



Our Conspiratorial Cartoon President During Almost Comically Consequential Times

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"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)

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

A well-informed electorate is a prerequisite for ensuring that a democracy is healthy, and thereby offers all its citizens truly reasonable representation. This simple understanding makes both humorous and viscerally provocative a political cartoon by David Sipress that appeared in *New Yorker* magazine soon after the 2016 elections. In this cartoon, a woman ruefully observes to her male companion, "My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane." Ha! Tens of millions of Americans find themselves in this predicament today, as the Donald Trump soap opera, crime saga, healthcare treachery, and interlude of authority abuses becomes increasingly dysfunctional, anxiety inducing and deadly -- and as Trump becomes more unhinged, sinisterly authoritarian and threatening to individual liberties, national security and our greatest American values.

Besides, problems ignored tend to fester, as starkly revealed during June 2020 as civil unrest spiked over issues of police brutality against Blacks and racial injustices that have been taking place for far, far, far too long.

Comic Relief

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

Will Rogers, the great humorist and social commentator known as Oklahoma's favorite son, once wryly observed, "Everything is changing. People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke." It's a mystery how conservatives can be so change averse, yet support a self-promoting egomaniac who creates chaotic change and stands athwart progress that would be beneficial to them -- and brazenly misleads them about what's going on.

As the historian Will Durant pointed out, "A sense of humor, being born of perspective, bears a near kinship to philosophy." In Buddhist philosophy, one key to proper conduct is right understanding. This is regarded as the first step on the Noble Eightfold Path toward enlightenment and Nirvana, a form of liberation in Buddhist philosophy. In our terribly conflicted world today, the common good and the general welfare are being drastically undermined by the anti-egalitarian priorities of the ruling classes in their relentless efforts to gain ever-more

money and decision-making influence, and more benefits, privileges and tax breaks for themselves. After right understanding, the seven other practices considered proper in the Noble Eightfold Path are right intention, right speech, right action, right effort, right livelihood, right mindfulness and right concentration. Right, right, right!

In July 2018, Donald Trump made the Orwellian declaration, "What you're seeing and what you're reading is not what's happening." Wow! The Deceiver-in-Chief thinks he can lie with impunity and get away with his deceit by attacking critical news media. He is succeeding in evoking echoes of a passage in George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* about Big Brother thought-control schemes in a dystopian world: "The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command." Yikes! Not very long after Trump's perplexing and deceitful declaration, the once respectable lawyer and mayor Rudy Giuliani, who is currently an all but comical Trump TV propagandist, and then a Ukraine Plot co-conspirator, jumped on the Orwellian bandwagon with his twisted observation, "Truth isn't truth." Let's rise above, and see self-evident truths!

Donald Trump is strutting and fretting his sorry hour upon the stage, damning all humanity's tomorrows with his self-serving and treacherously shortsighted power-abusing agenda. From the bully pulpit of the White House and Twitter, he is spinning the truth with such Machiavellian cold calculation that it resembles a charlatan telling the tale of an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying much, including ominous indicators of our collective destiny.

"A king can stand people's fighting, but he can't last long if people start thinking."

--- Will Rogers

Trump's former White House counsel Don McGahn aptly called him "King Kong", due to his volatility and "volcanic anger" and the "shouting matches" Trump had with him and other members of his staff, and due to his "emotional decision making". Trump's cunningly manipulative and narcissistic tweetstorms also contributed to making this moniker appropriate, especially the egomaniacal tweets in which he rails vituperatively against anyone who dares criticize his failings, subterfuge, scandalous behaviors or abuses of power. Will Rogers once astutely declared, "People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing."

George Conway astutely observed that this King Kong characterization also fits for another reason: "it reflects his desire to escape constraints -- in particular legal constraints." Conway pointed out in a February 2020 article that Trump's "Kong-like urge was illustrated by two developments: the president's latest executive clemency spree and his continued attacks against the federal judiciary." ... "Trump's specific invocations of the pardon power, moreover, appear unwedded to any notion of mercy or public good; they are not guided by the ordinary process of careful review. Rather, they are impulsive expressions of Trumpian spite and self-interest."

As far as Trump's attacks against the judiciary are concerned, they clearly reflect his view that he should have immunity from any form of accountability, and that he should have the absolute power to decide what he can and cannot do. When his co-conspiring enabler William Barr, Trump's third and worst Attorney General, chided Trump for making his job "impossible" by tweeting out his demagogic authoritarian eagerness to interfere in the Department of Justice, Trump declared that, "I'm actually, I guess, the chief law enforcement officer of the country." Many people were taken aback by this assertion, "but he was technically correct: As president, he sits at the apex of the federal law enforcement apparatus, and bears ultimate constitutional responsibility for it. The problem is that Trump's understanding of what it means to be the chief law enforcement officer, like his view of his office generally, is flawed and corrupt. The president's oath of office is to 'faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States,' and to 'preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.' His job, says Article II of the Constitution, is to 'take care that the laws be faithfully executed.'"

"With those words, the Constitution endows a president with the right and obligation to enforce the laws. It doesn't grant him the power to do whatever he wants. And it doesn't mean that Trump must be allowed to rampage through the legal landscape like King Kong, dangerously unchecked and unbound."

With regard to Trump's blitz of clemency and pardons after Republican Senators acquitted him, Jeffrey Toobin, CNN's chief legal analyst, suggested in a comment piece for *The New Yorker* that "the real lesson" of the brazen actions were "a story of creeping authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is usually associated with a punitive spirit -- a leader who prosecutes and incarcerates his enemies. But there is another side to this leadership style."

Authoritarians also dispense largesse, but they do it by their own whims, rather than pursuant to any system or legal rule. The point of authoritarianism is to concentrate power in the ruler, so the world knows that all actions, good and bad, harsh and generous, come from a single source." Toobin also noted how the people that Trump granted clemency to (including former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich and former New York Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik) all had "some personal connection" to him. Therefore, it was "exclusively an exercise of Trump's own power."

Trump is getting away with imposing a rash, overly greedy and extremely self-serving short-term-oriented agenda on the populace. His schtick is to act like a preening, bragging "strong man" who is like a bombastic character in a melodrama that provokes outrage and creates an exaggerated caricature of himself as a self-aggrandizing and authority-abusing demagogic cult leader who stereotypically loves to bask in the glory of conducting Nuremberg-like political rallies where adulating followers hang on his every word, chanting "lock her up" and fervently believing that he is the Second Coming of Jesus. But he is about as far from a saint as almost anyone, ever.

Steven Hassan wrote in *The Cult of Trump* about this phenomenon. Hassan is a mental health counselor who specializes in harmful cults. He is an expert on "the unethical use of powerful psychological influence techniques". Years ago, Hassan recruited and indoctrinated new members into Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, where "Moonies" blindly followed their cult leader in his political activism during the Cold War in the United States as a fierce advocate for anti-communism. He professed to believe that democracy had to defeat communism "as a necessary step in the Divine Providence to establish the Kingdom of God on earth." Many evangelical fundamentalists seem to bizarrely regard Trump with a similar bizarrely misplaced reverence.

Ecological Sanity

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

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

Trump is emulating the Doomsday Cult of Reverend Moon and "the Moonies", even though he knows full well that "if we fail to act now" to ensure "meaningful and effective measures to control climate change, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequence for humanity and our planet."

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

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

At the Davos Economic Forum in January 2020, Trump attacked climate activists, referring to them as "perennial prophets of doom." This was part of his diabolically twisted rationalization for disastrous profiteering policies for

fossil fuel interests and his crusade to cling to power and continue abusing it by betraying humanity in the future with cynically calculating self-promoting idiotically imprudent actions.

This point of view is dumbly backwards. Scientists are today's visionary prophets, who base informed projections on evidence and extrapolated data. Trump is promoting his self-interest by pushing rashly short-term-oriented policies that are tripping ecological tipping points -- and actually making doomsday scenarios more and more likely. "The time to argue over the validity of climate change predictions is over. The time to act is now."

The pragmatic and responsible approach would be to budget for costs that are unpredictable by creating "rainy day" provisions for recovery from inevitable natural disasters. Instead, the Trump approach is to further burden every taxpayer in every future year with burgeoning debt obligations, with the rash purpose of achieving short-term political advantages and allowing rich people to grab gargantuan benefits from politically corrupt and wrongheaded policies and priorities.

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

The fact of the matter is that Big Money wields dominating influence in our government-by-the-wealthy oligarchy. This state of affairs is unfortunately making our country less and less a democracy, due to exploiters betraying the best interests of the populace. Something like 95% of election contests are won by the candidates who spend the most money, and environmental organizations are vastly outspent by a factor of 30 to 1, by special interest groups intent on rigging the system ever more favorably for themselves -- to the dire detriment of the citizenry. This pathetic situation dangerously undermines all the bedrock American environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Wilderness Act, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the strategic Endangered Species Act.

We should rightly redesign our economy so that it works better for everyone, or else it inevitably will be worse for all. Joe Brewer, who describes himself as "a change strategist working on behalf of humanity", wrote an 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". He wrote that this is causing "deep worry and anxiety, prompting feelings of severe isolation and humiliation, combined with a profound sense of powerlessness for millions of people around the world." Brewer says we are on a path to "planetary-scale collapse", and that we need to reckon with this challenge in our lifetimes, and the sooner, the better. "Earth's climate is ramping up for a phase transition that threatens our entire civilization." The cause of this ominous development is the irresponsibility of leaders in our political duopoly, dominated as it is by politicians who collaborate with those who want to hyper-stimulate growth and maximize private profits at the expense of the greater good. Evaluating a passel of enabling "Global Architecture of Wealth Extraction" schemes, I do declare, "Let's admirably remodel."

As the Republican Party descends further into rigidity and chaos in their dastardly bargain with the amoral right-wing corporate-dominated devil of consumerism, profiteering and despotic abuses of power, a superb array of more progressive, positive, inclusive, honest, visionary, achievable and fair-minded common sense ideas are laying around, as extensively articulated in this manifesto, seeking to achieve a resurgence of power, persuasion and sustainability that will be effective in preventing more dire developments.

Consequential ethics is a philosophic discipline that judges demagogues harshly, especially when those who divide us to conquer us push a treacherous agenda that harmfully discriminates against the majority of people and is cunningly calculated to concentrate wealth and power more rashly and radically exclusionary in the hands of a ruthlessly anti-democratic few. It is disgustingly dastardly for demagogues to hijack people's emotions and drive wedges between people to gain power, and to then proceed to abuse that power, thereby torpedoing the great benefits of social

cohesion and peaceable coexistence found in fairer, more unifying courses of action.

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

Will and Ariel Durant wrote in *Lessons of History*: "Somewhere, sometime, in the name of humanity, we must challenge a thousand evil precedents, and dare to apply the Golden Rule to nations, as the Buddhist King Ashoka did (262 B.C.), or at least do what Augustus did when he bade Tiberius desist from further invasion of Germany (A.D. 9). "Magnanimity in politics", said Edmund Burke, "is not seldom the truest wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill together." If ever there was a time for "winners" to be magnanimous, it is when they win at the expense of others, or are extra successful at milking the government treasury to grab the spoils of the biggest public borrowing spree in history, which is taking place to recover from the 2020 Pandemic.

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

Public Corruption, Graft and Crony Capitalism

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

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

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

Under Crooked Trump, there is a plethora of public corruption, especially by climate altering fossil fuel interests. And there are many instances of graft in highly unscrupulous uses of the Trump family's power for personal gain, and in blatant crony favoritism and vengeance, ramped up influence peddling, Department of Justice Trumpism, foreign intrigue, campaign finance violations, misuses of Trump "charitable foundation" donated funds, and unprecedented nepotism. Too, the American people have had to endure the divisive unfolding constitutional crisis over impeachable offenses that sprang into the public awareness soon after the Trump cult claimed to have been exonerated by Robert Mueller of malfeasance in the 2016 elections. Trump's exaggerated violations of law and sneaky conspiratorial attempts to cover up his misdeeds are cartoonish, though sadly deadly consequential.

Things are no doubt much worse than they would have been under Hillary Clinton, for with Trump Republicans we have ruthless assaults against core human values like inclusiveness, fairness of opportunity, honesty, decency, Black Lives really mattering, political moderation, Golden Rule reciprocity, good neighborliness, social cohesion, personal security, true national security, fairer justice, peaceable coexistence, responsible controls on deficit spending, sensible protections of the environment, and valiant efforts to actualize common good goals.

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

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

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

These are our puppet masters, and for them and other loyalists to their agenda, no sacrifice is too great for getting bigger opportunities to exploit public lands and take unfair advantage of working people. The public, meanwhile, is being distracted by the latest manipulative tweets and deceits, or by the most recent scandalous outrage or treacherous fusillade of impropriety, or by some new instance of Republican loyalists standing by their man, despite his having betrayed the American people by collaborating with Vladimir Putin, Mohammed bin Salman, Recep Erdogan and other autocrats abroad. While civic unrest spikes in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, the USA seems to be teetering on the brink of totalitarianism, and Trump's urging of "dominance" of protestors by deployments of the military is a dire threat to First Amendment rights. "Crazytown".

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

Another facet of treachery by Republican politicians is their monomaniacal focus on eliminating regulations and making corporate-friendly changes to rules that were sensibly designed to protect both people's well-being and the health of the natural world. These insidious actions wrongly facilitate the misbegotten goal of allowing enormous costs to be externalized onto society. These politicians are opposing clean energy initiatives and utterly failing to make responsible efforts to mitigate the disastrous impacts of a warming planet. These schemers are also sneakily striving to undermine transparency and accountability requirements, and impeding efforts toward creating a sustainable future. All of these things are far-reaching betrayals of the greater good.

The Republican Party has adopted a "winning is the only thing" stance, "willing to place an individual who at best is an embarrassment and at worst a serious danger to the health and security of our nation in the position of leader of the free world. -- 'Party before Country:' -- one can only look on with disgust." Well, Mark Twain's great-granddaughter looks on with chagrin, and launches a chuckling fusillade of comically spiteful ridicule. As those persistent pharmaceutical drug ads on television always urge on a perplexed public, "ask your doctor if this treatment may be good for you." (Don't bother trying to understand the small print.)

Many members of the Trump administration have been engaged in an astonishing amount of self-serving misconduct. The fingers point particularly at Mitch McConnell, Devin Nunes and MANY other members of the Trump cabal, including Scott Pruitt, Ryan Zinke, Steve Mnuchin, Wilbur Ross, and Betsy DeVos. Also excessively treacherous to the best interests of the people are the finally fired Attorney General Jeff Sessions and then loyalist Bill Barr, who all add icy frosting on top of the tainted cake. Let the people eat healthier cake!

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

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

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

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

Trump, sensationally, is now acting as a subversive against our democracy. This is creating great risks to Party and Country, due to uncertainty resulting from this impulsive, insult-hurling officeholder of the most powerful position in the world. All of this evidence makes the rule of Trump Republicans excessively illegitimate.

Incidentally, the U.S. Constitution is indeed great. But today it requires some new amendments to keep it adaptive and effective in dealing well with changing circumstances. An amendment on campaign financing is required, as advocated by the Move to Amend coalition of public interest groups. This amendment would reduce the overweening power of giant corporations, and salubriously give more influence to *We the People*. And a broadly fair-minded Bill of Rights for Future Generations is needed to provide us with safer guidance in all our national decision-making. This should become a cornerstone to a more providential Constitution that proves to be better capable of guiding us intelligently toward leaving a legacy of a fairer and more sustainable future.

Here's the Scoop, Folks!

Republican rule is not only illegitimate due to the ruthlessly fraudulent means used to gain power, but also because it is anti-American in the treacherous extent to which Republican politicians are indulging in a long litany of wrongheaded scams, devious bait-and-switch cons, and egregious harms -- as incisively assessed herein.

What shall we do in this dangerous moment of constitutional crisis? The illegitimacy of Republican rule cries out for a truly fair-minded resolution. So too does the egregious extent of abuses of authority being perpetrated by conservative politicians, and by system-corrupting wealthy people who keep buying the commitment of puppet politicians to run up the national debt to cut their taxes. Mark Twain would scoff, and query, "This is the best government money can buy?"

A good far-reaching fair-minded remedy is called for. In a just world, strict amends would be required for all the Republican wrongdoing. In the aftermath of the Senate acquittal of Trump on impeachable offenses, the American people face the most seriously consequential constitutional crisis in history, and we have an overarching need for a sensible solution to this serious challenge. I, Dr. Tiffany Twain, believe we should demand restitution from Republican politicians for their wide-ranging malfeasance. The solution we need should be based on a concept that is salubriously civilized: fair compensatory restorative justice for wrongdoing, rather than the more primitive idea of retribution against those responsible. Though guilt of law breaking remains.

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

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, had set forth the essential principles upon which our government was founded, and he referred to these visionary principles when he sensationally stated, "The wisdom of our sages and the blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty and safety."

Here's the kicker. This is perhaps the most perilous moment in history for our democratic republic, and the preservation of our democracy and general well-being hang in the balance. National intelligence experts have confirmed that Putin's Russia is interfering in our 2020 elections, as they did in 2016. And Trump is using the system-corrupting ability to raise huge sums of money from rich people and big corporations, to be used to hype up manipulative messaging and intimidate critics and buy the fealty of his allied cronies.

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

The 2018 midterm elections were a good step toward correcting this state of affairs. Democrats, having gained majority House control, are now setting the agenda, passing hundreds of remedial laws, and exerting majority influence. Mitch McConnell in the U.S. Senate is unfortunately betraying the common good by preventing most of these remedial laws from even being considered. Control of the House allowed Democrats to try to fulfill the Constitutional responsibility of Congress to exercise oversight over the Executive Branch and any malfeasance it commits. Republicans in Congress have been glaringly derelict in fulfilling this constitutional duty. Senate Republicans became even more seriously complicit in facilitating corruption when they conducted a sham trial in Trump's impeachment by refusing to allow witnesses or evidence. Their loyalty to Party is broadly disloyal to the

American people. The majority of Republicans in the Senate has chosen to violate democratic fairness principles and reject honorable integrity and ethical responsibility in governing.

The Need for Positive Change

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

The best plan, by far, would be to collect the best ideas together, and to seek out comprehensive understandings -- ones informed by reason, prudence, fair-minded egalitarianism, and consistency with both the greater good and expansive concepts of freedom. In other words, we need well-articulated progressive plans, not reactionary conservative plans, and these need to be articulated clearly and forcefully so that *We the People* will be saved from abusive far right policies that are proving to be disastrous to current and future well-being.

The Earth Manifesto is dedicated to the idea that some day, after we have stuck with a lot of other options that are inimical to the greater good, a growing consensus will develop that is centered on propositions like those contained in this manifesto. Like the fact, for instance, that much better cooperative problem solving is needed in civilized societies to achieve goals consistent with the health, general welfare, security and sanity of the populace. Let's accomplish this, instead of allowing Big Money and poorly accountable corporations to corrupt our political system and create monopolies and pursue 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. For best guidance, remember -- common good, yes! Tragedy of the Commons, no! Watch the sensationally beautiful documentary *Our Planet*, for appreciation!

The ideas Milton Friedman incubated were a form of gospel-like economic fundamentalism that has been shown to often be disastrous, as when adverse impacts resulted from ruthless economic imperialism, bubble economic policies, deregulated exploitation, unfair national priorities, fraudulent activities and reduced accountability, all of which contributed to wreaking painful hardships on billions of people around the world during the financial crisis and recession of 2008-09. Friedman promoted ideas that could most easily be imposed during economic or political shocks like recessions, financial panics, periods of revolutionary instability, (pandemic disease outbreaks), military coups or other moments fair-minded governments can be subverted. These ideas are subject to spin and propaganda by reactionary conservatives, who employ them for unfair, and system corrupting political purposes.

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

Climate Action

A U.S. government report published in late 2018 confirmed that climate change is real, and human activities are primarily to blame. This report by 13 federal agencies unequivocally contradicted Trump's claims that climate change is a hoax. The report instead made clear that the evidence is unambiguous: increasing damages and risks are being driven by man-made causes, principally including emissions of greenhouse gases and the chopping down of vast

tracts of forests, especially rainforests in equatorial regions. The report concluded, "evidence for a changing climate abounds, from the top of the atmosphere to the depths of the oceans."

Stern warnings have also been repeatedly issued by the world's leading climate scientists at the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, indicating we have only about 10 years to take transformational steps to keep global warming at a level beyond which risks will cataclysmically worsen of extreme heat, severe droughts, disastrous floods, terrible wildfires, and dire poverty for hundreds of millions of people. Unprecedented urgent changes are needed to prevent this far-reaching tragedy. Scientists give us good hope by speculating that these actions are both affordable and feasible, and that we must act at the most ambitious end of the Paris Accord pledges. It is wrong for the Trump administration to make budget cuts to climate research and mitigation programs, and to repeal Obama-era rules focused on reducing carbon emissions, and to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords -- and to stint on contributions to the eminently fair Green Fund to offset the climate injustices of our harmful climate impacts on billions of persons in other countries.

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

We should all support a real clean energy revolution. As 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 that the worst perils of the climate crisis could be overcome with human ingenuity, passion and proper commitments.

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

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

Revealingly, the three biggest producers of oil in the world, by far, are the United States, Saudi Arabia and Russia. Huge multinational corporations involved in extracting fossil fuels from beneath Earth's surface are overproducing these non-renewable energy resources, and they are mining these dirty fuels at artificially cheap prices because they do not include the mounting costs of pollution, oil spills, associated adverse human health impacts, climate disasters and the real adversities being foisted onto people in the future through the rapid depletion of these resources. The fact that these fuels are being over-produced only to burn them profligately is wrong, especially in light of the fact that scientists tell us we should leave 80% the known reserves of these combustible materials in the ground during the remainder of this century. Right now, we are posed to burn through this carbon budget within 20 years or so. Let's demand climate solutions that help prevent calamitous costs of global warming and disasters caused by extreme weather events and other climate disruptions, and ocean acidification and the decimation of coral reefs, and coastal calamities that will result from warming temperatures causing inexorably higher sea levels and storm surges.

This state of affairs persists because unacceptable degrees of political corruption infuse global oil politics. This observation is confirmed by the fact that, instead of establishing effective incentives to strongly promote conservation and more efficient uses of these dirty resources, perverse incentives have been put in place in nations worldwide to give enormous subsidies and depletion allowances to giant corporations involved in extracting fossil fuels. Such subsidies are bigger for fossil fuels than almost any other commodities, due to the widespread "rent seeking" corruption involved in these highly lucrative pursuits. We have a real responsibility to burn fossil fuels more frugally, so as to conserve them AND mitigate the dangerously detrimental impacts associated with spewing tens of billions of tons of greenhouse gases into Earth's atmosphere every year.

Think again about Mark Twain's satirical statement that we have the best government money can buy. In recent years, our leaders have failed miserably at establishing campaign finance limits and sensible controls over lobbying, so our democracy has been subverted into divided coalitions in which under-represented Americans cede control to wealthy conservatives and corporate executives. The bottom line result is to give us a "kakistocracy", a government run by some of the worst, most poorly qualified and most unscrupulous persons. This is a part of the biggest con in history, which is unfolding right before our eyes. This scam features an ultimate bait-and-switch scheme in which a dangerously unfit demagogue grabbed power by a litany of scurrilous means, and then he and those in his cabal began imposing their retrogressive agenda on the masses to finance new rounds of tax breaks for the rich. Their agenda is clearly anti-egalitarian, anti-progressive and anti-environmental.

Sad images assault our senses. The Bible tells believers to beware of false prophets who perform great wonders to deceive the faithful. Those who are wise will see clearly, and follow the money, and watch the real deceitful machinations of self-serving, excessively profit-prepossessed abusers of power and privilege. They will understand that false prophets make reprehensibly poor leaders. Let's overthrow these scheming overlords!

"Teflon Don", as the flamboyant Mafia boss John Gotti was known, was a racketeer who escaped unscathed and unrepentant from several criminal prosecutions during the 1980s. He finally met his deserved fate in the early 1990's when he was convicted of five murders, bribery, tax evasion, illegal gambling, and obstruction of justice. Our cartoon president Donald Trump, or "Teflon Don II", has been engaging in public perfidy, which he tries to conceal beneath an astonishing pile of bullshit, excuse me. This is especially onerous because his devious actions and failures put the public health and well-being and the safety of the American people at unnecessary risk. A dirge of ominous sounds accompanies this observation, signifying that Trump should not have been able to continue getting away with his unconstitutional abuses of power and evasion of consequences for his domestic shenanigans and conspiratorial collaboration with an international syndicate of brutal and myopic autocrats.

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

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

Reflections on Religion

Most religions tell their faithful flocks how to behave to be saved from eternal punishment in an imagined afterlife. In this regard, religions provide solace for the hardships people endure in their lives, but they also serve to enable

injustices in the world right now. Curiously, religions thereby distract people from demanding that their representatives in government act to honestly make the world a fairer and safer place today. And established religions function as an opiate to the people, contributing to divisiveness that keeps people from uniting to throw corrupt and deceitful politicians out of office, and from demanding and getting substantial reforms to our rigged economic and political systems to make them better for the populace, here and now.

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

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

People's adherence to religious dogmas is like 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 were to be redirected into more moderate, salubrious, wholesome and peaceable channels, and if the enormous amounts of time and money devoted to churches were redirected away from discriminatory biases. Imagine, for instance, if we could transcend the horrible conflicts over religious supremacy taking place between Christianity and Islam in the world today, as manifested by the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the U.S. and the retaliatory War on Terror and military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the on-going disastrous war in Syria, and the drone assassinations of Islamic extremists (and innocents nearby) in places like Pakistan and Yemen. The U.S. military has used air supremacy for years to bomb insurgents, yet terrorist extremism has gained excessive influence that is stoked by blowback against injustices. The costs of conflicts like this are terribly high in a world so much in need of smarter and more salubrious investments of money and energy.

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

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

Truly, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
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