

Earth Manifesto



One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Make America Great Again

Earth Manifesto proposals by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
August 24, 2017

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 earlier tawdry Gilded Age before it, with its robber barons and excessive conspicuous consumption. The richest ten or twenty 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 hyper-concentrated wealth and power creates an increasingly critical situation that should be addressed by enacting laws that have the effect of making society significantly fairer, or else social strife and revolutionary fervor will create a redistribution of poverty and insecurity for all, according to the great 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 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 forward thinking, farsighted and inclusive-minded collaborative problem solving, and not leaders who exploit anti-immigrant sentiments and fear-mongering emotion-hijacking demagoguery to gain and abuse power in ways that are deceitfully 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 too many plutocratic, oligarchic, autocratic, totalitarian and dictatorial governments ruling in many countries around the planet, like in Russia, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, China, India, Poland, Britain -- and the U.S.

If good sense prevails, moderate leaders pass fair-minded reforms, but if 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 enacted by our representatives to create a healthier, more secure and more sustainable society. The social insurance policies needed are surprisingly affordable, and vastly preferable to chaotic instability and antagonistic conflict.

These proposals are set forth to honor the hopes and prospects of humankind for fairer and saner societies. These proposals would help create a real Better Deal that would make all Americans more secure, and would work better for all, not just the few. These ideas should be regarded as the well-considered ideas of a relatively objective observer, and a providential example of the "stragglings thoughts of individuals" that Thomas Paine referred to when he offered his cogent ideas as the basis for wise and able leaders to use in creating a fairer new form of governance.

These ideas are particularly important in the USA today due to the terribly backwards and anti-progressive directions in which our "conservative" leaders are driving us.

"I pray Heaven to bestow the best blessings on this house (the White House) and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof."

--- President John Adams, November 1800

1. FAIR TAXATION INITIATIVE. Give every taxpayer a tax break 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 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 are very fair because they apply to each and every taxpayer equally. 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. This may be a surprise, and it refutes the trickle-down propaganda that rationalizes regressive changes in taxes as contributing 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 magnanimously 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:

	2016 Federal Tax Rates on <u>Net Income *</u>	Proposed 2017 Federal Tax Rates on <u>Net Income *</u>	<u>Net Change</u>
\$ 0 to \$ 18,550	10%	5%	Lower by 5%
\$ 18,551 to \$ 75,300	15%	12%	Lower by 3%
\$ 75,301 to \$ 151,900	25%	25%	Unchanged
\$ 151,901 to \$ 231,450	28%	30%	Higher by 2%
\$ 231,451 to \$ 250,000	33%	36%	Higher by 3%
\$ 250,001 to \$ 413,350	33%	38%	Higher by 5%
\$ 413,351 to \$ 466,950	35%	40%	Higher by 5%
\$ 466,951 to \$ 1,000,000	39.6%	45%	Higher by 5.4%
\$ 1,000,000 to \$ 25,000,000	39.6%	48%	Higher by 8.4%
\$ 25,000,000 and above	39.6%	60%	Higher by 20.4%

* Note: These rates are for people who have the status of "Married, Filing Jointly". The Tax Tables should be adjusted in a consistent manner for all the current categories of taxpayers.

Taxes on capital gains and on inheritances of rich kids 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 minimized, as adduced in *Three Bills of Right*. 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.

Design this progressive tax reform plan to result in a net increase in tax revenues that would generate \$100 billion per year. Apply half of the increase in tax revenues generated by this initiative to reduce budget deficits. Apply the other half of the increase 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 amongst 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. And evaluations should be made to eliminate all really stupid laws.

2. ENERGY POLICIES. Go "carbon neutral" for all vehicle miles driven in the USA by assessing the 9 cents per gallon of gasoline sold that this would cost, and invest the revenues in carbon-offset programs. This will help the USA achieve independence from its addiction to the finite resources of non-renewable fossil fuels, which happen to be odiously polluting and climate destabilizing when burned. Also, let's put a stop to the cost externalizing ruses associated with artificially cheap oil and natural gas prices. The best way to do this is to boldly change course on national energy policies and invest in a world energy-modernization program along the lines of the "Ten-Point Plan for Good Jobs and Energy Independence", as proposed by the Apollo Alliance. This coalition of business, labor, environmental and community leaders advocates significant change that would shift the emphasis of our national energy policies to greater efficiency of energy use, conservation of fossil fuel resources, and the development of cleaner alternatives. Such changes should be designed to help make big reductions in climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions. These are extremely important steps for us to take to create a sound economy and improve our national security, and to ensure ecological well-being. As a collateral benefit, such policies would help emasculate the nefarious "rent-seeking" corruption in Oil Politics that undesirably affects nations worldwide.

To ensure that this proposal has a dramatic positive effect on reducing the use of fossil fuels, I propose that a federal Pigouvian green fee of \$1 per gallon be assessed on all sales of gasoline. The higher cost of fossil fuels will stimulate big private investments in 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 total, during the year in the United States, assuming an average fleet mileage of 25 mpg. The projected \$125 billion in revenues generated from this green fee should be providentially allocated as follows:

(2A) Give a new tax credit of \$500 per household to everyone filing a tax return that has a net income of less than \$250,000. 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. Estimated annual cost = \$60 billion.

(2B) Invest enough money in carbon-offset programs to make the USA carbon neutral for all miles driven each year. Model this program on the outstanding organization Cool Effect, which 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.

(2C) 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 emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, along with better protections of tropical and temperate forests worldwide. Invest \$25 billion each year under this program.

(2D) Make contributions to a Green Climate Fund and a Climate Disaster Insurance Fund to pay for some of the costs of weather-related disasters at home 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 and tornadoes, torrential rains, coastal flooding, heat waves, disappearing arable lands, intensifying wildfires and desertification. Rich countries, after all, have spewed the most emissions into the atmosphere in the last century and thereby contributed most to the accelerating climate crisis. Invest \$20 billion each year in this program.

(2E) Increase U.S. investments in humanitarian foreign aid, and in international family planning programs and women's health clinics worldwide. Invest \$10 billion each year in these programs.

Green Fee Investment Summary

Tax credits to offset higher gasoline taxes	\$ 60 billion
Carbon offsets to make the USA carbon neutral for all vehicles	12 billion
Investments in green technologies and reforestation	25 billion
Weather disaster relief funding for communities worldwide	20 billion
Foreign aid, family planning programs and women's health clinics	<u>8 billion</u>
Total	<u>\$ 125 billion</u>

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: A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good*.

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 reform to reduce the overwhelming corrupting influence of Big Money in our elections and in the lobbying of our representatives in Congress. We should try publicly financed "Clean Money, Clean Election" legislation nationwide. Also, the district lines for all Congressional districts should be redrawn by politically balanced commissions well before the 2018 elections, because extreme gerrymandering in the 21st century has given unfair over-representation to conservative partisans who control the redistributing process in most 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. Perverse incentives and wrongheaded subsidies should be eliminated. The overarching power that big corporations have in Congress should be reduced. And the interests of workers, women, children, minorities, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and future generations should be more strongly protected.

Our American democracy should 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, shortsighted profiteering, media manipulation, nepotism and outright fraud should be more effectively constrained.

5. CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS. Defend our Constitution and its checks and balances from excessive infringements by the Executive Branch. The responsibilities of Congress and the civil liberties of citizens must not be reduced by aggressive expansions in the power of the Presidency. Congress should start abiding by

the U.S. 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 of the armed forces.

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 brilliant 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 and consequences. In our political duopoly system, our elected representatives have deferred to the president out of expediency and cowardice, and they do so for one overriding unprincipled principal purpose -- profiteering! As always, 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 in order to divide people, and 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 the disdain for human rights should be circumvented. 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 and 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 in improving our nation's crumbling physical infrastructure and less in wars abroad; (d) restore taxation that is fairer and more progressive; (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 corporations is more intelligently limited, and to close loopholes that allow corporate entities to externalize risks and costs 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 richest 1% of Americans. Strong efforts should be made to prevent abuses of power and excessive privileges for insiders. Economically sound policies and innovative ideas should be embraced. Sensible public investments and prudent risk-taking and greater transparency should be encouraged. Human concerns and ecological values, not profits alone, should guide 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, war profiteers, polluters, and the reactionary religious right that 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 just 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 increasing profits by externalizing costs onto society should be addressed 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 \$300 billion in costs are being incurred in the U.S. every year that are associated with pollution, toxic wastes, related respiratory diseases, harms to the environment, and natural disasters like intensifying storms, heat waves, flooding and crop failures that are being made worse by global warming-exacerbated changes in natural weather patterns. This \$300 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 effectively 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 distinctly 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 allocated 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 citizen. This would offset the 2% higher costs on all annual spending up to an estimated \$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 afflictions related to environmental damages, and mitigation efforts of the 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, 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 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, 2017 to September 30, 2018, commit to an assessment of 20% of any federal budget deficit as follows: half of this obligation will be assessed to businesses that earn net incomes of more than \$2 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 representatives should courageously commit the United States to diplomatic and peaceful resolutions of conflicts between all nations in the world. We need to pursue foreign policies that enhance mutual security for all and 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. This idea has become crucial as Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong-un threaten each other with increasingly dangerous egomaniacal inflammatory rhetoric. We cannot 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 constrained. These supersonic missiles strike targets before the sound of their approach reaches their victims, and kill many innocent victims.

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!

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 impetuses that drive future ones. Stronger international institutions, agreements and laws should be supported to prevent wars, proxy wars, torture and genocide.

A summit of Middle Eastern countries should be convened to develop strategies to solve conflicts in Iraq and Syria and Afghanistan in ways that are most likely to ensure that these nations do not become failed states. A courageous new plan should be developed to guarantee a safe homeland for Palestinians, and to make sure that 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, human rights and sustainable development should be actively 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 the 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 to Congress and the American people on the federal government. 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 Constitution. Likewise, a Constitutional Amendment should be created to give gay men and lesbian women fairer treatment, equal civil rights, and reasonable protections under the law. The Constitution should be strengthened to make clear our common agreement that no Church should be able to impose its dogmas on society, and that the guarantees in the First Amendment that ensure a separation between Church and State are strongly established.

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 per year. To accomplish this, we should provide free contraceptives to women everywhere who want them, including emergency

"morning after pills", so that unwanted pregnancies and abortions will be prevented. Better education is needed, along with definite expanded opportunities for girls and women worldwide. Women's healthcare clinics should be established and generously funded, for initiatives like this would have a great humanitarian collateral benefit of reducing 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 increase its 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, as defined by the practical precedent set forth in the *Roe vs. Wade* decision by the Supreme Court 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 the people foremost in mind in all policy-making considerations. 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, polluting corporate entities, deceitful demagogues and the radical 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. These leaders should honestly avoid authoritarian abuses of power and military interventions, and reject ecologically unwise courses of action.

"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

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 everyone in the White House and Congress.

To Do the Right Thing, or Not To Do the Right Thing, *That* is the Question

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
Hannibal, Missouri

Addendums

The following items are not included, for space considerations, in the version contained in *See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times - Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto*.

"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."

--- John Fowles, *The Aristos* (1970)

A well-informed electorate is a definite prerequisite for ensuring that a democracy is healthy. This is a simple understanding, and it makes a cartoon that appeared in *New Yorker* magazine soon after the November 2016 election both humorous and viscerally provocative. In this cartoon, created by David Sipress, 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, at the end of August 2017 as

the Trump soap opera becomes increasingly captivating and anxiety inducing, and as his presidency becomes more chaotic, more unhinged, more dangerous to national security and more bizarrely contrary to true American values.

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" that 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 that "the Earth's climate is ramping up for a phase transition that threatens our entire civilization." This cause of this ominous development is the rash irresponsibility of our political duopoly system, dominated as it is by motives to maximize private profits at the expense of greater good goals through "a Global Architecture of Wealth Extraction" that enables this scheme.

To circumvent these dire developments, let's demand that our leaders take action to implement reforms like these recommended in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies!*

The key to true salvation in Buddhist philosophy is right insight. This is regarded as the first step on the Noble Eightfold Path toward enlightenment and being saved. 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 class in their relentless efforts to gain ever-more money and deciding influence and benefits and privileges for themselves. After insight, the Noble Eightfold Path consists of seven proper practices: right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right union.

I, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, feel strongly that we Americans could easily create a healthier, happier, fairer, more inclusive and more secure country. The main obstacle to this salubrious and positively providential achievement is the opposition to such a goal by wealthy vested interests that want the system to remain rigged in their favor so that they are able to gain an ever-increasing monopoly on the profits made through the exploitation of natural resources and working people.

Mark Twain once satirically declared that "we have the best government money can buy". In recent years, our political representatives have failed miserably at establishing campaign finance limits and effective controls over lobbying, so our democracy has been subverted into divided coalitions of underrepresented Americans that cede control to wealthy conservatives and corporate executives. The bottom line result is to give us a "kakistocracy", a system of government that is run by the worst, most poorly qualified and most unscrupulous political representatives. This is a part of the biggest con in world history that is unfolding right before our very eyes.

This swindle played on the American people features an ultimate bait-and-switch scheme in which a dangerously unfit demagogue-in-chief managed to grab power by a litany of scurrilous means, and he will disappear to yield to the more effective right-wing ideologues Mike Pence, Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan. This cabal will try to impose their Republican agenda of austerity on the masses to finance a new round of tax breaks for the rich, and their agenda will be clearly seen to be deceitfully anti-egalitarian, anti-progressive and anti-environmental. This disappearing act is part of the on-going con, and will take place relatively soon when the egomaniacal narcissist demagogue resigns or is removed from office in accordance with the provisions of the 25th Amendment, or after impeachment proceedings, or after he is thrown in jail or neutralized in some other thriller-worry manner.

Then the real power abusing "swamp monster" puppets will gain the power to do the bidding of their wealthy overlord masters. Pence, McConnell and Ryan are waiting eagerly in the wings for this vanishing act, secretly happy that the Trojan horse Trumpster has so brilliantly given the Republican Party majority control of all levels of the federal government and facilitated corporate corruption. Pence, McConnell and Ryan are snakes in the grass who have much greater potential than the madman Trump for successfully slashing investments in sensible social insurance policies to further enrich the already obscenely rich. The Pence/McConnell/Ryan cabal would in many

ways be worse than Trump in terms of inequalities and divisiveness and their potential success in imposing austerity and repression.

So let's not be too hasty about getting Trump removed from office. Yes, he is the most dangerous man in history, since he has his egomaniacally unstable fingers on the nuclear warheads launch button. But Congress should unanimously pass a law prohibiting the commander-in-chief from using nuclear weapons in a first strike ever. The U.S. Constitution gives Congress, and only Congress, the power to go to war, so Congress should stop its abdication of this duty and its cowardly obedience to the president that it has demonstrated ever since World War II.

We would be smarter to leave Trump in office, neutered, until the discredit of the Republican ruse to seize power on the coattails of the most divisive demagogue in American history becomes so clear that a vast majority of people will denounce their unethical and broadly detrimental power grab, and eagerly choose to put much more fair-minded and inclusive leaders in power. All Americans must come to admit that the Pence/McConnell/Ryan cabal that is waiting in the wings to gain domineering power is complicit in this con job of grabbing power through illicit means and planning on imposing and excessively ruthless Strict Father control over the people. Instead of rewarding this cabal for their un-American political strategies, they should be tarred and feathered and run out of D.C. town.

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

--- the underground mole

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 may have been right that some of the best opportunities for dramatic change arise in a crisis. But Friedman advocated "conservative" ideas that seem to be wrongheaded in many aspects, due to their anti-democratic consequences. Friedman's ideas concerning money supply policy, cutting taxes, privatization, deregulation, "free trade" and supply-side economics have significantly influenced government policies since the early 1980s and helped rationalize policies espoused by conservative politicians.

I believe that the best plan, by far, is to have ideas around that are prudent, fair-minded, reasonably egalitarian, and consistent 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 right-wing conservative policies that are proving to be disastrous to the general welfare and current and future well-being. The entire Earth Manifesto is dedicated to the idea that some day, after we have stuck with a lot of other options that prove to be inimical to the greater good, a growing consensus will develop that is centered on propositions like those contained throughout this manifesto. Like the fact, for instance, that better cooperative problem solving is needed in civilized societies to achieve goals that are 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 institute monopoly practices 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.

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 bubble economic policies, deregulated exploitation, inequalitarian national planning and fraudulent activities, all of which contributed to wreaking wide-reaching harm on billions of people worldwide during the financial crisis and recession that began in late 2008.

Milton Friedman and 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 anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian and system corrupting political purposes.

In her book *The Shock Doctrine*, author and social activist Naomi Klein harshly criticized some of Milton Friedman's economic ideas, identifying them with the principles that guided the economic restructuring that followed military coups in Chile and Argentina in the 1970s. Noam Chomsky joined Naomi Klein in pointing out that policies supported by Milton Friedman have contributed to increasing inequality and widening disparities in after-tax income and wealth, and they both conclude that such ideas are flawed and have been exploited by conservative politicians as an ideological cover for rationalizing capital accumulation by multinational corporations and rich people.

As the Republican Party descends into chaos in their dastardly bargain with the devil, a superb array of more honest, positive, inclusive, progressive, visionary, achievable, fair-minded common sense ideas are laying around, extensively articulated in this manifesto, and they are about to assume a resurgence of power and persuasion.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS

George W. Bush promoted the dumb precedent of preemptive attacks on other countries, and surely this is an exceedingly bad idea. Congress should explicitly declare that the erratic egomaniac Trump, and any president in the future, does not have the authority to drop nuclear weapons on any nation without the express approval of Congress. And Congress should pass a clear law that makes it unambiguous that a president cannot pardon himself after engaging in malfeasance and impeachable offenses.

Workers' rights and collective bargaining powers should be fairly protected. The use of signing statements by the President to evade rules of law, which were so abused by George W. Bush, should be limited. The judicial system should be made fairer by ensuring that right-wing judges are not appointed who consistently side with corporate interests over those of the people and dominate our federal court system and the Supreme Court.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio, a county sheriff in Arizona, had been convicted of criminal contempt of court for deliberately defying federal court orders. When Trump pardoned Arpaio on August 25, 2017, he effectively condoned racial profiling in law enforcement and encouraged officials who defy rules of law. Arpaio had been ordered by a federal judge to stop violating the constitutional rights of Latinos in Arizona in his zealously aggressive efforts to hunt down and detain undocumented immigrants and to subject them to harsh conditions in his county jail. Arpaio is a national symbol of the divisive politics of immigration because he had law enforcement officers stop people based on racial profiling and detained them based on the suspicion that they were in the country illegally.

In conclusion to these observations about Constitutional protections and in honor of the marvelous Princess Diana and her great humanitarian concern, the United States should ratify the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty that was adopted in 1997. This international agreement has been signed by more than 160 nations to outlaw the indiscriminate use of land mines, which have caused countless numbers of crippling and lethal tragedies in conflict-torn countries around the world.

Mercenaries of War

Clause 11 of the U.S. Constitution ("the War Powers clause") grants Congress "one of its more bizarre powers: the power to hire pirates to attack the nation's enemies." That clause refers to a "Letter of Marque", which was a letter that gave official permission to a pirate to do his pirating against perceived enemies in the name of the national interest. "Avast, ye mateys!"

This is interesting! We let Congress hire pirates in yesteryear, and now in modern times the U.S. has been using mercenaries in unprecedented numbers, as was done in the war in Iraq. There, the name Blackwater became synonymous for very expensive security, cultural arrogance, and notorious lack of responsibility and accountability. Fascinatingly, Blackwater was one of the most famous mercenary organizations in history and it was run by the billionaire Erik Prince, a war profiteer who is such a close crony to the domineering Republican Party that he is the brother of the public education-undermining Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

In the over-heated dog days of August, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump are threatening to unleash military clashes of "fire and fury" upon each other. I believe in more constructive attempts at diplomacy, and that we would be wise to stand down from our MAD risk-taking in mutually assured destruction and potential widespread carnage. While this great distraction is taking place, Erik Prince took advantage of the situation to propose that we privatize the war in Afghanistan, which has been going on since we invaded 16 years ago. Follow the money!

Healthcare

Donald Trump and Republican politicians made two promises during their 2016 campaigns for office -- to repeal and replace Obamacare and "to deliver real change that once again puts Americans first" by giving everyone "great health care, at a tiny fraction of the cost -- and it's going to be so easy."

The preposterous fact is that, once elected, these dishonest schemers have made a huge deal out of trying to fulfill their first promise to repeal "Obamacare", but they have blatantly betrayed their much more important promise by trying to create a Trumpcare plan that would have caused between 16 million and 32 million Americans to lose their health insurance AND would have driven up costs of medical care for everyone who does have insurance to cover the high costs of emergency room care for all the newly uninsured that would be paid for by significant increases in insurance premiums and hospital and doctor costs.

Our representatives should also take strong and effective steps to prevent Americans from dying tragically due to opioid drug overdoses, which have killed hundreds of thousands of people so far this century. Opioid drug abuse killed almost 20 times more Americans last year alone than died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is a seriously misguided priority for the U.S. to spend many trillions of dollars prosecuting an aggressive "War on Terror" when vast multiples more people would benefit from taking smart steps to prevent opioid drug abuse and invest in protecting the public from opioid overdoses.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that the total "economic burden" of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States is \$78.5 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement.

We should also demand that our political representatives stop the draconian prohibitions of both medicinal and "recreational" uses of marijuana, because the use of marijuana does not cause anyone to die, while millions of people's lives have been ruined due to harsh prosecutions of anti-cannabis laws and the extremely racially unjust war-on-drugs.

Perspective on Anti-Egalitarian Ruses

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a five-star general hero in World War II and then a Republican politician, 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 in 2017, now that demagogic politicians have managed to gain narrow control of the U.S. government by brainwashing a strident minority into giving them power. It seems that this is true 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. Our democracy has been corrupted by their trickle-down 'big lies' and corporate-friendly betrayal of the best interests of American working people, but they are destined to lose power unless they begin to be more honest and make America fairer again.

The NRA

The National Rifle Association and the corporate gun lobby are so radically committed to maximizing profits for gun and assault weapons manufacturers that they adamantly refuse to let our representatives restrict gun sales even to persons on the terrorist watch list. This industry thrives on fear and division to promote gun sales -- and it is affiliated with a wide range of right-wing extremists who advocate a regressive and retrogressive national agenda. The NRA has become an extremist organization today after more honorable roots; it was formed more than a century ago as a sportsmen's gun organization, but in 2017 it is creating terrifying online videos that should be denounced by all true patriots.

I encourage every member of the NRA to renounce their membership until the organization stops acting like a terrorist outfit. The two videos created by the NRA feature Dana Loesch in stridently dark, angry, fear-mongering and inflammatory diatribes. In the first video, put online in April 2017, critics declared that the NRA was making "an open call to violence to protect white supremacy", and that the organization was creating an "us-versus-them" narrative that pitted Americans against one another. "It paints liberals as liars and as violent, unruly protesters who law-abiding gun owners need protection from." In the second Loesch video, released in early August 2017, *The New York Times* was specifically targeted, and Loesch called it an "old gray hag" and an untrustworthy, dishonest rag that has subsisted on the welfare of mediocrity." She stated, "We've had it with your constant protection of your Democrat overlords, your refusal to acknowledge any truth that upsets the fragile construct that you believe is real life." She claimed the newspaper publishes "fake news", and declared that her video should be considered "a shot across your proverbial bow," and concluded, "We're going to laser-focus on your so-called 'honest pursuit of truth.' In short, we're coming for you."

Reflections on Religion

Most religions tell their faithful flocks how to behave to be saved from eternal punishment in an imagined "hereafter" afterlife. In this regard, religions provide welcome solace for the hardships people endure in their lives, but they also serve to enable injustices in the world right now. Curiously, religions thereby serve to distract people from demanding that their representatives in government act to honestly make the world a fairer, safer and more wholesome place today. And religions function as an opiate to the people that keeps them 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 in the here and now. Religions are good when they provide positive effects like closer community relationships and 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 lives, our grandchildren's lives, and the lives of everyone to be born in future generations.

Dutifully waiting 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 religions often serve to rationalize and perpetuate the established status quo:

RELIGION

is what keeps the poor
from murdering the rich

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 terrible 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 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 and Yemen. American involvements in the region have used air supremacy for years to bomb insurgents, yet terrorist extremism has been gaining 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 that are future-respecting and insightful and enlightened -- rather than ideas that are closed-minded, myopic and narrowly parochial. The synapses of our brains have a remarkable neuroplasticity, and maybe with broader ways of seeing, these synapses would build new circuits and snap into 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!

Specific plans for actually creating a more propitious world are articulated in the essays of the *Common Sense Revival*, including detailed recommendations in this essay and the *Progressive Agenda for a More Sane Humanity*.

Public Corruption, Graft and Crony Capitalism

Trump's rhetoric against Hillary Clinton, his opponent during the presidential campaign, has been exceedingly ugly and dishonest. At a particularly bombastic and demagogic rally just before the 2016 national elections, he made the following nasty allegation, which turns out to be a dramatic case of psychological projection that applies much more to himself than to her: "A vote for Hillary is a vote to surrender our government to public corruption, graft and cronyism that threatens the survival of our constitutional system itself."

Public corruption, graft and crony capitalism! Under Trump, there is a pathetic plethora of public corruption, especially by fossil fuel interests, and many instances of graft in highly unscrupulous uses of the Trump family's authority for their personal gain, and in blatant cronyism, egregious nepotism, ramped up influence peddling, and an unfolding constitutional crisis over election malfeasance and attempts to cover it up. In addition, things are far worse than would have been experienced under a Hillary Clinton administration, for we have ruthless assaults against ethical norms and core human values like honesty, decency, inclusiveness, social cohesion, personal security, Golden Rule acceptance, fairness of opportunity, social justice, political moderation, protections of the environment, and the valiant promotion of common good goals.

And we have huge amounts of costs being externalized onto society, and corporate-friendly changes to rules that protect the natural world, and accountability is being undermined, and treacherous opposition is being manifested to clean energy and a sustainable future and responsible efforts to mitigate global warming. All of these things are far-reaching betrayals of greater good goals.

"The only difference between a salesman and a con-man is that a salesman has confidence in what he's selling."

For best guidance, remember -- Common good, yes! Tragedy of the Commons, no!

A fair case can be made that one of the main mistakes Hillary Clinton made in her bid for the presidency was to characterize half of Trump supporters as being a "basket of deplorables". Of course, all Trump supporters are not racists or bigots or white supremacists or alt-right extremists or members of hate groups or excessively zealous evangelical religious fundamentalists. Many of these folks have very legitimate grievances against the political establishment due to the outcomes associated with a litany of dire challenges they have faced, including home foreclosures, jobs losses due to corporate entities that exported jobs abroad to cheaper labor countries with few environmental laws, the job reduction impacts of automation in the manufacturing, having elite groups disparage them, Main Street folks being crushed by Wall Street bankers, and the like.

Look. As the Trump era unfolds, it is clear that it is both risky and counterproductive to belittle entire groups of people, and in the interest of unity, it would be smart not to disparage Trump supporters. Millions of Trump supporters had very legitimate grievances against the establishment because of these ways that they have been betrayed for decades.

But on the other hand, it is becoming increasingly morally deplorable for supporters of Donald Trump to take an uncompromising stand defending him, right or wrong, in the face of his pandering to his diminishing base with

divisive rhetoric, discriminatory racism, and assaults against the environment and rollbacks of protections of public lands from polluting mining activities and other destructive or intrusive activities on public lands, and particularly in National Monuments. Repent, Trump supporters, and begin to vote for more responsible, honorable and inclusive representatives who are courageous enough to stand up for the values set forth in the preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

Infrastructure and Taxation

Here is a real populist proposal. Offer corporations to repatriate the estimated \$2.5 trillion that is sequestered abroad awaiting the next "tax holiday", as referenced in the Introduction to *See Clearly*, at a 15% tax rate, and use half of this money (about \$200 billion) to give each and every one of the 325 million people in the USA an equal share of these funds. This sum of about \$600 for each man, woman and child in the U.S. would be a good way to give some of the rewards of this tax evasion scheme to those who are not already wealthy. This real benefit would be a token of fairer treatment to the forgotten masses, and not merely another one of those fake promises that Republicans keep making to get support without having to actually act in ways directly favorable to the fortunes of the vast majority of the people, and especially those rural white males who have blindly supported them.

Climate Action

A draft report from 13 federal agencies was released in August 2017 that unequivocally contradicts Donald Trump's claims that climate change is a hoax, instead confirming that the evidence is unambiguous that the increasing damages and risks are being driven by man-made causes. The draft concludes that "evidence for a changing climate abounds, from the top of the atmosphere to the depths of the oceans." This is just the latest in an overwhelming body of evidence that makes it seriously wrongheaded for the Trump administration to make extreme budget cuts to climate research and mitigation programs, and to repeal many Obama-era rules that addressed climate change.

The U.S. experienced 15 weather and climate disasters in 2016 that have sustained losses exceeding \$1 billion each, for a total cost of \$46 billion, and more than 200 weather and climate disasters have occurred in the U.S. since 1980 that have cost in excess of \$1.1 trillion in overall damages.

In addition to spiraling costs, scientists say climate change could render parts of planet Earth uninhabitable during this century, and heat waves in places like the Pacific Northwest and Europe in August 2017 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 into the atmosphere. We should make a dramatic shift to mitigate climate change, and alter our efforts from being a voluntary individual process to being collective action through powerful incentives and green fees, as advocated by organizations like the Citizens Climate Lobby and proponents of environmental protections like those in the film *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*.

We should all support a real 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 perils of climate change can be overcome with human ingenuity and passion.

Scientists are right that the truly responsible thing to do would be to leave a greater proportion of fossil fuels in the ground by conserving energy and using it more efficiently, and by supporting powerful incentives to help make the inevitable and necessary transition to greener forms of energy that are renewable, less destabilizing to global weather patterns, and more indefinitely sustainable.

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, because such a market mechanism would have the sensible and salubrious effect of preventing costs from being insidiously externalized upon society, in epic foolishness, like they are being right now. People love personal freedoms, and tend to prefer to enjoy them with a fair modicum of security. Since this is true, progressive reforms are better when they involve incentives and disincentives in market pricing rather than more intrusive regulations. As the Trumpster and his troglodytic

clan of climate deniers roll back fuel efficiency standards on vehicles in the U.S., they are basically acting to implement plans that will waste fossil fuels at a faster pace.

Huge multinational corporate entities that are involved in extracting fossil fuels from deep beneath Earth's surface are excessively overproducing these non-renewable energy resources, and they are producing these huge quantities at artificially cheap prices because they exclude the mounting costs of pollution, associated adverse human health impacts, climate disasters, oil spills and the real costs to people in future generations of the rapid depletion of these valuable resources. The fact that we are over-producing these fuels only to burn them profligately is wrong, especially because scientists tell us that we must leave a larger proportion of the known reserves of these combustible materials in the ground than our current international plans portend so that we will avoid calamitous costs of global warming, disasters caused by climate disruptions, sea level rise and ocean acidification.

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 use of these dirty resources, perverse incentives have been put in place in nations worldwide to give huge subsidies and depletion allowances to Huge multinational corporations involved in extracting fossil fuels. Such subsidies are bigger for fossil fuels than almost any other commodities, due to the deep "rent seeking" corruption involved in these highly lucrative pursuits.

We have a serious 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.

That's All, Folks!

The Bible tells believers to beware of false prophets who will perform great wonders to deceive even the faithful elect, and those who are wise will see clearly and follow the money, watching the deceitful machinations of profit-prepossessed and self-serving abusers of power and privilege, and understand that false prophets make reprehensibly poor leaders. Let's overthrow these scheming overlords!

This content was at the end of the former *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies* on August 1, 2017.

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 John 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 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, worst of all, Dante would have consigned him to be frozen in a lake of ice in the Ninth Circle of Hell for his treacherous scheming to seize power by betraying community ties and stoking bigotry, fear and hatred, and by his treacherous scheming to satisfy his arrogant sense of deserved privilege and his bullying compulsion to exert authority.

Until Donald Trump became the official presidential 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 support him. The reason for this "change of heart"? It appears to be merely a zealous and transparent quest for power at any cost. Some of these flip-floppers are self-serving congressional officeholders who are eager to serve corrupt right-wing causes to satisfy their naked ambitions and their misplaced loyalties to misbegotten causes. Great risks to Party and country are involved in the chaotic uncertainty that is resulting from this narcissistic, insult-abusing officeholder of this most powerful position in the world. 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."

On the issue of releasing his tax returns, Trump has stated that there is nothing to learn from his tax returns. "That may be the most flagrant lie he has told yet, for he has grabbed for every loophole and legal lever he could find, and he has boasted about it, and he and his family have been the beneficiaries the highly rigged tax system that gives huge advantages to the real estate business."

Trump is a psychoanalyst's textbook case of a man with Narcissistic Personality Disorder, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association. This is a deeply dangerous problem for Americans now that they have been sufficiently bamboozled and emotionally hijacked into giving him power. It is illuminating to go to a real psychiatrist's textbook to better understand this issue by reviewing the sections on narcissism in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

The diagnostic hallmark of narcissism is grandiosity. This can be relatively innocuous in a young adult, because it can be corrected by one's life experiences. But grandiosity can become a pathologically dangerous character disorder in adult years, when it becomes characterized by a severe lack of empathy and exploitive interpersonal relations. Lying is the most common complaint about self-centered narcissists, and "in many instances, defects of empathy lead narcissists to wildly inaccurate misinterpretations of other people's speech and actions, so that they may believe that they are liked and respected despite a history of callous and exploitive personal interactions."

Dealing with someone with Narcissistic Character Disorder can be like trying to have a reasonable discussion with a very clever six-year-old. This is an age when normal children are grandiose and exhibitionistic and very resistant to taking the blame for their own misbehavior. While they understand what the rules are, and specifically that lying, cheating and stealing are prohibited, they still try to wriggle out of accepting those rules for themselves.

The survival of childish characteristics into adulthood may generally be a sign of pathological immaturity rather than bad intentions. But when these childish behaviors persist into adulthood instead of evolving in healthier and more integrated ways of relating, a narcissist may spend the rest of their lives in a state of highly volatile ambivalence and uncertainty.

Narcissists have an exaggerated sense of self-importance, and tend to act as though they think they are always right. They can't accept criticism, and lash out at anyone who they perceive as treating them without enough respect or admiration. They are also prone to being belligerent, combative and tyrannical, and thus often have temper tantrums and can be verbally aggressive, insulting or threatening to other people. They also tend to be obsessed with winning, and so will cheat or make up their own rules.

Narcissists may have normal or even superior intellectual development, but they tend to remain emotionally and morally immature. Trump's sexual insecurity about his manhood, as reflected in his egotistical expressions about the size of his hands and penis and his succession of brazenly sexy and obedient young wives, contributes to making him disturbingly volatile and vindictive.

Narcissists often blame others for any problems, and lack social inhibition, and are bullies who rarely show any sign of being distressed by their own behaviors.

Trump veers toward being a dangerous psychopath rather than merely a man who exhibits Narcissistic Character Disorder. This is due to his oft-demonstrated demagoguery that he uses in conjunction with TV, newspaper and social media attention to get what he wants, and his willingness to advocate physical violence in political rallies toward protestors who oppose him. While most narcissists are averse to physical contact with others, they will occasionally strike out in an impulse of rage, and given unchecked power in a position of national leadership, they become dangerous tyrants.

Authoritarian wannabe Trump hates criticism and frequently mocks and denigrates the media, especially

newspapers and progressive viewpoints like those articulated on MSNBC, or balanced perspectives provided by Public Broadcasting. He is not the first demagogue in American history to corrupt political discourse through falsehoods and innuendo that exploit public fears. In the early 1950s, Joseph McCarthy, a first-term Republican senator from Wisconsin, ruthlessly manipulated people's fear of communism. He was brought down because a courageous journalist named Edward R. Murrow understood that a vile bully like McCarthy could not be dealt with by traditional reporting. "The problem is that they don't make them like Murrow anymore."

Trump has pledged to change libel laws in a way that could undermine the first amendment and erode the freedom of the press. He has asserted that as president he would counter criticism by journalists and newspaper editorials by using libel laws to intimidate journalists and opinion writers. He has said:

"One of the things I'm gonna do, and this is only gonna make it tougher for me, and I've never said this before, but one of the things I'm gonna do if I win ... is I'm gonna 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. We're gonna open up those libel laws." ... "With me, they're not protected, because I'm not like other people ... We're gonna open up those libel laws, folks, and we're gonna have people sue you like you never get sued before."

So Trump thinks he is not like other people. "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."