



AMAZING DISGRACE

A Save the World Publication
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A beautiful rendition of the hymn *Amazing Grace* rings through my mind as these words precipitate into the public arena of broadening awareness.

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
T'was blind but now I see.

The lyrics to this great song were written by John Newton, a former captain of a sailing ship engaged in the slave trade from Africa to the American colonies. Newton had suffered a traumatic experience during a severe storm off the coast of Ireland in 1748, and subsequently found religion after having prayed desperately to God to save him -- and miraculously surviving the scare. So he converted to evangelical Christianity and became a clergyman. Having once been lost as a crude and unprincipled reprobate in his younger years, he resolved after this crisis of conscience to repent and be found, having been blind and then suddenly seeing. It was thus that he changed course and became more respectful, morally responsible and willing to embrace true Right Action. He later penned a polemic opposing slavery titled *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, and his song *Amazing Grace* became a highly respected anthem to hope, courage and transformation -- a song that is often sung at times of a social crisis of conscience.

Black Africans, after being captured and sold into slavery and brought in miserable conditions across the Atlantic Ocean to a land where they were accorded no rights, were often sold down the river to harsh fates in the Deep South, with or without their families, and for many generations. Harriet Beecher Stowe used the lyrics from the song *Amazing Grace* in her sentimental 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, which opposed slavery on moral grounds. The character Uncle Tom was a long-suffering black slave in this novel depicting the harsh reality of slavery while also asserting that Christian love can overcome something as destructive as enslavement of fellow human beings. Perhaps love is all we need?

Today, despotic acts are being perpetuated that are much worse than those imposed by King George III in the years leading up to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the Revolutionary War that followed. Modern "conservatives" are undermining the well-being of the American people and diminishing the hopes of hundreds of millions of folks in considerably more consequentially harmful ways than merely levying taxes on tea imported to the colonies or rigging the colonial system to deprive the people of fair representation.

Humanity is increasingly in desperate need of a better modicum of salvation in the here and now, and our leaders are horribly missing the mark -- a real sin! -- so we must seek salvation and redemption through greater honesty, honorable principles, inclusive understanding, and a greater respect for democracy, broad fair-mindedness, reason and precautionary wisdom.. This is a better plan than to complacently wait for an imagined afterlife of eternal bliss in the presence of God in Heaven. In these efforts we should be guided by the Golden Rule reciprocity principle,

and should embrace the farsighted provisions of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, as proposed in this manifesto.

The Disgrace of Extreme Short-Termism

In the Big Picture, the most astoundingly disgraceful state of affairs is the stubborn embrace of economic and political expediency and extreme ecological short-termism. The profit motive, unshackled and laissez-faire unrestrained, zealously sells the vast majority of the people down the river to an unnecessarily harsh fate, as seen by fossil fuel corporations refusing to take steps to prevent the destabilization of the global climate, and by giant pharmaceutical companies ripping off tens of millions of vulnerable folks in order to maximize profits, and even by such virtue-spouting corporate goliaths as the search engine Google and technology giant Apple, which are treating society shabbily by evading taxes. Facebook, for its part, can be seen to have been perniciously taking advantage of people's desire to communicate and be liked, and then selling our personal information and allowing manipulative demagogues and extremist groups to tear us apart -- in order to make bigger profits off advertising and propaganda messages and falsehoods that contribute to the shredding of unity and social cohesion in our communities.

We humans are reaching a condition of Peak Profligacy, and must choose to adapt rapidly by embracing new national and global priorities as soon as possible -- ones that respect precautionary principles and offer more powerful incentives for sustainable modes of living. We simply must make more effective efforts to conserve non-renewable reserves of many crucial natural resources, especially including fossil fuels and the mineral phosphorous, which is critically important for fertilizing crops -- and tropical rainforests, which serve as "the lungs of our home planet". This necessary change should involve making a much faster transition to cleaner renewable sources of energy from our dangerous dependence on climate-disrupting oil and natural gas and coal.

The early history of efforts to protect the environment in our democratic republic was remarkably bipartisan. Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, was one of the greatest presidents ever for his laudable efforts to establish protections of public lands and the environment. After he became president early in the 20th century, he sought to protect America's national resources from the greed of exploitive business entities, and one of his best accomplishments during his time in office was to conserve the nation's forests, fresh water resources and wildlife habitats. His conservation convictions were so strong that he succeeded in having 230 million acres of land set aside to be protected for the public in the form of 5 National Parks, 18 National Monuments, 24 fresh water reclamation projects, 150 national forests and more than 50 federal game preserves and bird sanctuaries.

Then in the 1960s and 1970s, truly broad bipartisan leadership helped enact all the bedrock environmental laws, including the Wilderness Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act. In the book *Getting to Green* by political independent Frederic Rich, the author explains that starting in the 1980s, a "Great Estrangement" began, with conservatives beginning a hard tack to the right and the Green movement drifting to the left. The sad result was that environmental issues underwent a disastrous transformation "from common cause to divisive wedge." And in recent years, federal spending on environmental protections and conservation has been significantly reduced. The status in the Trump era was shockingly worse, and dumbfounding in its backwards impulses and pushing of an agenda of the greedy.

We surely are in "a race between education and catastrophe," as the English writer H.G. Wells declared back in 1920. And this race has become increasingly urgent since his day. Canaries in the global mine are dropping dead left and right, along with roughly two-thirds of the populations -- since 1970! -- of a representative selection of 10,000 species of mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians and fishes, as the 2020 version of the Living Planet Report confirms. And we are "baking in" an increase in global average temperatures that guarantees excessively high costs of coastal flooding and extremely harsh natural disaster events. To mitigate these costs, we should rightly make bold efforts to alter this trajectory. We are already seriously threatening many species of life, including many in coral reef communities that are likely to suffer eternal extinction during coming decades.

The great David Attenborough intones in the extraordinary documentary film *Our Planet*, "For the first time in history, the stability of nature can no longer be taken for granted." Nonetheless, "the planet can recover. Never has it been more important to understand how the natural world works, and how to help it." Film critic Nick

Schafer wrote about this eight-episode Netflix documentary miniseries, "That ethos guides *Our Planet* from frigid tundra to bountiful forests to arid deserts to glistening oceans, adhering to a template that maximizes wonder, and then exploits it for both mournful critique and hopeful advocacy." Check it out!

Nick Schager provides scientific understandings in his article about *Our Planet*: "The notion of symbiosis — of the interdependence of man, animals and ecosystems — is fundamental to *Our Planet*. Not an episode goes by that Attenborough isn't explaining how one species' behavior (or existence) is dependent on another's, as well as how the environment works to sustain them all, and vice versa. It's in that crucial respect that the series underlines humanity's deleterious effect on Mother Earth. Awe-inspiring vignettes routinely double as cautionary tales about man-made climate change's radical restructuring of age-old natural orders. From the snowy wastelands of Antarctica, where diminishing stretches of ice are impacting polar bears' ability to hunt, to the arid plains of Africa, where draughts now force hippos to cover themselves in mud rather than water, to the Congo's shrinking rainforests, where gorilla populations have been halved by poachers, the destructive impact of our own actions is always front-and-center."

We are near a peak maximum of wasteful ways, in aggregate, not because humans are going to suddenly clearly see the existential folly of these behaviors. We are near Peak Profligacy not because we are going to soon achieve zero population growth and are likely to bring our human numbers into a sustainable balance. We are simply approaching limits in the amounts of finite reserves of fossil fuels, fresh water and other critical natural resources available, and we are exceeding natural carrying capacity constraints. It is foolhardy to continue spewing climate disrupting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. We are nearing the point where limiting factors will make it far too expensive for us to go on treating our home planet like a business in liquidation.

We can no longer be so exaggeratedly extravagant and unconscionably irresponsible with our resource uses, and we can no longer myopically allow greedy investors and big corporations to wreak havoc on the natural world. And we must find a way to prevent anti-conservation forces from ruling nations worldwide, and to remove demagogues and abusers of authority from power in many countries. Reactionary nationalist movements are corrupt in their essence and contrary to positive unifying features of social cohesion and collaborative efforts to make our existence fairer, healthier, safer and more sustainable.

The brilliant physicist Stephen Hawking once declared, "Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change." By that evaluation, the cowardly self-serving politicians who go along with Donald Trump's retrograde environmental policies are downright stupid in their efforts to promote the burning of increasing quantities of fossil fuels, for this will irreversibly increase the costs and risks of extreme weather events and the impacts of the destabilization of the global climate. It is insane to continue policies and priorities that disrupt normal patterns of temperatures and precipitation in locales around the world, and to stand in the way of smart actions taken to mitigate and adapt to global warming trends, ocean acidification, coral bleaching and rising sea levels.

A political cartoon surfaced on Facebook showing a big blue crowd with three black faces in it, with the words:

HERE'S THE PLOT: 97% OF THE WORLD'S SCIENTISTS CONSPIRE TO CREATE AN IMAGINARY ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS, ONLY TO BE EXPOSED BY A PLUCKY BAND OF BILLIONAIRES AND SENATORS AND OIL COMPANIES.

Here's the bottom line, as reported by Tim Radford in an article titled *Washington's political lobbying shackles science*. Lobbyists in Washington D.C. have spent billions of dollars to push their narrowly-focused corporate agenda, and to prevent legislative action that would mitigate climate disruptions. They brazenly spend vastly more than environmental organizations and the renewable energy sector. The upshot is clear: "when it comes to influencing climate legislation, money talks more urgently and effectively than evidence."

It is an extraordinary disgrace for *We the People* to be subjected to the predations of master manipulators dividing people so that they can irresponsibly impose an agenda of extreme short-termism on the world. The main characteristics of this crazy short-termism include: concerted efforts to maximize the extraction of resources, facilitate cost externalizing schemes, give top priority to wealth concentrating plans, allow scandalously corrupt pay-for-play political ploys, sacrifice public health, ignore scientific understandings, torpedo sensible climate

action, implement misguided national policies, and promote elite-favoring scams that are highly inequitable and morally bankrupt, all in conjunction with spiritually lacking materialistic consumerism.

It is a violation against concepts of Right Action for current generations to engage in extreme degrees of ecological short-sightedness that will leave a legacy of depleted resources, damaged habitats, decimated animal life, clear-cut forests, paved-over wetlands, dammed rivers, polluted skies, contaminated waters, spiking strife, increasing desperation and excessive debt incurred for wrongheaded reasons.

Conservative propagandists like Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson and Koch-backed organizations, in league with cunning Trumpian politicians, have been excessively successful in promoting falsehoods and demonizing progressives to advance their avarice-addled, corrupt and control-obsessed agenda. This is sadly ironic because of the disgraceful truth that their tactics have rationalized anti-democratic, anti-environmental, fiscally irresponsible and broadly inequality-increasing stances that are stupidly sacrificing the greater good in favor of allowing wealthy people to gain unconscionably generous short-term benefits.

The wise statesman Solon is known as "the father of democracy" for the fair-minded reforms he was able to put into effect in the city-state of Athens more than 2,500 years ago. At that time in history, revolutionary discord was spiking between members of the wealthy aristocracy and an increasingly angry populace. Solon was a skillful negotiator who was able to forge moderate and fair-minded compromises between the hubris-filled rulers and the people, thereby saving the republic from destructive conflict. It should be noted that the democratic rabble had good reason to be angry at that time, for the government was in the hands of elite factions that were abusing their power by doing things like corruptly stacking the courts with judges willing to decide every consequential issue against the masses.

Today, the federal Office of Government Ethics has declared that it is essential to the success of our republic that citizens can trust that good decisions will be made by our representatives -- ones motivated by fair considerations of the public interest, not by private gain of politicians and political parties and rich people. Yet the American people have compelling reasons to distrust the domineering Trump Republican Party, for it is generally striving to enrich insiders rather than to take the high road of working for the common good.

Professor Robert Reich makes it crystal clear in the film *Inequality for All*, and in his book *Saving Capitalism - For the Many, Not the Few*, that we should be striving to create a more inclusive and moral economy in which a virtuous circle reigns, not a vicious circle. The American people should stand up together and declare that they are as mad as hell at despotic power-abusing politicians, and that they are not going to take it anymore, and that they want a peaceful progressive populist revolution that is eminently egalitarian, and as soon as possible. I call on all people to make their voices heard in favor of fairer national policies and smarter national priorities.

Abraham Lincoln stated that all the people could not be fooled all the time. Today, many millions of Americans are being bamboozled, and their voices and best interests are being deeply disrespected, ignored and betrayed in the zeal of rich people to grab bigger portions of the income and wealth generated by exploiting natural resources and taking advantage of working people. Inequality is more extreme than it has been since before the Depression of the 1930s, and the top 1% of households in the United States now owns more wealth than the bottom 90% combined. Any honest tax plan would be structured so as to be highly graduated and really reduce this extreme level of wealth inequality, instead of making it worse. Scheming power-prepossessed conservative politicians, however, took a pivotal step with their egregiously devious Tax Cuts Act in December 2017 towards further redistributing wealth upwards and entrenching inequalities of income and wealth.

The devil is in the details, as they say, and the details of the Republican tax cut scam are downright diabolical in their extreme partisanship, naked pandering to the rich, deceitfully brazen inequitable nature, and the insidious degree to which the plan burdens all taxpayers in the future with riskily high levels of debt.

How is it possible in a democracy for power-abusing politicians to get away with this? The reason is basic -- because the vast majority of the American people effectively have little measurable influence on public policy. This stark conclusion was confirmed in early 2014 by Professors Martin Gilens of Princeton and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University, who analyzed 1,800 policy issues and found that "the preferences of the average

American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero and statistically non-significant impact upon public policy." Let's demand better! The Biden administration, and control of the U.S. Senate by Democrats, gives us a better chance to work on righting our ship of state, even in the face of radical opposition by Mitch McConnell and MAGA Republican loyalists in the House.

These are tragic times for the American people, as pathologically manipulative and deeply dishonest Republican politicians delivered great gifts to the rich with their Tax Cuts plan con job in Dec, 2017, along with dirty coal in the Christmas stockings of the vast majority of Americans when the plan was rammed through without a single vote by any Democratic representatives. These sycophants to the donor class are rigging the economy ever more extremely in favor of wealthy people, and achieving this grotesque top priority by pitting folks in red states against those in blue states, and sabotaging greater good goals, trying to shred the social safety net, displaying a severe deficiency of empathy, sacrificing the environmental commons, favoring dirty non-renewable sources of energy over clean renewable energy, driving up the risks and future costs of climate disruptions, and undermining the well-being of all in future generations.

It would be much smarter for us to create a rainy day fund to help pay for natural disasters like destructive hurricanes and "devil wind-driven wildfires" and other foreseeable probabilities. There will certainly be many more costly surprises as this century unfolds, so it is a calamitous Trump Folly to have imprudently put the pedal to the metal on driving up the national debt in order to slash taxes on corporations and rich people.

John Steinbeck tells a marvelous story about cormorants diving off the pier in Cabo San Lucas, concluding with the observation that they were "subversives" for having upset the established order. Scholars who study John Steinbeck indicate that the modest and soft-spoken author was sensitive to creatures being considered subversives for a cogent personal reason. His novels, like *The Grapes of Wrath*, had achieved great fame, and this had brought him notoriety, hate mail and even surveillance by the FBI. His literary themes were unsettling to the privileged, who feared anyone who poignantly points out the social problems related to poor people and the plight of farm workers, immigrants and disadvantaged people. Likewise they despised voices that emphasize startling contrasts in economic inequities in America or other failings of the dog-eat-dog capitalist system. Great literature evokes universal themes and images, so it provides deeper contexts in which readers can more viscerally understand. Books are sometimes 'subversive' of the status quo, but are more valuable for being so!

The Reasons Why the Current State of Affairs is an Amazing Disgrace

The USA is no longer a fairly representative democratic republic. An overarching reason for this is because the American people have been deeply divided by rashly scheming deceitful politicians and manipulative demagogues who managed to gain domineering power from 2017 through 2021 through a disgracefully corrupt litany of illegitimate means, as set forth in *Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy*. These are treacherous frauds used to sell the American people down the river to unnecessarily harsh fates with a deeply unjust debt-financed Tax Cuts scam. And they are betraying the best interests of every person in the future.

The arena of tax law is the most politically driven arena in government because it involves money and greed, and is thus a primary focus of abuses of influence and power. Tax law is the most intense area of law for egregious political corruption, and Republican politicians have devised and pushed through a devious and uncompromising tax plan that is a sad compilation of unfair, wealth pandering, inequality stoking, resource squandering, clean energy undermining, anti-conservation, debt burdening and future betraying schemes.

Political scientist Norman Ornstein of the conservative American Enterprise Institute declared of the Tax Cut plan in a tweet, "There has never been a more outrageous, revolting, unfair process to pass a corrupted bill in the history of Congress." He expressed this opinion eleven years after he co-wrote a book with Thomas E. Mann that blamed "both parties, equally" for the dysfunctional nature of Congress and politics in Washington, D.C. They then wrote in late 2017 about "asymmetric polarization" in *How the Republicans Broke Congress*, "over the past decade, it has become clear that it is the Republican Party -- as an institution, as a movement, as a collection of politicians - - that has done unique, extensive and possibly irreparable damage to the American political system."

Think about this. After dishonest Republicans betrayed the American people with their one-party tax plan, the beautiful sounds of refrains of *Amazing Grace* again drifted into my consciousness, and a recognition dawned.

Humankind is now in the midst of perhaps our highest stakes gamble of all -- deciding what to do, or what not to do, about the climate crisis. Scurrilous Republican leaders are rejecting prudence and precaution, and do not seem to have any viable backup plan to deal with the disastrous unfolding costs and damaging impacts of their wrong-headed opposition to necessary action. Scientists tell us that we should leave something like 80% of known reserves of fossil fuels in the ground during the years remaining in the 21st century, to prevent increasingly catastrophic and costly extreme weather events, including more intense and deadly heat waves, apocalyptic hurricanes, hellish wildfires, creeping desertification, coral reef bleaching, widespread coastal flooding and severe winter weather snaps like the three nor'easters that buffeted the Northeast in March 2018 and record-setting cold snap of November 2019, etc. But Republican politicians are working to prevent action designed to protect humanity from damaging outcomes like these. What part of this do they not understand? Compulsive greed and hunger for power and control can obviously trump common sense and morality.

Scientists keep being surprised at how rapidly environmental conditions are being altered by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Many of them are especially concerned with how fast glaciers and ice sheets are melting, and how severe episodes of coral bleaching are becoming in tropical oceans. Denial is a dumbly irresponsible course of action! Professor Garrett Hardin's words from his 1968 treatise on the Tragedy of the Commons resonate resoundingly: "Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons." For an in-depth assessment of the best understandings of this extraordinarily consequential issue, see my essay *Climate Change Considerations, Carrying Capacity and Population Overshoot*.

Here is another amazingly disgraceful fact. In December 2009, Donald Trump and his three oldest children, Ivanka, Donald Jr. and Eric, signed an open letter printed in the New York Times, along with 100 prominent business executives, which urged President Obama and world leaders headed to Copenhagen for international climate negotiations to act on climate change. The letter ominously stated that, "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet." Most unfortunately, once there was a huge amount of money and power available to the Trump family by aggressively siding with the fossil fuel industry, they demonstrated a reprehensible eagerness to pander to polluting companies, and to oppose climate action, and to support climate change deniers in positions of power. They thus betrayed common sense, the common good, integrity, precautionary wisdom and the moral good by contributing to the probabilities that humanity and planet Earth will suffer catastrophic and irreversible consequences. This is a grotesque failure to act in responsible ways!

The cost and consequences of INACTION on climate issues are both economically unacceptable and morally indefensible. Climate science has reached the point that it can definitively say that failure to very aggressively try to "solve" climate change is neither a rational or moral option for a nation or humanity as a whole. And, according to Joe Romm in his fascinating article *It's Not Too Late To Stop Climate Change, And It'll Be Super-Cheap*, "**The \$44 trillion additional investment needed to decarbonize the energy system by 2050 is more than offset by over \$115 trillion in fuel savings -- resulting in net savings of \$71 trillion.**" **Wow! Let's do the smart and responsible thing, and save an incredible amount of money!**

In insightful writer Naomi Klein's provocative talk at a TEDWomen Conference in 2010, she gave a brilliant presentation titled *Addicted to Risk*, indicating that we have become far too willing to gamble with things that are precious and irreplaceable. How can this collective recklessness be explained? There are, of course, many contributing factors, as Naomi Klein noted in her talk, which she gave right after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. These factors include greed, hubris, a surfeit of confidence in the righteousness of close-minded convictions, a male eagerness to take risks, and the perils inherent in working to give excessive privileges to the few. All these factors are rationalized by archetypal narratives that tell us that we humans deserve to reign supreme over every living thing, and over Nature. But tools and technology designed to control Nature will inevitably fail, so we should work WITH Mother Nature, NOT against her.

Corporations are abusing the power of their domineering influence in ways that are contrary to the greater good. These organizations are betraying the public trust and often the people who use their products, as well as taxpayers, their employees, the health of the environment, people in other countries and everyone in the future. Many companies illegally dispose of hazardous wastes or defy health and safety standards, or engage in price-fixing, or gain socially detrimental advantages through lobbyist shenanigans or other unscrupulous schemes. Corporate violations of laws and regulations cost hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of lives every year, and the magnitude of their offenses becomes clear when one considers that a single corporate offense may run into millions of dollars in losses, while the average cost of a burglary or larceny is less than \$1,000. In some cases, the cost of a single case of corporate or banking misconduct may exceed \$1 billion dollars, and corporate corruption is contributing to a widespread breakdown of ethical rightness, societal well-being and the boon of social cohesion.

Our national priorities should reflect higher values, not just a mish-mash of power-abusing expediencies and race-to-the-bottom profiteering enabled by a profoundly corrupt agenda. Budgetary decisions should be guided by considerations of ethical fairness, true moral rightness, ecological intelligence, and greater respect for -- and commitment to -- farsighted provisions in an ultimately responsible Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

It is a crippling fault of our political representatives in the world today that instead of Right Action, we are almost exclusively engaged in pandering to exceedingly narrow interest groups and facilitating Tragedy of the Commons outcomes, and foisting externalized costs onto everyone. Annual budgets proposed by Republicans are an affront to fiscal responsibility, inclusive concepts of fairness, truer justice, and the prospects of everyone yet to be born. The Right Action for us to take would be to emphasize better national planning that is more responsible, ethical, humane, just, empathetic and ecologically aware, and thereby to honorably pursue far-sighted precautionary principles, peaceable coexistence and sustainable courses of action.

Let's save the world! Together, let's rekindle that admirable revolutionary spirit of our liberty loving Founders, with their fairness-oriented democratic principles and Enlightenment Era ideals.

Seven Theoretically Simple Steps to a Saner Society

This is a digression to recapitulate the most important things we need in order to really honestly and fairly Make America Great Again.

(1) Defend the independence of the judiciary from excessively partisan and uncompromising ideological stances in legal decision-making.

(2) Defend the independence of the media from manipulation and suppression. Make sure we live in a world that accepts evidence and facts, not fake news, conspiracy theories, disingenuous misinformation and deeply biased reporting. We cannot let our world become a "post-truth" society fragmented by social media platforms that propagate lies, facilitate emotional hijacking and exploit people's fears and deep insecurities, thereby helping "conservatives" win elections. Independent investigative reporting is crucially important in our democracy, especially with secretive leaders who play loose with the truth and make extremely partisan and excessively corporate-friendly decisions behind closed doors and in ways that are distinctly contrary to the common good.

(3) Implement a much more egalitarian national tax plan that intelligently features Solon-wise taxation rates that are more progressively structured by being more steeply graduated, with lower rates for everyone on the first \$75,000 in income and higher rates on all income over \$250,000.

(4) End the practice of extreme partisan gerrymandering by creating non-partisan commissions of political independents in every state to re-determine Congressional district boundaries. Take this responsibility away from partisan state legislatures, like some states have done, including New Jersey, Iowa and California. When the responsibility for redistricting lies with partisan state legislatures, the outcomes are generally contrary to the public interest, and often produce congressional districts in which politicians choose their constituents, rather than the other way around. This redistricting action would make running for office more competitive, so more people's interests will be taken into account and respected. Our representatives would therefore strive to appeal

to broader constituencies, and necessarily become more responsible to all the citizens they represent. This would be one way to honestly and effectively make America greater!

(5) Prevent the trend of accumulated wealth becoming dynastic and selfishly aristocratic, like it did for many oppressive centuries in kingdoms of yesteryear. Keep inheritance taxes in place at rates like those in effect before the December 2017 Tax Cuts bill, for reasons set forth in the essay *Core Values of Democracy* (see pages 50 to 51 in *See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times*).

(6) Get Big Money out of the driver's seat in determining who will represent us in our elections and governance. Do this by instituting Clean Elections methods and making sensible reforms of campaign finance laws. Take the step advocated by the Move to Amend Coalition to accomplish this goal. This would be a good way to achieve the greater good, properly understood. Republicans tend to all but claim that God regards corporations as being people. Back in 2011, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney smugly declared, "Corporations are people, my friend". I thought, "Oh, is that so?" Well, let's call in the political economists, sociologists and historians, and the psychologists and psychiatrists, and let's analyze exactly what kind of person most giant corporations resemble in their actions. Conveniently, the insightful professor Joel Bakan has already done clear-eyed research for us on this topic, and he had a *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* handy by his side. Due to their behavior and inherent tendencies, he insightfully concluded, corporations would be pathological psychopaths, if regarded as actual persons. This is because they often act in ways that are socially irresponsible, manipulative, lacking any sense of empathy, and practically incapable of guilt, remorse, moral rectitude or genuine responsibility for the greater good.

(7) Enact true lobbying reform. There are currently more than 12,000 registered lobbyists in Washington, D.C. who frequent corridors in the halls of power, all of them intent on influencing one of the 535 members of Congress to support some special deal for themselves, often in ways contrary to the common good. And these lobbyists are highly compensated for their amazing success in turning hundreds of millions of dollars of corporate money and Koch billionaires' money and other rich people's money into *hundreds of billions of dollars* of tax cuts and special deals just-for-them, always at the opportunity cost of a fairer modern New Deal for *We the People*. WHAT A GREAT RETURN FOR THEM ON THEIR MONEY. But this is a tragedy for the people! All American citizens are affected by *The Top Ten Ways Our System Is Unfairly Rigged*, so it is high time we all better understood these corrupt aspects of the status quo, and demanded positive reforms.

We need sensible rules and regulations, adequate enforced. We need greater protections of human rights. We need greater freedom from adversities caused by polluters, corrupt dealings, financial fraud, Casino Capitalist ruses and Shock Doctrine Disaster Capitalist outcomes. We cannot afford to "deregulate" by reversing smart established protections of public health and safety and the environment, nor should we support ruthless efforts that will predictably create a tragedy-of-the-commons capitalistic free-for-all in which humankind treats planet Earth like an enterprise going-out-of-business and in liquidation, rather than a going concern. For better long-term guidance, we need to ratify a Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

Roguish Developments and the Rise of the Kakistocracy

The Republican Party seems to have gone rogue. Republican politicians and the shrewdly opportunistic crony capitalists they represent blatantly ran a scandal-ridden kleptocracy during the Trump regime, and succeeded at this by imposing domineering rule over *We the People* with a "kakistocracy" -- a Greek term that means rule by the worst, least qualified or most unscrupulous persons. One salient characteristic of this anti-democratic kakistocracy is that it seeks to impose some of the worst possible policies on the people, and to focus on some of the worst possible national priorities. The top goal for these money-obsessed and power-mad Mammonites is to give more tax cuts to rich people to gain their support. These facts inextricably mean that common good goals and the general welfare are violated in a seriously consequential manner. For more details about the swamp denizens in the kakistocracy, see *Postscript Two, Meet Members of the Kakistocracy*, at the end of this essay, and *Postscript One - The Top Ten Worst Aspects of Rogue Republican Rule*, which precedes it.

This modern-day kakistocracy was led by a Twittering Demagogue-in-Chief and his cronies who were actually well qualified in one terribly retrogressive regard -- they are effective in their opposition to the common good by

violating the principles, founding purposes, moral rightness and guiding missions of the government agencies they were charged with leading. How could they possibly have acted in such unconscionable ways, and get away with it? They should be ashamed to be so amazingly eager to fulfill the expectations of the corrupting persons and entities that have bought their allegiance. This is an especially bad category of unscrupulousness. Ideological extremists should be completely disqualified when they act as corrupt exploiters who want to "serve" by acting as skills for the rich, divisively undermining social cohesion, saddling the nation with more debt, and contributing to a profoundly unprincipled environmental Tragedy of the Commons of the first order.

One of the most amazing aspects of Republican disgrace is their extremely male chauvinistic, virulently anti-choice and effectively misogynistic national policy preferences and their boorishly sexist willingness to trade their souls for power by letting male leaders get away with lying brazenly about sexual misconduct against women, and even, in the case of Alabama's Roy Moore, apparently against a succession of teenage girls. Matt Gaetz, the Trump-supporting representative from Florida, is another culprit for his reported indecent activities with underage girls. And Donald Trump, who famously bragged on tape about grabbing beautiful women "by the pussy", is a notorious offender who has been found liable in the E. Jean Carroll rape case. Stormy Daniels?

The Emperor wannabe has no clothes, and it's an exceedingly ugly spectacle! Recall Hans Christian Anderson's famous tale, in which two conniving weavers sell a suit of clothes to the Emperor, saying it is invisible to those who are dumb or incompetent or otherwise unfit for their positions. As the Emperor vainly parades before the populace in his new clothes, no one dares to say they don't see any new suit of clothes on him, for fear that they will be seen as lacking, but then finally a child cries out, "But he isn't wearing anything at all!"

Let's Move Forwards, Not Backwards!

The Goddess of Irony flashes in the night sky. A main focus of Donald Trump while in office was to undo every accomplishment achieved by the smart black man who preceded him in the White House. This was true relating to the most consequential issues like those involved with environmental damages, socialized costs, greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, fuel efficiency rules, resource depletion, family planning, and protections of clean air, clean water, public lands, endangered species and biological diversity. This seems to be a curiously racist-tinged whim, and it is sad that this egregious stance can accurately be understood as vindictively bigoted, myopic, obtusely selfish, grotesquely contrary to the general welfare, and insidiously treacherous to young people and all in future generations. The simple fact of the matter is that the Biden administration needed to undo many of the damages done, and alter course from irresponsibly short-term-oriented schemes, unethical scams, divisive swindles, discriminatory executive orders, immoral family separation policies, and concerted efforts to allow corporate abuses of power, offshore oil drilling, and assaults on the vulnerable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks, National Monuments, BLM lands and other public property.

We need progressive action, like the implementation of ideas espoused by Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris and Pete Buttigieg. We should act intelligently, keeping eminent fair-mindedness foremost in our considerations, and choose to elect significantly more women to office. We owe it to them, many of them having been cheated in recent elections out of the opportunity to lead. This included outstanding potential representatives like the former state environmental chief Katie McGinty in Pennsylvania in 2016 and the Fordham University Associate Professor of Law Zephyr Teachout in New York. We can no longer afford to hew to righteously wrongheaded policies and priorities.

After a broad repudiation of Trumpian discriminatory demagoguery in the November 2017 elections in Virginia, New Jersey and the state of Washington, observers noted that the Trump era may one day be remembered as a last desperate power grab by white males who expect to have dominion and be allowed great perks and privileges that excessively favor them at the expense of the vast majority of others. Demographic trends are against them, and within a few decades their numbers will slip below 50% of the populace, so it is actually an excellent time for them to support the decent goal of recommitting our nation to respecting rights of minorities. Instead, of course, Trumpian champions of white male privilege want to ratchet up discrimination against immigrants, asylum seekers, women, Blacks, Latinos, Muslims, gays and poor people. This is disgraceful.

Republican politicians have succeeded in wielding excessive power, and in being able to abuse authority, by

exploiting resentment-stoked populist sentiments and anti-immigrant fervor, and by invoking religion and God. They misuse power for personal gain, engage in naked political malfeasance and corruption in office, use the power of legislatures for unscrupulous private advantages, abuse government power to hurt political opponents, and rationalize injustices like racial discrimination, hostility to the rights of women, class warfare, mass incarceration, instances of police brutality and the violation of environmental policies, laws and regulations.

Republicans triumph over the common good by riling up the masses with emotion-manipulating advertising and excessively simplistic, divisive, deceitful and demagogic propaganda designed to gain support from people their plans are formulated to betray. How could they have succeeded at this? Well, by following tradition, ever since Ronald Reagan showed them the way -- with his folksy anti-union, socially unjust, inequitable, Golden Rule violating, fiscally irresponsible, deficit financed, anti-environmental and authority-abusing way of pandering to the wealthy few and their organizational corporate tools. Reagan also gave special sway to Wall Street and military Keynesian hyper spending to benefit entities involved in the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex.

Another attribute of Republican politicians is their broad betrayal of the American public by pretending to be concerned about people in the middle class and "the forgotten man" -- while pushing policies that primarily benefit the top dogs in our country and irresponsibly incurring more debt to provide big tax breaks to top income earners, while cutting spending that benefits the masses, like that on healthcare, public education, nutrition programs, environmental protections, and many other initiatives that characterize civilized societies.

The Republican Tax Cuts plan is a naked manifestation of this cunning corruption. Republicans have lied through their teeth about how their law will help people in the middle class, because in fact the scheme is foisting a disastrous new degree of inequality and unfairness and burdens on we denizens in the land of the free.

There is only one way that such a deviously disgraceful and despicably disingenuous tax plan, with its huge benefits for corporations and rich people, could possibly have been imposed on the American people by a partisan phalanx of hubris-filled politicians exclusively from one political party. There's only one way this plan with its radically unfair hard-right social engineering provisions could squeak through into law when this narrowly-focused generosity is financed using more than \$1.5 trillion of borrowed public funds. There's only one way that this legislation could have been passed that creates growing pressure to make big cuts in spending on social safety net programs, environmental protections and a host of other common good goals. There's only one way possible that these Republican politicians could succeed at this without any public hearings in Congress and by using rashly anti-democratic tactics, and doing so in an all-fired hurry because the illegitimacy of their scandalously achieved electoral coup was being exposed by journalists and multiple investigations by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York investigating election finance violations, financial fraud, public corruption, money laundering, foreign bribery and organized crime.

The only way these things are possible is because Big Money has domineering influence in our politics. Sadly, the Supreme Court has effectively sanctioned this outcome with its wrongheaded 5-4 decisions in the *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon* rulings, and our country's politics have been rashly corrupted by billionaires like Charles Koch and the Mercers and the recently deceased Sheldon Adelson and their ilk.

Republican politicians have very good reasons to have been in such a big hurry to deliver this lavishly generous *Amazing Disgrace* boondoggle to their intensely expectant donors. The illegitimacy of the ruses they used to gain power is being exposed, and the time is approaching when the top echelons of their leadership are likely to be run out of town. The ethical rot of their abuses of authority and obstruction of progress and justice are coming to light, so ramming through this future mortgaging, anti-democratic, common good-betraying, secretive abomination of vested interest giveaways and Forgotten Man takeaways was a now-or-never proposition.

Remember the sentiments and perspectives articulated by Thomas Paine during tumultuous times in *Common Sense*, his revolutionary pamphlet published in January 1776. After famously declaring that we have it in our power to make the world over again, sure enough, guided by his courageous counsel and driven by people's love of liberty and their antipathy toward despots who wield abusive power, our ancestors in the American colonies sought common purpose in gaining liberation from British tyranny. By July 4, 1776, Thomas Paine's clarity of conviction in the cause of independence from despotism had catalyzed into a new form of fairly representative governance that better

suited a liberty-loving people. Our Founders then came together to bring forth a new nation, collaboratively concocting a farsighted Constitution and fair-minded Bill of Rights, and they put rules of law into place and a brilliant flexible governing structure that has progressively adapted ever since.

Let us once again stand up for independence from tyranny, and remember that true legitimacy of governance can be found only in the fair consent of the governed. Well-informed consent is, of course, better than poorly informed consent, and worst of all is coerced consent, along with the sad acquiescence to misguided priorities of deceived voters due to misleading propaganda, devious spin, false conspiracy theories and brazen lies.

As the noose tightened on scandalous Republican malfeasance with criminal investigations, more details were revealed of the cover up of coordinated efforts with Russia to interfere in the 2016 elections to help get Republicans elected. The main reason Republicans demonstrated such a fervor to end all the investigations and exonerate Trump in two impeachment trials was that they saw a heightening probability of their tenuous monopoly on power coming to an end. With a subsequent 91 felony counts against Trump in 4 different serious cases, they are now trying to let him off the hook and evade accountability for his misdeeds.

Trying to play offense, eleven far-right Republican politicians in the House introduced a bill in late July 2018 to impeach then Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. This was part of an intensifying effort to discredit the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 elections in favor of Trump. Incisive observers say this was also a shrewd attempt to attract Big Money donations to their reelection efforts, like Trump absolutist Devin Nunes did in collecting large sums of money from Super PACs and out-of-state Trump supporters.

Trump himself desperately attacked the Mueller investigation on Twitter and at his ranting rallies. He sensed, it seems increasingly obvious, that his guilt was being exposed, and perhaps Nemesis, the Greek Goddess of Retribution, might be getting ever more agitated at his hubris. All of this is not a mere "witch hunt".

Trump once tweeted, "Russia continues to say they had nothing to do with Meddling in our Election". Really?! The President of the United States was eager to swallow Vladimir Putin's devious assurances, despite the unanimous conclusions of all American Intelligence agencies. So it was ironic and very suspicious that Trump concluded that tweet with these words: "So many questions, so much corruption!" YES, INDEED!

There is overwhelming evidence of unconstitutionally unfair influence of extreme gerrymandering by Republican legislatures across the USA, a ruse that has helped give socially disastrous domineering power to Republican politicians. Such system-corrupting tactics are letting scheming politicians egregiously abuse their excessive and unmerited influence by disenfranchising millions of Americans and imposing reactionary policies, social and environmental, on the populace. Satirist Andy Borowitz made the humorous observation, "Vice-President Mike Pence has requested that Jesus Christ rapture him up before the special counsel Robert Mueller can indict him." These leaders should be denied tenure in office, and replaced with more honest, fair-minded representatives.

Only those who are adequately repentant for egregious sins are deserving of the amazing grace of forgiveness. By deviously designing a tax bill that makes winners of a narrow minority -- and relative losers of a vast majority -- Republicans are trying to further "divide the blue states from the red, the Democrats from the Republicans. It is evil in the extreme", declared California Governor Jerry Brown. Evil is not good!

Jerry Brown also accused Republicans of "acting like a bunch of Mafia thugs" by targeting rich, high-tax and largely Democratic states in their tax cuts plan so that they could curry favor with their political base and redistribute money to poorer Republican-leaning and Republican-run low-tax states. The unscrupulous Mafia-like Republicans in the Senate and the House managed to get an extremely narrow majority of votes to pass tax cut bills without a single representative of Democratic districts included, and then engaged in "reconciliation" in a conference committee to put final touches on the different schemes hatched in tax cut legislation narrowly passed in both chambers. An accurate understanding of this process, according to an astute observer, was that they were "negotiating among themselves to find the tricky combination that can win over various GOP factions in both chambers without losing others, all the while keeping the projected increase in the deficit below \$1.5 trillion."

This whole process was not only tricky, but a devious trick: the tax cut scam was a dishonest and risk-laden trick upon all taxpayers in every future year.

John Maynard Keynes, "the father of macroeconomics", was famous for advocating stimulative spending by the government during recessionary times to get the economy growing again, but he strongly advocated taking the proverbial punch bowl away by running offsetting budget surpluses during boom times to keep debt from ballooning and the economy from overheating in a risk-laden bubble. When there was with very low unemployment, before the pandemic, and a surfeit of national debt, it was the wrong time -- the exactly wrong time -- to hyper-stimulate the economy by giving huge tax breaks to rich people and power-abusing corporations, and to rashly run up deficit spending.

Remember that the top tax rate on individuals was 70% or higher for 45 years before Ronald Reagan became president and managed to get the top tax rate slashed to 28% during his tenure in office. Since then, budget deficits have been incurred almost every year, except during the final two years of Bill Clinton's presidency. This has driven up the national debt to record levels that are dangerous because they represent a historically high percentage of GDP. This level has been seen only once before in U.S. history, which was in connection with the huge effort of the U.S. in fighting the exceedingly costly Second World War against fascist aggressors. Today, the top tax rate is still less than 40%, and wealthy people make most of their money on capital gains that are taxed at very low rates. And most wealth is passed on tax free to heirs after they die. Due in large part to tax cuts on the highest levels of income and on inheritances, and due to tax evasion schemes by corporations and rich people, the national debt has soared from less than \$1 trillion in 1980 to over \$34 trillion in Mar. 2024.

Republicans crowed about their tax cut strategy, brazenly claiming it would be a win-win for everybody, despite the fact that it was designed to choose big winners and wreak disadvantages on countless millions of others who will be left behind. In all probability, their actions will have harmful lose-lose consequences for the majority of Americans and almost everyone yet to be born. Republican politicians, after causing budget deficits to spike, sounded the alarm about the debt, before the pandemic, and cynically began using this as justification to impose reductions in spending on healthcare, public education, protections of public lands, and the safety and security of the people -- including safety net programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio admitted this fact that the Republican tax plan was merely a first step before "instituting structural changes to Social Security and Medicare". He called for slashing benefits or privatizing the programs in order to reduce the federal deficit, which their 2017 Tax Cuts have made significantly worse. Senator Bernie Sanders had predicted this outcome when he wrote, "Mark my words. If passed, the Republicans will then rediscover the 'deficit crisis,' and push aggressively for massive cuts in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, education -- higher education in particular -- nutrition, affordable housing and more. They will seek to undo every major piece of legislation passed in the last 80 years designed to help working families, the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor." This is pathological treachery against the American people!

A first instance of coming spending cuts came to light as Republicans were laser focused on ramming through this wrong-headed assembly of shrewdly targeted tax cuts. Nine million children were on the verge of losing their health care because funding had not been re-authorized for the Children's Health Insurance Program, a low-cost health insurance plan for children from low-income families that expired in October 2017. During a debate in early December on the Republican tax bill, Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio asked about the future of this program, and Orrin Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee that presided over the tax cut hearings, claimed the program had not been renewed "because we don't have money anymore" -- two weeks BEFORE they finally pushed their tax cuts into law. This sad negligence was occurring even though there was bipartisan support for renewing the program rather than abandoning children. What was happening? Yes, the Republicans were again using vulnerable persons as bargaining chips in their winner-take-all gamesmanship.

An advocate for deficit-financed tax cuts, a man who is a smart investment executive of a ultra-high-net-worth wealth management firm, actually asserted that the Tax Cuts would not make inequality worse, echoing the dubious claim that the plan would prove to be a good thing for most Americans because tens of millions of Americans have investments in the stock market through their 401(k) retirement plans. But a little research revealed the truth: only 32% of Americans are saving for retirement in a 401(k), and the perception that stock market gains would be broadly shared is misleading. While more than 45% of American households do have direct or indirect investments in the stock market through 401(k)s, mutual funds, trusts, pensions or direct purchases of

shares, the top 10% of households own more than 80% of the total value of those investments, while the vast majority of shareholders have relatively meager holdings.

Disaster capitalism, as Naomi Klein sees it in her incisive book *The Shock Doctrine*, is amplifying itself by morphing into the most crazed Trumpian casino capitalism that can plausibly be imagined. It suffers from the fault of being value deficient, due to its kleptocratic plunder and astonishingly wasteful materialistic consumer craziness. For whom does the bell toll? It tolls for us all. Let's pay attention! Let's sharpen our wits. Casino Capitalism, Inc. has its doors wide open for speculation, and hubris-filled conservatives are making an all-out gamble that they can get away with engaging in idiotically arrogant overreach by exploiting people and ratcheting up the national debt. Both the intended and unintended consequences will eventually be very ugly.

Retrogressive Leadership

Think again about Donald Trump's crude efforts to reverse every action taken by President Barack Obama, in what was an apparently reactionary and egomaniacal whim tinged by racial prejudice. Because Trump's actions are so self-centered, self-serving, rashly shortsighted, broadly unjust, ecologically unsound and blatant in their disregard for future well-being, it will be necessary for new leaders sometime soon to responsibly reverse all the inequality-stoking and inequity-stimulating actions imposed on the world by Trump and his crony sycophants in Congress. Their "America First" policies simply give too little respect to other "constituencies", and in effect put life on Earth and the prospects and well-being of all people in future generations last.

Abraham Lincoln echoed the Bible during the Civil War, one of the most divisive times in American history, when he warned that a house divided cannot stand. Today, master dividers wield too much power through election cheating strategies like restricting voter suppression laws and partisan gerrymandering, and are making stark efforts since the 2020 elections to pass numerous laws in many red states that would allow legislatures to override the expressed will of the majority of voters. They are trying to abuse power by exerting domineering control over the people and rigging the economy and tax law ever more radically in favor of the few and against the common good. We should, as a consequence, rightly stand up and throw these treacherous politicians out of office, and replace them with leaders who are much more honest, fair-minded, inclusive and justice championing, and who are truly more respectful of women and peaceful coexistence, precautionary principles, protections of a healthy environment and other important values. Moderation in all things!

When the prospects for well-being for every being in future generations are betrayed by greedy apologists for outrageous abusers of power, this is not good. When the common good is undermined through the use of deceitful ideological arguments, this is anti-American. When the schemers who are perpetrating these outrages are working overtime to brazenly grab domineering power, no matter what the cost, and to stack the courts with "conservative" collaborators, these zealots deserve the deep disdain of those who they betray.

Republican politicians, drunk on power and exhibiting coldly calculating hubris, are busy rigging the rules in our country in backwards ways that will reward their generous benefactors. But they are doing this at a terrible cost to the vast majority of Americans, and of all persons in future generations. They are cynically using the slogan "Make America Great Again" and taking outrageous advantage of anti-immigrant fears and antipathies to promote a bait-and-switch agenda, and to deceive their base into supporting deeply inequitable outcomes.

Instead of promoting truly fair and honorably principled national policies, they are pushing reactionary plans to engineer society into a more repressive one that is inimical to broader personal rights and freedoms, especially for women and people in racial minorities, and immigrants and desperate refugees and asylum seekers. And they are misusing religion and fostering divisive propaganda in order to implement an unacceptably narrow agenda. This is having consequentially detrimental impacts.

Let's not allow these schemers to hijack our emotions and manipulate us so easily, and let us not fall for the distractions and swindles that corrupt politicians are using to take advantage of the people.

Men's souls are being tried today, as Thomas Paine declared they were during Revolutionary times, and too many of them are being found guilty. Dante regarded fraud and treachery to be the worst of his nine circles of Hell, and if there is a judgmental God, "He" is looking down with burning disapproval upon those who perpetuate highly

consequential crimes against humanity, and who betray principles of cohesive Golden Rule fairness, decency and environmental sanity. We are not lost, and we need now to be found; we have been blinded by deceivers, charlatans and demagogues, but now we can see. 'Tis grace that hath brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain on April 1, 2024

Postscript One: The Top Ten Worst Aspects of Rogue Republican Rule

1. Arrogant leaders are mindless ramping up assaults on life on Earth, despite the fact that humankind has already been decimating the population of almost all other forms of life on the planet. They are doubling down on plans that have contributed to wiping out more than two-thirds of the populations of 10,000 representative species of mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians and fish, as ominously reported by the World Wildlife Fund in its sadly revelatory and sensational Living Planet Reports.
2. Meanwhile human numbers have more than tripled since 1950, increasing from 2.5 billion to over 8 billion today. And yet Republican politicians are banning abortions and trying to make it harder and less affordable for women to get contraceptives, and they instituted a version of the Global Gag Rule that is wrongheaded by being more severe and far-reaching than ever before. In this action, they expanded prohibitions on abortions abroad to make them significantly more onerous than when Ronald Reagan first instituted this rash rule. The population explosion is a driving causative factor behind the shredding of the web of life on Earth, because increasing numbers of people are wreaking damage on wildlife habitats, poisoning ecosystems, changing normal patterns of temperature, precipitation and storm intensity by altering the gaseous composition of the atmosphere and the acidic-alkaline balance of the oceans, and causing sea levels to insidiously and ominously rise.
3. They are pushing policies that serve to squander natural resources at the fastest possible rate without any discernable shred of adequate concern for either sharing the spoils more broadly or conserving these critical resources on behalf of all persons in the future.
4. They are stubbornly refusing to take strong action to reduce carbon emissions or mitigate the increasingly severe damages and risks associated with the worsening climate crisis.
5. They are pushing a variety of scams, schemes and swindles to facilitate the socializing of externalized costs and increase inequalities and concentrate wealth ever more narrowly in the hands of the few. The sordid details of these shrewd ruses and con games are revealed throughout the sensational essays contained in *See Clearly*.
6. They are working to undermine public education, goose private profits and oppose sensible steps to reduce student debts, and failing to strengthen protections of women from sexual assaults.
7. They are trying to maximize profits for the few by rashly undermining sensible protections of Clean Air, Clean Water, public lands, National Parks and Monuments, oceans, Wilderness Areas and endangered species.
8. They are ruthlessly using extremely divisive tactics to gain and maintain power, and abusing this power by disdaining broader efforts to expand inclusivity and social cohesion. Instead of honoring Golden Rule principles of mutual reciprocity and working to achieve common good goals, they are sowing division in order to control and dominate, and they are exploiting resentments, anger, fears, anti-immigrant sentiments and racial biases of supporters in their political base to discriminate against almost everyone in the USA who is not a white male.
9. They refuse to take steps to limit access to gun purchases by people on the terrorist watch list or known to be suffering from mental health problems, and they obediently march to the drummer of the NRA, a front group for arms manufacturers and assault weapons pushers. The NRA has nefariously produced a series of rabble-rousing videos using inflammatory rhetoric by a scornful spokesperson named Dana Loesch. These are darkly manipulative videos that seem to be designed to provoke people's fears and hatred of advocates for sensible controls on gun sales, and of protestors in general, and even to incite violence against them.

10. The top priority of Republicans is to cut taxes on corporations instead of more honorably promoting the general welfare or ensuring domestic tranquility or leaving a fairer legacy to people in the future. To achieve these tax cuts, which are designed to primarily benefit the rich, they want to slash spending on programs that help old people and poor people and tens of millions of Americans whose voices are being ignored -- programs like Medicare, Medicaid, protections of the environment and a hundred other hallmarks of a civilized society.

History has witnessed Republican politicians trying to gain and maintain power through election skullduggery and catering to the rich and dark money groups. It is becoming clearer that these operatives are overreaching in their efforts to satisfy a driving lust for money and authority through this modern master plan of pandering to a corrupt coalition of corporate crony capitalists and wealthy conservatives, and manipulative demagogues, resentment-filled right-wing populists, religious fundamentalists, anti-choice zealots, white supremacists, male chauvinists, Q-Anon pushers of absurd conspiracy theories, opponents to sensible gun safety regulations, and anti-environmentalists. This is amazingly disgraceful.

Postscript Two: Meet Some Members of the Kakistocracy

Who were the main members of the Trump kakistocracy? The following were members of "the worst or least qualified or most unscrupulous citizens" who were put in positions of power. Note that in the disastrous event of another Trump term, the Cabinet would likely be more unconstrained and less accountable. Among the worst of the Cabinet members was the top legal authority in the country in the Department of Justice, Attorney General Jeff Sessions (until he was fired right after the 2018 midterm elections). Sessions apparently lied through his teeth about his and the Trump campaign's collaboration with Russia to throw the election to Trump Republicans. He was one of the main persons responsible for pushing "zero tolerance" immigration policies. He also offensively wanted to make the costly War on Drugs even harsher, deciding that overreach by the federal government is a good idea, as evidenced by his decision to ratchet up the extremely unjust and oppressive criminalization of the use of cannabis by engaging in a crackdown on existing marijuana laws in states that have legalized it. This is bizarrely inconsistent with what was once a core Republican value of defending states' rights, and it reveals soul-less and unprincipled aspects of the Party. Sessions was also a lousy person to try to enact fair reforms of the criminal justice system or honestly deal with racial discrimination inherent in national policies that have made our system of excessive criminalization and mass incarceration so unjust.

Jeff Sessions was replaced by Matt Whitaker and then Bill Barr, highlighting another shortcoming of the leadership of the Justice Department: these men acted like their duty was to be loyalists to Trump, rather than properly and honorably representing the American people. Bill Barr deserved to be impeached, but as the November 2020 elections approached, it was an excellent reason to throw Trump Republicans out of power!

Also among the worst members of the kakistocracy are both of Trump's heads of the Environmental Protection Agency, which was created through bipartisan agreement during Richard Nixon's years. These Trump sycophants brazenly favored short-term-oriented profiteering by fossil fuel businesses and a rash foisting of costs onto the public. These wide-ranging "cost externalities" include air pollution, water pollution, adverse impacts on millions of people's health, the unsustainable depletion of energy resources, and spiking costs related to emissions of greenhouse gases and the rapidly worsening conditions being caused by the climate crisis.

These reckless efforts undermine conditions that would help guarantee fairer treatment to young people and all people yet to be born in future generations. In keeping with this misguided ecological policy, the Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, favored private education at the expense of more generously funding public education, and showed inadequate concern for the heavy burden of debt imposed on students and their parents due to our system of student loans that have high interest rates and oppressive terms.

The Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin came from a private bank where he became known as an unscrupulous "foreclosure king" for his ruthless actions toward victims of the credit crisis of 2008, and he is one of the drivers behind the highly regressive and fiscally irresponsible tax cut plan that Republicans rammed through into law without any input from representatives of well over half of all Americans who did not vote for them.

Also, it turns out that Wilbur Ross, a billionaire nicknamed "the king of bankruptcy" who had been appointed as Secretary of Commerce, had many conflicts of interest. He suspiciously failed to disclose investments during his confirmation hearings in a shipping company he once controlled that has significant business ties to the son-in-law of Vladimir Putin and a Russian oligarch who is subject to U.S. sanctions, according to the "Paradise Papers". This leaked trove of more than 7 million internal documents of a Bermuda-based law firm provide "a rare insight into the workings of the global offshore financial world, which is used by many of the world's most powerful companies and government officials to legally avoid paying taxes and to conduct business away from public scrutiny." Where the sun never shines, you can bet the shenanigans are scandalous, and sure enough, more than 120 politicians and royal rulers around the world are identified in the Paradise Papers as having ties to offshore tax havens. Also, Wilbur Ross lied to Congress about his role in a Trump administration effort to add a politically manipulative citizenship question to the 2020 census. according to House Democrats.

Another way that Trump Republicans betrayed the best interests of the vast majority of Americans was by stacking the courts with ideologically extreme "conservative" judges. The Gorsuch, Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett Supreme Court is making its impact by siding with amoral corporations over people. And they will no doubt look with narrow favor on things like Republican efforts to strike down a sweeping rule that would have allowed millions of Americans to band together in class-action lawsuits against arbitrary arbitration clauses in all manner of banking and commercial contracts. By forcing people into private arbitration, such clauses in effect take away one of the few tools individuals have to fight predatory and deceptive business practices. Republicans overturned this rule only by having Vice President Mike Pence break a 50-to-50 tie. Their intention is to further loosen regulations on Wall Street and roll back Obama-era policies enacted in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis to protect people. By this action, Republicans were dismantling a major effort of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the watchdog agency created in the aftermath of the mortgage mess.

In the big picture, there is a gaping disconnect between Trump's populist rhetoric and the more conventional reality of how he governed. By signing a bill to kill the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Arbitration Agreements rule, people who are gouged by big banks or subjected to discrimination had a harder time seeking redress in the courts. When Trump put Mick Mulvaney, an outspoken opponent to banking regulation, in charge of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, it demonstrated blatant antagonism to the common good. "This is not the type of change most Trump voters were looking for. Perhaps that's why he signed the measure behind closed doors and with no fanfare."

Mick Mulvaney also served as Trump's budget director and acting White House Chief of Staff. So it was particularly onerous to hear him frankly admit that he champions what is in essence corrupt pay-to-play politics. Speaking to a group of executives from the banking industry in April 2018, he made it clear that he planned on helping them financially, and for proof he pointed to his past behavior as a Republican congressman who sold influence to the highest bidders. "We had a hierarchy in my office in Congress," he confessed conspiratorially. "If you're a lobbyist who never gave us money, I didn't talk to you. If you're a lobbyist who gave us money, I might talk to you." This was pathetic and alarming!

Trump's Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai tried to kill "net neutrality". This corporate friendly move was contrary to the best interests of the American people. Ajit Pai, a former lawyer for the conglomerate Verizon, tried to change the policies of the Federal Communications Commission to create a more pro-Trump media landscape by pushing through rule changes on media ownership to help right-wing Sinclair Broadcast Group gain an ever-larger monopoly on local television stations around the country.