs and risks of extreme weather events and the destabilization of the global climate. It is insane to continue policies and priorities that disrupt normal patterns of temperatures and precipitation in locales around the world, and to stand in the way of smart measures designed to mitigate and adapt to global warming, climate change, ocean acidification, coral bleaching and rising sea levels.

A political cartoon surfaced on Facebook showing a big blue crowd with three black faces in it, with the words:

HERE’S THE PLOT: 97% OF THE WORLD’S SCIENTISTS CONSPIRE TO CREATE AN IMAGINARY ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS, ONLY TO BE EXPOSED BY A PLUCKY BAND OF BILLIONAIRES AND SENATORS AND OIL COMPANIES.

Here’s the bottom line, as reported by Tim Radford in an article titled Washington’s political lobbying shackles science. Lobbyists in Washington D.C. have spent billions of dollars to push their narrowly-focused corporate
agenda and prevent legislative action that would mitigate climate disruptions, brazenly spending dozens of times more than environmental organizations and the renewable energy sector. The upshot is clear: “when it comes to influencing climate legislation, money talks more urgently and effectively than evidence.”

It is an extraordinary disgrace for We the People to be subjected to the ambitions of master manipulators dividing people so that they can irresponsibly impose an agenda of extreme short-termism on the world. The main characteristics of this crazy short-termism are concerted efforts to maximize resource extraction, facilitate cost externalizing schemes, torpedo sensible climate action, give top priority to wealth concentrating schemes, allow scandalous corruption and pay-for-play political ploys, sacrifice public health, ignore scientific understandings, implement misguided national policies, and promote elite-favoring plans that are anti-egalitarian and morally bankrupt, all in conjunction with spiritually deficient excessive materialistic consumerism.

It is an offense against Right Action for current generations to engage in extreme degrees of ecological short-sightedness that will leave a legacy of depleted resources, damaged habitats, decimated animal life, clear-cut forests, paved-over wetlands, dammed rivers, polluted skies, contaminated waters, and excessive debt incurred for wrongheaded reasons.

Conservative propagandists like Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, and Charles and David Koch, in league with cunning Trumpian politicians, have been extraordinarily successful in promoting falsehoods and demonizing progressives to advance their avarice-added, corrupt and control-obsessed agenda, despite the disgraceful truth that this tactic has rationalized broadly anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic, anti-environmental and fiscally irresponsible stances that are stupidly sacrificing the greater good in favor of allowing wealthy people to gain unconscionably generous short-term benefits.

The wise statesman Solon is known as “the father of democracy” for the fair-minded reforms he was able to put into effect in the city-state of Athens more than 2,500 years ago. At that time in history, revolutionary discord was spiking between members of the wealthy aristocracy and an increasingly angry populace. Solon was a skillful negotiator who was able to forge moderate and fair-minded compromises between the hubris-filled rulers and the people, and this saved the republic from destructive conflict. It should be noted that the democratic rabble had good reason to be angry at that time, for the government was in the hands of elite factions that were abusing their power by doing things like corruptly stacking the courts with judges willing to decide every consequential issue against the masses.

Today, the federal 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 our representatives are motivated by considerations of the public good, not by private gain of individual politicians and political parties and rich people. Yet the American people have very good reasons to distrust the current rashly domineering party in power, for they are generally striving to enrich themselves rather than to take the high road of working for the common good.

Professor Robert Reich makes it crystal clear in the film Inequality for All, and in his book 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 despotic power-abusing politicians, and that they are not going to take it anymore, and that they want a peaceful progressive populist revolution that is eminently egalitarian, and as soon as possible. I call on all people to make their voices heard in favor of fairer national policies and smarter national priorities.

Abraham Lincoln stated that all the people could not be fooled all the time. Today, tens of millions of Americans seem to be being bamboozled, and their voices and best interests sure are being deeply disrespected and ignored and betrayed in the zeal of rich people to grab bigger portions of the income and wealth generated by exploiting natural resources and working people. Inequality is more extreme than it has been since before the Depression of the 1930s, and the top 1% of households in the United States now owns more wealth than the bottom 90% combined. Any honest tax plan would be structured so as to be highly graduated and really reduce this extreme level of wealth inequality, instead of making it worse. But scheming power-prepossessed
conservative politicians took a pivotal step with their egregiously devious Tax Cuts Act in December 2017 towards further redistributing wealth upwards and entrenching inequalities of income and wealth.

The devil is in the details, as they say, and the details of the Republican tax plan scam are downright diabolical in their extreme partisanship, naked pandering to the rich, deceitfully brazen anti-egalitarian nature, and the insidious degree to which the plan burdens all taxpayers in the future with riskily high levels of debt.

How is it possible in a democracy for power-abusing politicians to get away with this? The reason is basic -- because the vast majority of the American people effectively have little measurable influence on public policy. This stark conclusion was confirmed in January 2014 by Professors Martin Gilens of Princeton and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University, who analyzed 1,800 policy issues and found that “the preferences of the average American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero and statistically non-significant impact upon public policy.” Let’s demand better! The Nov. 2018 elections gave us a good chance to begin righting our ship of state.

These are tragic times for the American people, as pathologically manipulative and deeply dishonest Republican politicians are delivering great gifts to the rich with their Tax Cuts plan con job, along with dirty coal in the Christmas stockings of the vast majority of Americans when the plan was rammed through without a single vote by a Democratic representative in December 2017. These sycophants to the donor class are rigging the economy ever more extremely in favor of wealthy people, and achieving this grotesque top priority by pitting folks in red states against those in blue states, sabotaging greater good goals, shredding the social safety net, displaying a severe deficiency of empathic understanding, sacrificing the environmental commons, favoring dirty non-renewable sources of energy over clean renewable energy, driving up the risks and future costs of climate disruptions, dangerously piling on the national debt, and undermining the well-being of all in future generations.

It would be much smarter for us to create a rainy day fund to help pay for natural disasters like destructive hurricanes and “devil wind-driven wildfires” and other foreseeable probabilities. There will certainly be many more costly surprises as this century unfolds, so it is a calamitous Trump Folly to imprudently put the pedal to the metal on driving up the national debt in order to slash taxes on corporations and rich people.

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

The USA is no longer a fairly representative democratic republic. An overarching reason for this is because the American people have been deeply divided by rashly scheming deceitful politicians 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 debt-financed Tax Cuts scam, and they are betraying the best interests every person in the future.

The arena of tax law is the most politically driven arena in government because it involves money and greed, and is thus a primary focus of abuses of influence and power. Tax law is the most intense area of law for egregious political corruption, and Republican politicians have devised and pushed through a devious and uncompromising tax plan that is a sad compilation of unfair, wealth pandering, inequality stoking, resource squandering, clean energy undermining, anti-conservation, debt burdening and future betraying schemes.

Political scientist Norman Ornstein of the conservative American Enterprise Institute declared of the Tax Cut plan 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 then wrote this year in How the Republicans Broke Congress, “... 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.”

Think about this. While dishonest Republican politicians are selling the American people down the river with their 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 captain of a
sailing ship engaged in the slave trade from Africa to the American colonies. Newton had suffered a traumatic experience during a severe storm off the coast of Ireland in 1748, and subsequently found religion after having prayed desperately to God to save him -- and miraculously surviving the scare. So he converted to evangelical Christianity and became a clergyman. Having once been lost as a crude and unprincipled reprobate in his younger years, he resolved after this crisis of conscience to repent and be found, having been blind and then suddenly seeing. It was thus that he changed course and became more respectful, morally responsible and willing to embrace true Right Action. He later penned a polemic opposing slavery titled *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, and his song *Amazing Grace* became a highly respected anthem to hope, courage and transformation -- a song that is often sung at times of a social crisis of conscience. Let us sing it now, together.

*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

Black Africans, after being captured and sold into slavery and brought in miserable conditions across the Atlantic Ocean to a land where they were accorded no rights, were often sold down the river to harsh fates in the Deep South, with or without their families, and for many generations. 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 in this novel that 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?

Today, despotic acts are being perpetrated 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 considerably more consequentially harmful ways than levying taxes on tea imported to the colonies and rigging the colonial system to deprive the people of fair representation.

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, and a greater respect for reason, precautionary wisdom and broad fair-mindedness. This is a more providential plan than to complacently wait for an imagined afterlife of good in heaven. In these efforts, we should be guided by the Golden Rule reciprocity principle, and should embrace the farsighted provisions of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, as proposed in this manifesto.

**Existential Climate Change Considerations**

Humankind is now in the midst of perhaps our highest stakes gamble of all -- deciding what to do, or what not to do, about the climate crisis. Scurrilous Republican leaders are rejecting prudence and precaution, and do not seem to have any viable backup plan to deal with the disastrous unfolding costs and damaging impacts of their wrong-headed actions. Scientists tell us that we should leave something like 80% of known reserves of fossil fuels in the ground during the 80 years remaining in the 21st century, to prevent increasingly catastrophic and costly extreme weather events, including more intense heat waves, apocalyptic hurricanes, hellish wildfires, creeping desertification, coral reef bleaching, widespread coastal flooding and severe winter weather snaps like the three nor'easters that buffeted the Northeast in March 2018 and the destructive floods in the Midwest in the Spring of 2019. But Republican politicians are working to prevent action designed to protect humanity from damaging outcomes like these. What part of this thing don't they understand? Compulsive greed can obviously trump common sense and morality.

Scientists keep being surprised at how rapidly environmental conditions are being altered by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Many of them are especially concerned with how fast ice sheets and glaciers are melting, and how severe coral bleaching episodes are becoming in tropical oceans. 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 the best understandings of this extraordinarily consequential issue, see my essay Climate Change Considerations, Carrying Capacity and Population Overshoot.

Here is another amazingly disgraceful fact. 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 executives, which urged President Obama and world leaders headed to Copenhagen for international climate negotiations to act on climate change. The letter ominously 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 demonstrate a reprehensible eagerness to pander to polluting companies, oppose climate action and appoint 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 failure to act in responsible ways!

The cost and consequences of INACTION on climate issues are both economically unacceptable and morally indefensible. Climate science has reached the point that it can definitively say that failure to very aggressively try to “solve” climate change is neither a rational or moral option for a nation or humanity as a whole. And, according to Joe Romm in his 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.” Wow! Let’s do the smart and responsible thing, and save an incredible amount of money!

In insightful writer Naomi Klein’s provocative talk at a TEDWomen Conference in 2010, she gave a brilliant presentation titled Addicted to Risk, indicating 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, noted Naomi Klein in her talk, which she gave right after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. 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 believing in excessive privileges for the few. All these factors are rationalized by archetypal narratives that tell us that we humans deserve to reign supreme over others, and over Nature. But tools and technology designed to control Nature will ultimately fail, so we should work with Mother Nature, NOT against her.

Roguish Developments and the Rise of the Kakistocracy

The Republican Party seems to have gone rogue. Republican politicians and the shrewdly opportunistic crony capitalists they represent are blatantly running a scandal-ridden kleptocracy, and have succeeded at this by imposing domineering rule over We the People with a type of “kakistocracy” -- a Greek term that means rule by the worst, least qualified or most unscrupulous persons. 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 some of the worst possible national priorities. The top goal for these money-obsessed and power-mad Mammonites is to give more tax cuts to rich people to gain their support. These facts inextricably mean that common good goals and the general welfare are being rudely violated in a seriously consequential manner. For more details about the swamp denizens in the kakistocracy, see Postscript One, Meet Members of the Kakistocracy, at the end of this essay, and see Postscript Two - The Top Ten Worst Aspects of Rogue Republican Rule, which follows.

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

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 Roy Moore, apparently against a succession of teenage girls. Donald
Trump, who famously bragged on tape about grabbing beautiful women "by the pussy", is a prime culprit.

The Emperor wannabe has no clothes, and it’s an exceedingly ugly spectacle! Recall Hans Christian Anderson’s
famous tale, in which two conniving weavers sell a suit of clothes to the Emperor that they say is invisible to
those who are stupid or incompetent or otherwise unfit for their positions. As the Emperor parades before the
populace in his new clothes, no one dares to say they don’t see any new suit of clothes on him, for fear that they
will be seen as stupid, but then finally a child cries out, "But he isn’t wearing anything at all!!"

John Steinbeck tells a marvelous story about cormorants diving off the pier in Cabo San Lucas, concluding with
the observation that they were “subversives” for having upset the established order. Scholars who study John
Steinbeck indicate that the modest and soft-spoken author was sensitive to creatures being considered
subversives for a cogent personal reason. His novels, like The Grapes of Wrath, had achieved great fame, and
this had brought him notoriety, hate mail and even surveillance by the FBI. His literary themes were unsettling
to the privileged, who feared anyone poignantly pointing out the social problems related to poor people and the
plight of immigrants and farm workers. Likewise they despised voices that emphasized startling contrasts in
economic inequities in America or other failings of the ruthless dog-eat-dog capitalist system. Great literature
evokes universal themes and images, so it provides deeper contexts in which readers can more viscerally
understand. It is sometimes 'subversive' of the status quo, but it is even more valuable for being so!

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, protections of clean air and clean water, fuel efficiency rules, greenhouse gas emissions into
the atmosphere, protections of public lands, family planning, and endangered species and biological diversity.
This seems to be a curiously racist-tinged whim, and it is sad that this egregious stance can accurately be seen
as vindictively bigoted, myopic, obtusely selfish, grotesquely contrary to the general welfare and insidiously
treachery to young people and all in future generations. The simple fact of the matter is that the NEXT
president will be forced to undo the damages being done, and alter course from divisive swindles, irresponsibly
short-term-oriented schemes, unethical scams, discriminatory executive orders, immoral family separation
policies, offshore oil drilling and assaults on the vulnerable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks,
National Monuments, BLM lands and other public property.

We need progressive action, like the implementation of ideas espoused by Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren,
Kamala Harris, Kirsten Gillibrand and Mayor Pete Buttigieg. We should act intelligently, keeping eminent fair-
mindedness foremost in our considerations, and elect significantly more women to office. We owe it to them,
many of them having been cheated in the 2016 elections out of the opportunity to lead -- outstanding potential
representatives like the former state environmental chief Katie McGinty in Pennsylvania and the Fordham
University Associate Professor of Law Zephyr Teachout in New York. We cannot any longer afford to hew to
righteously 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 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 their numbers will slip below 50% of the populace, so it is actually an excellent time for them to support the decent goal of recommitting our nation to respecting rights of minorities. Instead, of course, Trump and champions of white male privilege want to ratchet up discrimination against immigrants, asylum seekers, women, black people, Latinos, Muslims, gays, and poor people. This is diabolically disgraceful.

Republican politicians have succeeded in gaining power, and in being able to abuse authority, by exploiting resentment-stoked populist sentiments and anti-immigrant fervor, and by invoking religion and God. They are misusing power for personal gain, engaging in naked political malfeasance and corruption in office, using the power of the legislature for unscrupulous private advantages, abusing government power to hurt political opponents, and rationalizing injustices like racial discrimination, hostility to the rights of women, class warfare, mass incarceration, instances of police brutality and the violation of environmental policies, laws and regulations.

Republicans triumphed over the common good by riling up the masses with emotion-manipulating advertising and excessively simplistic, divisive, deceitful and demagogic propaganda designed to gain support from people their plans are formulated to betray. How could they have succeeded at this? Well, by following tradition, ever since Ronald Reagan showed them the way -- with his folksy anti-union, anti-egalitarian, socially unjust, fiscally irresponsible, deficit financed, Golden Rule violating, anti-environmental, and authority-abusing way of pandering to the wealthy few and their organizational corporate tools. Reagan too gave special sway to Wall Street and military Keynesian hyper spending to benefit entities involved in 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 while irresponsibly incurring more debt on top of the $22 trillion already owed. Their motives are reprehensible: to provide huge tax breaks to top income earners and cutting spending that benefits the masses, like that on healthcare, public education, environmental protections, nutrition programs and a hundred other initiatives that characterize civilized societies.

The Republican Tax Cuts plan is a naked manifestation of this cunning corruption. Republicans are lying through their teeth about how their law will help people in the middle class, because in fact the scheme will foist a disastrous new degree of inequality and unfairness on we denizens in the land of the free.

There is only one way possible that such a deviously disgraceful and despicably disingenuous tax plan, with its huge benefits for corporations and rich people, could possibly have been imposed on the American people by a partisan phalanx of hubris-filled politicians exclusively from one political party. There's only one way 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 $1.5 trillion of borrowed money. There's only one way that this slippery slope legislation could have been passed that requires big cuts in spending on social safety net programs, environmental protections and a host of other common good goals. There's only one way possible that these Republican politicians could succeed at this without any public hearings in Congress and using rashly 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 multiple investigations by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York and by Special Counsel Robert Mueller and a team of experts who possess a vast array of experience investigating financial fraud, public corruption, money laundering, foreign bribery and organized crime.

The only way these things are possible is because Big Money has domineering influence in our politics. Sadly, the Supreme Court has effectively sanctioned this outcome with its wrongheaded 5-4 decisions in the Citizens United and McCutcheon rulings, and our country's politics have been rashly corrupted by billionaires like Charles and David Koch and the Mercers and Sheldon Adelson and their ilk.

Republican politicians have very good reasons to have been in such a big hurry to deliver this lavishly generous Amazing Disgrace boondoggle to their intensely expectatious donors. The illegitimacy of the ruses they used to gain power is being exposed, and the time is fast approaching when the top echelons of their leadership are likely to be run out of town, or be impeached or imprisoned. The ethical rot of their abuses of authority and
obstruction of justice are coming to light, so ramming through this future mortgaging, anti-democratic, common good-betraying, secretive abomination of vested interest giveaways and Forgotten Man takeaways was a now-or-never proposition.

Remember the sentiments and perspectives articulated by Thomas Paine during tumultuous times in Common Sense, his revolutionary pamphlet 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 their antipathy toward despotism who wield abusive power, our ancestors in the American colonies sought common purpose in gaining liberation from British tyranny. By July 4, 1776, Thomas Paine's clarity of conviction in the cause of independence from despotism had catalyzed 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 concocting a farsighted Constitution and fair-minded Bill of Rights, and they put rules of law into place and a brilliant flexible governing structure that has progressively adapted ever since.

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 of deceived voters due to misleading propaganda and devious spin and brazen lies.

As the noose tightens on scandalous Republican malfeasance with criminal investigations, 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. The main reason that Republicans are demonstrating such a fervor to end all the investigations going on is that they see a heightening risk of their tenuous monopoly on power coming to an end.

Trying to play offense, eleven far-right Republican politicians in the House introduced a bill in late July 2018 to impeach then Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. This was part of an intensifying effort to discredit the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 elections in favor of Trump. Incisive observers say that this was also a shrewd attempt to attract Big Money donations to their reelection efforts, like Trump absolutist Devin Nunes has done in collecting large sums of money from Super PACs and out-of-state Trump supporters.

Trump himself has desperately ratcheted up his attacks on the Mueller investigation on Twitter and at his ranting rallies. He senses, it seems increasingly obvious, that his guilt is being exposed, and perhaps Nemesis, the Greek Goddess of Retribution, may be getting ever more agitated at his hubris. This is not a "witch hunt".

Trump tweeted on June 28, "Russia continues to say they had nothing to do with Meddling in our Election". Really?! The President of the United States is eager to swallow Vladimir Putin's devious assurances, despite the unanimous conclusions of all American Intelligence agencies. So it was ironically suspicious that Donald Trump concluded that tweet with these words: "So many questions, so much corruption!" YES, INDEED!

There is overwhelming evidence of unconstitutionally unfair influence of extreme gerrymandering by Republican legislatures across the USA, a ruse that has helped give socially disastrous domineering power to Republican politicians. Such system-corrupting tactics are letting scheming politicians egregiously abuse their excessive and unmerited influence by disenfranchising millions of Americans and imposing reactionary policies, social and environmental, on the populace. Satirist Andy Borowitz made the humorous observation, "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.

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 a vast majority -- Republicans are trying to further "divide the blue states from the red, the Democrats from the Republicans. It is evil in the extreme", declared California Governor Jerry Brown. 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 so that they could curry favor with their political base and redistribute money to poorer Republican-leaning and Republican-run 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 without a single representative of Democratic districts included, and then engaged in "reconciliation" in a conference committee to put final touches on the different schemes hatched in tax cut legislation narrowly passed in both chambers. An accurate understanding of this process, according to an astute observer, was that they were "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 a devious trick: the tax cut scam is a dishonest and risk-laden trick upon all people in the future.

John Maynard Keynes, "the father of macroeconomics", was famous for advocating simulative spending by the government during recessionary times to get the economy growing again, but he strongly advocated taking the proverbial punch bowl away by running offsetting budget surpluses during boom times to keep debt from ballooning and the economy from overheating in a costly bubble. Today, with very low unemployment and a risky surfeit of national debt, it is the wrong time -- the exactly wrong time -- to hyper-stimulate the economy by giving huge tax breaks to rich people and power-abusing corporations, and to rashly run up deficit spending.

Remember that the top tax rate on individuals was 70% or higher for 45 years before Ronald Reagan became president and managed to get the top tax rate slashed to 28% during his tenure in office. Since then, budget deficits have been incurred almost every year, except during the final two years of Bill Clinton's presidency, driving up the national debt to record levels that are dangerous because they represent a historically high percentage of GDP. This level has been seen only once before in U.S. history, in connection with the huge effort of the U.S. in fighting the exceedingly costly Second World War 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 very low rates. And most wealth is passed on tax free to heirs after they die. Due in large part to tax cuts on the highest levels of income and on inheritances, and due to tax evasion schemes by corporations and rich people, the national debt has soared from less than $1 trillion in 1980 to $22 trillion as 2019 begins.

Republicans crow 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 and wreak disadvantages on countless millions of others who will be left behind. In all probability, their actions will have devastating lose-lose consequences for the majority of Americans and almost everyone yet to be born. Republican politicians, after causing budget deficits to spike, are sounding the alarm about the debt, and are cynically beginning to use this as a justification to impose reductions in spending on healthcare, public education, protections of public lands, and the safety and security of the people, including safety net programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio admitted this fact that the Republican tax plan is merely a first step before "instituting structural changes to Social Security and Medicare", slashing benefits or privatizing the programs in order to reduce the federal deficit that their tax cut plan is making significantly worse. 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 coming spending cuts came to light as Republicans were laser focused on ramming through this wrong-headed assembly of shrewdly targeted tax cuts. Nine million children were on the verge of losing their health care because funding had not been re-authorized for the Children's Health Insurance Program, a low-cost health insurance plan for children from low-income families that expired on October 1, 2017. During a debate in early December 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 the tax cut hearings, claimed the program had not been renewed "because we don't have money anymore" -- two weeks BEFORE they finally pushed their tax cuts into law. This sad negligence was occurring even though there was
bipartisan support for renewing the program instead of abandoning children. What was happening was that Republicans were once again cynically using vulnerable persons as bargaining chips in their winner-take-all game.

An advocate for deficit-financed tax cuts, a man who is a smart investment executive of a ultra-high-net-worth wealth management firm, actually asserted that the Tax Cuts bill will not make inequality worse, and he echoed the dubious claim that the plan will prove to be a good thing for most Americans because tens of millions of Americans have inventions in the stock market through their 401(k) retirement plans. But a little research reveals the truth: only 32% of Americans are saving for retirement in a 401(k), and the perception that stock market gains would be broadly shared is misleading. While more than 45% of American households do have direct or indirect investments in the stock market through 401(k)s, mutual funds, trusts, pensions or direct purchases of shares, the top 10% of households own more than 80% of the total value of those investments, while the vast majority of shareholders have relatively meager holdings.

Disaster capitalism, as Naomi Klein sees it in her incisive 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! Let’s sharpen our wits. Casino Capitalism, Inc. has its doors wide open for speculation, and hubris-filled conservatives are making an all-out gamble that they can get away with engaging in idiotically arrogant overreach by exploiting people and ratcheting up the national debt. Both the intended and unintended consequences will eventually be very ugly.

Corporations are abusing the power of their domineering influence in ways that are contrary to the greater good. These organizations are betraying the public trust and often the people who use their products, as well as their employees, stockholders, taxpayers, the health of the environment, people in other countries and everyone in future generations. Many companies 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 one of many other unscrupulous schemes. Corporate violations of laws and regulations cost hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of lives every year, 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 exceed a billion dollars, and corporate corruption is contributing to a widespread breakdown of ethical rightness, societal well-being and the providential boon of social cohesion.

Our national priorities should reflect higher values, not just a mish-mash of power-abusing expediencies and race-to-the-bottom profiteering enabled by a profoundly corrupt agenda. 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 political representatives in the world today that instead of Right Action, we are almost exclusively engaged in pandering to exceedingly narrow interest groups and facilitating Tragedy of the Commons outcomes, and foisting externalized costs onto everyone. Budgets proposed by scheming Republicans are an affront to fiscal responsibility, inclusive concepts of fairness, truer justice, and the prospects of everyone yet to be born. The Right Action for us to take would be to emphasize better national planning that is more responsible, ethical, moral, humane, 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.

Seven Theoretically Simple Steps to a Saner Society

This is a digression to recapitulate the most important things we need in order to really honestly and fairly Make America Great Again.

(1) Defend the independence of the judiciary from excessively partisan and uncompromising ideological stances
in legal decision-making.

(2) Defend the independence of the media from manipulation and suppression. Make sure we live in a world that accepts evidence and facts, not fake news, conspiracy theories, disingenuous misinformation and deeply biased reporting. We cannot let our world become a "post-truth" society fragmented by social media platforms that propagate lies, facilitate emotional hijacking and exploit people's fears and deep insecurities to win elections. Independent investigative reporting is crucially important in our democracy, especially with secretive leaders who play loose with the truth and make extremely partisan and excessively corporate-friendly decisions behind closed doors and in ways that are distinctly contrary to the common good.

(3) Implement a much more egalitarian national tax plan that intelligently features Solon-wise taxation rates that are more progressively structured by being more steeply graduated, with lower rates for everyone on the first $75,000 in income and higher rates on all income over $250,000.

(4) End the practice of extreme partisan gerrymandering by creating non-partisan commissions of political independents in every state to re-determine Congressional district boundaries. Take this responsibility away from partisan state legislatures, like some states have done, including New Jersey, Iowa and California. When the responsibility for redistricting lies with partisan state legislatures, the outcomes are generally contrary to the public interest, and often produce congressional districts in which politicians choose their constituents, rather than the other way around. This redistricting action would make running for office more competitive, so more people's interests will be taken into account and respected. Our representatives would therefore strive to appeal to broader constituencies, and necessarily become more responsible to all the citizens they represent. This would be one way to honestly and effectively make America greater!

(5) Prevent the trend of accumulated wealth becoming dynastic and selfishly aristocratic, like it did for many oppressive centuries in kingdoms of yesteryear. Keep inheritance taxes in place at rates like those in effect before the December 2017 Tax Cuts bill, for reasons set forth in Postscript Two of the essay Core Values of Democracy.

(6) Get Big Money out of the driver's seat in determining who will represent us in our elections and governance. Do this by instituting Clean Elections methods and making sensible reforms of campaign finance laws. Take the step advocated by the Move to Amend Coalition to accomplish this goal. This would be a good way to achieve the greater good, properly understood. Republicans tend to all but claim that God regards corporations as being people. Back in 2011, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney smugly declared, "Corporations are people, my friend". I thought, "Oh, is that so?" Well, let's call in the political economists, sociologists and historians, and the psychologists and psychiatrists, and let's analyze exactly what kind of person the preponderance of giant corporations resemble in their actions. Conveniently, the insightful professor Joel Bakan has already done clear-eyed research for us on this topic, and he had a Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders handy by his side. Due to their behavior and inherent tendencies, he insightfully concluded, corporations would be pathological psychopaths, if regarded as actual persons. This is because they often act in ways that are manipulative, socially irresponsible, unempathetic, and practically incapable of guilt, remorse, moral rectitude or genuine responsibility for the greater good.

(7) Enact true lobbying reform. There are currently more than 12,000 registered lobbyists in Washington, D.C. who frequent corridors in the halls of power, all of them intent on influencing one of the 535 members of Congress to support some special deal for themselves, often in ways contrary to the common good. And these lobbyists are highly compensated for their amazing success in turning hundreds of millions of dollars of corporate money and Koch billionaires' money and other rich people's money into hundreds of billions of dollars of tax cuts and special deals just-for-them, always at the opportunity cost of a fairer modern New Deal for We the People. WHAT A GREAT RETURN FOR THEM ON THEIR MONEY. But this is a tragedy for the people! All American citizens are affected by The Top Ten Ways Our System Is Unfairly Rigged, so it is high time we all better understood these corrupt aspects of the status quo, and demanded positive reforms.

We need sensible rules and regulations, adequate enforced. We need greater protections of human rights. We
need greater freedom from adversities caused by polluters, corrupt dealings, financial fraud, Casino Capitalist ruses and Shock Doctrine Disaster Capitalist outcomes. We cannot afford to "deregulate" by reversing smart established protections of public health and safety and the environment, nor should we support ruthless efforts that will predictably create a tragedy-of-the-commons capitalistic free-for-all in which humankind treats planet Earth like an enterprise going-out-of-business and in liquidation, rather than a going concern. For better long-term guidance, we need to ratify a Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

Retrogressive Leadership

Donald Trump has tried to reverse every farsighted action taken by President Barack Obama, in what is an apparently reactionary and egomaniacal whim tinged by racial prejudice. Because Trump's actions are so self-centered, self-serving, rashly shortsighted, broadly unjust, ecologically unsound and blatant in their disregard for future well-being, it will be necessary for new leaders sometime soon 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 in effect put life on Earth and the prospects and well-being of all people in future generations last.

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 and rigging the economy and tax law ever more radically 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 betrayed by greedy apologists for outrageous abusers of power, this is not good. When the common good is undermined through the use of deviously deceitful ideological arguments, this is anti-American. When the schemers who are perpetrating these outrages are brazenly working overtime to grab domineering power at any cost, and to stack the courts with "conservative" collaborators, these zealots deserve the deep disdain of those who they betray.

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

Instead of promoting truly fair and honorably principled national policies, they are pushing right-wing plans 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 immigrants and desperate refugees and asylum seekers. And they are misusing religious doctrines and fostering divisive propaganda in order to implement an unacceptably narrow agenda. This is having consequentially detrimental impacts.

Let's not allow these schemers to hijack our emotions and manipulate us so easily, and let us not fall for the distractions and swindles that corrupt politicians are using to take advantage of the people.

Men's souls are being tried today, as Thomas Paine declared they were during Revolutionary times, and some of them 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, and who betray principles of cohesive Golden Rule fairness, decency 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,
Who are the main members of this misleading kakistocracy, these members of “the worst or least qualified or most unscrupulous citizens” who have been put in positions of power? Let’s meet some of them. Among the worst of these characters was the top legal authority in the country in the Department of Justice, Attorney General Jeff Sessions (until he was fired right after the 2018 midterm elections). Sessions apparently lied through his teeth about his and the Trump campaign’s collaboration with Russia to throw the election to Trump Republicans. This man was one of the main persons responsible for pushing “zero tolerance” immigration policies. He also offensively wanted to make the costly War on Drugs even harsher, selectively deciding that overreach by the federal government is a good idea, as evidenced by his decision to ratchet up the extremely unjust and oppressive criminalization of the use of cannabis by engaging in a harsh 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 was 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. His replacement by Matt Whitaker and then William Barr highlighted another shortcoming of the leadership of the Justice Department: these men are acting like their duty is to be loyalists to the President, rather than properly and honorably representing the American people.

Also among the worst members of the kakistocracy are both the current and former head of the Environmental Protection Agency, an agency created through common sense bipartisan agreement during the Nixon years. These sycophants brazenly favor short-term-oriented profiteering by fossil fuel businesses and a 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 Betsy DeVos 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 Steve Mnuchin 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 2008, and he is one of the drivers behind the highly regressive and fiscally irresponsible tax cut plan that Republicans rammed through into law without any input from representatives of more than half of all Americans who did not vote for their power grab.

Also, it turns out that Wilbur Ross, a billionaire nicknamed “the king of bankruptcy” who has been appointed as Secretary of Commerce, has many conflicts of interest. He suspiciously failed to disclose investments during his confirmation hearings in a shipping company 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 tax havens. Wilbur Ross also, according to House Democrats, lied to Congress about his role in a Trump administration effort to add a politically manipulative citizenship question to the 2020 census.

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 and Kavanaugh Supreme Court is
making its impact by siding with amoral corporations over people. And they will no doubt look with narrow favor on things like Republican efforts to strike down a sweeping 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 in effect 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 to protect people. By this action, Republicans are dismantling a major effort of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the watchdog agency created 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 governing. In signing the bill to kill 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. When Trump put Mick Mulvaney, an outspoken opponent to banking regulation, in charge of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, it demonstrated 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."

Mick Mulvaney also serves as Trump's budget director. So it was particularly onerous to hear him frankly admit that he champions what is in essence corrupt pay-to-play politics. Speaking to a group of executives from the banking industry in April 2018, he made it clear that he plans on helping them financially, and for proof he pointed to his past behavior as a Republican congressman who pandered to the highest bidder. "We had a hierarchy in my office in Congress," he confessed conspiratorially. "If you're a lobbyist who never gave us money, I didn't talk to you. If you're a lobbyist who gave us money, I might talk to you." This is pathetic! And it is alarming in light of the development when General John Kelly finally resigned as Trump's chief of staff, and Mick Mulvaney was promoted to "acting" chief of staff in the White House.

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

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 something like 60% of the populations of 10,000 representative species of mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians and fish, as ominously reported by the World Wildlife Fund in its sadly revelatory and sensational Living Planet Reports.

2. Meanwhile human numbers have tripled since 1950, increasing from 2.5 billion to more than 7.7 billion. And yet Republican politicians are making it harder 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. In this action, they have expanded prohibitions on abortions abroad to make them significantly more onerous than when Ronald Reagan first instituted this rash rule. The 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, and causing sea levels to insidiously and ominously rise.

3. They are pushing policies that serve to squander natural resources at the fastest possible rate without any discernable shred of adequate concern for either sharing the spoils more broadly or conserving these critical resources on behalf of all persons in the future.
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*.

6. They are working to undermine public education, goose private profits and oppose sensible steps to reduce student debts, and failing to strengthen protections of women from sexual assaults.

7. They are trying to maximize profits for the few by rashly undermining sensible protections of Clean Air, Clean Water, public lands, National Parks and Monuments, oceans, Wilderness Areas and endangered species.

8. They are ruthlessly using extremely divisive tactics to gain and maintain power, and abusing this power by disdaining 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 of their political base 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 inflammatory rhetoric by a scornful spokesperson named Dana Loesch. These are darkly manipulative videos that seem to be designed to provoke people's fears and hatred of advocates for sensible controls on gun sales, and of protestors in general, and even to incite violence against them.

10. The top priority of 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.

History has witnessed Republican politicians in an all-fired hurry to ram their abomination of tax legislation into law before anyone really understood the impacts that it will have on various constituencies. Now it is becoming clearer that these operatives are overreaching in their efforts 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.

*Germinating in August 2019, and Seeking Inclusion in See Clearly*

The profit motive, unshackled and laissez-faire unrestrained, zealously sells the vast majority of the people down the river to an unnecessarily harsh fate, as seen by fossil fuel corporations refusing to take steps to prevent the destabilization of the global climate, and by giant pharmaceutical companies lethally endangering and ripping off tens of millions of vulnerable folks in order to maximize profits, and even by such virtue-spouting corporate goliaths as the search engine Google and technology giant Apple, which are treating society shabbily. Facebook, for its part, can be seen to have been perniciously taking advantage of people's desire to communicate and be liked, and then they sell our personal information and allow manipulative demagogues and extremist groups to tear us apart -- in order to make bigger profits off contributing to the shredding of unity and social cohesion in our communities.
A daunting development haunts humanity here in the 21st century: crony capitalism has become almost completely unfettered by ethical constraints. We must now see clearly. Understand the following nefarious aspects of this Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalist Con, a swindle that deeply deceptive politicians and their donor supporters have foisted on the American people ever since Ronald Reagan launched his folksy revolution of regressive taxation in favor of the rich, and made concerted efforts to curtail the ability of working people to collectively bargain for fairer pay and benefits. Recall that these tax cuts were financed by borrowing unprecedented amounts of money and adding it to a suddenly spiking level of national debt. It is bizarre that Republicans lionize Reagan in light of the fact that he married these anti-egalitarian, anti-populist and fiscally irresponsible top priorities with a crusade against regulations that govern big banks and corporations, and that he promoted excessively high spending on the military that was profligately wasteful.

The American people have been subjected to this crony capitalist con for many years, but with the triumphant coup by Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress, this über-scum has really taken off. The 14 primary defining characteristics of this capitalist con are set forth below. Note that these insidious initiatives are being perpetrated not only in the USA, but also in countries around the globe, so our leaders should work together with peoples everywhere to rectify these wrongs.

Grotesque greed drives these capitalist schemes, as evidenced by the rash flip-flop by the Trump family on environmental protections. In 2009, Donald Trump and Ivanka, Donald Jr. and Eric all signed an open letter that was printed in the New York Times urging President Obama and world leaders who were headed to international climate negotiations in Copenhagen to act on climate change. The letter stated, “If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet.” Now that there is a huge amount of money and power available by aggressively siding with the fossil fuel industry against sensible precautionary actions, Donald Trump is reprehensibly pandering to polluting companies by signing a flurry of anti-environmental executive orders and appointing climate change deniers to positions of power, thus contributing to the probabilities that we will suffer “catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet”. This is a pathological rejection of social responsibility and intelligent dealing.

Defining Characteristics of the Crony Capitalist Con

Number One. Regressive Taxation. The wealthiest 1% of Americans has increased their net worth in total by an estimated $30 trillion since 1981, as a direct result of Ronald Reagan radically slashing tax rates on the highest income earners from 70% to 28%. This has been the primary factor in running up the national debt by more than $21 trillion, from less than $1 trillion in 1981 to an excessively risky $22 trillion today. Our representatives have basically embraced a radical antithesis of the precautionary concept of fairly balancing the budget, and they certainly have not sensibly invested in “a rainy day fund” for the plethora of costly challenges that are arising as our human population approaches 8 billion needy and greedy people -- within the next seven years.

Low tax rates on rich people are causing not just huge budget deficits but dangerously increasing inequality.
Recall the insightful billionaire Nick Hanauer's sensationaly words in *The Pitchforks are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats*, "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 counter-examples. None. It’s not if, it’s when."

The trickle-down theory that rationalizes regressive changes in tax policy is creating dangers too serious to be allowed to persist. Progressive tax reform, with more steeply graduated rates is necessary. See One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies for good ideas on how this and other important changes in our national policies and priorities could help us create a dramatically fairer and more secure society.

We should rightly stop cravenly catering to the shortsighted compulsions of rich people to get an increasing portion of the economic pie for themselves. The unintended consequences of this myopic stance are to risk creating revolutionary resistance and an increased impetus for the proverbial pitchforks to come out against the rich. A most likely result of national policies that increase the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few is to create economic instability and stoke revolutionary discord. When these developments intensify, Trump and his authority-abusing henchmen will likely try to violently repress those who oppose their abuses of power, and the American people will be deprived of some of their cherished personal liberties and security.

The Trump agenda is a devious one that is glaringly contrary to the populist propaganda that the Deceiver-in-Chief claims to represent. He has enacted huge new tax breaks that will serve as a wildly disproportionate boon for the wealthiest 1%, and his proposed spending cuts would cruelly and disproportionately affect everyone else, with the worst burdens falling on the poorest and most vulnerable persons. By cutting government spending and eviscerating most government agencies, tens of thousands of jobs will be eliminated in the public sector, and the effect of these anti-stimulus actions will have a depressive effect on the economy.

"IN MY OPINION WE DON'T DEVOTE NEARLY ENOUGH SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TO FINDING A CURE FOR JERKS."

--- Calvin to Hobbes (Bill Watterson)

Number Two. Capitalist vs. Worker -- the ultimate coup. Ever since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, capitalists have been taking advantage of working people to amass large fortunes. They are able to do this because they have more power and they "control the means of production". Workers are not able to fairly share in the productivity increases of their labor, and the repetitive work they often have to do makes them little more than cogs in a machine -- and capitalists and entrepreneurs generally treat them like disposable machines, and have been increasingly replacing them in recent decades with automation, leaving many unable to earn a living. Capitalists were so successful in the 19th century that by 1848 a manifesto was published urging the workers of the world to unite to gain fairer compensation and safer working conditions and a modicum more security in a ruthlessly capitalist world. That manifesto became a source of ideological conflicts that intensified during the Cold War, and threatened to destroy the world in nuclear annihilation. Fairer compromises between power-abusing capitalists and working people are a key to creating a safer and more stable world.

The ideals of economic fundamentalism are, in theory, quite laudable. They hold that free markets are guided by what Adam Smith called an 'invisible hand', which supposedly creates the best conditions for the public good. Unfortunately, our economic and political systems are corrupted by institutionalized bribery, monopoly abuses, deceptive practices, unfair vested-interest political influence, pork barrel spending, dishonesty, ruthless banking schemes and other financial shenanigans, imperialistic abuses of power, and distorting influences that militate for war and war profiteering. Giant corporations often cheat working people and the public to make bigger profits instead of improving their products or their production methods, or they strive to gain large government subsidies that perpetuate inefficient and polluting industries. They indulge in exploitive "rent-seeking" behaviors that do not create wealth, but merely grab a bigger proportion of the national wealth for themselves. They also generally treat workers unfairly, and externalize environmental costs onto society, and
indulge in unfair tax avoidance scams by using tax loopholes and offshore incorporation.

The overriding goal of capitalists is to maximize profits, and one main means of accomplishing this is by minimizing costs. So corporate management has strong incentives to take advantage of workers and dispose of them when convenient, and they generally have little compunction about firing employees and treating workers shabbily. They also engage in efforts to rip off taxpayers by foisting "too big to fail" bailouts and other costs associated with periodic economic crises onto taxpayers. They accomplish these goals by abusing the power they gain using the influence of their deep pockets. They get away with this largely because our campaign finance system has been corrupted by the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling.

This is why sensible government rules and regulations play a crucial role in making our democracy healthier and safer. Shrewd Republican ideologies, and law-making that blindly eviscerates these rules, is often wrongheaded.

Number Three. Cost externalizing schemes. These über-betrayals of the people by the top 1% of Americans who are excessively monopolizing the spoils of labor and resource extraction has an even more deplorable aspect. Vested interest groups are indulging in another rash ruse: cost-externalizing schemes, also accurately described as "the socializing of costs".

The rigged rules that govern corporate entities not only allow Big Businesses to foist a variety of costs onto society to artificially boost profits, but also give the top 1% of Americans more than two-thirds of the resulting capital gains -- and guess what! -- they pay really low capital gains tax rates of only 15% on these spoils, and only when these gains are realized. Even more outrageously, their heirs pay zero percent after a person dies because the "cost basis" of all investments is revised to the value at the date of death, allowing these windfalls to be transmitted indefinitely forward to every person who inherits any of these investments.

See what's happening here. These basic facts about how our economic and political systems are rigged urge us to exit our echo chambers and seek to better understand -- and to demand much more fair-minded leadership and reforms. See Dr. Tiffany B. Twain's Top Ten Ways Our System Is Rigged for enlightening understandings of the true nature of how our system really works against the interests of most Americans.

Number Four. Concerted efforts to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of the few. This scheme makes the almost unprecedented inequality in the USA today worse and worse, causing social unrest and increasing the risks of revolutionary turmoil. The brilliant linguist Noam Chomsky has adduced "10 Principles" that wealthy people use to enable this vicious and risky circle of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the few, and they are evaluated in detail in Thirteen Main Methods Used to Increasingly Concentrate Wealth and Power.

Eight billionaires own the same amount of wealth as the world's poorest 3.6 billion people, according to the latest Oxfam report on this aspect of the status quo. This is unacceptable, for it creates profound levels of hardship and suffering.

Number Five. Deregulation and Profiteering. Deregulation and efforts to enact corporate-friendly policies at the expense of the people serve to weaken government and give more power to corporations. As a sad result, corporations abuse this power, as confirmed by the significant decline in the amount of federal taxes they pay. Corporations paid more than 30% of all federal taxes in 1952, yet they have managed to skew national laws and loopholes so that they paid only about 9% of total federal taxes in fiscal year 2017.

Deregulatory schemes resulted in extraordinarily large costs in the Savings and Loan debacle at the end of Ronald Reagan's tenure in office, and during the "Great Recession" at the end of George W. Bush's time in office. A Dodd-Frank bill was passed to prevent future similar financial crises, but now the Trump administration is working to dismantle these protections and stoke the fires of predatory behaviors and risk-taking that will set the stage for a future episode that will likely be worse, given the huge overhang of a $22 trillion national debt.

Number Six. Tax Evasion and the latest "tax holiday". Multinational corporations in the United States evade taxes by squirreling them away in tax havens abroad until Republicans gain control of the government, and then they get these supposedly conservative politicians to give them what they euphemistically call a "tax holiday"
reward for bringing these profits back to the U.S. from their tax evasion havens, at really low tax rates.

We have foolishly allowed wealthy people and corrupt politicians to rig our economic, social and political systems in ways that make our societies more unfair, and the periodic tax holiday on hidden profits is a classic example of this outcome. This constitutes a serious misrepresentation of the best interests of the 99% of Americans, so it is deplorable and morally wrong.

This is a top Republican priority that is really a scam that rewards shareholders in big corporations who have been eagerly waiting for the day they will receive the benefits of this scheme. This action "repatriated" an estimated $2.5 trillion that was stockpiled in countries abroad, and did so at bargain tax rates on this corruptly "sheltered" money. The last such repatriation was pushed by Republicans in 2004, when $362 billion was brought back to the U.S. at an exceedingly low 5.25% rate, and was basically given to a relative few through stock buy-backs.

Number Seven. Infrastructure and Privatization. We have irresponsibly allowed our country’s infrastructure to deteriorate, and now the Schemer-in-Chief is proposing big investments in infrastructure improvement using "private-public" plans to finance them. This method of financing is a form of scam in which private investors will get rich and taxpayers will get shafted, as Robert Reich makes abundantly clear in Trump’s Infrastructure Scam. Trump’s promises to invest in American infrastructure involve scheming proposals that would give big tax breaks to private "partnerships" with huge corporations that would strip the American people of their own resources, and then make them pay for the use of bridges and highways and other projects.

Infrastructure maintenance is crucially important, as was realized when a flooding crisis at the Oroville Dam in the foothills of California’s Central Valley resulted in an urgent evacuation of almost 200,000 people. This event makes it clear that we do not merely need big new projects, which construction profiteers are eager to have the government undertake, but better maintenance of existing infrastructure. There are some 1,400 dams in California, and about 84,000 in the United States, and they should be more safely maintained, instead of embarking on a new era of aggressive dam building. Executives at Friends of the River and two other environmental organizations had warned in 2005 about the risks of having an "unarmored spillway" at the Oroville Dam, and events proved them right. They now provide smart recommendations for ways to shore up unsafe dams and levees, or to decommission dams when they no longer serve the public interest.

The corporatocratic Privatizer-in-Chief has proposed privatizing key public services, including the Veterans Administration, and slashing funding from public schools and public broadcasting. He also favors expanding private prisons. Republican politicians in Congress want to go even further by privatizing Medicare and the Postal Service and National Parks and air traffic control and other functions of the government. This is on top of previous privatizations of military contracts and even food services in the Senate dining room and cafeteria and coffee shops.

"Privatization" means taking public wealth and assets that benefit us all, and turning them over to the private sector, where only a few reap the reward. When a road or bridge is "privatized", people must pay a toll to use it, so the new “owners” of the road can make a profit.

There is another problem with privatization. Democratic governments aim to serve as a model of what the public wants, so they try to provide jobs with good pay and benefits. When governments are talked into “saving money” by privatizing, what often happens is employees are laid off, then private companies hire new workers, or rehire the old ones at lower wages with fewer benefits. The result is that laid-off employees are made worse off, while new hires are also impoverished because they are often no longer paid a living wage. A local, state or national government might "save money" in the short term by lowering wages and externalizing costs, but the communities where these people live ultimately suffer the consequences.

Privatization can contribute to an increase in home foreclosures, causing many neighborhoods to lose value. Property and income taxes are reduced, there are fewer customers for local businesses, schools are stressed as children move into poverty, and the need for emergency government assistance like food stamps rises. So while privatization shifts benefits to a few, all taxpayers inevitably bear the costs.
While privatizers promote this kind of transfer of public wealth to private hands with claims that it "saves money", privatization harms communities and often costs taxpayers more than it saves. More importantly, it hurts people. Avoiding such outcomes should be one of our main civic concerns.

Privatization, or government outsourcing, has been going on for decades, and is often touted as a cost-saving panacea. Today, governments are reassessing whether turning public property and services over to private companies has really been a good idea. Story after story has appeared detailing horror stories of corruption, incompetence and general scamming by companies prepossessed with profit. Molly Ball reported recently in The Privatization Backlash in the Atlantic, "In states and cities across the country, lawmakers are expressing new skepticism about privatization, imposing new conditions on government contracting, and demanding more oversight. Laws to rein in contractors have been introduced in 18 states this year (2014), and three -- Maryland, Oregon and Nebraska -- have passed legislation, according to In the Public Interest, a group that advocates what it calls 'responsible contracting.'"

This sensational observation is contained in a report Out of Control: The Coast-to-Coast Failures of Outsourcing Public Services to For-Profit Corporations begins: "Eager for quick cash, state and local governments across America have for decades handed over control of critical public services and assets to corporations that promise to handle them better, faster and cheaper. Unfortunately for taxpayers, not only has outsourcing these services failed to keep this promise, but too often it undermines transparency, accountability, shared prosperity and competition -- the underpinnings of democracy itself."

Donald Trump initially instituted a government "hiring freeze", which is a strategy toward privatization. Lauren McCauley explained in her article In Step Towards Privatization, Trump Enacts Federal Hiring Freeze: "As J. David Cox Sr. pointed out, the freeze will 'actually increase taxpayer costs by forcing agencies to hire more expensive contractors to do work that civilian government employees are already doing for far less.'"

"Numerous studies have shown that contractors are two to three times more costly than each federal employee they replace," Cox said. "President Trump's federal hiring freeze will result in more government waste as agencies are forced to hire high-priced contractors to do the work that federal employees can and should be doing. When a sufficient blanket of anti-government propaganda has been laid down, the privatizers introduce proposals for "reform" and providing "choice." Of course the proposals are to hand over government functions for private profit.

One result of falling for the privatization scam is that taxpayers have been fleeced, services to citizens have been cut way back and communities have been made poorer. But the companies that convinced governments to hand over public functions have gotten rich off of the deal. How is this a surprise?

"Imagine a system where someone makes a profit if more and more people are put in prison. This is known as a perverse incentive. Really, can you think of anything worse than getting a profit to get people put in jail? What you think could go wrong is exactly what does go wrong. These companies want profits, so rehabilitation becomes a "cost."

These companies push for government policies that put more people into prison for more crimes and for longer sentences. Prison-for-profit companies work with the notorious corporate lobbying outfit ALEC -- the American Legislative Exchange Council -- to come up with model legislation that they copy in states across the country to push things like "three strikes" laws and "truth in sentencing" that serve to significantly increase the number of prisoners and the amount of time they serve.

If you examine the claim that private companies are always more efficient than government, the argument starts to fall apart. Just how are companies more efficient? The first way companies are supposed to be better is cost-savings. But just how do they save money? There are two ways a company can save money over what government spends. The first is to reduce what it pays employees and suppliers. The second is to cut back on the amount or quality of the service the company is taking over.

The resulting wage and benefit cuts hurt the community at large, including declining retail sales, greater
reliance on public assistance and a larger share of at-risk children in low-income families. On a recent phone call discussing the study, Greenwood said that when governments outsource, “the availability of middle-class jobs is affected, even upward mobility.” She said, “Contracting to private corporations usually means big reductions in worker benefits and benefits,” and “lower wages often mean a shift to less experienced employees.”

With outsourcing, says Janice Fine of Rutgers University, a study shows that there is often “a stunning lack of government oversight of contractors.” She sensibly concluded that “oversight shouldn’t be set aside because of cost, it should be an essential part of outsourcing.”

Number Eight. Consumerism and international trade. Hundreds of billions of dollars are spent annually on advertising and product promotion to stoke materialistic consumerism -- and huge sums are spent on elections and lobbying and ideological indoctrination that allows this scam to continue, betraying fair-mindedness and rules of law in supposedly fairly representative democracies. The reason this continues is because our national decision-making is dominated by ruthless corporations and elites who abuse the power of their wealth.

Our national priorities should be consistent with sustainable activities for humanity over countless numbers of coming generations. It is insane to blindly believe marketing messages and ideological rationalizations that promote consumerism that recklessly wastes nonrenewable resources on Earth. It is downright dumb to allow profit-prepossessed business entities to irresponsibly externalize the costs of harmful impacts that their production activities have on wildlife habitats, natural ecosystems and the global climate.

In this Trumpian age of moral outrage, the vast majority of people are being given a bad deal and there is widespread social irresponsibility as greed is unleashed and Trump demonstrates egomaniacal insecurity and liberty-threatening authoritarian impulses. This age is being characterized by manipulative deceit, anti-Solon-wise Twittered lies, exclusion instead of inclusion, discriminatory inequality against anyone who is not a white Christian male, cravenly sycophantish loyalties by politicians to extreme planks of the hard-right conservative agenda, and far-reaching ecological insanity.

The Demagogue-in-Chief won the election, in part, by blaming the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs on bad trade deals and low wage competition in countries like China and Mexico. This characterization struck a chord with many voters in Rust Belt states, but it was another example of his deceitful spin on reality. As the Managing Editor of The Week magazine pointed out, ”A recent study found that 85 percent of manufacturing job losses from 2000 to 2010 were caused by automation, not outsourcing. American firms have been steadily cutting employees and replacing them with machines that are cheaper (they don’t need benefits) and more efficient (they don’t take vacations). U.S. factories now produce twice as much stuff as they did in 1984, but with only one-third of the workers. And smarter machines will soon steal a lot more jobs. One Oxford University study predicts that 47 percent of U.S. jobs will be automated over the next two decades.”

Number Nine. Healthcare inequities. Another pathetic dimension of the Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalist Con is the perpetuation of a fragmented healthcare system that discriminates against young people, the poor, the disabled, the unemployed and women. Think about how absurdly fragmented our healthcare insurance system really is. Trends in coverage rates for employer-sponsored insurance are revealing. They have fallen from 65 percent in 2001 to 56 percent in 2016. And premiums for family coverage increased by about 75 percent from 2004 to 2016. In addition, the share of the insurance premium paid by the employer continues to decrease.

In the big picture, it is cynically calculating to have a system that ties health insurance to having a job, then patches up the obvious defects of such a system with Medicare for older people who are retired, and a system of Medicaid for poor people and workers who are too poorly compensated to cover medical costs, and a patchy system of health insurance coverage for children. This system is really lousy for millions of people, and since it involves people’s crucially important health, failures in this arena make Martin Luther King’s observation poignant when he pointed out, “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

Let’s create a truly fairer system of healthcare for all, like a Medicare-for-all plan. The extreme Republican “repeal and replace” plans fall far short of satisfying this criteria.
Number Ten. Demagoguery and the illegitimacy and tyranny of hard-right rule. The Master-Manipulator-in-Chief and Republican politicians have used extremely divisive tactics and emotionally manipulative demagoguery to gain power, and are now rashly abusing this domineering power. Shrewd strategies that are effective in opposition are not well suited to governing fairly and in the best interests of public health and safety. Tactics like gerrymandering of congressional districts and vote suppression have given a minority of Americans undeserved and excessive power, effectively disempowering the majority, and the unjust ramifications of this abuse of power make this illegitimate scam morally wrong.

In all fairness, politicians should try to win elections by honestly offering the people good plans for improving their prospects and overall security. Instead, many Republicans won in the 2016 elections by using an astonishing variety of unethical means, as adduced in detail in Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy.

Consequentialist ethics tells us that despotism is deplorable in degrees, depending on the number of people that a tyrant adversely affects, and the severity of the oppression, and the exact nature of injustices perpetrated. The tyrannies imposed by Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung, Pol Pot, Augusto Pinochet and Saddam Hussein are among the most notorious and lethal in history.

One consequence of Trump's disastrous triumph is a significant increase in the number of incidents related to extremists and hate groups dedicated to anti-Muslim antagonism and neo-Nazi ideologies and bigotry and racism and anti-Semitism in the USA. This increase has occurred in the past two years in tandem with the incendiary rhetoric and ascendancy of the demagogic emotion-hijacking tactics of the Machiavellian-Prince-Pretender-in-Chief and his cronies like the provocateur chief strategist Steve Bannon and racist Stephen Miller.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report provides details of this deplorable, divisive and dangerous trend: "After half a century of being increasingly relegated to the margins of society, the radical right entered the political mainstream last year in a way that had seemed virtually unimaginable since George Wallace ran for president in 1968. A surge in right-wing populism, stemming from the long-unfolding effects of globalization and the movements of capital and labor that it spawned, brought a man that many considered to be a racist, misogynist and xenophobe into the most powerful political office in the world. Donald Trump's election as president mirrored similar currents in Europe, where globalization energized an array of extreme-right political movements and the United Kingdom's decision to quit the European Union. Trump's run for office electrified the radical right, which saw in him a champion of the idea that America is fundamentally a white man's country.

It is ironic for white people to set such a belligerent precedent toward minority groups, for they are destined to become a minority group within 30 years or so. The USA was about 90% white from the colonial era up through the early 1960s, but by 2015 it was only 62% white, and the Census Bureau predicts that percentage will fall to less than 50% before the year 2045, due to current demographic trends.

Number Eleven. Eviscerating environmental protections. Ronald Reagan once stated that "Preservation of our environment is not a liberal or conservative challenge, it's common sense." Today, Republicans are willing to sacrifice the environment to stimulate economic growth in the short run and enhance the potentials for profits to be made, no matter how irresponsibly. This entire manifesto deals with such issues. See Common Sense Revival - Book One of the Earth Manifesto for a good introduction to this broad range of ideas and proposals.

A critical environmental issue that will be significantly more serious in coming years is a severe crisis of fresh water shortages that is unfolding as human numbers on Earth approach 8 billion people. According to a report by the United Nations that was released in early 2015, shortages of fresh water for human consumption and farming could reach crisis proportions, with a stunning 40% shortfall in fresh water needs by the year 2030. That is soon! The United Nations recommended that significant global policy changes be made to address this ominous prospect. These ideas should be heeded, for many sources of underground water are already being depleted, and rainfall patterns are becoming more erratic due to changes in global weather patterns associated with the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.
The United Nations World Water Development Report provides intelligent, forward-thinking ideas for achieving more sustainable usages of fresh water. In light of these understandings, it is all but criminal to allow Big Oil to engage in unregulated fracking to extract fossil fuels, contaminating ground water resources, or polluting streams in connection with mountaintop removal coal mining.

Number Twelve. The oppression of women. The conservative compulsion to limit family planning options for women, and their reproductive rights, is an offensively male-centric, dominion demanding, obedience-expecting charade. The root cause for most abortions is unwanted pregnancies, and the most effective way to reduce abortions is to provide more funding for contraceptive choices and Planned Parenthood services that are provided to poor women who do not want to become pregnant. Opposition to these choices is wrongheaded.

I encourage readers to cultivate an expansive understanding of the rightful prerogatives of women, who have throughout the entire evolutionary history of human beings exercised “Original Choice” of their mates, as articulated by Dr. Leonard Shlain in *Sex, Time and Power - How Women’s Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution*. Females have one of the most basic of all human rights to choose NOT to have an unsuitable mate or to be forced to carry his spawn if she is raped or taken advantage of in other ways. In cases of rape, there should be no hurdles whatsoever to a woman’s right to choose to abort a fertilized embryo so abominably begotten.

There should be a litmus test for every candidate nominated to serve on the Supreme Court, and that is that they make a pledge to uphold the reasonable decision made in the precedent-setting *Roe vs. Wade* ruling to give any woman who becomes pregnant the right to choose to terminate her pregnancy within the first trimester before the embryo becomes a viable fetus.

Surely Sister Joan Chittister, a Catholic Nun, was ethically correct when she stated: “I do not believe that just because you’re opposed to abortion, that that makes you pro-life. In fact, I think in many cases, your morality is deeply lacking if all you want is a child born but not a child fed, not a child educated, not a child housed. And why would I think that you don’t? Because you don’t want any tax money to go there. That’s not pro-life. That’s pro-birth. We need a much broader conversation on what the morality of pro-life is.”

Social conservatives are incredibly obtuse and hypocritical on this issue. The goals of these anti-choice, so-called ‘pro-life’ hypocrites are inadequately concerned with children once they are born. Their agenda is about controlling women’s lives and bodies and futures. Why do conservatives often tend to staunchly oppose family planning? It is virtually certain that if males got pregnant, they would champion the use of contraception and strongly defend the freedom to choose whether or not to terminate any unwanted pregnancy, and they would generously support paternal health care policies.

People are NOT honestly “pro-life” if they oppose abortion but support policies and politicians that promise to gut public education, repeal the Affordable Care Act, oppose women’s healthcare, and beef up militarization of law enforcement agencies that disproportionately kill people of color, and black people in particular. Being “pro-life” means nothing if it doesn’t mean being “pro-all-of-life”.

Additionally, it is crazy to rationalize damages to planetary ecosystems through resource exploitation activities in order to avoid the cost of taking precautionary steps to ensure that we leave a fairer legacy to all humans. Pro-life people, when they champion actions and national policies that are contrary to environmental safeguards, are acting in anti-life ways. The anti-birth control, anti-choice doctrines of the patriarchal minority are wrong for humanity and life on Earth.

Since the number of human beings on Earth continues to grow rapidly, human population pressures on land usages and fresh water sources and wildlife habitats will intensify. Already, in just the last 42 years -- as our numbers have grown by 3.5 billion -- we have contributed to wiping out more almost 60% of all mammals, fishes, birds, reptiles and amphibians on Earth (according to the findings of the World Wildlife Fund’s Living Planet Report 2016). Almost 60%!  

Mike Pence is a religious zealot who became the first sitting vice president to address the "March for Life" when he participated on January 27, 2017. At this annual anti-choice rally in Washington, D.C., he told the
crowd, "Life is winning again in America." This is another one of this administration’s trademark "alternative facts" and bizarre spin. In reality, their policies are going to lead to more women being forced to carry a pregnancy to term and more abortions and more women dying from being denied life-saving health care.

Number Thirteen. Deeply corrupted petroleum politics. The term "petro-aggression" has been used to describe the tendency of oil-rich states to instigate international conflicts. There are many examples, including Iraq’s invasion of Iran and Kuwait, and Libya’s repeated incursions into Chad in the 1970s and 1980s, and Iran’s long-standing suspicion of and opposition to Western powers. Some scholars have also suggested that oil-rich states are frequently targets of “resource wars.” And several countries have nationalized foreign-run oil businesses because of abuses of power and interference with national politics by fossil fuel interests. Multibillion-dollar inflows and outflows of petroleum money tend to have worldwide macroeconomic consequences, and major oil exporters often abuse the influence they gain from their huge profits.

In The Price of Inequality, the brilliant economist Joseph Stiglitz discusses the concept of “rent-seeking”, which is a term used to describe the ways by which political policies help insiders at the expense of the rest of us. He writes, “Rent-seeking takes many forms: hidden and open transfers and subsidies from the government, laws that make the marketplace less competitive, lax enforcement of existing competition laws, and statutes that allow corporations to take advantage of others or to pass costs on to the rest of society.” Oddly enough, countries that are rich in natural resources, and in fossil fuels in particular, are infamous for corrupt types of rent-seeking activities. Whereas one might expect that an abundance of resources could be used to help the poor and the middle class, countries with the most natural resources often have the most severe levels of inequality and repression.

Russia’s current oligarchs, for instance, often get their fabulous wealth by obtaining state assets at below-market prices and then ensuring continuing profits through monopoly power. A similar trend is ramping up in the USA as Trump appoints oil industry executives and corporate shills to positions in his Cabinet. One of the first regulations the Trump administration revoked was a rule intended to prevent coal mining companies from polluting streams. This action will benefit coal company executives and investors while harming untold numbers of people and wildlife downstream from coal mining activities. Also, the House of Representatives recently used a radical legislative tool called the Congressional Review Act to “permanently” scrap critical protections against methane pollution from oil and gas drilling on public lands, and many Senate Republicans are thinking what a great idea this is, despite the fact that the well-being of countless numbers of people will be harmed by the crazy plan.

Number Fourteen. Military Keynesianism. Major General Smedley Butler famously wrote a book in 1935 about war being a racket. “It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.” He went on to describe a racket “as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. ... It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes.”

Of the First World War, he wrote, “a mere handful garnered the profits of the conflict. At least 21,000 new millionaires and billionaires were made in the United States during the World War. That many admitted their huge blood gains in their income tax returns. How many other war millionaires falsified their tax returns no one knows.” ... “How many of these war millionaires shouldered a rifle? How many of them dug a trench? How many of them knew what it meant to go hungry in a rat-infested dug-out? How many of them spent sleepless, frightened nights, ducking shells and shrapnel and machine gun bullets? How many of them parried a bayonet thrust of an enemy? How many of them were wounded or killed in battle?”

"Out of war, nations acquire additional territory, if they are victorious. They just take it. This newly acquired territory promptly is exploited by the few -- the selfsame few who wrung dollars out of blood in the war. The general public shoulders the bill. And what is this bill? This bill renders a horrible accounting. Newly placed gravestones. Mangled bodies. Shattered minds. Broken hearts and homes. Economic instability. Depression and all its attendant miseries. Back-breaking taxation for generations and generations."
There are more than 40 million persons in active and reserve military forces in the world today, plus maybe 20 million in paramilitary forces. This means that the war racket is almost certain to intensify, and will really be ramped up as shortages of food, arable land and fresh water get worse with the increase in human numbers of more than 70 million every year, year after year after year.

See Reflections on War - and Peace in the Earth Manifesto for an exhaustive exploration of this issue. Here is an excerpt:

The stimulative economic impact of World War II helped bring the world out of the Depression of the 1930s. Since then, however, a stubborn ideological argument has gained outlandish influence that contends a permanent war economy with profligate military spending is a necessary way to make us safer, and to create jobs and stimulate the economy.

A full-cost accounting of lavish spending on the military-industrial complex contradicts this conviction. Lavish military spending is a waste-oriented and cost-maximizing perversion of self-correcting mechanisms of the free market system, which serve to minimize costs through the forces of competition. Chalmers Johnson investigated this topic at length in the last book of his Blowback Trilogy. Johnson indicated that what he calls "military Keynesianism" is a misguided ideology. This dogma holds that the stimulative debt financing of wars, weapons, munitions and large standing armed forces is good for the economy. In reality, such debt unfairly and irresponsibly defers costs to the future and reduces funds available to emphasize fairer, more far-sighted and more sensible priorities at home. Johnson called military Keynesianism "a form of slow economic suicide."

The U.S. permanent war economy suffers not only from wrong-headed priorities, but also from high cost no-bid contracts, procurement improprieties, and excessive spending on unnecessary military projects. The non-partisan group Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities released a report in 2006 that indicated federal spending priorities are scandalously wasteful, and that Pentagon financial management practices are a big "embarrassment". The report also expressed the opinion that such spending priorities effectively serve to undermine our true national security.

The federal government's spending priorities include large amounts of waste and hidden fraud in military procurement. Much of this is entirely secret ("classified"!), and hence it is susceptible to wasteful earmarks and financial shenanigans. These squandered funds represent a sustained non-productive use of capital and labor. They distort American values and divert resources from more peaceful, just and wholesome goals and investments. They thus represent an outrageous cost of lost opportunities and subverted better priorities.

War may be the ultimate expression of competition, but war gives us a compelling example of why fair and reasonable rules of law are required to achieve greater good goals. Wars and military occupations for ignoble purposes -- like resource grabs and profiteering -- should be prevented. They are simply too devastating to millions of people around the world.

Both Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman considered war profiteering to be a form of "treason". Today, however, profiting from war seems to have become standard operating procedure as a means of allowing defense contractors, aerospace companies, war services corporations, and investors in these enterprises to make profits from lavish spending on wars and war preparations.

Harry Truman chaired a Senate committee during World War II that launched an investigation into shady wartime business practices. They discovered widespread "waste, inefficiency, mismanagement and profiteering." The gargantuan military spending of the last decade is likely to be significantly worse. Truman argued that such behavior was at best unpatriotic. We seem to be so accustomed to war profiteering today that many people regard it as desirable 'business as usual.' But this does not hide the fact that war is a scurrilous way to make profits, and one that we should find honest ways to control with greater rigor and responsibility.

Concluding Commentary
These 14 aspects of our corrupt crony capitalist system constitute considerable outrages against many basic American values. We Americans treasure liberties and generally believe in fair dealing, inclusiveness and more broadly shared prosperity. These values are severely threatened by these shrewd schemes.

Trump’s Chief Strategist Steve Bannon (until August 2017) talked about dismantling “the administrative state.” What he was really talking about is allowing corporations the right to do whatever they want, regardless of the harmful impacts their actions have on American citizens or the environmental commons. When Republicans talk about deregulation, what they really want is to facilitate corporate predation and reduce citizens’ ability to prevent corporate malefiance. With Congress controlled by a narrow majority of Republicans, corporations are using their deep pockets to further corrupt our national priorities.

No matter what populist rhetoric may say, when Republicans enacted huge debt-financed tax cuts in December 2017 that amounted to maybe $2 trillion over the next ten years, they gave most of the benefits to the top 1%. Ever since, they have been striving to rashly impose big cuts in federal spending on programs that benefit the poor and people in the middle class. These politicians are burying the hopes and future well-being of the majority of Americans, a consequential outcome that betrays true populism and destroys the vestiges of representative democracy under a lithified layer of reckless double-crossing avarice.

Economic fundamentalists promote national policies that often result in outcomes treacherous to the greater good. “They promote it. They sugarcoat it. They sing its virtues. They fling rationalizations upon it, and they even greenwash it. But horse manure rolled in powdered sugar does not a doughnut make.”

The domination of our federal government by an illegitimate President and Senate represents a reactionary leap backwards. Trump’s anti-precautionary actions and egregious abuses of power represent a broad betrayal of the public trust in fair governance, and a rash trajectory of torpedoing honorable American values. Scandals are pervading the Trump presidency because of his many conflicts of interest and his perpetuation of Big Lies and extensive efforts to deceive, and his reactionary rigidity and overreaching abuses of power and hubris.

Entrepreneurs tend to be highly regarded in our capitalist society. But from the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution, unethical business tycoons and manipulative bankers and ruthless robber barons have exploited opportunities to take advantage of workers and abandon them, and to cheat laborers, screw taxpayers, and corrupt our political system to quash competition, allow monopolies, give subsidies, and evade regulations and accountability. Real estate moguls and Wall Street fat cats who think they are “masters of the universe” are just following the lead of these earlier entrepreneurs.

Donald Trump, a master deceiver, has sold himself as an amazingly successful businessman, though May 2019 revelations that he lost more than $1 billion in 1985 through 1995 belie this deception. What “success” he had was manipulating public opinion and using a litany of some of the most ruthless, dishonest and dishonorable tactics imaginable. He has cheated employees, contractors, suppliers and taxpayers. He has exploited tax laws, bankruptcy laws, copyright laws and real estate laws. He has used thousands of lawsuits to intimidate communities and evade responsibilities. He has marketed real estate advice in scheming ways to defraud “students” at “Trump University”, and was forced to pay $25 million for this fraudulent audacity. He has run roughshod over the environment to build luxury hotels, gambling casinos and exclusionary golf courses. He has brazenly concealed his tax return information from the public, who should be allowed to see the truth about his often dastardly dealings. And he has generally acted in ways that are reprehensibly greedy and despicably dishonest and grotesquely manipulative.

Then he set his egomaniacal eyes on the ultimate power abuser’s prize -- the most powerful position on the planet, and he used brazen demagoguery and foreign intrigue with authoritarian dictators like Vladimir Putin, and a long litany of profoundly unscrupulous strategies to triumph in this quest. And now he is bringing his greedy, lying, cheating, exploiting, screwing, deceiving, manipulative ways to the White House, where he is strong-arming compliant Republicans in Congress to corrupt governance. The anti-egalitarian consequences will likely be catastrophic, and the unintended consequences could be even worse -- and uncontrollable.

It is time for patriotic Americans to stand up and shout that we are not going to take this corruption anymore,
and to demand that our leaders begin to honestly represent the best interests of humanity now AND in future
generations, and give greater consideration to other species of life on Earth.

"If ever a time should come, when vain and aspiring men shall possess the highest seats in Government, our
country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin."

--- Samuel Adams

Again Mark Twain's words resonate from long past, when he incisively wrote in A Connecticut Yankee in King
Arthur's Court, "My kind of loyalty was loyalty to one’s country, not to its institutions or its officeholders. The
country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing: it is the thing to watch over, and care for,
and be loyal to: institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become
ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body from winter, disease, and death."

Mark Twain made another sensational observation about patriotism more than 100 years ago: "We teach them
to take their patriotism at second-hand; to shout with the largest crowd without examining into the right or
wrong of the matter -- exactly as boys under monarchies are taught and have always been taught. We teach
them to regard as traitors, and hold in aversion and contempt, such as do not shout with the crowd, and so here
in our democracy we are cheering a thing which of all things is most foreign to it and out of place -- the delivery
of our political conscience into somebody else’s keeping. This is patriotism on the Russian plan."

Let us begin to champion true American values of democratic fair-mindedness and responsible inclusiveness and
precautionary principles that respect the prospects of all our heirs in future generations. Vladimir Putin seems
to be intent on exporting his ruthless Russian plan, threatening freedom and our self-determination and national
security, and Republicans are threatening our individual liberties and preventing us from achieving even a
slightly more fairly shared prosperity. Let's give honest and honorable representative a chance to run our
country!

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Germinating in August 2019, and Seeking Inclusion in See Clearly

In an extraordinary development in August 2019, more than 180 CEO members of the Business Roundtable
declared that they intended to try to ensure a more inclusive prosperity in the U.S., and therefore set forth a
new modern standard for corporate responsibility. Instead of the long-standing primary focus on maximizing
profits for CEOs and shareholders, these corporate CEOs declared an intention to strengthen their
commitments to all other stakeholders by dealing more fairly and ethically with their customers and employees
and suppliers and communities, and they suggested they would take the health and sustainability of the
environment in which they operate into greater consideration.

The glaring light of extreme inequality and extensive harms resulting from the excessively narrow focus by
corporate entities on maximizing profits has prompted this remarkable about-face by the Business Roundtable,
a group of CEOs of big U.S. corporations that promotes pro-business public policies. "Each of our stakeholders
is essential," they honorably say. "We commit to deliver value to all of them, for the future success of our
companies, our communities and our country." There is good reason for skepticism, but this is a good start.
We should all chuckle together at the perceptive insight contained in the wry cartoon that appeared in the New Yorker magazine right after the 2016 elections: "My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane." An existential Ha! Humor is good for the soul, but make no mistake about it, these are trying times for our souls, and the information and perspective in this essay could change the world, and do so in intelligent ways that could positively and providentially resolve our unfolding national political nightmare and set our nation onto a more star-spangled course than the direction in which it seems to be headed today. At this crucial juncture in history, American citizens cannot afford to shrink from participating and engaging in our democratic decision-making. So please read on for context, in advance of a radically good common sense proposal.

Hope springs eternal, and it can be a beautiful thing. Let's seriously acknowledge that helping actualize the hopes and dreams and aspirations of the American people is strongly correlated to honest efforts to make our country fairer and more inclusive, and to share prosperity and security more broadly.

Remember, as you read these words, the perspective that Mark Twain expressed about an honorable sense of patriotism, when he wrote, "My kind of loyalty was loyalty to one’s country, not to its institutions or its officeholders." True patriots believe that "liberty and justice for all" are not merely words for us to mindlessly recite in a pledge of allegiance to the flag, but are, in truth, basic commitments to our fellow citizens that we all desire to live together in an inclusive nation, governed by a Constitution and respect for assurances contained in the Bill of Rights and rules of law that have evolved throughout the 242 years since our colonial ancestors had the courage to declare independence from despotic rule.

Right now, we face a stark national emergency. When wise Benjamin Franklin was asked what kind of government the Founders had created after the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, he replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it." Here we are today with our democratic republic under serious threat. Please read these words carefully, and think about these ideas. This threat is not just from an unbalanced domination of the federal government by a Republican president and narrow Republican majorities in the Senate and House (until January 2019), and a Supreme Court narrowly dominated by ideological conservatives. No, this is a much more critical threat. There is a valid cause for the American people to have wide-ranging concerns that crucial fairness-oriented aspects of our democratic republic are being sabotaged, and here's why.

A demagogic "rabble-rouser" became president of the United States in January 2017. A demagogue, according to Wikipedia, is a leader in a democracy "who gains popularity by exploiting prejudice and ignorance among the common people, whipping up the passions of the crowd and shutting down reasoned deliberation." Ominously, many demagogues throughout history who were elected to high office soon thereafter "changed their democracy into some form of dictatorship." This concern is not mere hyperbole.

Alert! Ponder this idea, and understand what it is about. Democracies have one specific basic weakness: "because ultimate power is held by the people, nothing stops the people from giving that power to someone who appeals to the lowest common denominator of a large segment of the population". Or, to someone who whips up
people's prejudices and passions, and takes advantaged of their fears to get their support, or appeals to exclusionary tribal in-group fundamentalism, or panders to the basest psychological motivations of the citizenry.

"Good grief, Charlie Brown!" Our American norms and values are under concerted assault in the wake of the longest and most viscous campaign season in history, so perhaps we all should go to Lucy's booth: *Psychiatric Help 5¢ -- The Doctor Is In.* Charlie Brown was a "lovable loser", and an ultimate survivor in overcoming being bullied, and today we all need help in healing. Let's steel ourselves against the terrible turbulence in domestic affairs in coming days and months and years if courageous steps are not taken soon to expand opportunity and reduce inequalities and injustices in our American society. And let's act to preemptively prohibit the Commander-in-Chief from launching a war against Iran or North Korea or some other country.

Think about this possibility that the USA could become some type of authoritarian dictatorship. Donald Trump has acted like a demagogue by channeling each and every one of the twelve main methods used by demagogues throughout history, in many times and places, to gain popularity, support, loyalty and power. These techniques used by demagogues are described at length in the Wikipedia entry for "Methods of demagogues", under the general entry for Demagogue. Consider these manipulative methods in light of your own scrupulously honest impressions of exactly how Trump acted in his campaign to win the 2016 election, and what he has done since he assumed power. The twelve main tactics used by demagogues are:

(1) Scapegoating others and blaming the troubles of one group on others.

(2) Hijacking people's emotions through fear mongering to stir support and subvert rational deliberation.

(3) Lying, with little regard for facts or evidence, and wildly distorting the relative severity of risks faced.

(4) Using emotional oratory at rallies, and personal force of personality, to question the legitimacy of those they oppose and to provoke suspicions and even hatred of people in opposing factions.

(5) Accusing rivals of weakness and disloyalty, and even advocating violence to demonstrate strength, arguing that empathetic understanding and compassion are signs of weakness that enemies will exploit.

(6) Promising nebulous, deceitful or impossible things to spark an emotionally motivating effect on audiences without being concerned for how such promises could be accomplished, and without any real intention to honor populist promises or greater good goals once in office, and secretly scheming to cheat the people.

(7) Repetitiously hurling insults and ridicule at others to shut down reasoned deliberation of competing ideas and plans, and to make it seem reasonable to ignore the voices, needs and valid concerns of others.

(8) Using vulgarity and acting with outrageous and abusive behaviors.

(9) Engaging in folksy posturing and pretending they are like the ordinary people whose votes they seek.

(10) Grossly oversimplifying issues and using deceptive slogans in election campaigns and in governing.

(11) Bullying and intimidating opponents, and encouraging supporters to do the same.

(12) Intemperately attacking anyone in the news media, and on social media today, that is critical of their rhetoric, strategies, policies, agenda or character.

Demagogues have appeared in democracies ever since times in classical antiquity in ancient Athens, where the idea of democratic governance was born more than 25 centuries ago. And throughout all of history, shrewd demagogues have periodically made many promises and broken them, and deceived the masses to gain power, and abused power for often self-serving or nefarious and generally socially harmful purposes.

Mark Twain once reputedly made an interesting observation that is relevant: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme." The repetitious rhyme of Trump's extremely divisive, inflammatory and danger-engendering tactics should cause every American to snap to alert attention. Actions and deeds, not words and rhetoric, are what really determine the true nature of a person's character. Since many of Trump's electioneering ruses violated the public trust and are coming home to roost in the form of policies that are further dividing us,
instead of uniting us, and are increasing the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few, the people must come together to decide what course of action to take. And they should give special attention to blatantly unconstitutional abuses of power and an unfolding excess of malfeasance in the Trump Administration.

"The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few is the death knell of democracy."

--- Garrison Keillor, We're Not in Lake Wobegon Anymore

Those in the strengthening opposition believe that the American people will not long suffer the growing harmful consequences of Trump's con, but they are equally concerned that if impeached, Vice President Mike Pence would presumably become president, and he is even more committed to extreme conservatism and backwards ideas and the "war on women", and the perpetuation of the crooked economic and political Crony Capitalist Con.

Make no mistake about it: "Trump was always a Trojan horse for the 0.01 percent. And now he's forming a government of, by, and for the very elites he campaigned against." He is acting like a con artist, and a conniving deceiver. His choices for his Cabinet of billionaires, hard right ideologues, anti-immigrant firebrands, anti-choice zealots, anti-environmentalists and hard-line military generals confirm this characterization. Trump voters have been taken in by a fraud, and a shameless one, and almost everyone is destined to regret it.

As Trump proceeds with transforming his demagogic deceit and emotional manipulation into negative outcomes for the populace, it appears that he does NOT intend to fix our rigged system, but to rig it even more unfairly.

Think about this! In all fairness, politicians should try to win elections by honestly offering the people good plans for improving their prospects and overall security. Instead, here is how Republicans won. Trump blatantly used con man cajolery, dishonest bait-and-switch trickery, hard-times swindles, demagogic emotional hijacking, fear-mongering, the exploitation of racial prejudices, the hiding of revealing information on his tax returns and other insidious intrigues. Add to this the fact that the election was thrown to a Republican advantage by the unprecedented intervention by FBI Director James Comey in the last 11 days before the election, and that there was treacherous Russian cyber-hacking interference in American politics and suspicious collaboration by the Trump campaign with helpful Russian operatives, and a drumbeat of WikiLeaks hacking of private emails that helped give Republicans unwarranted support. A proliferation of micro-targeted "fake news" and conspiracy theories and character assassinations occurred on social media platforms like Facebook, also helping Republicans. And Trump’s rich friend David Pecker has his fingers all over the Trump victory, glorifying Trump in the National Enquirer and persistently demonizing Hillary Clinton in screaming supermarket tabloid headlines and stories filled with gossip, unfounded character attacks and conspiracy theory propaganda. There is also the scurrilous fact that Republicans gained unfair advantages from rigging our election system through extremely partisan gerrymandering, purges of voter rolls, and voter suppression laws that Republican legislatures passed in many states after a narrow 5 to 4 majority of ideological conservatives on the Supreme Court chose to eviscerate key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And Trump scurrilously set fire, like a scheming firefighter who has secretly become a flagrantly unscrupulous arsonist, to the dry tinder of tribal-like white identity resentments and insecurities in his brazen bid to command attention and grab power.

It seems perfectly clear that Trump won only technically, and by a tiny margin of less than a total of 78,000 votes in the three decisive states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. He did NOT win “fair and square”, and he did not win ethically, morally, or socially responsibly. And his ego-driven triumph bodes ill for the prospects of all our heirs in future generations.

The right thing for a president to do is to responsibly govern in the interests of all Americans. The right thing to do is to govern from the middle, with Golden Rule fairness for all, and not from an anti-democratic extreme. The right thing to do is to govern with moral rectitude and respectful concern for the interests of all the American people, and all in future generations. The right thing to do is to govern with vision and honor. In truth, our top priority should be to build an economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top. So the right thing to do is to act to improve the economic security and well-being of more people, not just to promote and defend the privileges and financial interests of insiders who have corrupted our democracy and made it into a pathetic form of plutocracy ruled by, and of, and for the few. The right thing to do is to prevent the wealth
generated by working people and the exploitation of natural resources from being concentrated more and more
and more narrowly into bank accounts of millionaires and billionaires.

President Thomas Jefferson set forth, in his First Inaugural Address in early 1801, what he deemed to be
"the essential principles of our Government, and consequently those which ought to shape its Administration." These importantly included "equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political," along with respect for "the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of republics, from which there is no appeal but to force," which is "the immediate parent of despotism."

Jefferson called the preservation of public faith in his stated principles sacred, and then sensibly concluded: "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."

In the words that follow, nine primary Constellations of Reasons are adduced and examined in deliberative detail to highlight why it is so important to the American people to overturn the one-party domination of our national decision-making. These constellations of understandings fall into these general categories: Fomented National Insecurity, the Biggest Financial Scam in World History, Risks Related to "the Disastrous Rise of Misplaced Power", Ideologically Twisted Perspectives on the Supreme Court, Overarching Ecological Perspectives, the Harms Associated with Diversionary Tactics and Public Graft, Subsidiary Themes, It Can't Happen Here, A Brief History of Truth and Lies, and True American Values.

"It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do: but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do." --- The statesman Edmund Burke

All Americans find themselves in a classic Bet Situation. We are in this Bet Situation because a consequential decision must be made that has profound practical implications regarding the future. We are confronted with this Bet Situation because (1) we are inextricably involved in the game, (2) there are many uncertainties, and (3) it is important to us in our own lives, and in the lives of our fellow citizens, that we make the most conscious, conscientious and socially responsible decisions related to the bets we are collectively making.

The American people should rise up together, including Trump voters acting with a modicum of integrity, and declare that they now want a better check on excessive executive power and ideological conservatism in federal courts and on the Supreme Court.

Let's all keep in mind the excellent guidance given to Thomas Paine by Giacinto Dragonetti. He said that our political representatives should "fix the true point of happiness and freedom" by seeking to create "the greatest sum of individual happiness, with the least national expense."

LET'S TRY IT! Let's generously and reasonably enlarge our views beyond the present, and work together to usher in a golden age of greater good.

In the next 10 years, the three most seriously impactful global risks, and the ones judged to be most probable, are fresh water crises, a failure to adapt to changing climate conditions caused by global warming fueled by the emissions of greenhouse gases, and large-scale involuntary migrations of refugees. This Big Picture assessment was made in the Global Risks Report 2016, which was presented to influential members of the World Economic Forum in the beautiful Swiss mountain resort of Davos in January 2016. An earlier report of research done by the banking giant Citigroup in 2015 put the costs of climate change, without mitigation, at a colossal $44 trillion by 2060. This is a convincing reason why we should force politicians in the Executive branch and in Congress, who have misguided priorities, corrupted goals and misleading ideological stances, to reverse their denials of a climate crisis and their refusals to take action, as discussed below in Overarching Ecological Perspectives.

Republicans, despite knowledge of the overarching risks we face, are putting their top legislative priorities on repealing the Affordable Care Act, cutting taxes, building walls, eviscerating protections of the environment, eliminating safety regulations and reversing many common good rules. And they are rashly rejecting many of the sensible things that the black man accomplished in the White House. They are simultaneously amplifying the propaganda and distracting cover-ups that they have been catapulting into the minds of the American people in order to rationalize this hopelessly misbegotten set of retrogressive plans and stress-exacerbating priorities.
Remember the passionate sentiments that our courageous ancestors expressed back in 1776 when they made their bold Declaration of Independence from a long train of usurpations and despotic abuses of power. They declared that it is our right, it is indeed our duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new safeguards for our future security.

The time for these important ideas has come; they are NOT, as Thomas Paine put it in his incendiary pamphlet Common Sense, "not yet sufficiently fashionable." When Paine advocated a new form of fairly representative government that would be virtuous because it would honestly serve the interests of all the people, he wisely focused on ideas, not specific individuals. He did this to establish his objectivity in his analysis of the "absurdity" of despotic rule. And he cleverly justified the vehemence of his arguments -- and lent his work significant gravity -- by referring to the "cause of America" as "the cause of all mankind."

--- Tiffany Twain, Common Sense Revival

Fomented National Insecurity

"Be careless in your dress if you must, but keep a tidy soul.

--- Mark Twain, Following the Equator, Pudd’nhead Wilson’s Calendar

Just five days after the 2016 national elections, Donald Trump reassured the American people on 60 Minutes that they have nothing to be afraid of. "Don't be afraid," he said. The American people have nothing at all to be afraid of, "absolutely", he proclaimed.

Oh, really? The fact-checking organization PolitiFact assessed a large number of Trump's statements during his campaign and found that an astonishing 70% of them were either "mostly false, false or pants on fire". But this nothing-to-fear proclamation was one of his biggest deceptions of all. Consider the long litany of valid reasons that some folks have for deep concern. Since the first day of his campaign, Trump threatened millions of undocumented immigrants with deportation. He repeatedly threatened to ban Muslims from the country or create a system of surveillance specifically targeting Muslim Americans and their places of worship, and his rhetoric has caused hate crimes against Muslim Americans and Jews and others to spike. He belligerently promised to build a wall on the border with Mexico and make the Mexican people pay for it. He endorsed torture tactics and advocated what would be war crimes under the Geneva Conventions, and his inflammatory rhetoric has likely boosted recruiting efforts for Islamic terrorist groups, feeding into religious prophecies of pitched battles and superstitious unreason in End Times.

Further, Trump declared during the campaign that he would revise libel laws with an obvious intent of intimidating journalists and other critics, and he has made concerted efforts to suppress dissent and criticize protestors who oppose his actions. His tirades against NFL football players who protest racial injustices and police brutality are especially devious. During his campaign, he threatened women who get an abortion with some form of punishment, and he is unrepentantly threatening to take away rights of any woman who gets pregnant to get a safe abortion, no matter what the circumstances, despite the fact that this would cause thousands of women to die from unsafe abortions. He chose Mike Pence as his running mate, a man who is one of the most anti-choice and anti-gay politicians in America. He is giving gigantic debt-financed tax cuts to rich people, an action that is causing inequalities to increase and irresponsibly driving up the national debt, and undermining the hopes for personal security, prosperity and well-being of all people in the future. By championing greed-rewarding causes like this, bolstered by the Big Lie deception of the trickle-down theory, he is weakening the true personal security of the vast majority of Americans -- especially the two-thirds or so of adults who have a net worth of less than $100,000, and their families, who are already pretty darned financially insecure.

When the majority of people are made more anxious and insecure, it is easier for the ruling class to control them. Millions of Americans, of all races, genders, religions and national origin are living in economic fear and distress. Nearly 70% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck, and would have trouble meeting a financial emergency that cost $1,000 or more. The type of economy that has created this inegalitarian state of affairs is a breeding ground for expanded opportunities for swindling. Studies like those conducted by Boston College’s Center for Retirement Research confirm what professional con artists have always known: it is easier to take
advantage of people in financial distress, so they are easier marks than more secure workers.

When people are subjected to excessive amounts of stress, they are less capable of making good choices or engaging in fair-minded rational thought. The engineers of austerity know this, and thus see a marvelous two-for-one benefit in fomenting increased inequalities and keeping the citizenry financially insecure and afraid. Reflect on this: regressive policies not only allow private profits to be maximized, but also force workers to feel afraid so that they will be meek in their demands for higher pay or better working conditions or expansive rights as employees and human beings.

Trump and Pence are not doing anything substantial to help students who have been burdened with huge amounts of debt, partially due to cuts in public funding for higher education. These cuts have forced millions of young people to work like indentured servants, struggling for decades to pay off opprobrious levels of student debt incurred at excessively high interest rates on loans with overly strict terms. And Republican politicians are rolling back protections of the environment, stoking the extraction and burning of coal, oil and natural gas from public lands, and encouraging drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and offshore in all the oceans off America's coast. They are gutting the Environmental Protection Agency and embarking on crusades against science and scientists. They are revoking protections of National Monuments and public lands, and have renounced American participation in the Paris Climate Accords, despite the fact that almost every other nation in the world made historic agreements to take steps to mitigate the disastrous impacts of extreme weather events and an altered global climate. These rashly anti-environmental actions will wreak extremely costly harms on billions of people and a large proportion of other species of life on Earth. Resistance must strengthen! Vote the bums out of office! Impeach both Donald Trump and Mike Pence!

Trump has repeatedly acted like a tinhorn dictator, as he did during the campaign by threatening to jail his general election opponent, Hillary Clinton. He once said, "We gotta maybe do something about the Internet ... We have to talk .. about, maybe in certain areas, closing that Internet up in some way." Huh? The surveillance state that George W. Bush unleashed, and that Barack Obama allowed to proliferate, is getting even more pervasively invasive, and the American people should express their concern about this, in no uncertain terms, while we still have a democratic form of government that allows us to express our opinions. Trump has threatened the Cuban people with a hardening of the almost 60-year-long embargo against Cuba, which has contributed to them having suffered much hardship. And his belligerence on the international stage toward allies, and his friendly overtures toward authoritarian leaders in other countries like Russia, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Turkey, Egypt and the Philippines, are stances that make the world much less safe and less free.

And Trump had the temerity to disingenuously and preposterously pretend that he poses no threat whatsoever to anyone. Yeah, right. "Don't be afraid," he cajoled. Ronald Reagan, faced with a questionably trustworthy geopolitical opponent, counseled “Trust, but verify.” It is bizarre that Trump asserted that nobody has anything to fear after he insisted so assiduously to flood the fear-alert emotional control centers of our brains with an ugly and sustained torrent of hyped up fears, taunts, suspicions, conspiracy theories, antagonisms and deceitfully solipsistic tweets. Fast forward two-plus years, and chaos, grave uncertainties and the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history give almost all Americans increasing cause to be afraid of Trumpist rule.

"O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth!"

--- Thomas Paine

In the simplistic symbolism of old-time cowboy Western movies, the good guys often wore white hats, and the bad guys wore black hats, to visually symbolize the contrast between good heroes and evil villains. Today, it is less clear who the real good guys are. The restless citizenry, dressed in relative tatters, looks up at the nearby ridges and sees an intimidating line of men mounted men on white horses, their outsized American flags streaming, all wearing the most preposterously conspicuous white hats and sitting on snorting steeds their prominently displayed rifles cocked and displaying an aura of domineering authority. One of them even holds aloft a huge banner that streams in a stiff breeze: it reads, Faithful and True, just like the rider in the Book of Revelation in the Bible, who judges and wages war.
"We have the best government that money can buy."  
--- Mark Twain

Listen, Trump supporters. You have been heard, loud and clear! Almost every reasonable person would readily acknowledge that the best interests of working people have been blatantly betrayed in our political duopoly system in the past few decades. Both establishment Republicans and establishment Democrats are culpable. American workers have not been allowed to share in any meaningful portion of the big increases in productivity realized in our economy since 1980. That is a stark and pathetic contrast to the period from 1945 to 1980, when American workers received increases in their pay of about 100%, on average, as productivity roughly doubled. Obviously, the power-abusing Few have been succeeding in ripping off the Many. They are being assisted in this swindle by pandering politicians and shrewdly greedy CEOs who strive to maximize profits by squeezing employees, and by conservative Supreme Court Justices who wrongly rendered the Citizens United ruling using the ridiculous rationalization that they see no corrupting influence in our campaign financing rules and the role of Big Money and Dark Money in our politics, and in lobbyist-skewed national decision making.

Revealingly, the top tax rate on the highest incomes -- those earned by only the top 1% of Americans -- ranged from 70% to over 90% each and every year from 1936 to 1980, but this rate was slashed by power-abusing rich people to 28% under Ronald Reagan. That was a radical reduction, and it has hugely contributed to the spiking increase in inequality that is understandably stoking revolutionary discontent and unrest in the USA today.

Since the days of Reagan’s presidency, tax battles have been intense, and the American people have managed to nudge the top marginal tax rate back up from 28% to just under 40%, which is not much of a compromising move back toward 70%. Meanwhile, the net worth of the top 1% of American people has increased by somewhere in the range of $30 trillion -- and they have achieved this boon at the same time that the national debt has increased from less than $1 trillion to $22 trillion in 2019. This is all but a crime, an inter-generational scam in its consequentially unjust and highly unethical impacts. This is arguably the biggest financial fraud in world history, and it is revealingly facilitated by ideological propagandists and media outlets like Fox News, Inc., as well as by “conservative” politicians and corporate executives.

This über-betrayal of the people by the top 1% of Americans who are excessively monopolizing the spoils of labor and resource extraction has an even more astonishingly deplorable angle. Vested interest groups are indulging in another rash ruse: cost externalizing, or “the socializing of costs”. Our rigged rules that govern corporate entities allow Big Business to foist a variety of costs onto society to artificially boost profits. More than two-thirds of the resulting capital gains are received by the top 1%, and of course, they pay really low capital gains tax rates of only 15% on these spoils. Even more outrageously, their heirs pay zero percent after a person dies because the “cost basis” of all investments is revised to the asset value at the date of death, allowing these boons to be transmitted indefinitely forward to every person who inherits any of these assets.

See what’s happening here. These basic facts about how our economic and political systems are rigged urge us to exit our echo chambers and seek to better understand -- and to demand much more fair-minded leadership and smart reforms. See Assessment: The Top Ten Ways the System is Unfairly Rigged for some enlightening understandings of the true nature of how our system works against the interests of the majority of the people.

"Truth-teller" Trump once declared, "We can’t fix a rigged system by relying on the people who rigged it in the first place." He milked people’s populist anger at being left behind by attacking Wall Street banks in his TV ads and campaign speeches, but then he gave his supporters a slap in the face by choosing Steve Mnuchin to be his Treasury Secretary. Mnuchin is a former Goldman Sachs executive and ruthless "foreclosure king", and a believer in the Republican orthodoxy of reversing the consumer protections enacted after the 2008 credit crisis in the Dodd-Frank law governing Wall Street. He is a powerful advocate for, in effect, exacerbating inequalities and causing the national debt to spike by helping implement new tax cuts that give the lion’s share of the benefits to giant corporations and the wealthiest 1%. In other words, Trump and Mnuchin are staunch defenders of new provisions that will serve to perpetuate the biggest financial scam in world history.
Trump chose Wilbur Ross, a multi-billionaire, as his Secretary of Commerce. Ross is known as “the king of bankruptcy” due to his “legendary knack for buying troubled companies on the cheap and selling them for billions of dollars in profit.” Wilbur Ross first dealt with Trump when he was head of Rothschild’s bankruptcy advisory practice and he helped Trump, in league with billionaire investor Carl Icahn, to save his Trump Taj Mahal casino hotel from financial collapse in the early 1990s.

Mnuchin and Ross are pushing for the types of Bush-era economic policies that almost drove us to ruin in the worst economic recession since the Depression of the 1930s. Let’s be real. What are the chances that these titans of our plutocracy are really going to adopt a laser-like focus on implementing policies that will improve the lot of the 99%? Answer: None! They deny this, but the devil is in the details -- they lie!

Mayer Amschel Rothschild, the long-ago founder of the extraordinarily wealthy Rothschild banking dynasty, once purportedly made this thought-provoking observation: “Permit me to issue and control the money of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws.”

Make no mistake about it. Wall Street insiders have, in effect, infiltrated the executive branch of the U.S. government even more than they have done in the last few decades. The stock price of Goldman Sachs zoomed up more than 35% in the first four months after election day, so Wall Street was giving a strong signal that it fully expects the Trump administration to represent windfall profits for this bank’s bottom line. Wall Street is effectively rejoicing, and the incoming spike in the power of Big Banks and Big Business is expected to be very successful in reducing the influence of working class folks even more than it has been in the three decades prior to this revolting development. This is consequentially bad news for the masses. And, ominously, volatility will spike as risks skyrocket.

Trump has never been a good friend to working people in his business dealings, so he was deceiving people to have claimed that he plans to stand up for working class folks. He initially chose Andrew Puzder to fill the Cabinet position of Secretary of Labor. Puzder is a wealthy businessman and big political donor to Trump who had been chief executive of a company that franchises fast-food outlets, and he is an outspoken critic of higher minimum wages and expanded eligibility for overtime pay and the worker protections enacted by the Obama administration. Trump’s nomination of Puzder was a clear indication that he sides with maximizing private profits for the few at the expense of the many, by wrapping the ruse in the ideological cloak of deregulation and anti-union dogma. Puzder proved to be so involved in scandals that he was forced to bow out from the prospective Secretary of Labor position in mid-February 2017.

Risks Related to “the Disastrous Rise of Misplaced Power”

Jim Hightower of Texas evaluated “Trump’s bizarre cabinet”, and stated: “the key qualification he seeks for public service is a nominee’s commitment to serving the private interests of corporate power over workers and the environment and local communities and everyone else.”

Remember President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s famous words when he warned the American people in his honorable Military-Industrial Complex speech as he left office in January 1961. He sternly warned about “the disastrous rise of misplaced power”. And he strongly emphasized the importance of “an alert and knowledgeable citizenry” who strive to make sure “that security and liberty may prosper together.” This idea is crucial to our personal freedoms and overall well-being, especially with hard-right Republicans in control of our government today.

Bernie Sanders wrote these compelling words just after the election: “President-elect Trump is right: the American people voted for change. But what kind of change will he be offering them? Will he have the courage to stand up to the most powerful people in the country who are responsible for the economic pain that so many working families feel, or will he turn the anger of the majority against minorities, immigrants, the poor and the helpless?” The answer seems clear. He is taking sides with corporations against working people, and giving more money and privileges to the powerful. Revelations since the November 2016 elections are providing the American people with compelling reasons for loudly demanding that we reverse course against misguided policies. Deep conflicts of interest are being exposed with Trump’s far-flung business interests and lack of a “blind trust”, and with his family’s close involvement in governing. He continues to conceal the information on his tax
returns, preventing people from understanding the unscrupulous extent to which his business dealings are chock full of unprecedented conflicts of interest at home and in nations abroad. He has committed Charitable Foundation fraud, and is violating the Emoluments Clause in the Constitution. His smugly stubborn, absolutist and authority-abusing stances make it clear that public graft is spiking, and this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Additionally, micro-targeting of fake news and misleading emotion-manipulating information on Facebook and Instagram and Twitter without doubt helped swing many votes to Trump. And less than 60% of Americans eligible to vote cast ballots in the election, partially due to gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts undertaken by Republicans in many states over the past few years, ever since the Supreme Court’s narrow majority of conservatives rolled back basic protections that had been contained in the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The unfolding saga of Trump’s Cabinet picks and chaotic mode of governing reveal that scheming politicians who will control and define our national direction are nowhere near what the American people had been led to expect. The partisans being elevated to power reveal that Trump intends to govern from the extreme hard-right and alt-right fringe, not from a position of moderation and intelligence and fair-minded reform.

Some observers say that Trump appears to be assembling a crony capitalist “kakistocracy” — domineering rule by the worst and most poorly qualified and most dishonest and unscrupulous citizens. More on this below, when Trump’s Cabinet members are evaluated in greater detail.

Trump seems to be determined to fan the flames of an astonishing set of extreme inequities that has been generated since 1980 by making huge tax cuts to primarily benefits corporations and the wealthy. At the same time, he is trying to impose a variety of austerity plans on the masses. Trump and Republicans in Congress are clearly trying to pull the wool over our eyes with one of the most egregious bait-and-switch betrayals of the American people ever. The point man on Social Security for Trump’s transition team was a longtime advocate of privatization of the program, which would violate Trump’s promises made that he would protect people’s Social Security retirement incomes. And Republicans want to reduce health insurance coverage for many millions of Americans. First they tried to repeal the Affordable Care Act, and failing that, they are now sabotaging it in five main ways, as Robert Reich makes clear in his video, Who’s Trying to Kill the Affordable Care Act? They are also trying to slash spending on Medicare and Medicaid, and sneakily trying to replace these federal programs with vouchers or block grants to states. Trump initially put Tom Price in charge of the Department of Health and Human Services, a man who was a stalwart Georgia Republican congressman who wanted to privatize Medicare. Trump thus brazenly violated his campaign promises to defend these social safety net programs.

Tom Price acted as a sexist in his opposition to a 2015 Washington, D.C. non-discrimination law that would have prevented employers from firing workers for using birth control or having an abortion. He also wanted to eliminate funding that helps provide poor women with healthcare in Planned Parenthood clinics. In an article by Richard Eskow titled This Trump Hire is Hazardous to Your Health (And Not Just Your Medicare), Eskow indicated that, “If Price and Trump succeed, Medicare will no longer need to (or be able to) slow the rate of healthcare cost growth. That will hurt all ordinary Americans, regardless of age, by making their medical care more expensive.” Eskow went on to point out that, under Price’s plan, vouchers would cover less and less of healthcare’s cost each year, “until seniors’ insurance premiums finally exceed older Americans’ total Social Security income. That’s why retiree and disability advocates are shocked and dismayed by this nomination.”

The Alliance for Retired Americans described Price’s plan as “a declaration of war on seniors, retirees and anyone who is counting on having guaranteed health care benefits when they retire after a lifetime of hard work.” Nancy Altman, co-director of Social Security Works, called it “classic bait and switch,” adding: “Trump ran on a promise, repeatedly made, not to cut Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid. Price has spent years working to destroy all of these vital programs. This nomination is a betrayal of the American people.” After months of trying to get rid of Obamacare, Tom Price was forced to resign due to the bad optics of his lavish use of charter flights at the expense of taxpayers. Sensible folks proclaimed, “Good riddance!”

Bernie Sanders, seeing the likelihood that Trump will take steps to reduce Medicare benefits that provide good healthcare at reasonable prices for more than 50 million Americans, asked if Trump “has any intention of
keeping the promise that he made, or has he played the American people for suckers?" Note to these scheming politicians: the American people really resent being played for suckers.

Trump is further blatantly betraying the trust placed in him by millions of voters who gave him their support by having named Steve Bannon, an extreme "alt-right" propagandist, to be his chief strategist and senior advisor in the White House. Proponents of the alt-right push a reactionary strain of conservatism, so Trump was showing his true colors in this choice. Bannon is the former head of Breitbart "News", an ultra-right-wing exploiter of tensions between whites and minority groups that engages in constant fear mongering against minorities. Many reports indicate that Bannon has been an outspoken proponent of white nationalism and racist, anti-Semitic and misogynistic views, and he has cold-heartedly exploited "white identity grievance politics". It is revealing that many people who believe in the inflammatory propaganda of Breitbart "News" consider the already excessively conservative and unfairly unbalanced Fox News to be "too wimpy". But when demagogues scapegoat certain groups of people, like the Nazis did with Jews, it creates greater danger for all.

White nationalists have ominously been among Donald Trump's strongest supporters. In a post-election rally in Washington D.C., the "alt-right" extremist and white supremacist Richard Spencer harangued the assembled with rousing words: "we are not meant to live in shame and weakness and disgrace. We were not meant to beg for moral validation from some of the most despicable creatures to ever populate the planet." Then he shouted, "Hail, Trump! Hail, our people! Hail, victory!" And then, according to a senior editor at The Weekly Standard, "a scattered half-dozen men stood and raised their arms in Nazi salutes."

Hate crimes have surged across the USA since the 2016 election, and dire threats by Trump supporters have proliferated against African Americans, Latinos, Jews and gay people. Asked about this by Lesley Stahl on "60 Minutes" on the Sunday after the election, Trump turned to the camera and sternly said, "Stop it." But as Aasif Mandvi, the author of No Land's Man succinctly pointed out in an article in the New York Times, if Trump really sincerely wanted to disavow and condemn acts like this and organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, he would do it the way he does when he feels strongly about an issue -- by spewing forth on Twitter:

"When the president-elect wants to unleash his disapproval, or his thin skin has been ever so slightly bruised, the people responsible can be sure to find themselves on the receiving end of a Twitter barrage like none other. That's what I want to see now, and I won't settle for less. The American people deserve to see Mr. Trump attack these hate groups and the people perpetrating hate crimes in his name the way he attacked the cast of the Broadway hit Hamilton, the cast of Saturday Night Live, the television personality Rosie O'Donnell, Gold Star families, the New York Times, Miss USA, the Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly, women accusing him of sexual misconduct, protesters and the I.R.S."

"We don't want a pro forma apology extracted out of him reluctantly by a reporter. We want him to feel so hurt and angry about Nazis using his name that he is up tweeting at 3 a.m."

"So let me ask you, Mr. Trump -- the cast of "Hamilton" are worth a tweet storm, but you can't muster even one tweet against neo-Nazis yelling "Hail Trump"? Nothing? Come on, I'll write you a couple of options:

"Neo-Nazis are haters and losers. Nasty people. #smallhands #lowenergy."

"White supremacists are a threat to our nation #bigleague. Worse than the #NYTimes. Only I can stop them."

"Time to retire the boring and unfunny Hitler salute, highly overrated."

Bannon was finally driven from his influential position in the White House, and returned to Breitbart News, where he is trying to get extreme right-wing candidates to challenge Republican moderates in order to drive the USA even further toward the domineering hegemony of extreme conservatives over the American people.

Trump is also betraying his once stated intention to be a president for "all Americans" by having named Senator Jeff Sessions as Attorney General, for Sessions has a long history of opposing civil rights. The attorney general is the chief law enforcement officer of the U.S. government, and is in charge of the Department of
Justice, which has a main mission of ensuring a "fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans." Since Sessions is not a fair-minded champion of civil rights for all, he was the wrong person for this office.

It was very clear after Trump selected Bannon as his chief strategist and Sessions as his attorney general that he is not really going to try to "Make America Great Again", but more like "Make America a White, Racist, Misogynistic Patriarchy Again", as columnist Charles Blow observed. While Trump may still get support from many groups like angry white folks in rural areas and organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, it is highly likely that he will eventually lose many supporters over this divisively anti-American direction, and associated misdeeds.

"If he governs as he campaigned," observes Michael Gerson, an op-ed columnist for The Washington Post, "Trump will smash the unity of our country into a thousand shards of bitterness." This probability alone should be enough to stir a sense of compassion in the man, and motivate him to change course. But this isn't happening. Trump put the billionaire Betsy DeVos in the position of Secretary of Education. She is a proponent for private school vouchers. This is a clear sign that Trump intends to make a national push to direct public funds to private and charter schools, according to Douglas Harris, a professor of economics at Tulane University, who expressed the opinion that "... this is more than just a political or financial loss for traditional public schools. It will also most likely be a loss for students."

"The choice of Ms. DeVos might not seem surprising. Mr. Trump has, after all, proposed $20 billion to finance 'school choice' initiatives, and Ms. DeVos supports these ideas. Yet of all the candidates the transition team was apparently considering, Ms. DeVos has easily the worst record, because she is one of the architects of Detroit's charter school system, so she is partly responsible for what even charter advocates acknowledge is the biggest school reform disaster in the country."

"The worst." The pathetic kakistocracy comes together, and stumbles onward, the ranks thinning remarkably as the chaos president and many in his chosen staff part company. Amarosa sings an incriminating song.

One of Trump's bizarre Cabinet picks was Rick Perry -- "Oops!" -- the folksy fossil fuel promoter who has been put in charge of the Department of Energy, even though he favored dismantling it. Another was Ryan Zinke, Trump's first head of the Department of the Interior, in charge of public lands. Zinke voted against protecting endangered species 100 percent of the time during his short stint as a congressman from Montana, and he seems to have a particular dislike for wolves, having sent out a cartoonish Christmas card with a dead wolf and him holding a military rifle. Maybe that's normal in macho Big Sky Country? While Zinke may not want to sell our public lands like many other Republicans, he voted to turn control of them over to the states, an action that would have similar damaging end results. Zinke is trying to roll back protections of many National Monuments and wants to end Obama's moratorium on leasing public lands for coal extraction, and he supports more oil and gas drilling on public lands and in risky offshore locations, including the Arctic. And he favors stripping every future president's authority to designate national monuments for protection. This is wrongheadedness incarnate. Once again, good riddance!

Ideologically Twisted Perspectives on the Supreme Court

The 2016 elections were significantly influenced by one major issue: who would have the power to appoint a Supreme Court Justice to replace Antonin Scalia, who died in February 2016, and probably several other Justices in the next four years, considering that Ruth Bader Ginsburg is currently 83 years old and Stephen Breyer is 78, and either of them could retire before the year 2020. When Anthony Kennedy retired in 2018, it set up real political fireworks because an extreme partisan Republican Brett Kavanaugh was nominated and narrowly and illegitimately won a terribly ugly confirmation battle.

Consider the incisive words of the former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who served honorably on the high court for 24 years in a distinguished tenure of fair-minded service and balanced decision-making, after Ronald Reagan appointed her in 1981. Soon after she retired from the Supreme Court to care for her Alzheimer-stricken husband, O'Connor expressed how important it is for our courts to remain independent from politics, stating: "... some political attacks on the independence of the courts pose a direct threat to the
constitutional freedoms of Americans.” She has pointed out that judicial independence is under serious attack at both the federal and state level, and astutely added, "it takes a lot of degeneration before a country falls into dictatorship, but we should avoid these ends by avoiding these beginnings.”

Think about these important words. It can be argued convincingly that conservative judges are mainly concerned with two sets of ideological stances. First, to reduce the limitations on power of big corporations and moneyed interest groups and wealthy people and the executive branch of government, often at the expense of power for the people and citizen class-action influence and rights of working people to bargain collectively for higher pay or better benefits or safer working conditions. And second, to rule in favor of Christian religious fundamentalists or other traditional groups like white males at the expense of other groups like women who do not want to get pregnant, or women who are pregnant with a fertilized embryo in the first trimester of a pregnancy and want to be able to have a safe abortion. Conservatives do not seem to be committed to the greater good and more inclusivity in society, in general.

Every person who wants our American judicial system to be dominated by conservative judges is thus unwittingly making a Faustian bargain with the devil. This is both a personal mistake and a national error, because it is an excess of enthusiasm for depriving others of some part of their personal freedoms while unwittingly sacrificing more expansive rights and opportunities and liberties for all. Fairer jurisprudence is needed that gives greater respect to the voice of the American people.

What Republicans want is an ideological judge, not an impartial one. They want someone in the mold of Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas or Antonin Scalia, for they can’t stand the thought of having a more progressive Court. After all, they have very wealthy patrons who have big expectations in return for their political contributions.

Republicans want Justices who will side with ideologues who say that government has no place in determining whether large political expenditures prevent corruption or "the appearance of corruption," so that no limits will be imposed on Big Money spent in our elections to purchase influence. According to OpenSecrets.org, a record $1.4 billion of Dark Money and SuperPAC money was spent in the 2016 elections, much of it in secret. This moneyed influence has clearly distorted and corrupted our democracy. A record $600 million flooded Senate and House races, with voters rarely knowing who contributed the money. And 94% of national House races and an astounding 96% of Senate races were won by the candidate that spent the most money. Republicans who were elected hypocritically oppose reforms that would fairly address the problems posed by our country being corrupted by Big Money in politics.

The Supreme Court, under a larger number of conservative Justices, would severely compound the injustices that spawned Ian Millhiser’s book, INJUSTICES: The Supreme Court’s History of Comforting the Comfortable and Afflicting the Afflicted. It is socially reactionary and morally wrong to structure our political system ever more unjustly against the afflicted in favor of comforting the comfortable! Such priorities are wrong, for they foolishly ramp up the risks of a surge in destabilizing revolutionary unrest and a doubling down on repression.

The trajectory of evolutionary change from time immemorial demonstrates that natural selection favors ingroup cohesion and cooperation in human social groups, rather than excessively ruthless competition. Here is another excellent reason to reject Trump’s abuses of power. It is evolutionary Right Action to seek unity in social cohesion, rather than engaging in ruthlessly anti-social exploitation of others. The principal factors that contribute to positive social cohesion are fairness, inclusivity and broadly shared well-being.

The Lessons of History, as summarized by Pulitzer Prize-winning historians Will and Ariel Durant, reveal that when societies have reached a tinderbox condition of having too extreme a degree of inequality, it historically has been met either with "legislation redistributing wealth or by revolution distributing poverty." In such a dangerous state, often exacerbated by corrupted courts deciding issues against the people, the risk of violent revolt increases, and such challenges to authority have generally resulted in harsh repression by police state-type forces that defend the interests and privileges of the rich. In similar straits back in Athens in 594 BCE, "Good sense prevailed; moderate elements secured the election of Solon, a businessman of aristocratic lineage", and he honorably instituted many progressive reforms that included reducing all personal debts and establishing
"a graduated income tax that made the inch pay at a rate twelve times that required of the poor." The rich protested profusely, and riled-up radicals also complained, but in time everyone agreed that Solon's wise and fair-minded reforms had saved Athens from revolution by the desperate poor against the jealously greedy rich.

In a starkly contrasting episode in history, the Roman Senate back in the second century BCE "adopted an uncompromising course when the concentration of wealth approached an explosive point in Italy, and the result was a hundred years of class and civil war." It seems likely that the vast majority of Americans would agree that wise and fair-minded reforms are a better plan than retrogressive policies that risk causing a long period of class and civil warfare.

Solon is known as "the Father of Democracy" because of the many progressive reforms he implemented to reduce conflicts between the privilege-protecting Few and the angry Many. This wise Athenian statesman and lawmaker's historic efforts to intelligently fix the Greek economy and politics some 2,500 years ago made his penchant for wise compromise legendary, and we should honor his wisdom -- by emulating it.

Having used the words "police state" a few times, let me clarify, lest this sound like some wild conspiracy theory. Ever since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. has lurched toward more widespread surveillance of citizens and fewer checks on law enforcement power. One protection that has been in place since 1878 is the Posse Comitatus Act, a law designed to limit the powers of the federal government so that it cannot use military personnel to enforce domestic policies within the U.S. This law is often relied upon to prevent the Department of Defense from interfering in domestic law enforcement. In the annual National Defense Authorization Act signed into law at the end of December 2011, a controversial provision was included that authorized the indefinite military detention of persons that the government suspected of involvement in terrorism, without giving the person arrested the right of being charged or being given a fair trial. This treatment could be used on U.S. citizens arrested on American soil, and one source has claimed that this provision "is tantamount to the militarization of law enforcement and the repeal of the Posse Comitatus Act."

Ever since 9/11, provisions like the Patriot Act and various new claims to power of Executive Privilege have moved us dangerously towards the establishment of a more totalitarian state, resembling an authoritarian military government dressed in civilian clothes. Disturbingly like Germany in the 1930s, basic rights and personal freedoms are being infringed upon, under pretexts that democracy is threatened and must be protected. Trust in our leaders generally assuages this concern, but now that Trump is in power and he has proven himself to be exceedingly unworthy of trust, this threat is getting much more real.

The need for true positive change continues to increase, especially because our leaders have been so stubbornly unwilling to work together for the common good, properly understood, as evaluated from the perspective of consequential ethics and the greatest good for the greatest number of people over the longest period of time.

I feel strongly that the majority of Americans have an underlying sense of decency, and that they can be persuaded with the force of reason when they are not being flooded with emotionally manipulative messaging and deceptive information. Who stands in the way? The Liar-in-Chief and his sycophants in the Senate!

Note that the original purpose of this essay was to set forth broadly convincing reasons for a groundswell of grassroots energy to rise up in opposition to the unscrupulous and illegitimate authority that is being abused by this demagogic master manipulator and his loyalists. My hope at the time was to thereby resoundingly convince Electoral College electors not to choose Donald Trump when they met on December 19th, 2016. After this fateful date came and went without Electors having taken an expansive view of their important Constitutional responsibilities, my revised purpose was to seek to have Vice President Joe Biden get the U.S. Senate to confirm the moderate and exceptionally well qualified judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court on January 3, 2017 during the transition of power from the last Congress to the next one. This action would have served as a last bulwark against demagogic abuses of power that threaten our cherished freedoms, as clearly set forth in my Open Letter to Vice President Joe Biden.

Republicans owed all Americans this one fair-minded reassurance to establish a last "check and balance" that would have served to protect our personal liberties and general well-being. They owed us this because of the
rudely illegitimate litany of ways that they used to gain domineering power and to steal a Supreme Court seat, at the long-term expense of fairer jurisprudence for the people.

Here is a powerful reason to maintain an independent judiciary. The American Civil Liberties Union stated before the election that Trump represents "a one man Constitutional crisis". According to the ACLU analysis, all of Trump's rhetorical proposals taken together would violate the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Eighth Amendments to the Constitution in the Bill of Rights, so Trump in many respects appears to be engaged in a devious plot against the best interests of the vast majority of the American people, and he presents a clear and present danger to our personal freedoms and democracy. The potential for tyranny is palpable, and his budget proposals and tax cut priorities confirm the fears of many people that he will govern in favor of the 1%, not the 99%.

Political authority depends on legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry, and Trump’s loss of the popular vote by almost 3 million votes, coupled with other pathological aspects of his character, means that his legitimacy is hanging by a thread. In many ways, the use of demagogic tactics to gain power renders the authority illegitimate that Trump and his cabal of cronies are now in the process of imposing over the American people.

Overarching Ecological Perspectives

Professor Jared Diamond made a valuable observation in his insightful book Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed. He contended that a paradigm shift is needed in how our leaders think and act. We need leaders with "the courage to practice long-term thinking and make bold, courageous, anticipatory decisions at a time when problems become perceptible, but before they reach crisis proportions." Hallelujah - the time is now!

One thing we need to do to save ourselves is to try harder to save the planet. There is a sadly false dichotomy "between economic prosperity on the one hand and environmental protection on the other", according to Robert F. Kennedy's poignant insights. He noted ruefully how foolish it is for us to treat our home planet as if it were a business in liquidation by striving to convert natural resources to cash as quickly as possible. "Environmental injury is deficit spending", he said. "It's a way of loading the cost of our generation's prosperity onto the backs of our children."

The Trump family’s stances against taking actions to prevent climate disruptions are extremely irresponsible and contrary to these understandings. Recall that Donald Trump and his three oldest children all signed an open letter printed in the New York Times in 2009 that urged President Obama and world leaders who were headed to international climate negotiations in Copenhagen to act on climate change. Get this! The letter stated, "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet." Now that there is a huge amount of money and power available by aggressively siding with the fossil fuel industry, the Trump family is reprehensibly pandering to polluting companies by appointing climate change deniers to positions of power, contributing to the probabilities that we will suffer "catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet". This is grotesque greed incarnate.

These understandings were given glaring emphasis when Trump named Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Pruitt had been a leader in the fight AGAINST the EPA’s efforts to rein in carbon pollution and protect our nation's drinking water. Like his fellow Oklahoman Jim Inhofe, he is a climate change denier and has been a close ally of fossil fuel industries, defending their interests in order to obtain big political contributions at the expense of fair representation of the best interests of the people. Scott Pruitt's turbulent tenure at the EPA was a disaster for our hopes of maintaining a safe home planet for our children and our grandchildren, and for all persons to be born in the future. Good riddance to him.

Crony capitalism seems to be getting worse than ever before, with so many really rich people in Trump's Cabinet. His choice of Exxon Mobil Corporation Chief Executive Officer Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State confirmed this concern, and set up "a confirmation battle with U.S. lawmakers who have questioned the oilman's relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin." Trump made the announcement hours after he unexpectedly delayed a planned statement on how he would separate himself as president from the far-reaching conflicts of interests associated with his business activities. There are deep conflicts of interest related to having the
chief executive of a giant oil company acting as the top diplomat and architect of foreign policy. It is chilling to realize that Tillerson "has favored doing business in countries that offer political stability, even if this stability was achieved through authoritarian rule, as Steve Coll, author of Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power, has written. Good riddance to him. His replacement, Mike Pompeo, is sadly a hawkish stalwart.

Trump has also stoked concerns in his choice of Rick Perry of Texas as his Secretary of Energy, putting the former oil-state governor atop the agency that helps chart the nation's energy future. Rick Perry was the presidential candidate who stammered 'Oops!' after famously failing to remember one of three federal government agencies he proposed to eliminate during a Republican presidential debate in 2011. Later he realized that it was the Department of Energy he wanted to eliminate, ostensibly to get rid of any limits on his profit-maximizing cronies in Big Oil and other fossil fuel industries. Is Trump a joker? He appears to have fallen under the spell of the Goddess of Irony, as well as the thrall of Russia's autocratic leader Vladimir Putin. "Oops!" might be an exceptionally appropriate exclamation for the American people to utter right now in the glaring spotlight of the consequential implications of Trump's chaotic rule.

We should find much better ways to make our government dramatically more trustworthy by making it more fairly representative of all Americans, rather than letting fat, greedy foxes rule the roost in the henhouse. Yet Trump has named agency heads who are ideologically opposed to the purpose and mission of the agencies they are being given responsibility to lead. This is simply wrong.

The most important premises of the Earth Manifesto involve ecological issues. Trump is dangerous in this arena because his positions on environmental issues reveal that he will go down as the most anti-environmental American leader in history. A leading climate change denier, Myron Ebell, ran the Environmental Protection Agency transition team for Trump. Ebell is a professional climate change denier with no scientific experience. Intense suspicion was cast on his "integrity", due to the fact that an organization he led took millions of dollars from Exxon and other giant fossil fuel conglomerates to promote doubts and deceptions about climate change.

Insidiously destabilizing environmental damages are being caused by the effects of billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions that we are spewing into the atmosphere each year. The outcome will cost trillions of dollars in coming years, and wreak widespread harms on Earth's biosphere. Allowing these costs and associated mounting risks to be externalized onto society, instead of being included in the prices of products and services that generate these emissions, is a consequential and treacherous swindle that can no longer be tolerated. This is why an impressive coalition of prominent economists advocates sensible Pigouvian taxes -- like a fee on carbon -- that would effectively internalize the costs of emissions and thereby reduce the amount of them generated.

In light of such big picture environmental understandings, it is unconscionable for Republicans to be rolling back President Obama's Clean Power Plan, which was a laudable effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to be trying to scrap a litany of other "unnecessary" rules imposed on the oil, gas and coal sectors. Republicans are pushing instead to open more federal lands for logging, coal mining and drilling for oil and natural gas. These plans blatantly violate the realization by an overwhelming consensus of scientists and experts that 80% of fossil fuel reserves should be left in the ground to preserve a habitable world and prevent ocean acidification and costly rises in sea levels that will flood tens of millions of people out of their homes, and gosh even inundate some of Donald Trump's coastal golf courses.

One of the most dangerous of Trump's convictions is that the United States should become a rogue nation on the international stage. He has vowed to cancel billions of dollars in U.S. commitments to the UN Green Climate Fund, which is helping people in countries adversely affected by global warming to deal with adversities caused by the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This stance is belligerently unempathetic in light of the fact that the U.S. has contributed the most of any country on Earth in driving the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from under 300 ppm in pre-industrial times to 415 ppm in May 2019. While Trump thunders on about making America First, he is being harshly and arrogantly unjust to other nations in doing so. This is particularly true with regard to climate injustices. It is clear that the United States should pay a proportionally larger amount of the costs required to cope with the impacts of extreme weather events
around the world, so that poorer countries that disproportionately suffer climate-related hardships will be covered by those who contributed the most to causing these hardships.

As of November 2016, the Green Climate Fund had raised more than $10 billion in pledges from 43 national governments to address some of the big challenges highlighted by the "climate justice" movement. Then Trump figuratively gave the finger to everyone in other countries by reneging on the U.S. portion of this already inadequate commitment to help mitigate the on-rushing adversities associated with climate disasters.

Trump is recklessly emulating the Captain of the Titanic, steaming full speed ahead in treacherous waters on a maiden voyage. Unfortunately for the vast majority of the American people, we are trapped below in lowly third class, and we will be the ones at the greatest risk when disaster strikes. Ironically, the Titanic was powered by the burning of coal, and Trump bucks scientific better sense by pandering to coal producers and other big fossil fuel mega-corporations, and he doesn’t seem to give a damn about the consequences.

The RMS Titanic carried some of the wealthiest people in the world, along with hundreds of emigrants seeking a new life in North America, and the lives of all were endangered by the hubris of the Captain. The Titanic did not have enough lifeboats to accommodate all the passengers and crew aboard, due to outdated maritime safety regulations. Donald Trump is ironically eager to eliminate regulations on Big Business and the rich tycoons that run huge corporations in order to create bigger private profits in the short run. This brazen plan unfortunately rashly puts the health and security and well-being of everyone in jeopardy.

Feeling helpless in the face of a powerful adversary can be discouraging, but when we see that there is a good course of action we can take to dramatically improve the world, it can inspire us to positivity and resolve. There would be poetic justice if the strengthening movement to challenge the legitimacy and rectitude of Trump’s rule actually became an overwhelming force in peaceably overthrowing it.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a people to throw off the yoke of established interests that have betrayed them, and to stand up against the scheming cadre of oppressors who seek to further deprive them of a fair voice in national planning and a fair share of the profits engendered by the fruits of their labors, and even to deprive them of some of the civil liberties that have been guaranteed to all Americans in our Bill of Rights, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to their demands to be heard and to have their opinions respected and to have their best interests and the general welfare taken into account as the highest priority of those who govern.

In honor of the Rights that should be unalienable to all Americans, including the rights to liberty, justice and the reasonable opportunity to pursue happiness and share in the aspirational dream of a better future, strong efforts must be made by our representatives to secure these rights. Recognizing that our government was instituted by our Founders to derive its legitimacy and just powers from the consent of the governed, let us now declare our unity and interdependence with the vast majority of Americans by demanding that our national priorities be altered so that 99% of the people have much more power, and the power-abusing 1% have less power. Let us lay the foundations of this new agreement with the American people on golden rule reciprocity principles and time-honored values that we share, and let us make sure these new provisions are ones that the vast majority will regard as honestly most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Let us make it abundantly clear that we will no longer suffer the evils of despotism, and set forth exactly why we reject the long train of abuses and usurpations that have served to undermine our common cause in the greater good. This is our right, and it is indeed our duty to establish new safeguards for our security and the best interests of our descendants in future generations.

The Harms Associated with Diversionary Tactics and Public Graft

For decades, giant corporations, particularly including tobacco, coal, oil, chemical and biotech companies “have poured billions of dollars into an international misinformation machine composed of think tanks, bloggers and fake citizens’ groups,” according to George Monbiot in Frightened by Donald Trump? You Don’t Know the Half of It. The purpose of all this spin has been to portray the interests of the common people as being the same as the interests of billionaires, and to wage war against unions and beat down attempts to regulate businesses and
tax the very rich. "Now the people who helped run this machine are shaping the government."

Trump's strategy of blaming the woes of American workers on immigrants and bad trade deals with other countries has been cunning, but this is another plank in the scam that prevents people from understanding that the main culprits in the hardships endured by American workers are giant corporations abusing their power and depriving workers of better compensation for their work and profit-enhancing increases in their productivity. Conspiring with big business executives in this effort are conniving rich people who control our country and decide our national policies.

A classic example of how political corruption is adversely affecting the American people through the lobbyist-driven formulation of bad laws can be found in a "21st Century Cures" bill that the lame-duck Congress passed in the waning days of the Obama administration. It was a reasonably good bipartisan medical innovation law that would invest in medical research, deal with mental health issues, protect genetic privacy for patients, improve foster care and provide funding for Vice President Joe Biden's efforts to fight cancer. But it was hijacked by Big Pharma and moneyed Republican donors. According to details provided by Senator Elizabeth Warren, lobbyists for these business interests inserted provisions in the law that would make it easier for giant drug companies to commit fraud, give kickbacks and put patient's lives at bigger risk. This is just another example of corporate abuses of power, similar to provisions contained in the Medicare Prescription Drug Act entitlement created in 2003 by Republicans, which has cost American taxpayers more than $1 trillion and prevented the Medicare program from negotiating volume discounts or favorable pricing for prescription drugs, or much less expensive generic drug alternatives. The obvious intent of this socially foolish provision was to give bigger profits to Big Pharma, even though this was accomplished by foisting higher costs on taxpayers and driving up public obligations for the excessive national debt.

"It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly native American criminal class except Congress."

--- Mark Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar

The heated anti-establishment mood of the American people stunned many observers during the long 2016 election process, and it sure makes one wonder how incumbent politicians could have gotten re-elected at such an incredibly high rate despite Congress being regarded with nearly the lowest approval ratings in all of American history. The unwarranted influence of Big Money is transparently responsible.

It is helpful to cultivate a healthy awareness of the largest possible context of big picture understandings in these matters. The most persistent ideological conflict in modern history is the struggle between Capital and Labor. It was this mega conflict that sparked the philosophies set forth in Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, which in turn became the dominating ideological and political conflict during the incalculably costly Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Capital had been roaring until 1929, when its excessive speculative risk resulted in the severe economic depression of the 1930s. This crash forced capitalists to face the necessity of going along with the creation of a New Deal safety net to cope with the terrible economic adversities and insecurities that resulted. Capital then had to bide its time after World War II until a new champion in the person of Ronald Reagan came along to help it reassert its domineering hegemony over working people.

Democracy has this grave weakness of being susceptible to an insidious domination by rich people, who transform it into a plutocracy in which the Few are the primary beneficiaries of the economy at the expense of the Many. When this state of affairs prevails and becomes too extreme, increasing inequalities and injustices create dangerous and justified anger. This is a good time to remember the words of Plutarch, a Roman historian and philosopher, who once warned that an "imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all Republics." Let's positively improve our collective prospects!

The Republican Party has gained dominance by cunningly stoking hot button social issues while single-mindedly betraying the best interests of the people. They have given top priority to the interests of rich conservatives and the rights of giant corporations and banks to abuse the power of their moneyed influence. Now that these interest groups have gained almost unchecked power by fooling people into thinking Trump would drain this
particular swamp, it is daunting to remember that domineering power always tends to corrupt, so our unfairly rigged system is now being corrupted to an even more extreme degree, and the risks are spiking that even worse revolutionary unrest will stalk the land in reaction.

A united country would be nearly impossible to hijack into supporting the financial and social über-scams described in this essay. This is why extremely divisive tactics are used to keep people from uniting on common ground. In addition to stoking hot button wedge issues, another even more unconscionable ploy is used to divide people and divert their attentions from domestic woes: waging preemptive wars and engaging in aggressive military exploits and scaring people into supporting arms buildsups and intelligence agency intrigues to thwart hyped up fears of threats from abroad. This strategy has the additional benefit for those who benefit from a hyper-divided populace of stimulating opportunities for profiteering and rationalizing military Keynesian increases in the national debt to finance such intrigues.

The top national priority of the Republican Party for decades has been to gain power by reducing taxes on people at the top. This is an extraordinarily wrongheaded highest priority. It is a cold calculus that benefits politicians who push this agenda by engendering lavish financial support for their careers from the beneficiaries of this largess. But this blatant corruption is a tragedy that undermines the common good. The Trump administration is making a huge mistake by continuing to march to the drumbeat of scheming orthodoxies like this, and it may lead to disaster. The American people want positive change, not crippling reactionary change.

Robert Reich made a surprising revelation in an article he wrote in December 2015 titled The Revolt of the Anxious Class: "Last year two highly-respected political scientists took a close look at 1,799 policy decisions Congress made over the course of over twenty years, and who influenced those decisions. Their conclusion: "The preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy." We must change this to preserve our democracy -- and Trump and Pence are demonstrating that they do not want to honestly undertake this. Let's "drain the swamp"!

I seriously doubt that even a few percent of Americans would claim that they intended to give a mandate to Trump to enact a tax plan that would give families earning less than $50,000 a tax break of under $1,000 while giving the average millionaire a tax cut of over $300,000. The fact of the matter is that such tax cuts are being financed by borrowing money and increasing our dangerously large $22 trillion national debt by trillions of dollars in the next ten years. And I seriously doubt that there are many Americans who favor eliminating Estate Taxes levied on the 2 out of every 1,000 Americans who are rich enough under current law to owe any tax at all on the inheritances their families will receive after they die.

Republicans rationalize their priority of giving debt-financed tax breaks to rich people by claiming that the action will create jobs and stimulate the economy so much that they might even pay for themselves. But in reality, borrowing to enrich the already rich has the opposite effect from creating jobs. What really creates jobs is when 99% of the people are better off, not the 1%, because demand for products and services creates economic expansion, rather than falling demand caused by the relative destitution of the masses. By slashing taxes and reducing government revenues, pressure builds to reduce government spending, so jobs are eliminated and suppliers of goods and services to the government experience declines in demand, and the economy falters. As the insightful billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer made clear in The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats, this ratchets up the risks of widespread social unrest and violent revolution. Not good!

Another fact is that when the federal government borrows a huge sum of money like another $1 trillion to finance tax cuts, it will cost taxpayers in future years $1 trillion in interest expenses every 15 or 20 years or so, over and over and over and over again, even without paying back a penny of the principal borrowed. So it is a very shortsighted scam that is treacherous to all people in the future. It is a sad form of intergenerational betrayal of taxpayers forever hereafter to cut taxes today merely to pad the bank accounts of the wealthy.

What really happens when tax cuts are put into effect that primarily benefit the wealthy is that wealth becomes more highly concentrated in the hands of the few, and power becomes more narrowly concentrated, and inequalities and social injustices increase, and the risks of revolutionary fervor become more intense, and
the government takes steps toward repressive measures to enforce the spiraling unfairness associated with this outcome. This makes such plans dangerously wrongheaded.

Investors in U.S. equities drove the U.S. stock market to record highs in the wake of Trump's Machiavellian victory, temporarily blind to the dangers of an authoritarian Trump presidency. They were celebrating the profit maximizing, cost socializing, anti-regulatory, climate action eschewing, resource plundering green light that they see shining with an illusory and phony patina before their eyes. But after only one year, this giddy fervor turned to anxiety, doused by the cold reality of what Trump's actions really portend as he abuses the power of his position in an extremely partisan and uncompromising way. He is rashly disrupting international trade and threatening to engage in preemptive military aggression. The U.S. bond market, in dramatic contrast to equities, suffered big losses in the weeks following the election, portending inflationary pressures and a fiscally irresponsible spike in the national debt. This does not bode well for our country.

Barack Obama managed to preside over the economy during a period since February 2010 in which there was a net increase in private sector jobs for an all-time record 80 months in a row, with more than 15 million jobs created. One contributing factor to this great record was a moderately more progressively structured tax system that was put into effect in 2014 when tax rates on all earnings over $450,000 for a married couple were increased from 35% to 39.6%. Trump's regressive tax cuts will have the opposite effect, and eventually lead to another economic downturn or disastrous debt crisis, and his rash anti-trade proposals could precipitate this outcome sooner rather than later.

There is a deep element of truth in the O'Roarkian observation that Republicans are "the party that says government doesn't work, and then they get elected and prove it." But this was no ordinary election, due to its consequential implications for the future of humanity. Early anti-capitalist critics like Karl Marx insisted that economics must be contained within an ethical context, and that social justice should be accorded higher priority than maximizing private profits at the expense of the public. Today we are seeing that both economics and ethics must rightly take into account ecological values. Donald Trump threatens to brashly torpedo these understandings, violating most decent codes of ethics and sacrificing the environment to goose profits in the short-term. He may thus even bring our democracy to an ignominious end.

The two primary purposes of corporate entities are to maximize private profits and shield management and owners from liability and social responsibility for their actions. Corporate entities facilitate the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and they are amoral by design. To help achieve these narrow purposes, Trump has slashed taxes on corporations and eliminated many of the rules that limit big businesses from abusing their power by reducing protections of the health of their employees and pushing to eliminate their collective bargaining rights. And he is pushing to allow excessive exploitation and depletion of natural resources, and to allow toxins and pollutants to be dumped into the environment, wreaking unreasonable damages on the ecological commons. He is also staunchly opposing climate action in order to benefit fossil fuel industries.

Joel Bakan, in his insightful book The Corporation - The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power, provides a compelling understanding of the sometimes psychopathic character of corporations in their dealings with people and their employees and the environment. In the film based on the book, titled The Corporation, a psychologist and FBI criminal profiler named Dr. Robert Hare describes the many ways that corporate behavior closely corresponds to a checklist of characteristics that the World Health Organization uses to define psychopathic personalities in individuals. These characteristics include a callous lack of concern for the feelings of others, a reckless disregard for public safety, acting in deceitful ways, distorting facts repeatedly, conning others for profit, exhibiting an inability to experience guilt or remorse, and failing to conform to social norms regarding lawful behavior.

Humankind is at a critical crossroads where concerns about the ecological underpinnings of all prosperity and sustainable well-being are mounting, and we need leaders who acknowledge the crucial importance of giving higher priority to issues like environmental protections and social justice. Instead of choosing leaders most likely to lead us in the right direction on big issues like this, we have been railroaded into choosing the opposite, i.e. industry apologists who want no limits on their power to exploit workers and natural resources. Such
ideological extremists act as puppets of the rich. They resemble dastardly deceivers who promise one thing but are loyal mainly to their own career ambitions. These Conservatives without Conscience, as John Dean has provocatively written, tend to be believers in uncompassionate and repressive Strict Father paradigms, and radical opponents to the more socially responsible constellation of attitudes and values emblematic of honorable Nurturing Parent worldviews, as insightfully articulated by linguist George Lakoff.

Republican politicians have been the main ones responsible for the current catastrophic status of the American electorate. Not only have they stoked inequality with their huge regressive tax breaks in favor of the rich, but they have worked tirelessly to decimate the collective bargaining rights of working people, and they have been the biggest boosters of trade deals that have sent millions of jobs abroad and reduced real wages and driven illegal immigration from Mexico. They have been the anti-regulatory engineers of the financial crisis of 2008, and of the resulting impulses of austerity that have made millions of Americans more insecure and saddled students with huge debt obligations. They spent 8 years undermining every effort President Obama made to improve the prospects of working people and Americans citizens in general. They have contributed mightily to the creation of the class of American voters who distrust their federal government and are antagonistic to it.

Consequentialist ethics would say that despotism is deplorable in degrees, depending on how many people a tyrant adversely affects and the severity of the oppression and the exact nature of the injustices perpetrated.

In perusing these words, I encourage readers to maintain a big picture perspective. Consider every issue from the fair perspective of consequential ethics, and evaluate the merits of any decision or course of action by an honest assessment of the most likely impacts it will have on the most number of people over the longest period of time. This is, bottom line, common sense. It is a respect-worthy utilitarian philosophy that commendably values decisions made in the interests of what is most likely to represent the greatest good. This was a guiding philosophy of Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the U.S. Forest Service, who applied this honorable principle to the management of American public forests soon after Theodore Roosevelt created the Forest Service in 1905. This perspective was an early translation of the golden rule ethic of reciprocity into a visionary guiding principle of precautionary action.

In French, the noun trompeur has a meaning of "one who deceives or misleads." Trump has proven beyond a reasonable doubt that he is, in both word and in deed, a trompeur. One is tempted to mildly swear, "You're Joshing me", as some have said in reference to a deaf mute counterfeiter named Josh Tatum during the Gilded Age in 1883. Trump peddles a phony patina of honest rectitude -- "I'm a truth teller. All I do is tell the truth." But this assertion is belied by the nonpartisan fact-checking organization PolitiFact's assessment of a large number of Trump's statements, in which it found that an astonishing 70% of them were either "mostly false, false or pants on fire" lies. Seventy percent! What this really means is Trump actually "tells it like it isn't."

"Thou shalt not be dishonest" may not be one of the Ten Commandments, but it is crucially valuable to evaluate important issues from the viewpoint of honestly understanding the consequence of a course of action. The worst aspect of Trump's leadership is that he threatens the common good, properly understood. His backward stance on environmental issues is especially anti-democratic because he favors allowing despoliation of the environment merely so that private profits can be maximized and large amounts of costs can be socialized onto other Americans, and onto billions of folks around the world, and inevitably onto countless of our descendants forevermore. Need resources, anyone? Appreciate clean air and clean water? Care about coral reefs? Love untrammeled wilderness areas? Enjoy peaceful coexistence? Or even just want to help preserve coastal property values from draconian declines?

Let us eat the fine fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and see with startling clarity the true
nature of right and wrong. The Bible tells us in the Ten Commandments that two of the most important ethical principles are not to commit adultery and not to covet thy neighbor's wife. While there may be some wisdom in these prohibitions, a much more important understanding of Right Conduct can be found in consequential ethics, because the ultimate basis for any judgment about the rightness or wrongness of any conduct is found in how broadly beneficial or negative the consequences of one's actions are on the lives of others. Actions that wreak widespread hardships on tens of millions of Americans and undermine the well-being of all of humanity in the future are a lot worse than a petty crime like stealing or coveting thy neighbor's sexy wife. It is far worse than coveting one's neighbor's wife to covet money and power so much that one ruthlessly uses a devious bait-and-switch scheme to rip off untold numbers of people by going all-in to ramp up financial swindles that are outlined above as "the Biggest Financial Scam in World History".

Let's think like a business person for a moment, and one who sees a bigger picture than just making money, no matter what the costs or harms. It is just wrong to allow rich people to continue to engage in this historic financial scam of abusing the power of their moneyed influence to get politicians to rig our tax system to give them unaffordably low tax rates, as they have been doing since 1981. It is wrong because the bottom line result of this scam has been to add $21 trillion to the national debt, and to constrain spending on public education, opportunity, healthcare and other provisions of our social safety net that provide a modicum of security to the two-thirds of Americans who live paycheck to paycheck.

Thomas Paine lent perspective to such a juncture when he wrote, "'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time, by the proceedings now. Now is the seed-time of Continental union, faith and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound would enlarge with the tree, and posterity read in it full grown characters."

Subsidiary Themes

We live in a shallow short-attention-span "sound-bite society" where impulsive tweets have helped get a brash real estate developer and reality TV celebrity anointed as president. The renowned feminist Gloria Steinem wrote in the Introduction to her thoughtful book My Life on the Road, "What we're told about this country is way too limited by generalities, sound bites and even the supposedly enlightened idea that there are two sides to every question. In fact, many questions have three or seven or a dozen sides. Altogether, if I'd been looking at nothing but the media all the years of my travels, I would be a much more discouraged person, especially given the notion that only conflict is news, and that objectivity means being evenhandedly negative."

Due to demographic trends, Gloria Steinem points out, the majority of Americans will not be of Caucasian descent within thirty years or so. This is one reason a white nationalist backlash has aided Trump in gaining power. Steinem writes that the sense of identity of many Americans depends on an old "white male Christian hierarchy", and their willingness to vote for a stunningly flawed candidate for president may be a choice made from guilt and fear -- "What if I am treated as I have treated others?"

Steinem adds: "... with all the power and money that is behind it, this backlash could imprison us in a hierarchy all over again." This prescient observation, made in 2015, casts a bright light of illumination on what happened in the 2016 national elections. The old white male hierarchy has seized power, through unscrupulous means, with the clear intent of consequentially abusing this ill-gotten power. To hold onto this power, given the illegitimacy of its methods and the betrayal of trust being revealed in deicts about how it is governing, the authoritarian leaders in this hierarchy will probably be able to hold onto power only by imposing a variety of repressive measures, because the fundamental premises of the authorities in this hierarchy are not fairness and inclusiveness, but rather defensive fear that the coming minority status of white people could result in the new majority treating the power abusers in ways similar to the way they have treated all other minorities.

Theodor Geisel, popularly revered as Dr. Seuss, was a writer and author of children's books who created political cartoons early in his career that showed a passionate opposition to fascism. Geisel portrayed the fear of communism as overstated, and found bigger threats to the American people in Senator Joseph McCarthy's
power-abusing witch-hunt and House Un-American Activities Committee investigations in the 1950s, which targeted communist sympathizers, liberals, intellectuals and Hollywood screenwriters, directors and producers.

Many of Dr. Seuss' books commendably express his views on a remarkable variety of social and political issues, including the dangers of environmental despoliation in *The Lorax*, the crazy human prepossession with materialism and consumerism in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, humorous criticism of authoritarianism and arrogance in *Yertle the Turtle*, the insanity of the arms race in *The Butter Battle Book*, the merits of racial equality in *The Sneetches*, and the anti-social risks of isolationism and virtues of positive involvements as responsible members of the international community in *Horton Hears a Who!*

One of the most famous rhyme-ers of all
Was Dr. Seuss, who among men always stood tall
He cared greatly about real social justice
So it is time for us all today to honestly discuss this
For "NOW comes an act of Enormous Enormance!
No former performer's performed this performance!"

Artists and writers are often the subject of intimidation and repression by authoritarian leaders because they stand for Right Mindfulness in speaking truth to power. It is, however, generally in society’s best interests to cultivate critical thinking and valiantly make commitments to protect the freedom of expression. This is why whistleblowers and organizations like the non-partisan Center for Investigative Reporting are so important for the health of our democracy.

Masha Gessen is a writer who studied Vladimir Putin and other totalitarian rulers and was inspired to pen the provocative book *Autocracy: Rules for Survival*, in which she noted that we should not pretend that America is starting from scratch and its president-elect is a clean slate, or that "we owe him an open mind." Trump, after all, promised the whole litany of hard-line stances like opposing minimum wages, deporting millions of immigrants, creating a system of surveillance specifically targeting Muslim Americans, building a wall on the Mexican border, and advocating war crimes, endorsing torture, and threatening to jail his election opponent Hillary Clinton.

"The national press is likely to be among the first institutional victims of Trumpism. There is no law that requires the presidential administration to hold daily briefings, none that guarantees media access to the White House. Many journalists may soon face a dilemma long familiar to those of us who have worked under autocracies: fall in line or forfeit access. There is no good solution (even if there is a right answer), for journalism is difficult and sometimes impossible without access to information."

"The power of the investigative press -- whose adherence to fact has already been severely challenged by the conspiracy-minded, lie-spinning Trump campaign -- will grow weaker. The world will grow murkier. Even in the unlikely event that some mainstream media outlets decide to declare themselves in opposition to the current government, or even simply to report its abuses and failings, the president will get to frame many issues. Coverage, and thinking, will drift in a Trumpian direction, just as it did during the campaign -- when, for example, the candidates argued, in essence, whether Muslim Americans bear collective responsibility for acts of terrorism or can redeem themselves by becoming the "eyes and ears" of law enforcement. Thus was xenophobia further normalized, paving the way for Trump to make good on his promises to track American Muslims and ban Muslims from entering the United States."

Because Trump lashes out verbally at every critic and has made rude, insulting attacks on Mexicans, immigrants, Muslims, women, disabled people, prisoners of war and Gold Star military families, there is no doubt that he will severely abuse the power of the presidency by lashing out with chilling authoritarianism, starting with immigrants and the intimidation of Americans who exercise their First Amendment-guaranteed freedom of expression and rights to protest. He has engaged in retributive actions against media outlets that criticize him, and against lawyers, judges and politicians who oppose him. There is an ominous risk of his actions being defended with an emergency national security danger, and maybe some police-state repression, bringing with it a catastrophic collision of white supremacism with the demographic reality of growing racial and ethnic diversity
President Theodore Roosevelt made it clear that criticism of elected leaders is well justified, when he stated: "The President is merely the most important among a large number of public servants. He should be supported or opposed exactly to the degree which is warranted by his good conduct or bad conduct, his efficiency or inefficiency in rendering loyal, able, and disinterested service to the Nation as a whole. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that there should be full liberty to tell the truth about his acts, and this means that it is exactly necessary to blame him when he does wrong as to praise him when he does right. Any other attitude in an American citizen is both base and servile. To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public. Nothing but the truth should be spoken about him or anyone else. But it is even more important to tell the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, about him than about anyone else.

An instance of Trump's twittering efforts to mislead people and suppress protests and repress the freedom of speech was demonstrated when he got real angry at the cast of the highly acclaimed play Hamilton. The cast felt compelled to communicate a heartfelt message to Trump's vice presidential candidate Mike Pence, when he attended a performance of this musical about our Founding Fathers in November 2016. After this popular theatrical production concluded, Brandon Victor Dixon, the actor who plays Vice President Aaron Burr, took a microphone and addressed the audience and Mr. Pence with these ringing words:

"You know, we have a guest in the audience this evening -- Vice President-elect Pence, I see you walking out, but I hope you hear just a few more moments."

"Sir, we hope that you will hear us out. We, sir, are the diverse America who are alarmed and anxious that your new administration will not protect us -- our planet, our children, our parents -- or defend us and uphold our inalienable rights, sir. But we truly hope this show has inspired you to uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us. All of us."

In response to these courageous words, Trump angrily tweeted the following morning: "The cast and producers of Hamilton, which I hear is highly overrated, should immediately apologize to Mike Pence for their terrible behavior". He added, "Our wonderful future V.P. Mike Pence was harassed last night at the theater by the cast of Hamilton, cameras blazing. This should not happen!"

Anthony D. Romero, the executive director of ACLU responded, "President-elect Trump needs a refresher on his high school civics class. It’s Trump -- not the cast of Hamilton -- that should offer an apology. Americans don’t apologize -- not even to presidents or vice presidents -- for the lawful and proper exercise of their constitutional rights. The First Amendment is a cornerstone of our democracy, and Democratic and Republican presidents alike have understood that freedom of speech makes our country stronger -- even if it sometimes make our leaders uncomfortable."

In the overheated aftermath of the national election and before the Electoral College electors chose who is to lead us into the turbulent future, the fervor of the election theatrics died down from a fever-pitch maelstrom of propaganda to a Twittering tintinnabulation of bizarre pronouncements, like Trump's November 2016 tweet: "Nobody should be allowed to burn the American flag -- if they do, there must be consequences -- perhaps loss of citizenship or year in jail!"

The flag is a symbol, and Trump's blustery condemnation of anyone who might choose to burn it as a protest against injustices should give every American well-justified reason to fear his reaction-exploiting authoritarian tendencies. Even the Supreme Court has upheld the right of free expression that is represented by this symbolic act, though the now deceased Justice Antonin Scalia said in 2015, "If it were up to me, I would put in jail every sandal-wearing, scruffy-bearded weirdo who burns the American flag. But I am not king." Trump is not King, nor will he be, unless our democratic institutions fail in the face of extreme partisanship.

Such threats of disproportional penalties to any patriotic protestors who burns the flag constitutes a power-abusing penalty so unconstitutional that it is harsher than punishments meted out to murderers or treacherous
national security-compromising spies or genocidal war criminals. It is as if Trump regards the burning the flag as an intolerable symbol of resistance to the Supreme Leader. All Americans are getting a pathetic glimpse of the master manipulator's true colors, and all patriotic Americans should express opposition to having Trump become "His Excellency". We cannot allow him to destroy our democratic republic to replace it with a nightmare of despotism and repressive policies and repressive actions against any and every group of people who dare to object or displease him in any way.

Abbie Hoffman, the 1960s political activist, made an important point, saying "You measure a democracy by the freedom it gives its dissidents, not the freedom it gives its assimilated conformists."

Charles M. Blow wrote in a December 2016 Op-Ed piece in the New York Times, Trump's Agents of Idiocracy, that Donald Trump made a "Thank You Tour" stop in Cincinnati a few weeks after the election, and instead of being magnanimous and conciliatory in an respectable effort to heal and unite the American people, he instead continued his boasting and gloating. Charles Blow incisively pointed out that "Trump and his agents of idiocracy are now engaged in an all-out crusade to exaggerate the scope of his victory, rewrite racial history, justify their vendettas and hostilities, and erase the very distinction between true and false."

He also provocatively wrote: "The truest measure of a leader is as much about how he or she attains power as how he or she wields it; while the latter is yet to be determined, the former has been revealed in devastating clarity." ... "the emergence of Donald Trump as a political figure has threatened to kill many of the ideals that we hold dear: decency and decorum, inclusion and empathy, truth and facts themselves." And, "Trump has shown himself beyond doubt and with absolute certainty to be a demagogue, bigot and xenophobe, and has given space and voice to concordant voices in the country and in his emerging Legion of Doom cabinet ... In that reality, resistance isn't about mindless obstruction by people blinded by the pain of ideological defeat or people goring on sour grapes. To the contrary, resistance then is an act of radical, even revolutionary, patriotism. Resistance isn't about damaging the country, but protecting it."

Progressive-minded folks tend to be much more magnanimous than uncompromising conservatives, but most of them see Trump's triumph as a tragedy acutely contrary to the common good, and they are having a difficult time accepting the malfeasance of his regime. After all, Republicans achieved their victory in extremely dirty and unethical ways by exploiting antagonisms, fears, resentments and hatred, and by offering hollow promises for making America great again that are now morphing into making our nation a more divided, discriminatory, stressed out, unstable, ruthless and intolerant country, at great risk and harm to us all.

It Can't Happen Here

Throughout history, oligarchic rule by the few has often been characterized by despotic tyranny, because the only way this profoundly undemocratic unfairness can be perpetuated is by imposing dictates on the people that make them obedient, and by using repressive measures. Today in the United States, our form of government has become a plutocracy, a type of oligarchy in which rich people wield excessive power.

Look at what is happening here, and in nations around the world, for it is becoming pathologically clear. Right-wing political leaders are seizing power through demagogic tactics of exploiting people's anti-immigrant sentiments and fears, fomenting insecurities and agitating antipathies, particularly in the USA and Great Britain. Such leaders have become major factors in politics in Poland and Hungary, and even exert powerful influence in Sweden, Germany and France. These reactionary politicians are using the power they gain through this exploitation of fears to advance the narrow interests of millionaires and billionaires. This is another form of a cunning hard-times swindle that gives powerful rich people more money and more control over the populace, and threatens the prosperity, security, personal freedoms and well-being of the citizenry. This domineering hegemony by an elite few over the subjected anxious masses is an insidiously anti-social ruse that is subversive of the greater good, and of the broadly civilizing influences of fair trade and democratic fair-mindedness.

Wise patriots recognize that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. We the People have been distracted from being vigilant by the deadly serious demagogic antics of master manipulators who manifestly mesmerize the people and the media in order to triumph in the contest for power and control. Trump's activities appear for all
the world like a hostile takeover of the U.S. government, and it is going to be real hard to stop him from cementing his hold on power and consolidating it with a cabal of loyalists and an enabling phalanx of Big Money plutocrats. This is a revolting development because of its subversive impact on our democracy.

We are like frogs sitting in a pot of water that is slowly being brought to a boil. Millions of Americans watch, some even saluting, as right-wing authoritarianism is being insidiously imposed upon our country. Slowly, but surely, fanned fears of dangers from immigrants and threats at the Mexican border are being exploited in a clamor for order. This rise of neo-fascist-like control is being facilitated by a distorted sense of patriotism and feelings of humiliation. Long ago it was written that when and if fascism comes to America, it will be called Americanism. Similar insights contained in Sinclair Lewis’ 1935 novel It Can’t Happen Here have been popularly interpreted as "when fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross."

Sometimes life imitates art. When Sinclair Lewis wrote It Can’t Happen Here, he imagined a Trump-like character named Buzz Windrip who challenged Franklin Roosevelt in the 1936 presidential election, and won by using scurrilously manipulative demagoguery. What then unfolded in Lewis’ novel was a cavalcade of unrest and resistance that was met with repressive paramilitary forces, and the resulting chaos was calamitous to the American people.

Today, the threat of authoritarian rule has arisen from within to impose its anti-American hegemony over the people, materializing like a nightmare of fiction on some dystopian Reality TV program, and it has arisen under the deceptive guise of "Making America Great Again".

Fascism is a form of radical far-right authoritarian nationalism led by a strong demagogic leader who proclaims a desperate need for a major transformation of society, often along racial lines. Fascists generally seek to establish a totalitarian state and impose protectionist economic policies and interventionist foreign policies. Extreme political turmoil will unfold when investigations reveal that Trump and his Republican loyalists are betraying the American people through corruption, deceit, division and cruel policies that insidiously shred the social safety net and undermine the well-being of the vast majority of Americans to finance regressive tax cuts that primarily benefit the top 1%.

Ironically, such leaders gain support by taking advantage of populist passions, but then they champion anti-populist policies that satisfy the demands of ruthless bankers and captains of industry and powerful elites. Since Republicans have given huge tax breaks to the rich while increasing spending on the military, we have run up the national debt to very dangerous levels to finance the previous episodes of this trickle-down Big Lie and military imperialism and record rates of domestic incarceration, and there is only one way to finance this ungodly largess -- by cutting spending on social programs like public education, health care for people with preexisting conditions under the Affordable Care Act, healthcare for older Americans (Medicare), and healthcare for the poor (Medicaid).

The Goddess of Irony has gotten together with Nemesis, the Greek Goddess of Divine Retribution, to watch these proceedings from the heavens above, and they both seem contemptible at the hubris of hard right-wing demagogic politicians who pathologically crave power and go about getting it by fanning the populist flames of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee fervor. These deities despise leaders who engage in tactics of deceiving the populace about their true intentions of greedily usurping and abusing power. In effect, right-wing leaders take advantage of people’s darker impulses and repress the better angels of our nature.

The fight for social justice has gotten much harder with Trump’s domineering abuses of power. Those who speak out for social justice have suffered a critical setback, and basic fairness, expanding opportunity and fair equal rights are under assault. And those who speak truth to power are being intimidated.

Unaccountable power represents an existential danger to the greater good, especially when wielded by politicians without conscience who put their own career and ambition way ahead of concerns for the common good. An unconscionably corrupt principle appears to underlie everything Republican politicians stand for. They regard gaining domineering power as being more important than anything else, including moral Right Action. This
is why they have adopted the virulently anti-democratic strategy of pandering to wealthy conservatives with regressive tax plans financed by huge increases in the national debt.

Author Masha Gessen commented on what Hillary Clinton should have said after Trump’s triumph over her, indicating that instead of being magnanimous in conceding the presidential race, she should have said:

“Thank you, my friends. Thank you. Thank you. We have lost. We have lost, and this is the last day of my political career, so I will say what must be said. We are standing at the edge of the abyss. Our political system, our society, our country itself are in greater danger than at any time in the last century and a half. The president-elect has made his intentions clear, and it would be immoral to pretend otherwise. We must band together right now to defend the laws, the institutions, and the ideals on which our country is based.”

Think about the famous statement written by the German Pastor Martin Niemöller concerning the cowardice of German intellectuals following the rise of Nazis to power and the subsequent purging of their chosen targets, group after group:

"First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak for me."

Many variations of this poem were penned right after the 2016 elections, and a series of tweets by Raphael Bob-Waksberg rings with the most visceral resonance:

First he came for the Muslims, and I said "Guys, let’s take a wait-and-see approach here."
Then he came for Mexican Americans, and I said, "Let’s not be sore losers just because the other guy won."
Then he came for the press, and I said, "What makes this country great is our peaceful transitions of power."
Then he came for the women and I said, "Try to have some compassion for the frustrations of the other side."
Then he came for the black community, and I said, "I know it sucks, but wait four years."
Then he came for me, and I said, "How could this have happened? I did everything I could."

"No justice, no peace."

Mark these words. Donald Trump poses a dire threat to a free press. He has repeatedly called journalists and reporters "the enemy of the people". He is coming first for Hispanic immigrants, with aggressive deportation agents. He may well crack down harshly on protesters who oppose him, and has already attempted to delegitimize protestors by charging that they are professional agitators, basically denying that the fear he has inspired with his insult-heavy rhetoric is justified. His actions against Muslims and people in other minority groups could ignite a constitutional crisis and dramatically strengthen worldwide recruiting support for terrorist groups. He has threatened women who get an abortion with some form of punishment, and is appointing Supreme Court Justices who believe the Roe vs. Wade decision should be overturned, an act that would result in thousands of women dying from unsafe abortions. And it is not at all inconceivable, given his vindictive history of retaliation against anyone who opposes him, that he will come after other individuals and groups like liberals, intellectuals, writers, artists, professors and Jews. He may also take harsh repressive actions against Black Lives Matter activists or drug users, who are already disproportionately locked up in prisons.

"Trump was swept to power in large part by white working-class voters who responded to his vow to restore the voices of forgotten people, ones drowned out by big business and Wall Street," according to a front page article in the New York Times in November 2016. Trump campaigned against the corrupt power of special interests, but now he is betraying his supporters by filling his administration with Wall Street executives, corporate consultants, industry insiders, lobbyists and military generals. The proof that Trump has been a con man are becoming glaringly obvious because of this involvement of so many people who have helped rig the system against the masses.

The gathering evidence starkly reveals that Trump panders excessively to his political base and is not in the least earnest about representing all Americans. We the People need to be vigilant to his actions to make sure
he does not act like a notorious demagogue such as Adolf Hitler, who basically staged a repressive coup d'état less than one month after he was appointed Chancellor of Germany in January 1933. Remember that Hitler sensationally used a "false flag attack" -- a suspicious fire that broke out in the Reichstag, the German Parliament building -- as a pretext to deprive the German people of their civil liberties, effectively ending German democracy overnight. Similar danger in the USA today is real. We cannot afford to have our key civil liberties nullified by any sort of similar ruse. "With Nazis in powerful positions in the German government", Wikipedia explains, the infamous Reichstag Fire Decree "was used as the legal basis for the imprisonment of anyone considered to be opponents of the Nazis, and to suppress publications not considered 'friendly' to the Nazi cause. The decree is considered by historians to be one of the key steps in the establishment of a one-Party Nazi state in Germany." And THAT was calamitous for the German people!

Republicans have grabbed narrowly domineering one-party rule in the USA, with the outrageously scurrilous help of Russian hackers and the Director of the FBI, who helped throw the outcome of the election from a Democratic presidency and a Democratic Senate and a more liberal Supreme Court -- all imminent probabilities just 11 days before the election -- to a far-right dominated near monopoly on power that represents an extreme threat to many of the civil liberties enjoyed by American citizens. Many conservatives and Trump supporters are still giddy from their triumph, but should wake up to this dangerous development and demand that our representatives take strong steps to strengthen protections of our cherished freedoms and our democratic form of government.

Eternal vigilance is required to keep despotism at bay because it appears for all the world as though the American people have been duped by this demagogic con man, and this narcissistic character seems to be too strongly motivated by money, self-dealing and the egomaniacal thirst for power. It is contrary to the best interests of the people to be ruled by this man who is so lacking in honesty, empathy, compassion, civility, magnanimity, respect for women, honor, virtue, statesmanship, maturity, moral rectitude or ethical sanity.

"These are the times that try men's souls," as Thomas Paine was wont to say. Is it even remotely possible that our plutocratic American democracy could become a dictatorship? Most Americans would deny that there is any chance of this, and express complacent confidence that it can't happen here in the USA. Our civil and military institutions are strong. But we are in entirely uncharted waters with this Twittering demagogic leader, and considering his vengeful persona and unempathetic self-centeredness, every American should demand a pledge from each and every one of our representatives to oppose any subversion of our democratic institutions by the Trump family. However, cowardly Republicans are marching lockstep with Trump, fearing his reckless wrath.

Republican politicians have generally proclaimed a mandate in recent years for an excessively right-wing agenda, and they govern rashly, ruthlessly, uncompromisingly, divisively and harshly, as if the contest is a zero sum game where the winner takes all. This is wrong. Far from winning a mandate, Republicans have won an illegitimate victory, and possibly a Pyrrhic one. Trump got almost 3 million fewer votes than Hillary Clinton, so Republicans did not receive the consent of the governed to rule with an ideologically uncompromising and oppressive one-sided agenda.

Recall again that Mark Twain called the phrase, "Our Country, right or wrong ... an insult to the nation." Remember the great author's words about true patriotism being loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its officeholders. Let's all look Mr. Trump square in the eye and ask, in honor of the tens of millions of Americans who have died in the patriotic duty of protecting our liberties and the values represented by our Constitution and Bill of Rights and rules of law in our democratic republic, that he make an irrevocable commitment not to impose any semblance of dictatorial rule on us in these already terribly divided United States of America. The majority of the American people feel that Trump's rise to power presents a clear and present danger to our liberties, and because of the demagogic nature of his rise to power and his demonstrated authoritarian tendencies, he represents the biggest threat ever in our country's history of our democratic governance being overthrown from within.

Today, this brazen and dangerous demagogue has induced a bout of temporary insanity in our psyches, and this alarming development has served to give this tyrant-wannabe excessive power. But every honest American
should now recognize this resentment-engendered and fear-actualized moment of error, and should now join together to speak out about the overriding desirability of retracing our steps and seeking to regain the road that is most likely to lead toward reaffirmed assurances of liberty and justice for all, and peaceful coexistence, and personal safety that is found in overarching guarantees of the freedoms spelled out in the Bill of Rights.

Many of the British "brexiteers" who voted for the UK to leave the European Union are suffering a serious case of "bremorse" at their votes, but this pales in comparison to the extreme remorse the American people are experiencing in light of the treachery of Trump's intentions to govern from the far right instead of the middle, and to impose his Trumpian authority on Americans who have heretofore been guaranteed basic civil liberties.

Trump has given American citizens little reason to trust him or his word, so I ask that each and every current and newly elected member of Congress make an irrevocable commitment that they will honorably do everything in their power to prevent any kind of coup d'état by the Trump administration that would deprive any class of American citizens of a significant degree of the liberties they enjoy today, particularly including Mexican Americans, Muslim Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, gay Americans and female Americans.

Trump has riled up people's emotions with his demagoguery, and this has given the vast majority of Americans real cause for feeling insecure about his tenure as president. His decision to empower the firebrand alt-right propagandist Steve Bannon as his Chief Strategist and senior advisor, perhaps of public enlightenment and public relations propaganda, caused alarm bells to ring ominously around the globe, reinforcing this need for strong reassurances today. Bannon promoted conspiracy theories of the wildest variety when he was the media head of the fringe Breitbart News, so he should be able to honestly admit that the American people are justified in regarding it as a great danger that Trump is radically abusing the power of the presidency, and that our desires are valid for powerful guarantees that our cherished freedoms will not be taken away.

Bannon has been described as the "Leni Riefenstahl of the Tea Party movement" for his extremely manipulative media spin. It may be recalled that Riefenstahl is possibly the most famous propaganda filmmaker in history, having created films like Triumph of the Will to catapult Hitler's propaganda and drone the German people's minds into dutifully obeying the fascist dictator.

Recent history is not reassuring in the matter of presidents abusing executive power. George W. Bush abused the power of the presidency in a litany of consequential and extremely costly ways, including lying to the people to gain support for preemptive wars and military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. And conservatives accused President Obama of having abused his power with things like Executive Orders to implement a Clean Power Plan and to lift the threat of deportation from an entire class of young undocumented immigrants.

If we are fortunate enough to avoid the potentiality of our democracy meeting its demise in dictatorship, the American people need to be hyper-alert to make sure that the tactics Trump used during his campaign do not morph into dangerously deceitful strategies and policies that undermine the common good during his tenure.

Tens of millions of Americans justifiably feel that our political system is rigged, and that they are personally shut out of the political process due to the unfair influence of Big Money in our elections, and of lobbyists in our national decision making. Everyone should recognize that our great experiment in democracy has become "a sham equality of votes nullified by a gaping inequality of wealth." But it need not stay this way. All Americans should strongly support democracy reforms such as public financing of elections, the restoration of voting rights for all citizens, and new laws that overturn the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling that allows undue influence of money in our elections and law-making, and in determining our national priorities. Move to Amend!

In the film Triumph of the Will, Leni Riefenstahl showcased a droning cavalcade of psychologically manipulative images in 1935 that extolled Nazi greatness and the expected virtues of duty and patriotism and blind obedience by the German people. After Trump's triumph of invective and manipulative fear-mongering and vile exploitation of people's prejudices and the reactive fervor of white male nationalists, he gave a startlingly uncharacteristic victory speech in which he declared that he would be a president who cared for all the people, thus giving the American people a nanosecond of hope that he could rise above the shrewdly manipulative
character of his bigotry-spewing and sexist campaign self, in all its socio-pathological vitriol and extreme divisiveness and deep dishonesty.

Reason trumps faith, and faith trumps fear, and fear trumps reason, as Al Gore made abundantly clear in *The Assault on Reason*. So Trump’s stunning victory over liberty-loving democracy should not really have been such a big surprise. He used fear to trick people, and now the unreasonable is residing at the nexus of power. He effectively exploited reason-hijacking resentments and fear, lying and deceiving with barely believable presumption, while pretending he cares about the downtrodden and those who have been left behind by policies and trade deals that mainly benefit corporations and rich elites. He exploited people’s resentments and feelings of alienation on account of modernity, multiculturalism and urban progressivism. The fact of the matter is that Trump cares mainly for money, power, self-aggrandizement and satisfying his ego and ambition, and he shows little of the better angels of human nature or conscience or empathy or scruples. He has failed to discipline his behaviors and steer them toward fair-mindedness, ethical action or any of the respectable hallmarks of true social intelligence, civility or compassion.

Trump managed to emerge triumphant by scurrilously appealing to white males and “authoritarian followers”, using many of the powerfully manipulative tactics known by demagogic tyrants throughout history to be effective in attracting support. This was a modern “triumph of the will” that poses a big threat to the cherished liberties and safety of the American people, and it could bring our great American experiment in democratic governance to an inglorious end after so many long years of struggle and hard-fought progress.

Profound anger at the extent to which our system is rigged has led many voters to reach for something different -- even though it means turning in risky new directions. Voters have narrowly rejected a "stale elite consensus", but we are now confronting a still greater threat. What remains of checks and balances in our government is fragile, and some of the most sinister forces in American political life are right now imposing their ruthless will. Voters responding to a desire to get rid of the Washington D.C. swamp have returned many politicians to the capital that are downright antagonistic to the true best interests of ordinary working people.

Pragmatic leaders of the progressive movement need to clearly articulate the best ideas for what collective response should be made in the face of the "unprecedented moment of crisis" that is affecting us as a result of Trump’s rise to poorly checked power.

Curiously, it was Ronald Reagan that coined the slogan “Make America Great Again”. It was during his first run for the presidency, and he used this slogan to promote a narrow agenda that was a rude subterfuge that crushed the collective bargaining power of working people, hyper-stimulated spending on the military, significantly reduced public funding for higher education, and eliminated regulations on giant banks in a move that led to a costly savings-and-loan financial crisis. He made concerted efforts to undermine environmental protections, and also put in place rashly regressive tax and spending policies that have been the main factor dangerously driving the national debt up from less than $1 trillion in 1981 to more than $22 trillion today.

At least when Reagan campaigned, he asserted a hopeful vision of “beacon on the hill” optimism and propriety. Trump, in contrast, has set forth a dark, dystopian view of America. He has doubled down on Reagan’s debt-financed trickle-down tax policy, and this is likely to result in a severe debt crisis that will be disastrous to poorly educated Trump supporters in particular, and to billions of people worldwide. Thus, ironically, Trump’s dystopian view of the world could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Cunning Trump adopted the slogan to Make America Great Again for even more nefarious purposes: to promote white supremacy and divide people against each other. His hidden purposes were similar to Reagan’s -- to enact highly regressive changes in taxation that will increase the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, despite the danger this presents to democratic fairness, and to fool the people left behind by the forces of globalization and modernity. He appears to be lying about his intentions and betraying the trust of the American people by creating an administration that is even more divisive, anti-inclusive, racist, sexist and inegalitarian. And his anti-environmental agenda represents a far-reaching and unconscionable misuse of power.

Trump owns or controls more than 500 businesses in some two-dozen countries around the world. Getting things
done in many of these countries inevitably involves various forms of corrupt practices like bribery and public graft to accomplish anything. Corruption needs to be understood and exposed to remedy the real nature of improper activities, and secrecy is a roadblock to remedial actions. To allow the Trump family to continue to conceal their business involvements by hiding Trump’s tax returns is to engage in collusion that allows likely questionable business activities and conflicts of interest and compromising activities to be perpetuated.

Transparency International, one of the top think tanks in the world, defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. Donald Trump’s entire personal business history is a saga of money-obsessed endeavors for his personal gain that are tainted with thousands of lawsuits over egregious conflicts of interest and a variety of unethical activities. Transparency International makes it clear that corruption eventually hurts everyone who depends on the integrity of people in positions of authority. The level of corrupt activities and their nature differs from country to country, and includes a wide range of activities, from small bribes paid to officials by millions of people to large-scale looting.

Imagine a better world where social relations are strongly infused with Hygge, the cozy and hugfully heart-warming Danish “feel good philosophy” (pronounced hooga). And imagine, like John Lennon might have done, all the world living in peace, and not mired in dark divisions and antagonisms riled up in fits of Trumpian bile and in people suffering from “Trump Derangement Syndrome”. Imagine instead all of us together now, healing through the marvelous tonic of people appreciating Nurturing Parent worldviews and throwing their support to better representatives of the common good who devote much more generous-hearted funding for the social safety net and protections of the public health and well-being and the environment.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

October 2017, with some revisions in August 2018 and Jan. and May 2019

Germinating in August 2019, and Seeking Inclusion in See Clearly

Jeff Sharlet tells the disturbing story in The Family, a new 5-part Netflix documentary series, of the insidious effort by evangelical Christian fundamentalists over the past six decades, in the name of Jesus, to insinuate themselves into positions of great influence in the U.S. and around the world. They have achieved this goal like wolves in sheep clothing by speaking of brotherly love and other lofty ideals while siding with ruthless authority-abusing conservative politicians in their mutual goal to achieve domineering control over the people.

This marriage of religious fundamentalists and scheming anti-democratic politicians is pushing a fundamentalist economic agenda that helps Economic Elites monopolize wealth and power in the hands of the few. In doing so, along with a power boost by corporate CEOs and their lobbyists, this troika of power brokers is an unholy alliance that has the nefarious impact of discriminating against those who are not wealthy, seriously exacerbating the rigged state of extreme income inequality and making it easier for uncompromising conservative fundamentalists to deprive progressives of the power to enact reforms that would make our society much more fair and healthy and inclusive and egalitarian and peaceable and sustainable and ecologically sane. “Praise the Lord!”, they say, “and all ye bow down in faithful obedience to us master manipulators, and acquiesce to Republicans and their divide-to-conquer strategies, even though they are tearing the fabric of our communities asunder and destroying our democracy and undermining the prospects for peaceable coexistence and severely threatening the environmental underpinnings of all future well-being.

This overwhelming hegemony of domineering rule is precisely what the brilliantly incisive Charles Ferguson calls a “political duopoly” in his book Predator Nation, and what he exposes as corruption in governance in his documentary Inside Job. While the sound and fury of divisive conflict over social, cultural and racial issues is deafening and numbing, behind the divisiveness lies a deeper bipartisan consensus in which Big Money donors control our democracy and thwart sensibly fair reform efforts. In this cunning consensus, public opinion is manipulated to achieve an underlying anti-egalitarian goal, and “the emotions of a scared, increasingly cynical, economically insecure electorate” are used against the people to perpetuate this unjust system.
PRESS RELEASE

Revolutionary Earth Manifesto Mysteriously Materializes – A Potential Game Changer

HANNIBAL, MO. --- July 1, 2019

A providential foresight-honoring Earth Manifesto has been launched into the public arena that contains wide-ranging understandings designed to spark positive change in the world. All of the essays in this manifesto can be found online, as well as in one of twelve handsome books available at generously discounted prices from the print-on-demand publisher Lulu. This compendium of ideas and insights has been set forth by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, who is a great admirer of Mark Twain and fancies herself to be his philosophic soul mate in many matters.

The most important of these perspectives are included in See Clearly – Sanity in Insane Times. This compendium of understandings spells out how an epic scam has been foisted on the American people, and the bizarre details of this con job are described in deliberative detail, and involves such things as "the biggest financial fraud in world history" and The Con Goes On: A Triumphant Coup by Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalists. These swindles seriously undermine democratic fairness and rashly betray the well-being of people in future generations. This set of schemes has involved borrowing more than $21 trillion since 1980 to finance regressive tax cuts that disproportionately benefit wealthy people and create broadly detrimental and riskily extreme inequalities in the USA. Compounding these scams are many schemes that allow big corporations -- the organizational tools that help concentrate wealth in the hands of the few -- to socialize many costs by externalizing them onto taxpayers and countless numbers of individuals who suffer harms as a result.

Tiffany Twain passionately articulates an extraordinary worldview in these writings, and she believes that these ideas could dramatically help transform our societies into happier, healthier and more peaceable ones. A principal idea in this manifesto is that it would be a providential good plan for humanity to begin to demonstrate much greater respect for Mother Earth by making courageous commitments to effective means of protecting the health of Earth's providential ecosystems and the biodiversity of life on the planet. To this end, a detailed Bill of Rights for Future Generations has been created to help guide our activities and make sure they are sustainable for a longer period of time, and that our actions today do not rashly ignore the anticipated needs of people in the future. Intelligent Precautionary Principles have also been enunciated to help focus our national priorities and give us clearer guidance to a more propitious future than current trends portend.

See Clearly also contains a powerful perspective in "My Country, Right or Wrong?", which concerns true patriotism and both Mark Twain's and my own incisive understandings about loyalty and honorably patriotic ways of seeing. We should embrace the values central to what Abe Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature."

Another of the most important collections of ideas in this manifesto is contained in Common Sense Revival - Book One of the Earth Manifesto. These perspectives are a distillation of forceful ideas that emulate the plain truths expressed by Thomas Paine in his influential 1776 pamphlet Common Sense, and they represent comprehensive and overarching worldviews that include an entire constellation of recommendations and supporting ideas for more salubrious policies and priorities that would help ensure a healthier, saner and more sustainable future.

These understandings have been evolving for many years, but have assumed greater urgency in light of the intense political turmoil that has resulted from the November 2016 elections. It is crucial to recognize how
seriously the political establishment in the U.S. has betrayed the American people in the past few decades by allowing institutional bribery and Dark Money to facilitate a long train of despotic abuses in national policies related to taxation, political representation, personal liberties and fairness in governance. These were the main issues our Founders regarded as being most important when they declared independence from Great Britain over 242 years ago, when they boldly launched our great American experiment in democratic government.

This manifesto contains a farsighted blueprint on how to make the world a better place for all by taking our country back from today's opportunistic, profit prepossessed and power-abusing establishment and the political right wing. It is appropriate for the vast majority of Americans to feel righteous indignation at the current state of the status quo, and it is our right, indeed our duty, as our Founders asserted in the Declaration of Independence, to throw off despotic rule and take courageous steps to provide new guarantees for the general welfare of the people, and to safeguard our future security. This is how we will be able to create truer liberty, fairness and justice for all.

A revolving focus has created many entertaining and enlightening essays in these writings, and one of the best is Huckleberry Finn, the Forty-Niners Gold Rush, and Sensational Related Reflections. Check it out, and contemplate the riff on hydraulic mining and legal precedent in the United States. Mark Twain loved to spin greatly exaggerated yarns, and Tiffany Twain uses her own rich imagination to tell some tall tales of her own. Some years ago she took particular pride in Tall Tales, Provocative Parables, Luminous Clarity, and Evocative Truths: A Modern Log from the Sea of Cortez. The great philosophic writer John Steinbeck would have approved! There are also cogent perspectives in the essay, Tyrants and Damsels and Associated Incisive Insights. And crucial foreign policy understandings are contained in Reflections on War -- and Peace!

There is a wonky side to Tiffany Twain's introspections into existence, as epitomized by her creation of a 45-parameter Sustainability Index, which was developed to provide a clear snapshot evaluation of the status of the sustainability of human activities. This Sustainability Index measures progress or regress with regard to hopes for humanity to live in sustainable ways on our home planet. This Index began flashing an ominously cautionary red warning signal in May 2013 when measurements of the concentration of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the atmosphere high atop remote Mauna Loa volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii exceeded 400 ppm for the first time in human history, tipping the Status Evaluation rating of the Index to a more dangerous level. In May 2019, this measure ominously reached 415 ppm, a level not reached in more than 800,000 years.

The many essays in the Earth Manifesto contain philosophic explorations, incisive insights, penetrating political and economic analyses, creative proposals, feminine perspectives, poetic appreciations, and a fair share of deep introspections and ruminations. Most of these ideas are at least tangentially oriented toward a good marriage of humanism and awareness of human responsibility, and of smart long-term understandings with a clear focus on the ecological importance for us to act as better stewards of Earth's wildlife, habitats and ecosystems.

Perilous times require Big Ideas, higher purposes, broader perspectives, more honest leadership and more responsible actions. The essays in this manifesto grapple with the most important issues that face our nation and the world today. The visionary understandings they convey serve to creatively combine economics and politics with common sense, progressive thinking, creativity, philosophy, psychology and spiritual illumination to propose auspicious ways forward. This manifesto contains many plans for improving our country and the world by making our communities healthier, our economy more sound, and our societies saner. Excellent ways are also proposed for us to begin to more sensibly safeguard the environmental commons, and to ensure the longer-term sustainability of vitally valuable services provided by healthy natural ecosystems. Good ideas are provided for how to better conserve resources crucial to humanity's current and future flourishing and survival.

In light of the economic, social, political, financial and ecological challenges that confront us today, many Earth Manifesto essays explore Big Picture perspectives of these dilemmas. One of these pieces is a clarion call for smarter planning in Climate Change Considerations, Carrying Capacity, and Ecological Overshoot. Provocatively creative explorations of big issues and entertaining ideas are also made in Transcendental Musings: A Bugle Horn Sounds for Solidarity of Purpose, and in Revelations of a Modern Prophet.
Ultimate mysteries permeate existence, so it is appropriate that this manifesto has mysteriously materialized in our midst, springing forth as if fully formed like Athena, the Greek Goddess of Wisdom, from the forehead of Zeus. In actuality, these writings have been evolving continuously since before September 11, 2001, and they have incorporated unfolding events and new perspectives and developments as they transpire.

The eminently respect worthy Dalai Lama said at the Vancouver Peace Summit in 2009, "The world will be saved by the western woman." Many well-qualified women have answered this call to action in American politics, but too many of them were crushed by the diabolically cunning and well-financed Republican machine in the 2016 elections. Bravo! for so many having won their 2018 midterm election contests, and let's give women much better chances in all future elections! Women should have fairer opportunities in our political system and all our leaders must see and understand issues in more forward-looking, sensible and fair-minded ways. It is not acceptable that only about 20% of our representatives in Congress are women. A strong correlation exists between these statistics and gender discrimination that is built into our political system and corporate-dominated economic system, and in media coverage and cultural biases.

We are at a crucial crossroads in global politics, and the American people would be wise to avoid a break with the international community that is being actuated by the agenda being pushed by Donald Trump and his rogue administration. Some of the numerous reasons for this stance, which will help us overturn the retrogressive plans of conservatives in Congress, are discussed below.

The insightful billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer makes it crystal clear that "middle-out economics" would be a much more secure and positive course of action, as expressed in his provocative TED talk and article, The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats. He states: "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."

Donald Trump has given powerful voice to millions of Americans who feel well-justified anger and frustration at lost jobs and the outrageous extent to which our economic and political systems are rigged against them, in favor of the overly privileged few. The American people should thank Senator Bernie Sanders for his much more honorable voicing of support for farsightedness and democratic fairness of representation, and for the passionate concern he expresses for the true well-being of working people and those in the middle class. Bernie Sanders is also to be commended for his championing of greater fairness toward the disenfranchised and the downtrodden, and for his proposals to take action to reduce rash extremes in inequality that are being foisted on people through wrongheaded national priorities. Trump is much narrower and more selfish than Bernie Sanders, and he gained power by dishonorably appealing primarily to beleaguered white workers and rich conservatives. He has acted like one of the worst demagogues in history by stoking people's fears, exploiting racial prejudices, scapegoating immigrants, and taking demeaningly rude advantage of sexist attitudes -- and doing all of this to greedily gain greater celebrity and domineering power and personal profit.

Wake up, my fellow Americans! A serious mistake has been made in allowing Trump Republicans to seize power by demagogic means, scaring people and exploiting their feelings of frustration and resentment, for Trump is acting like a despot and causing severe economic disruptions by promoting aggressive protectionism and import tariffs in international trade and other potentially calamitous conflicts. One big problem with this is basic: "reciprocity". Trade tariffs are an economic gambit that stifles competition to favor crony supporters, at big costs to consumers, and contrary to fairly shared prosperity. Trade wars and less competition turn out to be bad for all countries, considered in whole. This will NOT make America great again.

Republicans are crowing about the beneficial economic effects of their tax cut scam, despite the folly of it being financed by borrowing almost $2 trillion that taxpayers will be obligated to pay for, in every future year. These recklessly regressive debt-financed tax cuts are mainly benefitting rich people and corporate entities, and causing worsening inequality in our society. This is crazy, given that increases in inequality and associated heightening injustices are among the biggest risks to most people's current and future well-being in the USA and around the world. The Twitterer-in-Chief even revealed his idiotic hubris in touting stock market highs (until the rattling December 2018 steep declines). This set up a classic comeuppance when his disastrous and irresponsible fiscal policies and unconstitutional executive orders and anti-regulation fervor and grave
conspiratorial misconduct and geopolitical follies result in another bubble-bursting or violent global calamity.

The 2016 national elections were a watershed moment in our country's history, for the competing ideologies of Republican politicians and Democratic politicians have probably never offered a more extreme contrast. The prescriptions proposed by progressives and conservatives are radically different, as seen in the official 2016 Democratic Party platform that Bernie Sanders succeeded in making the most progressive ever, and in the Republican Party platform, which may never have been more reactionary. In addition, Republicans demonstrated extreme intransigence in the U.S. Senate by refusing to consider President Obama's well-qualified nominee to replace Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia after he suddenly died in February 2016, and this led to the radical inequity of a replacement justice being forced on the American people in April 2017 who is further right than almost every conservative ever on the high court, including current Justices John Roberts and Samuel Alito and the now retired Anthony Kennedy. This Trump appointee, Neil Gorsuch, is as far right as Clarence Thomas, and even further right than Antonin Scalia was himself. The appointment of Gorsuch, and then the controversial Brett Kavanaugh, is already proving to be a negative development for the American people.

The 5 to 4 majority of conservatives on the Supreme Court before Antonin Scalia died were responsible for the Citizens United ruling that overturned decades of precedent and a century of practice involving limits on the influence of big money in politics. That Supreme Court also eviscerated the commendably fair Voting Rights Act of 1965. These actions and others were targeted to undermine the prospects of legislation aimed at protecting the rights of workers, consumers and citizens, as well as the health of the environment, in favor of corporate profits and prerogatives. The "conservatives" on the Supreme Court have generally favored employers over employees, polluters over people, creditors over debtors, property owners over less affluent citizens, and big corporations over individuals. I strongly believe that We the People need to prevail in this struggle over whether government will be able to serve as a countervailing force to concentrated economic power, and we need a more independent judiciary to accomplish this. Supreme Court Justices should honestly honor the oath of office they have sworn to, "that I will administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich." Soon after being sworn in, Neil Gorsuch jumped into the job to apply his creativity to rationalizing strict constructionist interpretations of the Constitution in ways inimical to proper guidance of a reasonably sane society. Brett Kavanaugh's extremely controversial confirmation adds another conservative to the high court, making it even less legitimate. History will judge far right ideologies harshly, just as it has judged Nazi fascism in the light of infamy. The lens of consequential ethics makes it clear that championing policies that exacerbate inequalities and social injustices is wrongheaded, and that antagonism to rights and well-being of women, immigrants, asylum seekers and people in racial minorities is morally misguided. History will prove conclusively that excessive exploitation of natural resources is dangerously myopic, and that staunch opposition to precautionary action on climate change is deeply damaging to hopes for future safety, prosperity and well-being. History will also prove that policies that ignore intelligently farsighted adaptive measures that would mitigate the ecologically destabilizing impacts of unregulated greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere are foolish because they will subject billions of people in the future to calamitous hardships and increasing numbers of harsh natural disasters.

The Department of Defense has repeatedly called climate change a "threat multiplier" that will require far-reaching humanitarian or military intervention because it will lead to more severe storms that threaten cities and military bases, and will cause rising sea levels that will imperil coastal habitation and infrastructure. Early in 2016, the Pentagon ordered its officials to start incorporating probable climate change impacts into every major consideration. In a hard-to-believe contrast, Republican leaders in Florida have tried to prevent even the mention of climate change in order to promote narrow ideologies, and Trump has told staff in the EPA similar stupid things. This refusal to discuss the risks of anthropogenic alterations of the global climate and natural ecosystems is one of the most ridiculous-deserving head-in-the-sand denials ever, despite the certainty that precautionary action is well advised to mitigate climate disruptions. This is especially ironic in Florida, because honestly responsible actions are needed in this low-lying state, considering that it is one of the most vulnerable places to catastrophic impacts of more powerful hurricanes and rising sea levels.
Trump manipulatively milked an insidious strain of ideology and emotional fervor to grab power. He combined absurd promises to build a “beautiful wall” along the entire U.S./Mexico border, to be paid for by Mexico, with stoked hostility against immigrants and Muslims, and added in disingenuous ruses that exploit unbridled ethnic nationalism, climate crisis denials and stubborn support for increased domestic production of fossil fuels. Politics in France, Germany and other European nations are also embattled by similar right-wing anti-immigrant political parties that are intensely antagonistic to agreements designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the environment. It is irresponsible to deny and ignore the gathering risks of climate change and rising sea levels, and to thus act as poor stewards of Creation. It is wrong to sacrifice future well-being on the illusion-addled altar of deplorable political expediencies, privatized profits, socialized costs, irresponsible debt financing, right-wing social engineering and extremely short-term-oriented materialistic priorities.

Trump’s anti-regulation executive actions and staunch support for fossil fuel industries and advocacy of huge new tax breaks for rich people undermine protections of the environmental commons that is a foundation of future well-being. Trump is proving to be one of the most disrespected leaders in the world for his refusal to agree with leaders in every other country on Earth to make efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the incalculably costly impacts of resulting changes in the global climate.

Trump evoked a dark dystopian vision of the supposedly pathetic state of the U.S. military during his campaign, and declared that the plight of African Americans was the “worst ever ever ever”. Worse than decades of slavery? He pretends that international trade agreements have been an unmitigated disaster, even though reasonably fair international trade throughout history has had broadly beneficial effects overall. He hyps up the dangers of threats posed by “radical Islamic terrorists”, and downplays the dangers of terrorist acts by white nationalists, and he uses this sophistry and his “Make America Great Again” sloganeering to set up a “social trap” in which he claims to be the best and only possible savior, even though his proposals, plans and self-serving agenda are proving to be social, economic, environmental, geostrategic and national security disasters.

Barack Obama once said that the American people need to be told the truth, and he was right. Bigger and more comprehensive versions of the truth need to be told. In bizarre contrast to this vital exigency, con man Trump “tells it like it isn’t”, and does so with an air of certitude so brazen that millions of gullible people seem to think he actually is telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In reality, his proclamations weave simplistic half-truths, misinformation, deeply deceptive lies and emotionally manipulative insinuations that motivated many people during his campaign to think he might just be a good leader -- despite his long history of unethical business dealings, tax fraud and his stoking of people’s prejudices and anger, his scheming economic elitism and his dangerously demagogic, devious, narcissistic and reactive character. These nefarious qualities and his antagonism to immigrants and refugees have made the majority of people in nations around the world fear the ascendance of this egomaniacally crazed dictator-wannabe to the most powerful position on the planet.

Trump has taken this pathetically flawed, notoriety and power by despicably fanning the flames of white nationalism, racial bigotry, xenophobia, white male chauvinism and religious discrimination to satisfy his ambitions for power. His blatantly unhinged and unethical tactics make it clear that his abuses of power in the presidency will increasingly infringe on the Constitution, violate rules of law, threaten peaceful coexistence, reduce democratic fairness, torpedo environmental sanity, tear apart social cohesion and violate the moral good.

My philosophic great-grandfather on my mother’s side was the estimable writer and humorist Mark Twain, who played an active role in opposing American aggression abroad as Vice President of the Anti-Imperialist League. He had become disillusioned about the real motives of the U.S. in the Philippine-American War from 1899 to 1902, so he bemoaned war as “a wanton waste of projectiles”, according to the insightful correspondent John Nichols. But, notably, Mark Twain’s “deepest disgust was reserved for politicians who played on fear and uncertainty to promote the interests of what would come to be called the military-industrial complex.”

Today, Trump has exploited people’s insecurities and anger at the establishment to gain power, and he has done this in more egregiously selfish ways than almost any demagogue in history -- right up there with red-baiting Senator Joseph McCarthy. Mark Twain would be horrified, if he were still alive, to see how wantonly humankind is wasting the resources of the world on weapons and standing armies and violent conflicts and the global "war
Trump is a demagogic power-abuser whose stances, character and reactive temperament are simply too risky for the American people to allow him to remain in office. His efforts to deport millions of hard-working immigrants, and to slash legal immigration, make him doubly dangerous, because immigrants actually contribute greatly to many American industries, including agriculture, restaurant services, construction and numerous categories of generally low-paid jobs. Another red flag should be seen in fascist-plot-like efforts being made to significantly increase the power of the military and police and deportation forces, and in a seeming vindictive readiness to crush opposition by using intimidating lawsuits to suppress criticism, deter dissidents and silence those who engage in the freedom of expression to oppose divisive, sexist and retrogressive actions. Trump has despicably engaged in racial profiling and discrimination, and has zealously tried to slash funding for State Department diplomacy. Additionally, he is unacceptably dishonest, and he represents irresponsible positions on issues like his opposition to reforms that would limit the system-rigging influence of Big Money in politics. He generally takes a sycophantish stance to satisfy the NRA in opposing any sensible regulations on sales of guns and assault weapons. The grounds for removing this illegitimate president and his Vice President from office are coming into focus as their widespread conflicts of interest, egregious actions, illicit activities and numerous scandals unfold, and the noose tightens on dozens of investigations into their dishonesty and many shenanigans.

The top priority of Republican politicians is to cut taxes on the wealthy. This is a value that is preposterously misguided in light of crucially more important priorities like making our communities healthier and our societies safer, fairer and more sustainable -- and of ensuring a more providential legacy to all people in the future. This distorted value can only remain entrenched because of the institutional corruption that our political system and the Supreme Court have given to moneyed interests. If we want to "take back our country", the place to start is to guarantee much fairer representation to the people, and prevent ideological crusaders for low taxes on the rich from having deciding influence on our national decision-making and budget setting and law-making. One consequence of Republican propaganda and priorities is that the very rich are getting richer in the USA while American children have the highest level of poverty of almost any major country on Earth, and young people have excessively opprobrious levels of student debt. And revolutionary unrest is simmering across the land.

Ideas like these are contained in this manifesto, along with an astonishingly comprehensive array of philosophic perspectives, penetrating psychological insights, farsighted points of view, enlightened recommendations, spiritual revelations, humorous asides and entertaining tall tales -- and even many outstanding recipes for healthy and tasty meals. Check all this out at www.EarthManifesto.com!

General Observations

It has been 242 years since the Second Continental Congress adopted the great Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. In many key aspects, the years from 2001 to 2019 have been an economic and political fiasco for the United States. It is now a good time for us to consider how to ensure that our nation really helps foster and preserve individual freedoms, civil liberties, human rights, national security and social well-being. And at the same time, it is crucially important that we make committed efforts to achieve a greater modicum of more fairly shared prosperity, social justice, community well-being, good governance, intelligent planning priorities, fiscal responsibility and ecological sanity.

The well-being of most species of life on Earth is being threatened by conservative ideologies, wasteful consumerism, excessive greed, unbridled corporatism, economic desperation, and the overharvesting of natural resources. The Living Planet Report 2018 reveals that the average population sizes of some 10,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish have declined by a sobering 60% in the 48 years since 1970. This stunning news should shake us all into alert awareness, and provoke us into supporting farsighted action.

It would be eminently wise for us to respect the healthy condition of Earth's ecosystems and adopt an every-day-is-Earth-Day attitude. Policies and behaviors are needed that are more considerate of the general good.
and broadly-shared prosperity in the long run. Unfortunately, “Change you can believe in” is being torpedoed by the powerful influence of entrenched interest groups and the overriding impulse of domineering conservatives. It is becoming increasingly clear that our economic institutions and trade agreements should be restructured to eliminate misguided policies and perverse incentives that our representatives have put in place to give an immorally large proportion of the benefits of the economy to the few, to the distinct detriment of the many. Our system of democratic governance itself should be re-invigorated to purge it of the dysfunctional aspects that give overweening power to big corporations, lobbyists and influential wealthy conservatives.

Regulations that are merely bureaucratic should be reduced, and fair-minded rules and regulations that protect people from pollution and health hazards should be safeguarded. Intelligent new incentives and disincentives should be designed and put into place that will serve to foster the greatest good for the greatest number of people over the longest period of time. The basic criteria for determining what contributes to the public interest and the common good should be an honest assessment of what is consequentially most fair, wholesome and likely to be sustainable.

One compelling line of thought that underlies the ideas in many of these writings is that the human race is ill advisedly “fleecing the future” with our short-term oriented and unsustainable activities. Powerful interest groups are converting natural resources to cash as quickly as they are able, despite the fact that common sense tells us we should be honestly treating our home planet like a thriving and lasting concern, rather than as a business in liquidation. We are collectively acting as if we are unaware, or in denial, or lacking in the most basic tenets of conscience and morality. Must we not tread on the Planet more gently? Must we not treat other people more fairly? Wouldn't it be wisest for us to strive with more sustained commitment to finding ways to protect people's civil liberties? Shouldn't we be demanding that our business and governmental institutions give fairer consideration to the common good and the well-being of people today AND in future generations?

The Earth Manifesto commemorates the wonders and beauty of our home planet. It strives to advance a bold revolution against the subtle madness that characterizes the world in its compulsive busyness, laissez-faire exploitative capitalism, wasteful consumerism, cost externalizing, excessive risk-taking, bubble economic policies, harsh inequities, reactionary religious fundamentalism, wrongheaded goals, stoked fears, excessive population growth, and policies that provoke terrorism and encourage aggressive militarism and repression in reaction.

General Douglas MacArthur once expressed the conviction, “I believe that the entire effort of modern society should be concentrated on the endeavor to outlaw war as a method of the solution of problems between nations”. Shouldn't we give greater weight to these words, and reflect this consideration in our public decision-making and foreign policies? Shouldn't we strive to be more effective in marginalizing extremism, and dedicate ourselves to creating societies that are more mutually secure by making the world more just?

We need to look beyond the 'good old boys', and beyond the conflict between the ideologies of conservatives and liberals. We must look deeper than the cultural conflicts between stereotypically strong, discipline-oriented, authoritarian, domineering and paternalistic father-figure paradigms, on the one hand, and more cooperative parental instincts that are oriented around fairness, sensible protections, and empathetic understanding, on the other. Where should we look? -- Directly to the important principles set forth by our Founders. Our true American values are those that have been cherished since the original 13 colonies declared independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776. Colonial imperialism by the British had given our forbearers a powerful motive to establish a democracy that fairly represented all citizens, so a new nation was brought forth upon this continent that was to be governed by a Constitution, a Bill of Rights and rules of law that maintain idealistic and humanistic principles of Liberty, Justice and the promotion of the General Welfare. These great founding documents included powerful protections of free speech for all people, and freedom of worship and other guaranteed rights. They also reflected a valid distrust of despots who abuse power, so they included a robust system of checks and balances within the federal government, and between it and the States.

Many years have passed since the Constitution was ratified. In this eventful interregnum, a commendable number of progressive advances have been made to protect citizens from the worst characteristics of ruthless capitalism. Laws and regulations have been established, agencies created and reforms made to ensure vitally
important protections of privacy, public health, safety of the food supply and pharmaceutical drugs, workers' rights, investor protections, civil rights, and the health of our enveloping environment. These progressive advances stand above the opposing influence of entrenched interests that are vested in the status quo. The purposes of these advances have been to remedy social ills associated with modern urbanized industrial civilization, and to mitigate the corrupting effect of Big Money in our economic and political systems. Many forces are working against these progressive advances, including unethical dirty tricks in elections, misleading information, deceptive propaganda, shrewdly manipulative micro-targeted advertising on social media, legalized institutional bribery, the drumbeat of ideological propaganda and the emotional hijacking of millions of people who cling to inflexible conventional beliefs. In particular, the insecurities and fears of the American people have been manipulated by "movement conservatives" and the subsequent rise of Donald Trump, who has exploited the anger, fears, frustrations, biases, nationalistic impulses, and sheepish gullibility of many people in order to advance a retrogressive and risky agenda in both domestic and foreign policies.

This manifesto is foremost about the Earth and our inextricable ecological interconnectedness with her biological communities and her miraculously providential ecosystems. These words convey a true understanding of the inter-dependencies of our species with healthy natural habitats and the undiminished biological diversity of life on Earth. We are slowly coming to the realization that we simply must give our beautiful home planet much more respect, so as to help assure our own flourishing and survival.

There is an enormous amount of money to be made by ignoring these overarching understandings. A really huge amount. But this fact does not alter -- even one iota -- the transcendent truth that we must give more far-reaching protections to planet Earth's providential terrestrial and aquatic commons, and to the health of the ecosystems upon which our human prosperity and survival depend.

Life on Earth is amazingly resilient, but also vulnerable to rapid changes. The lessons of history tell us that the remarkable diversity of life on Earth should be conserved and protected for our own sake, and for the sake of our descendants. We cannot indefinitely sustain wasteful, damaging and depletionary activities the way we have been doing so egregiously, and at a rapidly accelerating rate, since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

Such observations -- and many, many more far-ranging ideas -- are explored in this lengthy manifesto. Readers are urged to think for themselves about the ideas it contains, and to do their own part to contribute in some way to the improvement of conditions in the world. We can, indeed must, do better!! As Dr. Seuss' Lorax said, 'UNLESS someone like us cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not!'

For more information, contact Dr. Tiffany B. Twain at SaveTruffulaTrees@hotmail.com. Feedback is welcomed!

-------------- The End ------------

NOTE: In published versions of See Clearly prior to Version No. 7, the Sustainability Index followed this Press Release. It can now be viewed online for the valuable perspective and commentary it contains. Be assured that it is highly relevant to the contents and existential considerations contained in this book.