

# Earth Manifesto



## In the Firmament, Far Above the Twittering Trenches

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### Breaking News: *It Is Happening Here*

Attention here and now! The following poignant perspectives are not just philosophical words, but important and consequential ideas and understandings. The ruling class, in order to defend national policies and priorities that increase inequalities and make social injustices worse, relentlessly strives to impose harshly repressive measures on the people, and to see that this rude and rash imposition will be enforced by right-wing politicians and stronger police and military forces. This is not good for the vast majority of Americans, and is drastically contrary to domestic tranquility, peaceable coexistence and the overall well-being of the American people. And oppressive policies by government are subversive of our hopes to enjoy our liberties and individual pursuits of happiness.

The main arenas where Republicans want to spend more money is on the military and weapons and preparations for war, and on police forces, prisons, deportation forces and detention facilities. So, it appears increasingly clear that authoritarian government could happen here. And we are right in the middle of a maelstrom of its actually happening. Let's sharpen our focus.

Jeffrey Goldberg made a stinging observation in June 2020 in *James Mattis Denounces President Trump, Describes Him as a Threat to the Constitution*, writing: "James Mattis, an esteemed Marine general who resigned as secretary of defense in December 2018 to protest Donald Trump's Syria policy, has, ever since, kept studiously silent about Trump's performance as president. But he has now broken his silence, writing an extraordinary broadside in which he denounces the president for dividing the nation, and accuses him of ordering the U.S. military to violate the constitutional rights of American citizens. In an extraordinary condemnation, the former defense secretary backs protesters and says the president is trying to turn Americans against one another."

"I have watched this week's unfolding events, angry and appalled," Mattis wrote. "The words 'Equal Justice Under Law' are carved in the pediment of the United States Supreme Court. This is precisely what protesters are rightly demanding. It is a wholesome and unifying demand -- one that all of us should be able to get behind. We must not be distracted by a small number of lawbreakers. The protests are defined by tens of thousands of people of conscience who are insisting that we live up to our values -- our values as people and our values as a nation." ... "We must reject and hold accountable those in office who would make a mockery of our Constitution."

Mattis excoriated Trump for setting Americans against one another. "Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people -- does not even pretend to try. Instead, he tries to divide us," said Mattis. "We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort. We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership. We can unite without him, drawing on the strengths inherent in our civil society. This will not be easy, as the past few days have shown, but we owe it to our fellow citizens; to past generations that bled to defend our promise; and to our children."

Mattis goes on to contrast the American ethos of unity with Nazi ideology. "Instructions given by the military departments to our troops before the Normandy invasion reminded soldiers that 'The Nazi slogan for destroying us ... was 'Divide and Conquer.' Our American answer is 'In Union there is Strength.'" He concluded, "We must summon that unity to surmount this crisis -- confident that we are better than our politics."

Consider closely the words Franklin Roosevelt spoke in January 1941 in his Four Freedoms speech. Talking about military expenditures just before the United States entered World War II, FDR declared that the American

people would need to pay more money in taxes. "In my Budget Message, I will recommend that a greater portion of this great defense program be paid for from taxation than we are paying for today. No person should try, or be allowed, to get rich out of the program; and the principle of tax payments in accordance with ability to pay should be constantly before our eyes to guide our legislation."

In stunning contrast, at a time when military spending is at the highest ever in the U.S. -- and increasing -- Republican politicians cunningly rammed through into law a Tax Cut plan in December 2017 that authorized \$1.5 trillion to be borrowed over the next 10 years. The devil is in the details: the law gave most of the benefits of this public debt-burdening swindle to the top 1%. This is a diabolical scam because, in effect, it bribed the public with relative crumbs to gain support, giving almost everyone a small fraction of the spoils of this fiscally irresponsible largess. But it did so to deliver the lion's share of this scheme to the already rich.

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

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

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

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

The changing demographics in the USA make it clear that this may be among the last opportunities for arrogant white guys to exert a significant monopoly on power, and make hay while the sun glares reprehensibly on their deeply discriminatory abuses of power. A consequential day of reckoning is coming.

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

The great philosopher Voltaire incisively expressed this opinion: "I always made one prayer to God, a very short one. Here it is: 'Oh, Lord, make our enemies quite ridiculous.' God granted it." Ha! Voltaire, remember, was not only famous for his wit, but also was an admirably outspoken advocate for expanded civil liberties -- despite the risk this placed him in, due to strict censorship laws in France at the time. He was a "satirical polemicist" who commendably made frequent use of his works to criticize intolerance and religious dogma and the oppressive French religious and governmental institutions of his day. Hear, hear!

### What's Happening?

Win-win politics would be vastly better for everyone than the Republican's modern brand of win-lose politics and Trump's profit-obsessed triumph-at-any-cost con game. A majority of Americans is getting tired of this "bad actor" and his crowing about the brilliance of his "wins". Surely, his MAGA agenda is fiscally irresponsible,

environment damaging and socially wrongheaded, and he arrogantly defies subpoenas, laws and the Constitution.

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

The pandemic and economic recession in 2020, along with the widespread street protests against police brutality and systemic racial inequities that took place in that summer, revealed that we have a critical need for a smart and constructive remodeling -- "big structural change"! Yet what we got was a rash opportunistic teardown that sacrificed future well-being in favor of short-term economic recovery and profiteering. There was no evidence that our representatives would try to balance the federal budget by assessing eminently reasonable excess profits taxes, or an accumulated wealth tax, to rectify the developing extreme imbalances.

There are many instances of Excess Profits taxes in the U.S. These are assessments on any profit above a certain amount. Excess profits taxes are fiscal instruments that have predominantly been used in times of war to capture wartime profits that exceeded normal peacetime profits. They did this to raise revenues during the crisis, and prevent perverse incentives for manufacturers to engage in war profiteering and warmongering.

The U.S. has been morphing from having a largely propitious system of democratic capitalism to being driven by a dystopian authoritarian corporatism that is supported by Wall Street interests cheering on fiscal profligacy with money borrowed from the public treasury. Vested interests love this lavish benefit for businesses and investors. Our representatives are wrongly kicking the can down the road instead of being fiscally responsible, supportive of progressively fair taxation, and willing to demonstrate reasonable concern for the future good.

In this emergency episode of extreme short-termism, disaster capitalists are grabbing all they can get, and what the renowned economist Joseph Schumpeter called the capitalist "gale of creative destruction" is attaining Category Five hurricane force. One instance of greed and unconscionable treachery was the Republican success in sneaking a tax loophole that gave an average \$1.6 million tax cut to 43,000 millionaires into the March 2020 CARES Act, a \$2.2 trillion pandemic financial aid package. That was truly outrageous! "Buoyed by their covert success of leveraging the pandemic for personal gain, Wall Street is at it again, calling for a payroll tax cut that would undermine Social Security and Medicare, and capital gains tax cuts that would mostly benefit the top 1%."

Republicans are making fools of their blue-collar and poor supporters, and those in the white middle class. They are also making their supporters accomplices to a profound treachery against the common good by pushing extreme short-termism in fiscal, social, political and environmental policies. They continue to tell big lies about trickle-down economics, and abuse power by mortgaging the public good for the benefit of the excessively rich.

Theodore Roosevelt spoke out passionately in favor of an Estate Tax, "increasing rapidly in amount with the size of the estate", so as to prevent the increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few, where it is invariably abused. This is good guidance for *We the People* to be assured that dastardly despots will be prevented in the future from illegitimately seizing power and onerously abusing authority.

Recent elections have featured an unbelievable barrage of political propaganda, conflicting opinions, sneaky disinformation, deceitful attack ads and distortions about the desirability of a generations-long dominance of the Supreme Court by conservatives. The newly elected Democratic House majority in 2018 encountered stonewalling in its efforts to investigate Trump and his corrupt Cabinet members, who took advantage of the permissive Trump regime at the time to gloss over their conflicts of interest and abuses of authority. It is imperative for our Constitutional system to act as a check against corrupt activities in the executive branch. In all future election contests, I urge all voters to rightly vote for more moderate and progressive-minded representatives in Congress - - ones that demonstrate much more honesty, integrity and moral character.

It is normal for a majority party to lose seats in Congress in midterm elections. This is because people are generally not happy with the political party in power, and elections are one way to punish those in power for the dissatisfaction they engender. But never in the history of our democratic republic has a regime abused its power so egregiously as the Trump administration. Republican politicians deserved to have lost many seats in the House and Senate in 2018 -- and since then in 2020 and 2022 -- and should be relegated to minority status for their egregious assaults against democratic fairness, expansive rights to vote, inclusive egalitarian values, diversity, the

rights of people in racial minorities, the healthcare and reproductive rights of women, the dignity and civil rights of gay people, and sensible protections of the environment.

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

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

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

Republicans are gloating over their success in having altered the Supreme Court for decades to come, thereby undermining fair decision-making. When Trump announced that Brett Kavanaugh was his Supreme Court nominee to replace Anthony Kennedy upon his retirement, attention was suddenly focused on the implications of having a more politicized and excessively conservative Supreme Court, and one more lenient with regard to Donald Trump misusing power. Soon thereafter, concerns spiked that health care, reproductive rights, voting rights and the rights of workers would all be at risk if the Senate approved such a Republican partisan. "What we know of D.C. Circuit Court Judge Brett Kavanaugh's judicial record is troubling. Kavanaugh has consistently ruled against environmental protections, struck down EPA protections under the Clean Air Act, opposed efforts to fight climate change, and stood against protections for clean water. Kavanaugh has also favored limiting the power of federal regulatory agencies and has argued for restricting the rights of people to access our court system."

A "breathtaking documentary" titled *Justice* premiered at Sundance in January 2023 to shed bright light on the illegitimacy of the process by which the "I like beer" judge managed to lie himself into a lifelong tenure making rulings against the best interest of the people. What's up, FBI? Scandalous accusations have been made into the FBI's failure to look into allegations about Kavanaugh's sexual misconduct towards several women.

A revealing barrage of 5-4 rulings was made at the end of the Supreme Court's session from Oct. 2017 to June 2018. A detailed analysis of decisions made confirmed that political conservatism has yielded negative outcomes for the majority of American people. Ever since the *Bush vs. Gore* ruling gave the presidency to George W. Bush instead of Al Gore, despite Gore having decisively won the popular vote, it could be seen that a partisan right-leaning majority on the court yields decisions that are, on the whole, contrary to the general welfare of the people, and antithetical to democracy, and subversive of honestly expansive guarantees of personal freedoms. This was again demonstrated at the end of the Supreme Court session that ended in June 2019 with their 5 to 4 decision to do nothing about extreme partisan gerrymandering, so it was clear that the conservative Justices do not care about truly fair representation, and in effect favor political "conservatism" and polarization over unity.

We stand at a pivotal point in the history of our democratic republic, and with conservatives having succeeded in cementing a hard right hegemony on the Supreme Court, this check on abuses of power by the Executive Branch has somewhat become more like a rubber stamp of complicity. The political partisan Kavanaugh was chosen for the court because manipulative Big Money has corrupted our politics. Then after McConnell Republicans rammed through the rushed confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett while early voting was already underway in October 2020, this seemed like the last straw, because it will further prevent decisions that would help reform the anti-democratic and anti-progressive domination of our national decision-making by rich people and cash-flush giant corporations and Christian nationalist religious fundamentalists.

The worst aspect of this situation is that corporate-friendly Supreme Court decisions are threatening the great benefits provided by natural ecosystem services. "Conservative" Justices misguidedly favor giving a green light to giant corporations to intensify their assaults, giving them more prerogatives to pollute and foist externalized costs onto society. We need a more progressive court system, because MAGA Republicans are failing the majority of the

people by imposing anti-egalitarian dictates on them. The arrogant Trump regime worked overtime to pander to its political base, which they are playing for fools by supercharging their emotions and hyping up their resentments while implementing policies contrary to what really constitutes their best interests.

Additionally, with the Supreme Court likely at the time to decide cases that involved investigations into malfeasance by Donald Trump and members of his administration, Kavanaugh's extremely partisan role in obsessively investigating Bill Clinton's sexual improprieties in the 1990s is seen through the eyes of infamy. Kavanaugh even expressed an absurdly expansive view on presidential powers by questioning the high court's unanimous decision in the 1974 case *U.S. vs. Nixon*, which forced President Nixon to turn over the Watergate tapes to a federal district court.

All concerned citizens should demand that their Senators protect people's rights and oppose any Supreme Court nominee in the future that supports national bans on abortions and criminalizing the procedure, or rolling back healthcare, decimating civil rights, harming workers or damaging the environmental commons. Or undercutting rules of law that protect people from the predations and cost externalizing schemes of big corporate entities and banks and their lobbyists.

Those who know Brett Kavanaugh say it is difficult to vilify him personally. Hey, I trust that he may be a good guy. But the American people should demand a moderate tilt to the Supreme Court, not a rightward one. It is revealing that Kavanaugh's father was a lobbyist for the cosmetics industry who used money and connections to fend off demands for consumer protections and safer products. He also fought better transparency about ingredients in cosmetics. While this may have been beneficial for his well-heeled clients, and a boon for profits in the industry, it was bad for the public health, especially of women, and it was subversive of the common good.

All the names on Trump's list for possible nominees to the Supreme Court were provided by the conservative Federalist Society. The implications of having a more rigidly conservative Supreme Court are frightening. What precedents will be overturned? First to go were federal protections for women's rights to have an abortion. What other civil rights and civil liberties are at stake? According to Wikipedia, Federalist Society members generally choose not to criticize Trump. *Politico* described the Society membership as "elite, conservative lawyers who have generally chosen to give Trump a pass on his breaches of long-cherished legal norms and traditions, in exchange for the gift of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch." That particular gift is proving damaging to *We the People* and our general welfare.

During the battle to get another extreme conservative on the Supreme Court in 2018, Brett Kavanaugh cunningly tried to evade questions focused on determining if he respects precedents like *Roe vs. Wade*, which gave a fair guarantee to all woman that they could get a safe and legal abortion before fetal viability during a pregnancy. In photographs of the Supreme Court Justices, they all stare toward the camera, and conservatives among them seem to be disdainful of the common law legal principle of *stare decisis*, the idea that a judge is bound by, or should give considerable respect to, decisions of earlier judges that render issues as "standing decided".

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

Sensationally, 83 ethics complaints had been filed against Brett Kavanaugh, yet he was not held to account. Many of the complaints allege he made false statements under oath during hearings on his nominations to the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in 2004 and 2006, and to the U.S. Supreme Court. These serious allegations were made by lawyers, doctors, professors and concerned citizens. But Kavanaugh got off the hook. First, a judicial

council in Denver dismissed all 83 misconduct complaints in December 2018, citing a lack of jurisdiction. This council was led by Judge Timothy Tymkovich, a man with real conflicted interests because he was on Trump's list of potential conservatives to possibly be appointed to the Supreme Court. Then in August 2019, a committee of federal judges dismissed all the complaints again, this time because Supreme Court justices are not subject to the judiciary's ethics review process. These are convenient technicalities for Kavanaugh, but the issue should not just fall by the wayside. The only body that can discipline him now is Congress, and it should rightly look into the facts, along with other malfeasance by Alito, and Clarence Thomas.

### Opening a Modern Pandora's Box of Inequities

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

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

"When Ronald Reagan became president, tax cuts and deregulation were the order of the day. Even from the start, though, there was a big element of dishonesty in Reagan's strategy. He cut taxes, but not government spending, so America's economic recovery came in part from unsustainable deficits. Administration officials claimed that tax cuts would pay for themselves, which they knew was a lie. And what they called 'deregulation' was often simply political corruption. Lobbyists and industry executives were appointed to run government agencies, and several industries sharply increased their spending on political donations, lobbying, and revolving door hiring. Nowhere was this clearer than in finance. It was in financial services that Ronald Reagan initiated America's descent into criminality, financial crisis, political corruption, inequality and decline." That is quite scandalous -- ludicrous lies, radically exacerbated inequalities and unscrupulously propagated harms!

"Criminality, financial crisis, political corruption, inequality and decline!" These words may sound like outrageous hyperbole, but when you read the actual details of the many financial scams perpetrated in the past 40 years, this characterization doesn't seem like an exaggeration at all. Charles Ferguson continues: "It was in large measure the financial sector's political activities that gave us deregulation, abdication of white-collar law enforcement, tax cuts for the wealthy, huge budget deficits, and other toxic policies. These are the aspects of our econopolitical system that have allowed the U.S. financial sector to become a rogue industry."

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

The radical ramping up of deregulation efforts led directly to economic power becoming ever more concentrated since 1980. This is true especially in banking, energy, telecommunications, media industries, automobiles, agribusiness and retailing. This trend has been the result of abuses of influence as corporate money has neutered antitrust policy and corrupted our political system, and even swayed the supposedly objective expert opinions of a

minority of people in academic institutions -- but all too many! Such concentrated power undermines the power of *We the People*, and it contributes to the sadly increasing and politically dangerous extremes in income and wealth inequality -- and personal security! -- between the top 1% and the other 99%.

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

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

Perhaps this should be no surprise, because influence peddling is not only legal, but a fundamental facet of the way our political system operates in modern times. So, sadly, the Supreme Court, by a vote exclusively by partisan conservatives, might declare null and void the entire substance of these remarks. They continue to refuse to overturn the wrongly decided *Citizens United* ruling that has helped wealthy people corrupt our elections and pervert our national priorities and distort our decision-making. And they offensively overturned constitutional guarantees to women in June 2022, thousands of whom are being forced to continue unwanted pregnancies as abortion bans have spread across many Republican-dominated states. Many are promoting sexual abstinence as the only acceptable method of family planning. In this consequential deliberation, conservative judges keep foremost in mind their own narrow politically partisan biases, religious convictions and power.

Charles Ferguson has commendably created an evocative new exploration of what happened with the Watergate scandal in a thought-provoking film titled *Watergate: Or, How We Learned to Stop an Out-of-Control President*. This documentary debuted at the 2018 Telluride film festival. Watch it! -- and think about "Tricky Dick" Nixon and what should be done now as new crisis-provoking MAGA Republicans continue to abuse power. Understand the treacherous role played by former Attorney General Bill Barr in his disdain of Congress and the American people, and in Trump evading accountability, obstructing justice and revealing his contempt for rules of law.

### The Fox Propaganda Machine

Trump spoke laudable words in his 2016 election victory speech, but they rang hollow in light of the scurrilous tactics he used to get elected. His words provided a momentary ray of hope that, perhaps, he really might try to act as a fair-minded president for all Americans and heal the country, but this hope sure didn't last long, for he set about soon afterwards to choose the most extreme Cabinet and federal agency officials ever.

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

Max Boot, in an article *The right-wing media's contempt for truth has never been more dangerous*, recommends that readers go to the homepage of Media Matters for America to see how "conservative" media continues to infect their followers with misinformation, increasing the dangers of spreading the coronavirus.

The intentional propagation of misinformation has contributed to this serious assault on fair representation of the best interests of the people. Part of the problem causing this state of affairs is that the FCC Fairness Doctrine for media that was in effect from 1949 to 1987 was eliminated, facilitating the rise of unbalanced and seriously skewed alt-right media. The Fairness Doctrine was a federal policy in the U.S. that required television and radio



broadcasters to present contrasting viewpoints on controversial issues of public interest and importance -- and to do so in a manner that was balanced, honest and equitable. The ending of this Fairness Doctrine was a contributing factor to the increase in divisive party polarization in the United States.

It is proving to be exceedingly difficult for social media to control devious misinformation -- or to want to, because platforms like Facebook are making huge profits off the neglect. Twitter finally for the first time hid from view a Trump tweet, during violent nighttime looting after the killing of George Floyd, on the ground that the tweet was "glorifying violence". This was the first time Twitter had taken such action against a political leader. The divisive and inflammatory tweet was sent out while Minneapolis was engulfed in riots. Trump described protesters as "THUGS", and attacked the city's "very weak Radical Left" mayor, and declared that when "the looting starts, the shooting starts." Facebook, for its part, is facing harsh criticism and even internal headwinds because its CEO Mark Zuckerberg has pandered to Trump and demonstrates an unwillingness to take adequately strong steps to make the Internet a more positive force in society.

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

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

Ever since Trump took the down escalator into contention for the presidency in June 2015, he used divisive tactics and offensive rhetoric to gain media attention. His scandalous behaviors have been "normalized" by media outlets that are more interested in ratings and profits than in important big issues and comprehensive and honest Big Picture assessments of these issues. Trump is now continuing to try to claw his way back into power in 2024, and attention fatigue has set in somewhat. But dangers lurk, and many people in the mainstream media and conservatives on social media and white supremacists are attempting to normalize MAGA Trumpism and engage in historical revisionism, most consequentially about the January 6th insurrectionary riot.

We must recognize how essential a free and independent media is in our democracy. Trump is trying to destroy that freedom and independence by using seven of the principal unprincipled techniques that despots have employed throughout history to undermine media independence. Robert Reich provides this list::

1. Berate the media. Trump called two-dozen TV news anchors and executives to the Trump Tower soon after he was elected in 2016, to chew them out about their reporting during the election. This included Lester Holt, Charlie Rose, George Stephanopoulos and Wolf Blitzer.
2. Blacklist media that criticize them. Trump favors Fox News, and hates CNN and MSNBC. He maintained a blacklist of news outlets to which he refused to grant press credentials during his time in office.
3. Turn the public against the media. Trump refers to journalists as "dishonest," "disgusting" and "scum."
4. Threaten the media. Candidate Trump said he'd "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." And sure enough, he repeatedly abused the judicial system with more than 60 frivolous lawsuits in pushing his Big Lie claiming election fraud after he lost the 2020 election.
5. Block media access. Trump prefers rally events to news conferences, and often blocks the media from traveling with him, or knowing whom he's meeting with, or what is said in secretive meetings like the instantly infamous one with Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.
6. Establish alternative media. Trump sends emotion-manipulating narratives through the unfairly unbalanced Fox News and hard-right talk radio show hosts and "alt-right" mediums like Breitbart News, and through his Orwellian-named Truth Social, in which he is trying to get his "megaphone" back after being banned from Facebook and Twitter for repeatedly violating their policies.



7. Bypass the media and communicate with the public directly. Trump tweeted incessantly, until he was denied access to the Twitter platform for having repeatedly violated its rules. The devious demagogue tortuously twists the truth, and tells incredible numbers of falsehoods and outright lies.

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

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

The best way to counter propaganda is to understand the methods and techniques being used to sway public opinion. George Orwell explained some of the many shrewd tactics and powerful techniques that are used to "catapult the propaganda", as George W. Bush put it. They can be read online to understand this important influence on our worldviews and national decision-making. See Orwell's *A citizen's guide to understanding corporate media propaganda techniques*. These techniques are being used on the American public, and on people around the world, by corporate mainstream media and the "alt-right" fringe media, and by many political influencers on social media. "Having familiarized yourself with these techniques," Orwell wrote, "you will be able to spot them as they are being deployed against you."

Trump's time in office ended badly, especially for democratic fairness and Blacks and white working class people who were deceived into supporting Trump, thinking he would "drain the swamp" in Washington D.C. Instead, he opened the floodgates to a retrogressive cadre of swindlers, operatives and ideologues. As a candidate Trump claimed he would end corruption, but look at what happened. A narrowly focused electorate, deceived by Machiavellian intrigue, voted to keep almost all the corrupt alligators in the swamp in Congress, and Trump filled his Cabinet with loyalists who represented a perpetuation of the policies that have hurt and angered the populace. And his policies were almost exclusively oriented around his own self-interest, not the common good.

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

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

Russians do things. The result is that we have an American president who is terrified of his counterpart in Moscow." Trump treacherously panders to Putin, for suspicious reasons.

Another strategy Republicans favor is to use wedge issues to rile up people's emotions in a classic bait-and-switch scheme. The Trump base is being sold a pathologically deceptive bill of goods by apologists who say Trump kept his promises. But his loudest promise was to build a huge wall between the U.S. and Mexico -- and force Mexico to pay for it. He continually exploited this divisive and distracting plan, even though American taxpayers had to pay billions of dollars for portions of the wall that were built. Meanwhile, with all the sound-and-fury of partisans up at arms over this issue, Trump pushed through large debt-financed Tax Cuts that mainly benefitted the wealthy, and he pushed an agenda that sacrificed the environmental commons to further enrich the rich. He also tried to cut spending on social safety net programs and other things that are hallmarks of a civilized society, while building up the military and police forces, and he lied through his teeth about making people safer. And he undermined the economic prospects and collective bargaining rights of working people.

Roman hands and Russian fingers -- and lying eyes -- don't inspire confidence in the righteousness of these schemes, which are maniacally targeted to usurp power and get big bucks. These wanton abuses of authority and despotic control, and righteous zealotry, discriminate against the majority of Americans, especially including women and people of color. For this indulgent skullduggery and these base qualities, they deserve condemnation of those who are being fooled and taken advantage of. Powerful people who heartlessly exploit vulnerable folks -- through a wide variety of scams, swindles and public health failures -- are displaying a deep ethical rot.

To really see what is going on, "Watch what they do, not what they say." Trump claimed he wanted to Make America Great Again, but a close analysis of his actions reveals that what he really meant was to Make America More Favorable to the Few, and to give white males more power at the expense of everyone else. To accomplish this goal, Republicans stacked federal courts and the Supreme Court with partisan conservatives. And under cover of the support they receive, they rigged the tax structure to be more regressive and stimulated economic activities through a debt-financed mortgaging of the future, and gave undemocratic corporations more power to exploit workers, deplete natural resources and externalize costs onto society. They imposed tariffs, waged trade wars, and scapegoated Latinos, Muslims, immigrants and asylum seekers. They deceived people using misinformation and repetitiously told lies, and used inflammatory rhetoric, and exploited hot button wedge issues to stay in power. And they demonize liberals, hold Nazi-like political rallies, condone misconduct by police, and incite gun owners to fear, suspicion and vigilantism. While Trump was in office he strengthened ties with undemocratic strong man autocrats abroad while weakening ties with democratic allies. It was treachery for Trump to fight with our allies and cozy up to authority-abusing foes of democracy like Putin in Russia, Kim Jong Un in North Korea, Erdogan in Turkey, Modi in India and Duterte in Philippines. All of this is wrongheaded!

### The Role of Deregulation in Enabling Malfeasance

The reason Republicans push deregulation so fervently, and with such lavish financial backing, is to make it easier for corporate polluters and corrupt con men to succeed, along with those who take advantage of expanded opportunities to engage in benefitting from conflicts of interest. They ignore and deny how much harm they engender. These rogues notably include Trump family members and persons in his Cabinet who peddled influence to those that used Big Money and political corruption enabled by the *Citizens United* ruling.

Republicans demonstrate an unbalanced zeal for deregulation, as Trump did in appointments made to lead the EPA. They do so to give big benefits to a relative few by artificially inflating profits of fossil fuel and mining companies and chemical conglomerates, despite harms such actions do to large numbers of powerless people. This causes a tragic array of heedless Tragedy of the Commons outcomes. It is wrong to allow big companies to foist terrible costs onto vulnerable people in the form of respiratory ailments or exposure to toxic chemicals, or to fail to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that are having detrimental impacts on billions of people, and will cost trillions of dollars. Short-term expediencies are inimically imprudent for the future.

The remarkable and great thing about scientific understandings is that they are progressively adaptive, always improving through the investigatory mechanisms of the scientific method. The latest best understandings are true whether or not deniers with self-serving interests believe them. When pathological deceivers and greedy

Merchants of Doubt have big vested interests in persistently questioning whether there are harmful and consequential cumulative greenhouse effects on climatic conditions due to about 100 million tons of greenhouse gases being spewed into the atmosphere every day, this effort to deceive people for private profit does not alter even one iota the science of physics and our unfolding knowledge about how greenhouse gas emissions are causing worsening impacts on people worldwide, and negative impacts on most species of life on Earth. When they shift strategies to cast shade on solutions, they obstruct efforts to help solve the problems.

One thing the Trump administration was good at was trying to roll back protections of the environment. Fortunately, though it is true that Trump's first EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt tried to weaken or get rid of more than 40 rules, he wasn't very successful due to strong challenges in courts to many of his attempted rollbacks. "If all these deregulations actually came to pass, we'd see astounding effects on public health: an additional 80,000 deaths and well over a million cases of respiratory illness over the next decade. And that's an 'extremely conservative' estimate, according to Harvard professors who tabulated the numbers in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*." (This was before the pandemic.)

In a notable victory for environmental protections, after Scott Pruitt declared his intention in June 2017 to reverse methane emission limits placed on the oil and gas industry in 2016, the Environmental Defense Fund and partners filed a motion challenging this action. Courts subsequently ruled that the EPA could not suspend the methane emissions rules for new oil and gas wells. They cited Pruitt's decision as "unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious", and the D.C. Court of Appeals overwhelmingly upheld that decision.

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

In the summer of 2020, the Trump cabal used the pretext of the pandemic to roll back climate rules and pollution regulations, and to speed the opening of public lands to industry, and to weaken laws like the Endangered Species Act. A cynic might conclude that the main expertise needed to be employed in Trump's administration was the ability to succeed in implementing a deregulated, private profit maximizing, inequitable and insidiously anti-environmental agenda, and to help impose it on the masses. And the main character quality desired was unquestioning loyalty to Donald Trump, even when it involved blatantly betraying the greater good.

Just after July 4, 2018, Scott Pruitt was forced out of his job as EPA chief. That was a positive step. It was high time that this worst-ever Cabinet member was removed from power. Unfortunately, Pruitt was replaced by a climate change denier and coal industry shill, and most of Trump's Cabinet secretaries were guilty of multiple misdeeds, from extravagant and excessive use of taxpayer dollars to cronyism and nepotism, to using their position to increase their personal wealth. At the time, the question arose, "What are Republicans in Congress doing about this? Why, investigating Hillary Clinton, of course!"

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

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

Upon his resignation, Scott Pruitt sent a cravenly flattering letter to Trump, stating: "It is extremely difficult for me to cease serving you in this role, first because I count it a blessing to be serving you in any capacity, but also

because of the transformative work that is occurring." Really?! In reaction to this bizarre utterance, Mark Sumner incisively observed, "That transformative work includes allowing coal mines to dump waste into streams and rivers, relieving oil and gas companies of the pesky business of letting anyone know when they leak huge plumes of methane into the air, allowing factory farms to flood streams with animal waste without even having to report on water or air quality. All of which is *truly* transformative for people who live downwind or downstream. And there are the pesticides that Pruitt saved from cruel regulation, the power plants now free to produce more acid rain and bring the blessing of holy mercury to the nation's diet. Yea, verily, these are blessings which are expected to leave 88,000 Americans transformed to the state of holy deadness over the next decade, and leave millions more with the gift of asthma or nerve damage."

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

### Political Observations

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

The Republican push to pass a tax cut plan in 2017 before they lost their one-party monopoly on power revealed how corrupt our political system is, and how treacherous their grotesquely scheming basket of priorities really is. This partisan plan, designed to lavishly reward rich people and corporate shareholders, was made more unfair by creating a structure that make it excessively easy for wealthy people to claim new lower tax rates designed for "pass-through businesses". This is another feature that redistributes wealth upward, at a big eventual cost to the majority of Americans -- and to all in the future when this devious scheme falls apart with an economic recession, extreme volatility in artificially-inflated stock prices, a calamitous debt crisis, harsh austerity measures, rancorous strife, an ecological collapse, or whatever other disastrous outcomes will be delivered by this hard right, shortsighted, hubris-exposing, scurrilously divisive, inequality stoking, greed driven, anti-precautionary-principle swindle. It makes matters much worse that this agenda is designed to deplete resources, take unfair advantage of working people, rashly run up the national debt, ruin *Our Planet*, fail to deal with critical problems, and sabotage the potential well-being of everyone in future generations.

### Save the World!

We liberty-loving Americans sure do need a healthier two-party system to ensure that more people are fairly represented. It is negative for society as a whole to have our representatives so outrageously beholden to the rich. We do not need -- OR WANT, damn them! -- authority-abusing control freaks who repress the populace and

cheat us, lie to us, put us at greater risk, perpetrate various frauds at our expense, corrupt our politics and mislead us with naked untruths, bad management, poor preparedness and shortsighted foolhardiness.

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

Politics has sadly and necessarily become an outsized factor in the lives of people living in the USA. Good God, politics! Black Lives should matter more. It seems wrong for our leaders to rudely sow division and antagonisms between people through manipulative propaganda, dastardly demagoguery and an underhanded hijacking of people's emotions -- and to then push wrongheaded national policies and priorities.

In theory, our representatives are the ones *We the People* have entrusted with setting our national priorities, and we should demand that they work to actualize the best interests of the people. How, then, has it turned out that the political leaders we choose are so preposterously prepossessed with the drive to satisfy their own selfish ambitions and power drives? Why are these priorities more important than helping to improve people's lives? FOLLOW THE MONEY! Our representatives give the heaviest emphasis to getting their own outsized portion of the spoils of the on-going Corrupt Conniving Crony Capitalist Con. This is what is described as "the biggest financial swindle in history" in *Demagoguery and the Definite Dangers of the Demise of Democracy*.

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

The pandemic recession drastically amplified inequalities between the prospering fortunate and those who are desperately disadvantaged and unfortunate. And Republicans in Congress are opposing federal help for state and local governments severely challenged by the coronavirus and economic fallout.

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

It is ominous for the future that progressives in the U.S. were largely sidelined after Trump's 2016 victory through many ruses that include structural ones of extreme gerrymandering, blatant voter suppression in states led by Republican politicians, and excessive purges of voter rolls. A big contributing factor is the brazen misuse of Big Money, right-wing propaganda and spin by often dishonest skills like Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity at Fox

News, and Rush Limbaugh (for decades before he died) and his nodding "dittoheads", and crafty manipulators of people on social media through misinformation, negative ads, and false conspiracy theories.

Let's save ourselves! We know how. Throw the bums out of office! "Indivisible" groups are fighting Republican abuses of power and overreach by organizing together in every single congressional district in the USA, and they are using protest and pressure tactics to fight Republican corruption and malfeasance. They helped Democrats gain 40 seats in the House of Representatives in the 2018 elections, so reforms and checks on power abuses were given greater standing. Unfortunately, they encountered extremely fierce Republican opposition. And in the U.S. Senate, Republicans betrayed their solemn hand-on-the-Bible oaths of office by helping Trump get away with unconstitutional abuses of power.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIVISIBLE GUIDE

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

"We know this because we've seen it before. The authors of this guide are former congressional staffers who witnessed the rise of the Tea Party. We saw these activists take on a popular president with a mandate for change and a supermajority in Congress. We saw them organize locally and convince their own Members of Congress to reject President Obama's agenda. Their ideas were wrong, cruel and tinged with racism and they won. We believe that protecting our values, our neighbors, and ourselves will require mounting a similar resistance to the Trump agenda -- but a resistance built on the values of inclusion, tolerance, and fairness. Trump is not popular. He does not have a mandate. He does not have large congressional majorities. If a small minority in the Tea Party could stop President Obama, then we the majority can stop a petty tyrant named Trump."

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

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

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

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