

Earth Manifesto



Introduction to *Rather Ridiculous Ruses*

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This Book Eleven of the Earth Manifesto has been extensively revised in May through the end of July 2022. Much new content has materialized in the turbulent wake of the leaked draft of a Supreme Court ruling against *Roe v. Wade* protections of women's rights. This includes a powerful salvo in *Women's Rights: Let Freedom Ring - Honestly!*

Other new inclusions are a resounding zinger in *Calamitous Consequences of the Conspiratorial Scheme to Capture the Courts*, which is focused on incisive understandings about the Republican capture of the Supreme Court and other federal courts, a topic that is convincingly conveyed by the honorable Senator Sheldon Whitehouse in 14 Speeches that he has given on the floor of the U.S. Senate between May 25, 2021 and May 11, 2022.

Also included are the insight-filled essays *Moderation in the Pursuit of Justice is No Virtue*, and *Divide-to-Conquer Roguery*, and *An 'Intellectual Feast' of Dubious Distinction*, and *The Crucial Need for Fair Voting Rights*, and *Several Succinct and Sensible Observations*, and *Evolving Climate Change Considerations 2022*.

Opening Statements

In the beginning, there was NOTHING, other purportedly than a God who decided to create the heaven and the earth. Now echoing above an etching of the Ten Commandments from the Bible, a stentorian voice booms out from the heavens, and speaketh these words: "Thou shalt not hack away at the branches of the tree of life, nor shalt thou chop off its providential roots." This commandment is a contrapuntal reverberating echo of God's prohibition that Adam and Eve shall not eat the fruit of the tree in the Garden of Eden that would open their eyes to knowing good and evil. Yet this modern commandment is a much more crucial one, enfolding a comprehensive perspective of right and wrong -- and we cannot continue to rashly violate it.

In great contrast to a false national emergency that Donald Trump declared at the border with Mexico in February 2019, as if we were facing an immediate existential threat from immigrants and asylum seekers, this real national emergency is a global one, and it is a titanic tragedy of the global commons. The driving forces in our economic systems and our politics are violating this ultimate moral commandment, putting humankind's security and future well-being at grave risk, and threatening our very survival in the long run by undermining the fundamental life support systems that nourish, protect and sustain us. This is a matter of moral hazard, and a pathetic paucity of precautionary wisdom that features an unacceptable lack of foresight and responsibility.

Compounding this great challenge is the daunting fact that our collective reproductive success continues to drive our human numbers higher, adding a net increase of more than 70 million people to global population every year, as has been the case each and every year since 1965. At the same time, we are ominously causing the carrying capacity of Earth's natural ecosystems for our kind to dangerously diminish, with non-renewable resources being used up at a reckless rate and access to adequate amounts of fresh water becoming a critical problem for billions of people. And the global climate is being destructively destabilized, with extremes of storm intensity and temperatures and precipitation, and habitat destruction is driving many species of life toward external extinction.

There are overwhelmingly good reasons for us to revolutionarily alter the status quo in human affairs to make our economic and political systems dramatically fairer to the vast majority of people alive today, and to our

descendants to be born in the future. We are in increasingly urgent need of leaders to be committed to solving our greatest challenges. But instead of taking steps in the right direction, the ruling classes in most countries around the world are striving maniacally to maximize profits and funnel them into the pockets of the wealthiest few. The implications of this ultimate Tragedy of the Commons are too dire to allow this state of affairs to continue any longer. To more fully understand the perverse nature of how corrupt the current status quo really is, review my Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto, *See Clearly - Sanity During Insane Times*. It can be found online, and is available in hard copy from the on-demand publisher Lulu Press.

The Crucial Importance of Reducing Inequality

One of the most critical aspects of economic, social and environmental matters is that inequality is becoming too extreme in the U.S. Such extreme extents of inequality are risky for a society, both in terms of harms to the general welfare of the people and of increased dangers of instability, despair and revolutionary conflicts.

"Any society that allows itself to become radically unequal eventually collapses into an uprising or a police state -- or both" -- according to venture capitalist Nick Hanauer. He is joined in this understanding by some of the world's leading economic and political thinkers, who have done "an exploration of who gets what and why." ... "Turns out, everything you learned about economics is wrong. And if we don't do something about rising inequality, the pitchforks are coming."

"The US needs to be reminded that when societies are bound together through understanding, purpose and prosperity, everyone is happier -- not just the wealthy few at the top."

A new report found that roughly a third of the world's capitalist nations are currently suffering from intense inequality, and about a third have seen their levels of income inequality stay more-or-less steady since the year 2000, and another third have actually driven inequality down, closing the gap between their nation's wealthiest households and their poorest. The U.S., unfortunately, is in the category of rapidly rising inequality.

Paul Constant, in an illuminating article on June 3, 2022, set forth 3 kinds of policies that could reverse income inequality in the U.S. Check out this important article to find out the three good ways we could reduce inequality and make our society much fairer, safer and more salubriously stable. These three initiatives basically boil down to actuating visible positive change, building solidarity, and securing credibility in efforts to reduce inequality. "But one policy that the report said simultaneously promotes all three of those criteria is the idea of a 'solidarity tax' -- a short-term tax on wealthy individuals or corporations to rebuild infrastructure, supply-chain, and social-service programs that have been stressed and depleted during the pandemic."

"For many, massive and growing income inequality feels like a fatal flaw baked into capitalism that ensures the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. But in the latest episode of 'Pitchfork Economics', Dr. Faiza Shaheen said that while income inequality has exploded in the U.S. and the U.K., it isn't skyrocketing in other capitalist countries around the globe."

"As the program head for the inequality and exclusion grand challenge, Shaheen was given the task by the 39 countries of the United Nations subgroup 'Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies' to measure inequality around the world and propose policy solutions to create a more equitable and sustainable world by 2030. Her organization just released a new report on economies around the globe that shows income inequality isn't a necessary byproduct of capitalism. Rather, the report found, it's the result of certain policy choices -- and in fact, it can and should be reversed through specific policy choices as well."

Democratic Governance is a Broad Public Good

Professor Larry Diamond wrote in a 2019 article titled *The Long Freedom Slump* that the Freedom in the World survey stresses that, "in an unprecedented focus on US freedom in decline, there is plenty to worry about in the United States, where the total freedom score fell three points in 2017 due to President Donald Trump's attacks on the judiciary, the media, truth, public faith in the electoral process, and norms of ethical conduct. As a result of this deterioration -- which owes as well to deepening polarization that began well before Trump came to office -- the U.S. now ranks 52nd in political and civil freedom among the 195 countries that Freedom House assesses each year."

It is pathologically irresponsible for the United States to rank so low on the scale of freedoms allowed to its people by our leaders, who are failing to fulfill the responsibilities of their authority in this regard.

Our democracy is in crisis right now, and a specter haunts the land. In a true democracy, leaders would compete for the presidency and for positions in Congress and state executive and legislative bodies by honestly appealing to the best interests of the voters. But our American experiment in democratic governance has been deeply corrupted by Big Money, and the effect of this has been to transform our democracy into a plutocratic oligarchy in which the people are ruthlessly ruled by the wealthy few.

Trump and McConnell Republicans staunchly oppose campaign finance reform and expanded voting rights. They are against fair-minded measures like automatic voter registration, making November general election days national holidays every two years, and drawing non-partisan congressional district lines instead of engaging in extreme gerrymandering. Why are they so persistent and obstinate? Because these stands allow them to usurp power instead of being required to compete more fairly for political support. This lets them get away with running roughshod over the common good, and ruling imperiously by pandering to the few against the best interests of the many. These stubborn stances reveal that they are opposed to democratic fairness, and prefer autocratic coercion, social injustices, extreme levels of inequality, opportunities to profit through political malfeasance, and an ever increasing concentration of wealth and power in hands of the few.

The For the People Act (H.R. 1) is the first bill that the new Democratic majority in the House introduced in early 2019. It promised comprehensive democracy reforms that include a proactive voting rights agenda, supporting the restoration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, encouraging small donor financing of elections, overturning the Supreme Court's partisan corruption-enabling *Citizens United* ruling, ending partisan gerrymandering, and enacting ethics reform and other common sense provisions.

This top priority for the new House Democratic majority in 2019 was a bold and groundbreaking reform package with a goal of putting the power of democracy back into the hands of the American people by striving for greater government transparency and ethical conduct, and by strengthening and expanding voting rights, enforcing sensible measures of accountability, and reducing the influence of big money in politics.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell preposterously called proposals like these, and the idea of making Election Day a federal holiday, a "power grab" by Democrats, accusing them of supporting such ideas just to win elections. In other words, if more people vote, Democrats would win more election contests, so Republican politicians see it as desirable and necessary to keep obstacles to voting in place.

Edward R. Murrow famously declared that "We cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home." Republicans are trying to perpetuate their excessive minority influence by throwing numerous obstacles in the path of free and fair elections, and this can be seen as an obvious ploy to deprive the majority of fair representation of their best interests and the general welfare.

It would be highly desirable for us to "reimagine capitalism" to honestly fix our capitalist economic system, not to throw it away or replace it, but take strong steps to fix it. "Free and fair markets are one of the best tools we have to move forward, but they need to be truly free and fair, and right now they are neither."

More emphasis needs to be given to the common good in what should be a respectable commonwealth, and patriotic citizens should strongly support having a country that is not overwhelmingly dominated by a shrewd system of "socialism for the rich and harsh capitalism for almost everyone else."

Ideally, our political representatives should be motivated by civic-minded concerns and strive to perform honest public service and work honorably to put into effect policies consistent with the greater good. In reality, our representatives are primarily motivated by their own self-interest in getting elected, and often affiliate themselves with factions that act contrary to the common good. In connection with this, they are motivated to do the bidding of the big donors who give them financial support.

Donald Trump threatens our democracy and the institutions that protect our freedoms, our security and our collective well-being, right now and for everyone in the future.

Requiem for the American Dream

The brilliant linguist Noam Chomsky spells out the top ten ways that elite groups shrewdly accomplish their greedy goals, in his insight-filled film *Requiem for the American Dream*. Chomsky reveals how wealthy folks torpedo people's aspirations and selfishly sabotage the hopes of people to share in the prospects of achieving a fairer measure of prosperity and social mobility. The film explains how people in power pathologically abuse their influence to get more money and power for themselves, while depriving the masses of better opportunities.

Chomsky's incisive understandings give viewers a powerful justification for demanding fairer national policies, and they also represent a warning to wealthy elites for why they should act to prevent the proverbial pitchforks from coming for them by making more reasonable compromises and accepting reforms that would make our economy and society fairer, and improve potentials for people to be able to enjoy better quality lives.

An insightful philosopher, Noam Chomsky has provided bright illumination on the cunning strategies that wealthy people utilize to increase the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, eviscerating fair representation to further concentrate power, then legislating a narrower concentration of wealth, which then concentrates more power in a vicious cycle that is creating severe adversities and revolutionary discord.

In *Requiem for the American Dream*, Chomsky lists and elaborates on ten principles involved in the concentration of wealth and power -- plans that the wealthy of the United States have ruthlessly acted on since 1980. There are crucial differences between the days when Ronald Reagan first began slashing taxes in favor of the wealthy and the conditions that prevail today. First of all, inequality is much more extreme now. The top 1% of Americans has a four times larger share of the national wealth than they did four decades ago, and the number of people living in poverty today is near an all-time high. Secondly, the American people were much more economically secure in 1980 because they had just been through a period from 1945 to 1980 when the rewards for work and productivity were more broadly shared, in glaring contrast to today when working people have been subjected to decades of stagnation in real compensation. Thirdly, the national debt was less than \$1 trillion in 1980 -- or 32% of annual economic activity (GDP) -- while it is over \$30.5 trillion in July 2022 -- or over 130% of 2021 GDP.

"Regarded by many as America's most influential intellectual, Noam Chomsky is also a great story teller. Without overwhelming the viewer or the material, he marshals data, example and anecdote, cutting through 250 years of history to distill ten basic principles of wealth and power that have conspired against the American Dream. More than anything, the film is a well organized, thoughtful look at these forces and their consequences."

All Americans should see clearly what is going on here -- and Noam Chomsky's clear illumination is at hand. Here are the simple details in his eye-opening exposé *Requiem for the American Dream*, and his sensationally summary of the ways wealthy elites use a "vicious circle" of concentrating wealth and concentrating power to dominate our national decision making. The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth and Power are:

1. Reduce Democracy. They strive to deprive people of power and fair representation by restricting voting, and by gerrymandering congressional districts and using media propaganda to fool people into going along with abuses of authority by elites in politics, corporations, high society and established religions.

2. Shape Ideology. The Lewis Powell Memorandum from the corporate right, and the Trilateral Commission's first ever report titled *The Crisis of Democracy*, are cited by Chomsky as roadmaps for the backlash against power to the people. These conservative ideological views claim that America has an "excess of democracy," an over engagement of young people with civic life, and a view that young people are just not receiving proper "indoctrination."

3. Redesign the Economy. Since the 1970s, banks and other financial institutions have grabbed ever larger influence in the economy and our politics. By 2007, the financial industry "earned" 40% of all corporate profits. Deregulation has produced wealth concentration and economic crashes, followed by corporate bailouts, making for a more extreme concentration of wealth. Offshore manufacturing and intense competition have had the effect of reducing workers' pay. Alan Greenspan testified to Congress about the benefits to elites of creating "job insecurity".

4. Shift the Burden. The American Dream in the 1950s and 60s was partly real. Both the rich and the poor got

financially better off. Since then, we've seen the steady advance of what Chomsky calls the plutonomy against the precariat, i.e., the wealthy few who run the show and get all the new wealth, against the precarious proletariat. Back then, taxes were quite high on corporations and dividends and wealth. "Not anymore."

5. **Attack Solidarity.** To go after Social Security and public education, Chomsky says, you have to drive the normal emotion of caring about others out of people's heads. The U.S. of the 1950s was able to make college essentially free for millions with the G.I. Bill and other public funding. Now a much wealthier United States is full of "serious" experts who claim that such a thing is impossible.

6. **Run the Regulators.** Since the 1970s, there has been an enormous growth in lobbying. One outcome of this is that it is now routine for the interests being regulated to control the regulators, which makes things much easier on the regulated, and worse for everyone else.

7. **Engineer Elections.** Corporate entities claim they deserve the rights of legal personhood, and demand that courts equate money with free speech. They insist there should be no limits on campaign financing and lobbying, as has been accomplished under the *Citizens United* ruling that is so corrupting our governance and allowing dominating minority influence.

8. **Keep the Rabble in Line.** Here Chomsky focuses on organized attacks on organized labor, like the Taft Hartley Act that restricted the activities and power of labor unions, and one can easily adduce further means being used to achieve this socially undesirable goal.

9. **Manufacture Consent.** Compulsive consumers are not born, they're molded by advertising. The marketing goal of directing people to superficial consumption is also a means of diverting people's attention and keeping them in their place. In a market economy, Chomsky says, informative advertisements would result in rational decisions. But actual advertisements provide poor quality information and promote irrational choices. Here Chomsky is talking about not just ads for automobiles and soap, but also mind-numbingly repetitious advertising for candidates in election campaigns and proliferating misinformation.

10. **Marginalize the Population.** This seems as much a result as a tactic, but it certainly has been achieved. What the public wants and needs does not generally have determining influence on what the U.S. government delivers.

Most thoughtful viewers of this film would have some other things to add, especially this one:

11. **Dump Massive Funding into Militarism.** Why should this be included? Well, militarism is the biggest public program in the United States, representing over half of federal discretionary spending. Since lobbyists help concentrate wealth through their influence on the government, this single budget item that eats up over half the budget obviously does indeed help concentrate wealth and power. It's a vast pot of unaccountable funding that cronies have easiest access to. Militarism also generates public support for fighting foreign enemies rather than enemies hanging out with the "grim reaper" Mitch McConnell or on Wall Street. "It does militarize the police for free, however, just in case Wall Street generates any disgruntled customers."

A Call to Action

The deeply disturbing dimensions and infinitely far-reaching implications of the liberty-threatening afflictions that *We the People* are enduring shouts out for all patriotic Americans to rise up and demand that responsible leaders protect our country and Constitution from these 21st century "barbarians at the gates". Abusers of political power are trying to put a nail in the coffin of our democratic republic with their outrageous trickle-down Big Lies and evil deceptions and scandalous debt-financed regressive Tax Cuts swindles, and efforts to undermine the well-being of the people by imposing austerity measures on the masses (as well as their insidious insurgency). These nefarious schemes are subverting fair-minded governance and the hopes for more inclusive and broadly-shared prosperity.

Our Founding Fathers trumpeted their exceedingly legitimate concerns about despotism and the overarching need for eternal vigilance to prevent tyranny and to protect the people from abuses of power. In the past 6 years, tens of millions of Americans have been bamboozled into trusting and supporting a Master Deceiver and his many co-conspirators, and this misplaced trust is turning out very badly. We must rise up together and stop the worst

incursions by preventing them from winning re-election to continue their subversive efforts.

The excessive concentration of wealth in the hands of the few is being ratcheted up to such a dangerous extreme of inequalities and injustices that two outcomes are becoming much more likely: both revolutionary unrest and harshly punitive measures in reaction. We cannot afford to be complacent in the face of this onslaught. We must demand that our representatives act to restore integrity, moderation and honorable willingness to protect small businesses and families and communities and people in the future from the predations of ruthless abusers of the public trust.

Will and Ariel Durant made it clear in *The Lessons of History* that Solon-wise democratic reforms are vastly preferable to reactionary repression in defense of a corrupt status quo.

The USA is in a predicament similar to that experienced by France just before its revolution began with the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. At that time, the commoners were exasperated with the privileged class and their corruption and excesses and tax evasion and the perilously onerous level of France's national debt, which had been incurred due to political gridlock and an inability to enact tax reform. Insistent demands for reform must be met today with honest efforts to improve conditions, not bait-and-switch trickery, or else the masses may clamor as the French did for a revolution to overthrow the government and send the King to the guillotine.

In David Frum's book *Trumpocracy - The Corruption of the American Republic*, the story is told "why President Trump has undermined our most important institutions in ways even the most critical media has missed. This thoughtful and hard-hitting book is a warning for democracy and America's future." David Frum is a bestselling author, media commentator and former White House speechwriter. *"From Russia to South Africa, from Turkey to the Philippines, from Venezuela to Hungary, authoritarian leaders have smashed restraints on their power. Media freedom and judicial independence have eroded. The right to vote remains, but the right to have one's vote counted fairly may not. Until the U.S. presidential election of 2016, the global decline of democracy seemed a concern for other peoples in other lands. ... That complacent optimism has been upended by the political rise of Donald Trump. The crisis is upon Americans, here and now."*

"Quietly, steadily, Trump and his administration damaged the tenets and accepted practices of American democracy, perhaps irrevocably. As he and his family enriched themselves, the presidency itself fell into the hands of the generals and financiers who surrounded him."

"While much of the country has been focused on Russia, David Frum has been collecting the lies, obfuscations and flagrant disregard for the traditional limits placed on the office of the presidency. In *Trumpocracy*, he documents how Trump and his administration steadily damaged American democracy. During his own White House tenure as George W. Bush's speechwriter, Frum witnessed the ways the presidency is limited not by law but by tradition, propriety and public outcry, all now weakened." The Trump presidency "has changed the nature of the office for the worse, and likely for decades."

"In this powerful and eye-opening book, Frum makes clear that the hard work of recovery starts at home. *Trumpocracy* outlines how Trump could push America toward illiberalism, what the consequences could be for our nation and our everyday lives, and what we can do to prevent it."

Seeing Clearly

A "curse of knowledge" afflicts efforts to express complex ideas simply, memorably, engagingly, credibly, and in an effectively motivating manner. We are now seeing the reality that there is also a "curse of ignorance" that can mercilessly afflict millions of people when emotionally manipulative messages are used deviously, dishonestly, disingenuously, deceitfully and dangerously to get the people in our democracy to go along with the dastardly schemes of a demagogue to mislead our great nation and make us into a House Divided, with rich pitted against poor, citizens against immigrants, men against women, whites against blacks and Latinos, straights against gays, police against the safety of way too many innocent people, and the ultra-rich against the best interest of all.

But we should not go along with the exploiting engineers of hyper-partisanship and hot button-division who have rendered our country a House Divided. On the issue that has been our top national priority since the beginning of the Reagan Revolution, the people should reject the trickle down Big Lie that rationalizes giving huge public debt-

financed tax cuts to people on the highest levels of their incomes every year. The vote should be 99 to 1 for a more steeply graduated progressive tax plan that would be fairer to the many.

It is crazy to allow millionaires and billionaires to pay taxes on the top levels of their earnings at rates so low that they are near the lowest since the end of the Roaring Twenties in 1929. Worse yet, it is fiscal folly to finance this colossally misguided generosity by shoveling mountains of debt onto the already dangerously high \$30 trillion national debt.

This understanding concerns not only rich Americans, but also rich people in countries worldwide. Reforms now!

The top priority of conservatives has been to gain power and control using any means possible, no matter how unethical or dishonest or anti-American. Extreme conservatives are in the process of cementing the power they have grabbed through a wide range of immoral schemes. Evaluate the ways that they have gained support by rigging our national elections to their unscrupulous advantage:

- 1) They created cynicism and citizen distrust of the government by undermining the well-being of the 99% while helping the wealthiest 1% get an increasing portion of the wealth generated by the exploitation of natural resources and the labors of working people.
- 2) They have imperiously pushed for international trade agreements that contain corporate-dictated provisions that make it more profitable for manufacturing jobs to be sent abroad to cheap labor countries that do not have as many laws protecting working people and the environment.
- 3) They claimed that the rules were rigged against them while making concerted efforts to create contorted gerrymandered congressional districts that favored Republicans, and they actively discouraged millions of minority voters through voter suppression tactics and intimidation.
- 4) They both intentionally and inadvertently propagated fake news stories and manipulative misinformation.
- 5) They used demagogic strategies to scare people and divide them, and they used emotion-hijacking techniques to gain support and exploit people's hostilities, resentments, racial prejudices, and fears of immigrants and terrorists in this effort to gain unchecked power.

A Historic Declaration

A group of 44 former U.S. Senators, including 10 Republicans and 32 Democrats and 2 Independents, joined together in December 2018 to publish a compelling Opinion article in the Washington Post that implored current Senators to defend democracy in the face of this dire threat from within. "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."

At that moment, the country was "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" ... "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."

The priorities of our leaders are terribly askew, grotesquely perverted by money and the pursuit of power into a despotic effort to increase the concentration of wealth and power. This uber-scam constitutes a consequentially harmful vicious cycle in which abused power contributes to treacherous harms that undermine the health, security and hopes of a vast majority of the American people.

The top priority of Republican administrations is to cut taxes on the wealthy, and Republicans have unrelentingly tried for a dozen years to repeal the Affordable Care Act, one of President Obama's signature accomplishments. Michael Hiltzil explained why a repeal of Obamacare has been a top goal in *The real reason the GOP is gung-ho on repealing Obamacare: It would give the rich a huge tax cut*. He makes this cogent observation, among many:

People wondering why Republicans are so hell-bent on repealing Obamacare even though that would cost 20 million Americans their health insurance haven't been heeding the old investigator's maxim to "follow the money." The path leads to the Affordable Care Act's tax provisions, and the discovery that repeal would provide the wealthiest taxpayers with an immediate tax cut totaling \$346 billion over 10 years. Every cent of that would go to taxpayers earning more than \$200,000 a year (\$250,000 for couples). ... And, "Obamacare repeal would reduce the average incomes of Americans in the lowest 60% of income earners, mostly because of the loss of tax subsidies for insurance premiums."

The current sad state of affairs is due to an "ethical rot" that has been growing for many years like a cancer in the halls of power all across the land of the free. From January 2017 through January 2021, a virulent form of especially egregiously corrupt politicians abused their ill-gained authority.

No matter how much deceitful spin and rationalizing propaganda Trump and his demagogic co-conspirators broadcast and tweet, the plain truth is that they seized power by profoundly illegitimate means. The legitimate way to gain power in a democratic republic is to offer the people fair-minded national plans that advance the common good. There are many illegitimate ways to gain power, other than by means of a military coup. They include through divisive demagoguery, emotional hijacking, manipulative lies, the rigging of congressional districts through hyper-partisan gerrymandering, voter suppression, encouraging foreign interference in our elections and pursuing a takeover of federal courts.

In the wake of the hostile takeover of all three branches of our federal government in 2017, the apprentice Demagogue-in-Chief brazenly began betraying his supporters and all Americans -- and every being to be born in future generations -- by putting in place a elitist cabal of billionaires, captains of industry, resource exploiters, anti-worker capitalists, Wall Street profiteers, authoritarian loyalists, collaborating religious authorities and right-wing judges eager to abuse their ill-gotten power for the narrowly shortsighted benefit of the few.

It was a dangerous time in December 2017 for Republicans to have made some of the most regressive tax cuts in American history. Tinderbox conditions make it a time that we need more equitable reforms, and it was a terrible time to implement changes that make inequality radically worse. The American people were ruthlessly betrayed by Trump and his Cabinet of billionaire cronies, and recovery from this is real difficult, particularly in the face of strict opposition to helping make it happen. It would be disastrous if Trumpers were again able to grab and wield dominating influence.

Trumpian Wrongdoing

There is a monstrous wrongheadedness to the whole materialistic, short-run-profit maximizing, cost-externalizing, risk-socializing, injustice promoting, anti-democratic corporatocracy and its far right agenda. It is catastrophically shortsighted, environmentally treacherous and tragic in its harmful impacts on the ecological commons, and it is unacceptably ruthless in its efforts to gain and maintain power through socially harmful ruses that exploit divisive tribal emotions and anti-immigrant fears and anti-gay prejudices and anti-choice sentiments, all in order to discriminate, harm social cohesion and undermine salubrious inclusive egalitarian goals. One of the worst aspects of the right-wing agenda is that it promotes population-exploding increases in human numbers by aggressively opposing freedoms of reproductive choice, thereby inimically driving habitat destruction, the costly destabilization of the global climate, and the ominously unsustainable, insanely unwise depletion of natural

resources.

Trump has for years acted like a puppet of Vladimir Putin and organized crime figures like Semion Mogilevich, a Russian organized crime boss who is believed by European and U.S. federal law enforcement agencies to be the "boss of bosses" of most Russian Mafia syndicates in the world. The Mueller investigation reportedly looked into money laundering through shell companies and other "suspicious financial activity" involving "Russian operatives." Reporters for the New York Times indicated that the Mueller investigation looked at whether Trump associates laundered financial payoffs from Russian officials by channeling them through real estate deals or offshore accounts -- or through right-wing organizations like the National Rifle Association.

There are grave national security risks and other problems if the Trump family is beholden to Russia, either through compromising business relationships or through funds that flowed to them years ago. "In that context, a troubling history of Trump's dealings with Russians exists outside of Russia: in a dormant real-estate development firm, the Bayrock Group, which once operated just two floors beneath the president's own office in Trump Tower."

"One of Bayrock's principals was a career criminal named Felix Sater who had ties to Russian and American organized crime groups. Before linking up with the company and with Trump, he had worked as a mob informant for the U.S. government, fled to Moscow to avoid criminal charges while boasting of his KGB and Kremlin contacts there, and had gone to prison for slashing apart another man's face with a broken cocktail glass." Sater "was always hustling and scheming, and his contacts in Russia were the same kind of contacts he had in the United States," an associate named Salvatore Lauria wrote in a 2003 memoir, *The Scorpion and the Frog - High Times and High Crimes*.

"The difference was that in Russia his crooked contacts were links between Russian organized crime, the Russian military, the KGB and operatives who played both ways, or sometimes three ways."

One reason that it is highly objectionable that Trump acts like a puppet of Putin is that under Putin, many reporters and journalists have been assassinated. Putin's uncontested power came after the Soviet Union had crumbled at the end of the Cold War and oligarchs had grabbed power, and the state took control of the media.

Meanwhile, Trump has generated chaos ever since he rode the down escalator into America's consciousness in June 2015, and he has been mired in many investigations that pivot off sensitive topics for him and his family: their money, their deals and Russia -- all of which are reasons that Trump refused to testify under oath to Robert Mueller and his investigators, and subsequently to Congress and the January 6 Committee and other responsible parties.

Trump has been chummy throughout his adult life with organized crime in New York and New Jersey -- the mob! This has served Trump well in instilling a cunning and shameless empathy-deficient ruthlessness in him. And it seems clear that the Trump campaign treacherously collaborated with Russians hackers who stole important information to help Trump Republicans win elections in 2016. This is truly deplorable and reprehensible.

Get Rid of the Electoral College

The Electoral College system has resulted in a man winning the presidency twice this century who received millions of votes less than his more popular opponent. The most sensible way to fairly resolve problems related to the exceedingly undemocratic and unfair Electoral College system for choosing the president is to succeed in getting commitments for 270 electoral votes through the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. This is "an agreement among a group of U.S. states and the District of Columbia to award all their electoral votes to whichever presidential candidate wins the overall popular vote in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The compact is designed to ensure that the candidate who receives the most votes nationwide is elected president, and it would come into effect only when it would guarantee that outcome. As of June 2022, it has been adopted by fifteen states and the District of Columbia. These states have 195 electoral votes, which is 36% of the Electoral College and 72% of the 270 votes needed to give the compact legal force."

"We are standing on the precipice of a really dark time", said a representative of women's rights groups early in the Trump administration. This feeling is also being experienced by immigrants, people in racial minorities, civil rights groups, environmentalists and those who really care about our descendants in future generations. The 2016

Presidential Electors arguably should have prevented this reality.

Our Founding Fathers gave the responsibility for choosing the president to Electors in the Electoral College for a good reason. They recognized the risks of a demagogue who is a threat to democracy being able to gain power, or a person unfit for the presidency, so they allowed a cooling-off period of 40 days after the national vote so that responsible Electors would have a chance to protect our democracy from a takeover by a demagogic autocrat. The 2016 election was the first time in U.S. history that this fail-safe provision should rightly have been used.

The framers of the Constitution were particularly concerned that the people might choose a demagogue. The Electors, Alexander Hamilton believed, would prevent someone with "talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity" from becoming president. And they would combat "the desire in foreign powers to gain an improper ascendant in our councils." They would prevent America's adversaries from meddling in its elections. The founders created the Electoral College, in other words, in part to prevent the election of someone like Donald Trump.

The Founders envisioned Electors as people who could prevent a despotic demagogue from taking office. It is "desirable," Alexander Hamilton wrote in Federalist 68, "that the sense of the people should operate in the choice of" president. But it is "equally desirable, that the immediate election should be made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station." These "men" -- the Electors -- would be "most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations." And because of their discernment -- because they theoretically possess wisdom that the people as a whole might not -- "the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications."

Electors in December 2016 should have risen above divisive partisanship and propaganda, and seen their historic responsibility in the broadest possible light. The Electors have a larger responsibility than voting for the candidate that their state's voters chose in this historic contest, due to the real threat Donald Trump represented to our democratic republic. Defending the U.S. Constitution and our country are more important. The framers of our Constitution had a vision that Electors should exercise independent judgment and pick whoever they think would make the best president for the nation. This design was arguably created for a situation precisely like the populist election of Trump, where a dangerous demagogue managed to succeed by extremely scurrilous means to win the Electoral College on November 8th, 2016. It seems likely that anyone who evaluated Trump's character and personal history from an objective and non-partisan point of view would conclude that Trump was NOT an acceptable person to fulfill the serious responsibilities of the presidency. By failing to derail Trump's elitist authoritarian train, the consequences seemed the most likely ever to be catastrophic. Trump broadly threatened what really matters most in our lives: our personal freedoms, our hopes of broadly shared economic well-being and overall inclusive fairness, our national security, our American values, domestic tranquility and the fundamental principles that serve as a bedrock in preserving our democratic republic.

Peter Beinart, a contributing editor at *The Atlantic* and an associate professor of journalism and political science at City University of New York, wrote a balanced and important article soon after the 2016 elections concerning the Electoral College, titled *Electoral College Was Meant to Stop Men Like Trump From Being President*. In it, Beinart was pragmatic about the positives and negatives of the Electors choosing or rejecting Trump. He pointed out that "all hell would break loose" if the Electors were to decide on December 19, 2016 that Trump was unfit to be president. But he also recognized the terrifying prospects involved in allowing Trump to become president, and evaluated the four most consequential reasons. In summary, he was concerned with (1) Trump's dangerous opposition to action on climate change; (2) the big threat to our Constitutional liberties that Trump would pose in the event of a real emergency or a terrorist attack; (3) the increased probability that Trump's presidency would spark a constitutional crisis, for any number of provocative reasons, and (4) the heightened threat of a Wag-the-Dog war and even a nuclear conflict. Read this article to gain a fuller understanding of Beinart's well-reasoned perspective.

The failure of the Electors to act appropriately when it was most urgently needed in 2016 means that the Electoral College will probably never fulfill its designed obligations, and we must responsibly change this system. This is a powerful argument for demanding that more states adopt the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

Truly,

