

# Earth Manifesto



## Project 2025 and the Nefarious Ruses at the Root of the Rigged Status Quo

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Many Americans feel a sense of deep discontent due to extreme inequities in the economic status quo, as well as to societal and political factors. This sorry state of affairs features stagnant wages despite big increases in productivity, inflating costs, job insecurity, fewer unionized jobs providing stable positions with good pay and benefits, rising credit card debt and student debt for millions of families, unaffordable healthcare, very high costs of housing and childcare, and in general more difficulty in achieving social mobility. These challenges are made more difficult due to increasing political division and partisanship that create growing distrust in the ability of government to address the needs of the populace. It is certain that, for the common good, we need to reform the economic policies that have contributed to this unnecessarily dire situation.

All of these factors together have made the economic environment more challenging for modern families, and caused it to be hard for millions to achieve the same standard of living that was possible for previous generations.

Income inequality has become extreme in the past 50 years, leaving many feeling left behind, and the "wealth gap" between the rich and the poor has widened drastically. As a result, many Americans are feeling *The Grapes of Wrath*, similar to what poor people experienced who had to struggle mightily during the Great Depression, as depicted by John Steinbeck in his 1939 novel. It is important to understand the main causes of this.

Research published by the RAND Corporation in 2020 revealed that, since Ronald Reagan came to power in 1980, the top 1% of earners have accumulated more than a staggering \$50 trillion in wealth at the expense of the bottom 90% of workers. "That is how much the upward redistribution of income has cost American workers over the past several decades," according to the respectable entrepreneur Nick Hanauer in his Sept. 2020 article *The Top 1% of Americans Have Taken \$50 Trillion From the Bottom 90% – And That's Made the U.S. Less Secure*.

Many people see parallels between the economic hardships and social injustices of the Depression era and the situation today. The injustice of having a system so radically rigged against ordinary people understandably creates a similar sense of frustration, grievances and anger. And many people see that politicians have failed them by implementing policies that have favored the wealthy and corporations over the average worker, exacerbating feelings of being poorly represented, disenfranchised and disrespected.

The RAND Corporation findings attributed growing inequities to "neoliberal economic policies", including tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation, reduced bargaining power for workers, and other factors that proportionately benefit the rich. An accompanying erosion of community and increased social isolation can lead to feelings of alienation and hopelessness, and both media and social media tend to amplify feelings of discontent and anger.

According to the RAND Corporation report, the current extremes of economic inequality are not an inevitable result of technological or global economic trends but are largely driven by policy choices. The report provides a stark illustration of growing income inequality and its long-term effects on workers' earnings, and calls for a reevaluation of economic policies to promote a fairer distribution of income. These findings underscore a need for significant policy changes to address wealth disparities and support economic equity.

### Let's Fix This State of Affairs

The stakes in the 2024 elections are higher than ever before in American history. The future of our republic is at

stake, along with democratic fairness, the general welfare of the people, good governance, sane leadership and the blessings of liberty. So are the stakes for social and environmental justice, and the health and sustainability of the environmental commons and biological diversity that helps support us. Also, it is becoming ever more important that we take positive steps to protect the stability of the global climate to ensure better hopes of saving ourselves and our descendants from the accelerating ravages of "climate hell". And yet one Party -- the Republican Party -- opposes making effective remedial efforts, in its zeal to pander to the fossil fuel industry, which buys its loyalty.

To voters, pocketbook issues are the most important economic matters. Unfortunately, there is much confusion, misunderstanding, deception and devious blame-shifting in our world today about pocketbook issues and the role politics plays in them. There are seriously unfair causes and consequences of how the economy is structured, and our national policies and priorities are dramatically askew in social issues, as well as economic ones.

Tens of millions of Americans are justifiably angry about the decline of their economic and security prospects over the last few decades -- and they have valid grievances due to the following seven compelling and woe-filled reasons:

**Reason #1.** Working people have been subjected to the colossal swindle mentioned above, in which working people have been deprived of over \$50 trillion in what can be understood as a massive on-going heist. Most American families could afford a home, two cars, education and healthcare with one breadwinner in the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies -- with bigger families -- but due to this swindle, it is difficult to do so today with two parents working.

**Reason #2.** The federal tax system has been made too regressive, rationalized by the big lie that says low tax rates on the rich will trickle-down to everyone. This started with Ronald Reagan slashing the top marginal tax rate from 70% to 28% while in office, which had the sordid effect of shifting a heavy burden of taxes and interest expense obligations onto all taxpayers in future years who are part of the 99%, in favor of those in the top 1%. And the Republican Project 2025 revealingly vows to make a further huge shift in the burden of taxation from the top 1% to everyone else. This wrongly and egregiously would make income and wealth inequalities even more extreme than they already are.

**Reason #3.** Tax cutting policies are part of a public borrowing mega swindle. The colossal national debt has increased by over \$34 trillion since 1980, at the same time that the net worth of people in the top 1% has gone up to almost \$50 trillion. Regressive Republican tax cuts are a main culprit in this extremely inequitable increase in the concentration of wealth, which has made it easier for rich people to abuse power and wield malign influence.

**Reason #4.** Union representation has been greatly reduced in the USA, declining from a peak of 35% of the work force in 1955 to only 10% today. This deprives tens of millions of working people of bargaining power and better pay and benefits. The excess power and influence of giant corporations over our political representatives and policy-making is to blame. This is a reflection of deep-seated corruption in our business and politics.

**Reason #6.** Influence peddling and political misrepresentation allow abuses of power, poor governance and harmful schemes that allow many costs to be externalized onto individuals in society who suffer severe consequences.

**Reason #6.** Corporations have moved millions of jobs abroad. This "offshoring" has hollowed out many regions where manufacturing takes place, like in the Rust Belt of the Midwest, with drastically negative impacts on many people's lives. Offshoring persists in a larger context of globalization and automation, and these forces have led to job displacement and wage pressure in many industries, reducing job security and wage growth for many workers.

**Reason #7.** Devious propaganda and spin have been very successful in enabling corporate America and anti-empathetic political factions to blame liberals who want to fix these problems, and to divert attention from the real culprits in these scams, the richest 1% and their far-right apologists. Deceitful blame-shifting is a central aspect of MAGA-mania. Trump maniacally uses cunning demagoguery to blame liberals and "communists, Marxists, fascists, and the radical left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country." The real fascists, of course, zealously support Trump and MAGA Republicans and Christian nationalists. And if they manage to grab power in the 2024 elections, they plan on imposing Project 2025 dictates that would be calamitously onerous.

True comprehensive big picture understandings are needed to improve the lot of the vast majority of people, and thus to achieve our collective salvation. We can no longer afford to misunderstand all we see. So don't fall for devious rationalizations for selfishness and the blinding blizzard of misinformation, political propaganda, ideological

spin, big lies, pernicious us-vs.-them polarization, manipulative emotion hijacking, fear mongering, the scapegoating of immigrants, and culture war offensives that prevent people from seeing clearly and understanding accurately.

The American people are victims of what can be accurately characterized as "mansplaining" by conservative billionaires, who push a self-serving and treacherously inequitable agenda. These wealthy individuals in our patriarchal American society use disingenuous arguments to explain complex issues in a way that benefits their own interests, often at the expense of broader societal equity. Their explanations downplay or ignore the negative impacts that their policies and actions have on people in less privileged groups, while promoting an agenda that primarily serves to maintain or enhance their own wealth and power.

This mansplaining isn't just a matter of providing disingenuous explanations. It involves deliberately deceitful justifications. Conniving factions conspire to torpedo reasoned deliberations, civic dialogue, collaborative solutions, and the common good. In doing this, they undercut those propitious endeavors using emotion-hijacking strategies and diabolical efforts to stoke culture war conflicts, gender inequities and class warfare.

These dynamics create a climate where divisiveness and conflict corrosively trump cooperation and mutual understanding. They discourage open-minded discussions and promote an environment where winning an argument or vilifying opposition forces takes precedence over finding solutions that benefit society as a whole. To counter these challenges, it is essential that we form a more perfect Union and promote desirable social cohesion by encouraging respectful dialogue and creating spaces where diverse voices can be heard and respected. Let's honestly seek win-win outcomes!

The best plan: vote for Kamala Harris and her middle class championing VP choice Tim Walz and their team!

### Despotic Bid for One Party Rule

Republicans have already illicitly captured the Supreme Court with a politically partisan supermajority for the foreseeable future, and they have an extremely narrow majority in the House. They also have a fair chance of winning the presidency and control of the Senate in upcoming elections. That would be harmful to the majority of people, and damaging to Earth's ecosystems and biodiversity, and the safer relative stability of the global climate.

In these circumstances, the USA is teetering on the verge of despotic rule unlike any ever experienced since before the American colonists declared independence from the British monarchy in 1776. Enemies from within are in striking distance of succeeding where foreign enemies have never been able to in our nation's history.

The MAGA Republican Party threw down the gauntlet when it called for unity at its fervent Republic National Convention in Minneapolis. But the deeply perverse unity it demands is dark and dystopian, for it is unity behind One Party Rule by far-right extremists, as set forth in the chilling Project 2025 plans. And they cynically and ominously promise that this takeover "will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be."

*See Clearly.* The contours of this One Party Rule are contained in the Republican 920-page "Guide to Snuffing Out American Democracy", as the Sierra Club characterizes it. "Project 2025 is the far-right's playbook for an authoritarian administration the likes of which have never been seen in America before. It would open the door to corruption and make it even harder for the American people to have a say in our government and its policies. This dangerous plot would threaten our democratic institutions and freedoms, and give corporate polluters the keys to our government, allowing them to rewrite our laws, bypass Congress, and undermine the will of the people."

Project 2025 is the most brazen and baldly stated declaration of corrupt intent in American history. And many state legislatures in Republican-controlled red states are already implementing an odious variety of the wrong-headed provisions advocated in this dangerous document. Salient instances of this are in abortion bans in red states, and in plans to cut funding for public schools in favor of private school voucher programs and charter schools, which divert educational resources to benefit the haves to the detriment of the have-nots.

The unprincipled main persons and organizations pushing for this domineering One Party Rule are giant corporate entities, wealthy "conservatives", American oligarchs, fundamentalist Christian nationalists, scheming influence-peddling politicians, anti-immigrant demagogues, right-wing extremists, fascistic authoritarians, and a Supreme Court composed of an illegitimately constituted and politically partisan supermajority of Trump-favoring Republican

Justices in robes. And all of these conspiring factions would be united behind the Trojan horse Donald Trump and his confederates, who are acting as irresponsible, insidiously pernicious and threatening treacherous plotters against democratic fairness and the vital protections provided by the rule of law and the U.S. Constitution. Shame on those who are sycophantic loyalists in support of this cabal of traitorous factions.

Constitutional democracies have robust balances of power to protect people from abuses of authority by ensuring that government operates within a framework of principles and laws that safeguard individual rights and freedoms and make people more secure. These socially advantageous protections include ones against arbitrary rule, unfair treatment, and the infringement of fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and the press. A healthy separation of powers is one of the key provisions in constitutional democracies that help prevent tyranny by upholding the rule of law. This protective structural feature of checks and balances is strengthened by good accountability provisions, and the great value of a properly independent and impartial judiciary.

Knowing this, it was a shock to see the six Republican Justices on the Supreme Court corruptly make an absurdly expansive ruling relating to presidential immunity on the last day of its 2023-2024 term. This decision flung the Country's doors open to coldly-calculating politicians, and was highly unethical because it made *We the People* much more vulnerable to exploitive divide-to-conquer schemers and aspiring abusers of authority, and those eager to skirt the rule of law and defy the Constitution.

This ruling was a model of how NOT to create new judicial precedents, because it created broad ambiguities in what the president can legally do in office. The ruling is like a gilded invitation to various rogues and grifters, and coup plotters and insurrectionists, and to any future despotic dictator wannabes to be able to do whatever they want in office, no matter how undemocratic or socially detrimental or immoral or contrary to the greater good.

This decision is like leaving a million loaded guns lying around that have defective safety catches, or planting indiscriminately deadly landmines. It would be an existential danger to allow, by hook or by crook, the executive and judicial and legislative branches of government to be dominated by MAGA extremists who clearly demonstrate loyalty to one hubris-filled man, rather to our Country and the greater good.

In their immunity ruling, in what columnist Jamelle Bouie describes as a "bid for infamy", the Supreme Court's Chief Justice John Roberts and his Republican colleagues have imposed new meaning on the Constitution according to what they want it to say, rather than what it says. This is a stunning case of judicial activism that is at bizarre and duplicitous odds with conservative Justices' usual preoccupation with history and Constitutional originalism.

"We don't know how this opinion will play out," writes Jamelle Bouie in the *New York Times*. "If Trump wins a second term, there is a real chance that it will empower presidential lawlessness of a kind that no living American has experienced, at least in this country. *Trump v. United States* would become, in short order, one of the worst opinions ever issued by the Supreme Court." The proverbial guardrails might not withstand the chaotic onslaught.

### Corrupt Intent

The Big Money corruption of our elections and national priorities and lobbyist-determined policies is so starkly clear that it makes the Supreme Court's claims about the influence of moneyed interests absurd, resembling a Big Lie. Conservative Justices actually wrote in the 2010 *Citizens United* ruling that because Super PAC funds were not being spent in coordination with a specific candidate's political campaign, they "do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption." More than 14 years have passed since this wrongful decision, and the evidence is overwhelming that huge amounts of Big Money are grievously corrupting our national priorities and policies, and governance. As victims of the Parkland High School mass shooting in Florida once declared, "We call BS."

With their absurd ruling on presidential immunity to favor unethical Trumpists, the Republican Justices on the Supreme Court are rewriting the Constitution to place the president above the law. It is a terrible time in history for this to happen, because Trump has demonstrated more perhaps than any American politician in history that he cares more for himself than the Country. He cares only about factions loyal to him, not to all. And he poses a grave threat to those who criticize him, oppose him, or honorably try to hold him accountable for violating the rule of law. He also threatens the general welfare, democratic fairness, women's well-being, and the common good.

Trump wants to gut the federal workforce and replace them with MAGA loyalists who will do whatever he wants.

One main criteria for tens of thousands of public servants to be hired in a second Trump administration would be a highly unprincipled one: that every prospective civil servant would be expected to be zealously willing to bend the knee to Trump by parroting the big lie that the demagogic con man actually won the 2020 election he lost.

The great novelist and philosopher Mark Twain communicates wisdom to us from more than 100 years ago, telling us that loyalty to one's country is the real thing, not blind allegiance to its institutions or officeholders. Today, the King/dictator wannabe Trump demands loyalty to himself over principled loyalty to Country and the Constitution.

The Project 2025 plans for the civil service would focus on choosing opportunists and ideological extremists and assorted grifters to be part of a new regime who would treacherously defy their Oath of Office in order to do Trump's imperious bidding. And proponents of the 2025 plan are assembling thousands of such loyalists right now.

Also, Trump wants to use the military to deport millions of immigrants, and to crush dissent. He is ruefully eager to weaponize the Justice Department and use government power to investigate, harass and punish anyone he views as a threat to his power. He also wants to pardon convicted criminals who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021. He basically wants to trash the Constitution and get away with circumventing the rule of law.

Shortly before Trump spoke on the last day of the cultish hubris-engorged Republican National Convention in Minneapolis, former professional wrestler Hulk Hogan took the stage and belted this refrain: "Let Trumpmania run wild!" Laugh out loud at the weird and ominous antics of these "clowns". Trumpmania would have terrible consequences for most Americans, and be contrary to the best interests of billions of people around the world.

The crucially important 2024 elections aren't just about the choice between two extraordinarily different old men to be president (before Joe Biden decided not to continue his run for reelection and anointed Vice President Kamala Harris as his successor). "It is much bigger than that. It is, in fact, about the choice between two different futures. In one future, where Biden's leadership continues, we can organize to expand our rights, protect our communities, and use the power of the federal government to advance climate justice, economic justice, racial justice, and more. Under a Trump presidency, we'll be back to the daily chaos and the struggle of stopping the worst of his attempts to divide us, further dismantle democratic norms, and roll back our rights and freedoms."

Think about this. "In a time of dictators, Trump tried to overthrow the results of the 2020 presidential election and install himself in power against the wishes of the people. President Joe Biden voluntarily turned away from reelection in order to give the people a better shot at preserving our democracy." So said the admirably insightful historian Heather Cox Richardson on July 21, adding, "He demonstrated what it means to put the country first."

There is far-reaching truth in the understanding that "personnel is policy", and while the Biden administration has fought for the integrity of our federal civil servants, Trump wants to fire tens of thousands of them and replace responsible public servants with thousands of loyalists and people who worked on the nefarious anti-democratic Project 2025 plan. So the writing is on the wall, and is scrawled in a big ugly ominous offensive script.

Trump, seeing the recent glaringly bad optics of Project 2025, has tried to distance himself from the scheming plans, writing on his lie-promoting "Truth Social" social media platform, "I know nothing about Project 2025. I have no idea who is behind it. I disagree with some of the things they're saying and some of the things they're saying are absolutely ridiculous and abysmal. Anything they do, I wish them luck, but I have nothing to do with them."

What effete deceit! That is an inconsistent set of rhetorical assertions that is bizarre in its consequential deception. It was, in fact, at Trump's posh Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach that a hundred extreme conservatives gathered in April 2022 to raise money for the Center for Renewing America, "a conservative policy shop whose most recent annual report emphasized a 'commitment to end woke and weaponized government'. Its founder, Russell Vought, a former head of the Office of Management and Budget under Trump, and a leading candidate to be the White House chief of staff in a second Trump term, was in attendance. His group is a kind of ivory tower for far-right Republicans, issuing white papers with titles such as *The Great Replacement in Theory and Practice*. In 2021, he wrote an op-ed for Newsweek that asked, "Is There Actually Anything Wrong with Christian Nationalism?"

That quote comes from a "Letter from Washington" article in the July 22, 2024 issue of *The New Yorker*, titled INSIDE THE TRUMP PLAN FOR 2025. The Center for Renewing America "is one of roughly two dozen right-wing groups that have emerged in Washington since Trump left office. What unites them is a wealthy network based on

Capitol Hill called the Conservative Partnership Institute, which many in Washington regard as the next Trump Administration in waiting. Its list of personnel and affiliates includes some of Trump's most fervent backers." That includes the rogues Mark Meadows, Stephen Miller and Jeffrey Clark.

It is exceedingly foolhardy to go along with Trump and his cronies. It is crazy to blindly trust in Trump, for he is one of the most deviously dishonest and manipulative men in history, and among the least trustworthy. It is dangerously dumb and socially harmful to have so many loyalists bowing down to an exceedingly flawed and dangerous man, who is angrily vindictive and doesn't give a damn about the general welfare of all the people, or women and their reproductive rights, or expansive blessings of liberty and justice for all.

It is wrong to abandon *We the People* to a Constitution-abrogating and rule-of-law-violating abuser of authority who is an increasingly unhinged cult leader that wants to move our government toward totalitarian One Party Rule.

Trump gloatingly relishes running roughshod with an iron heel over the common good. He loves to intimidate and bully people, and seems to relish humiliating people, especially anyone who opposes him or objects to his grifting or malfeasance by taking a principled stand against his lawlessness and his naked bid for tyrannical rule -- or anyone who tries to hold him accountable. And in his greed and malignant narcissism, he demands absolute loyalty to himself, and cares vastly more about himself and his ego, power and money than he cares about the future of the Country. Don't believe his countless lies or his deceitful emotion-hijacking rhetoric!

Trump lasciviously peddles falsehoods and pushes misinformation and twists the truth about almost everything, and does so in an orgy of Orwellian manipulation, deceptive spin, and devious rhetoric and propaganda. He is trying to torpedo democratic fairness and social cohesion to gain the benefits that result from *Divide-to-Conquer Roguery*. He lacks honor, integrity, decency, and moral compass in his corruptly transactional world. And he and his acolytes often encourage political violence, which is terrible for our Country and its people.

These malicious character flaws threaten the well-being of millions of people. The man Trump chose to be his vice president, J.D. Vance, once compared Trump to Hitler, and it is noteworthy that Trump reportedly praised Adolf Hitler in 2018 while on a trip to Europe with his chief of staff John Kelly. Trump shares similar shockingly serious weaknesses and failings with the murderous warmongering and genocidal German dictator (as well as with Vladimir Putin). These flaws include being manipulative, ruthless, self-serving, violence-prone, grandiose, megalomaniacally ambitious, racially prejudiced, and nefariously inclined to belittle others, demonize them and humiliate them. In addition, he demonstrates fanaticism, intolerance, paranoia, devious dishonesty, and reactionary totalitarian opposition to criticism, dissent and efforts to hold him accountable for misdeeds and malfeasance.

Voters: Let's "fight, fight, fight" -- and rightly fight for ethical and moral right, NOT for rich people, corporate CEOs and the dominion-demanding far right and their dangerous plans, which are driven by unchristian Christian nationalism rather than by laudable Enlightenment era principles and values. These factions are anti-women, anti-gay, anti-lesbian, anti-immigrant, anti-inclusive, anti-fairness, anti-common good, and diabolically anti-democracy.

MAGA Republicans are indulging in noxious treachery and zealously imperious demands to overthrow the separation of Church and state, and upset the crucially important balance of powers in the Constitution that protects *We the People* from despotism. Let's come together to reject extremism!

In the New York Times Sunday Opinion section on July 14, 2024, the Editorial Board wrote a cover story about Trump: "He failed the tests of leadership and betrayed America. Voters must reject him in November. Donald Trump is unfit to lead."

Apparently only voters can save us, and we need the help of principled voices in the "Fourth Estate" of press and news media. This realm has been bifurcated into responsible voices of those who stand up against corruption, and in favor of principled Right Action, on the one hand, and into many echo chambers like those of Fox News and MAGA-leaning social media sites in which the mainstream media is regarded as "the enemy of the people".

The socioeconomic state of affairs that is reflected in J.D. Vance's depiction of "hillbilly" Appalachia, as well as in struggling Rust Belt cities and inner city urban areas, is a stark contrast to the gated communities of the superrich, revealing a deeply entrenched divide in American society and a woefully deplorable degree of inequality.

This deeply inequitable divide manifests in vastly different life experiences and opportunities, and a status quo of extremes of poverty and privilege. While communities in places like Appalachia and other disadvantaged areas struggle with economic decline and social malaise, and with limited access to quality education, and with an epidemic of opioid use and social instability, the superrich enjoy insulated lives with abundant resources and far too much unmerited influence. They, of course, make sure our national policies and priorities favor their interests over everyone else. This disparity underscores the need for making systemic changes to address big problems and create a more equitable and secure society. This would be the road to social cohesion and desirable greater unity!

Our state and national politics has been egregiously corrupted by emotion-hijacking, sanity-defying, grotesquely irresponsible factions who oppose the common good and the general welfare in their fervor for power, money and dominating influence. Their plans would torpedo true justice, eviscerate women's reproductive rights and universal healthcare, and exacerbate gun violence by preventing gun safety reforms. And it would devastate protections of the environment and damage the providential health and safety provided by a stable global climate. It would also terminally harm the inclusiveness of the cohesive blessings of liberty for ourselves and our heirs in posterity.

### Thanks to Joe Biden

President Joe Biden has led a historically effective administration, especially in light of concerted efforts by Republicans to stymie his Build Back Better plans during the pandemic, and because of the darkly cynical opposition by MAGA extremists to having him accomplish anything on immigration, border security, healthcare, employment, infrastructure improvement, climate change, or protections of the environment. They seem to be unwilling to honestly defend democracy or protect voting rights, or to try to prevent discriminatory and polarizing gerrymandering from making representation more and more grotesquely unfair. In great contrast, Joe Biden honorably decided to step down to help save the republic.

MAGA Republicans have been making unhinged and brutally malevolent and relentless demagogic attacks against immigrants for years, trying to shift blame onto them for social ills, stoking anger and fear in their right-wing "populist" political base in order to gain power.

At Trump's urging, for treacherous political purposes, Republicans shot down the first comprehensive border control and immigration bill in 30 years, which was designed to deal with spiking numbers of immigrants coming to the U.S. at the southern border. This Trumpian sabotage of the negotiated bipartisan deal to secure the border is "the most cynical, awful type of politics", in which Trump just tries to use the issue for his own narrow personal political purposes, instead of trying to actually solve the problem.

Senator James Lankford, a conservative Republican from Oklahoma, was one of the three main persons involved in writing the Border Act of 2024, along with Senator Chris Murphy, a Democrat from Connecticut, and Krysten Sinema, an Independent from Arizona. Lankford strongly advocated that this border security bill be passed in early 2024, but Trump wants this issue to remain hot and propulsive, so he cunningly directed Republicans in Congress to scuttle the bill.

With immigration having surged in the past decade, the "status quo is untenable", says Senator Lankford. But Trump has hyper politicized immigration issues, and puts the Country at greater risk, disgracefully doing so for the self-centered political benefit he perceives in sabotaging remedial action.

In a Proclamation on Securing the Border in early June 2024, the Biden administration provided context: "There are more people around the world who are displaced from their homes today than at any point in time since World War II. Many factors have contributed to this problem. Failing regimes and dire economic conditions afflict many countries, including several in the Western Hemisphere. Violence linked to transnational criminal organizations has displaced substantial numbers of people in Latin America. The global COVID-19 pandemic upended societies around the globe. Natural disasters have forced people from their homes."

"As a result of these global conditions, we have been experiencing substantial levels of migration throughout the Western Hemisphere, including at our southwest land border." And many people like refugees fleeing the desperate conditions in Venezuela are trying to escape oppressive and corruptly despotic rule. The more appropriate and honorable thing for our representatives to do would have been to pass the 2024 Border Act.

Journalist Catherine Rampell wrote an article in May 2024 titled *The reward for Republicans who try to solve problems: humiliation*. She observed, "the GOP's inability to get behind their own border security bill just keeps getting more embarrassing. Pity poor Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), who on Thursday was humiliated into voting against his own border security bill."

"Last fall, you might recall, Republican lawmakers refused to pass funding for Ukraine and Israel unless Democrats agreed to 'tough' border security measures. Lankford, one of the Senate's more conservative members, negotiated on the GOP conference's behalf, and he drove a hard bargain."

"Lankford got President Biden and Democrats to agree to revive a version of the controversial Title 42 border expulsion policy, which would shut down much of the asylum system without even the fig leaf of needing a 'public health emergency.' It also included more personnel for Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (one reason the major Border Patrol union endorsed it), and a stricter, faster process for adjudicating asylum claims. Progressives decried many of the asylum measures as inhumane."

The Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas issued the following statement on the Senate vote on the Bipartisan Border Security Agreement: "The bipartisan border security legislation would deliver the strongest border enforcement tools in thirty years. It would make significant changes to our broken immigration system, greatly accelerating the federal government's ability to remove more quickly individuals who have illegally entered the United States and do not have a legal right to stay. It would also equip the federal government with the resources to provide humanitarian relief more quickly to those who qualify for it under the law."

"The bipartisan border security legislation would provide resources for more than 1,500 additional U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel, more than 1,200 additional Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel, more than 4,300 additional asylum officers, and 100 additional immigration judges. The broken immigration system would be significantly repaired, cases would move more quickly, and the staggering immigration court backlog would be addressed." And, "Importantly, as a result of the strong border enforcement tools that the bipartisan border security legislation would deliver, fewer migrants would attempt the journey to the southern border in the first place. The consequences of illegal entry would be delivered more quickly, and it is proven that the swift delivery of consequences under the law deters irregular migration to our southern border."

"The bipartisan security legislation is the result of months of hard work by both Republican and Democratic Senators and members of the Biden-Harris Administration. Everyone agrees that our immigration system is fundamentally broken and has been for decades. This legislation would significantly fix it and provide the heroic workforce of the Department of Homeland Security the tools and resources they need and deserve to do their jobs and advance the safety and security of the American people."

"Only Congress can fix our broken immigration system. I urge Congress to do so. In the meantime, we will continue to enforce the law with full force with the limited resources we have. Our personnel have done so remarkably. Over the past twelve months alone, we have removed or returned more than 720,000 migrants who did not have a legal basis to stay in the United States, more than in any year since 2011." ... "The American people deserve an immigration system that works, that enhances our security and delivers the humanitarian relief that a functioning asylum system is designed to provide. The bipartisan border security legislation does just that."

#### More Important Insight on Weird J.D. Vance

In a resurrected controversy, video has come to light of J.D. Vance talking with Tucker Carlson in a Fox News interview in 2021, when Vance was running for the U.S. Senate seat in Ohio. He stated: "We're effectively run in this country -- via the Democrats, via our corporate oligarchs -- by a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they've made, and so they want to make the rest of the country miserable too." Vance, who has a wife and three children, asked Carlson. "How does it make any sense that we've turned our country over to people who don't really have a direct stake in it?"

By asserting that Democratic female politicians that do not have children are "a bunch of childless cat ladies, who are miserable at their own lives", Vance shows a deep disdain of women who have not given birth, and is being "completely out of line and disrespectful", according to one observer, who added that this is "coming from a



Republican man who wants to police how women make choices about having children in the first place."

Republican commentator Meghan McCain noted that Vance's "comments are activating women across all sides, including my most conservative Trump supporting friends. These comments have caused real pain and are just innately unchristian."

Actor Jennifer Aniston, who tends to stay out of politics, posted: "I truly can't believe this is coming from a potential VP of The United States." Vance had called out Harris by name in those 2021 comments on Fox, and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff's ex-wife Kerstin Emhoff took to social media to defend Harris from Vance's attacks on her as "childless," calling her "a co-parent with Doug and I. She is loving, nurturing, fiercely protective and always present. I love our blended family and am grateful to have her in it." Harris's stepdaughter chimed in: "I love my three parents."

"Vance also ties the Republican ticket firmly to Project 2025. The Trump camp has worked to distance itself from Project 2025 -- not convincingly, since the two are obviously closely tied, but it turns out that Vance wrote the introduction for a forthcoming book by Heritage Foundation president Kevin Roberts, who was the lead author of Project 2025." The book tries to popularize that plan, right down to its threatening claim that "we are in the process of the second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be."

Ohio Senator J.D. Vance deserves particular scorn, writes Trump's niece Mary Trump of her uncle's running mate in the 2024 race. "By adding J.D. Vance to the Republican ticket, Donald has increased the level of creepy weirdness exponentially, and the Harris campaign and its allies are taking every opportunity to capitalize on it."

Vance has expressed contempt for women who choose not to not have kids. And he isn't the only Republican who does this: "In fact, it seems to be the attitude of the whole Party."

Hark back to the "quiet revolution" that took place in women's roles in American society beginning in the late Sixties. This revolution "greatly expanded women's life choices, allowing many to pursue careers as well as or instead of traditional paths. Indeed, almost three-quarters of women ages 25 to 54 were in the work force by the end of the Reagan administration, close to the proportion today."

This transformation in women's rights and prerogatives was significantly aided by the *Roe v. Wade* decision that established a legal right for woman to choose to have an abortion. It was also helped by the Title IX federal civil rights law that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that received federal financial assistance.

The American people cannot now allow Republican leaders and the illegitimate supermajority of conservative Justices on the Supreme Court to drive us backwards to a time before women were assured a modicum more rights in our excessively patriarchal society.

Trump made a contentious appearance at the National Association of Black Journalists annual conference in Chicago on July 31, where he argued with moderators and baselessly accused his opponent Vice President Kamala Harris of only recently identifying as Black.

Trump, who has grown accustomed to softball questions from right-wing reporters like those on Fox News, etc., was clearly not up to the task at the event, attacking the questioners and calling ABC a fake news network, among many controversial assertions. The Harris campaign pounced soon after the event concluded, with a spokesperson observing, "Today's tirade is simply a taste of the chaos and division that has been a hallmark of Trump's MAGA rallies this entire campaign."

The toxic discourse surrounding Kamala Harris is often recycling earlier falsehoods about her, said Nina Jankowicz, chief executive of the American Sunlight Project, a nonprofit studying disinformation. "So many of the narratives that we saw back in 2020 are being repeated," she said. "It's part and parcel of the violent rhetoric plaguing our political discourse, and unless politicians on both sides of the aisle stop engaging in it and call it out, it's only going to get worse." Let's take bold and honorable steps forward! Elect Democrats to the White House and Congress!

Researchers about disinformation say that normalization of racist and misogynistic language has become an inexorable byproduct of an inadequately effective media and an online ecosystem run with weak oversight and

powered by a hunger for engagement. Clickbait! Retweeting!!

In conclusion, the stakes are higher in the 2024 elections than ever before for the future of our democracy and the planet, due to the extremist agenda pushed by Trump and Vance, and MAGA Republicans, and the coalition of right-wing groups that helped the Heritage Foundation concoct its abysmal and deadly serious Project 2025 plans. In contrast, Democrats propose to defend democracy and fundamental freedoms, including voting rights, women's rights, the general welfare of working people, and basic rights of young immigrant Dreamers. And they fight for improvements in pocketbook issues for the vast majority of Americans. They also respectably call for equitable treatment for all, and responsible public service, and bold climate action, and social and environmental justice, and protections of the environmental commons, and fiscal responsibility, and honesty and reasoned deliberation, and Right Action on dozens of other crucially important issues.

We would be wise to remember the "Contract with America". Back in 1994, Republicans pushed a legislative agenda that they touted as the Contract with America, but which critics saw as a Contract ON America. Many of the policy ideas in the Contract originated at the same dang conservative think tank and policy shop, the Heritage Foundation. The provisions of the Contract with America represented the view of many conservative Republicans on the issues of reducing the size of government, cutting taxes, and reforming both welfare programs and tort law.

Today in 2024, "it's Déjà vu all over again", but vastly worse, because of the Project 2025 agenda that the Heritage Foundation and far right factions of the Republican Party are pushing. This extremist plans should more accurately and honestly be called the Contract AGAINST America. It is, after all, an offensive initiative that reads like a blueprint for a fascist takeover of the government that would devastate democratic fairness and turn the federal government into a threat to the health, well-being and security of tens of millions of Americans.

The same Heritage Foundation that wrote the 1994 Contract with American has written this aggressive effort to transform the USA into what sounds an awful lot like an authoritarian dictatorship. The Heritage Foundation is now operated by many of Trump's current and former political allies. Its president, Kevin Roberts, is a Christian nationalist who once said the project's main goals are "institutionalizing Trumpism" and getting rid of unelected bureaucrats who he believes wield too much political influence. J.D. Vance tellingly wrote a glowing foreword to Roberts' upcoming book about Project 2025.

The Project 2025 agenda is called a "Mandate for Leadership", and the devil is in the far-reaching phalanx of frightening details. It is ironic that conservatives tend to oppose mandates in many matters, claiming they encroach on people's personal freedoms and autonomy. But the mandates included in the dangerous Project 2025 plans would impose an unbelievable litany of oppressive, repressive and offensive mandates on Americans that would be vastly worse than mandates like wearing a mask or getting vaccinated that were imposed during the global pandemic to prevent the spread of the contagious disease, and save lives, and protect oneself and others.

"When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross." This statement is widely attributed to Sinclair Lewis, although there is no definitive evidence that he actually wrote it or said it. The prescient quote captures the idea that fascism in the United States would likely take advantage of religious fundamentalism and disguise itself with patriotic and religious symbolism in order to gain and wield dominating power. And so it could potentially come to pass, unless votes are vigilant and act as true patriots.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

August 8, 2024

#### Appendix - Summary of the Worst Aspects of Project 2025

The Republican Project 2025 agenda is an alarmingly anti-democratic hard-right plan for the takeover of the U.S. government by partisan conservatives. The alarming blueprint, which favors plutocratic rich people and corporate entities, is particularly offensive for the following planks:

1) It would impose a regressive tax plan that would onerously shift the burden of taxation from the top 1% to everyone else, wrongly and egregiously making income and wealth inequalities even more extreme than they already

are.

2) It would subjugate women to the heinous hegemony of anti-abortion extremists, contemptuously misogynistic control freaks and Christian nationalists by forcing women who do not want a child, or another child, to remain pregnant for 9 months and deliver an unwanted baby, AND also it would restrict access to contraception, try to outlaw or restrict in vitro fertilization, implement a new regime of invasive abortion data tracking, and misuse the 1873 Comstock Act as a backdoor means of banning abortion in every state in the country by criminally prosecuting anyone who mails medication abortion drugs. "It's a detailed roadmap to rip away a woman's right to choose in every single state in America -- and they don't even need Congress to try to do it! Americans need to understand that abortion rights are on the ballot this November, in every single state."

3) Project 2025 aggressively promotes plans to benefit religious schools and private schools at the expense of improved public education for the vast majority of young people, and it also would prevent relief for tens of millions of borrowers saddled with mounting and often crushing levels of student debt.

4) It promotes arrogant and irresponsible stances on fossil fuel use and refuses to deal with the horrible legacy such policies will have on all people in the future by making "climate hell" worse than it would alternately be with fairer and more farsighted policies. The agenda would slash regulations, exacerbate pollution, stoke climate injustices and gut the Inflation Reduction Act, "the Biden administration's wide-ranging law that would generate some 10 million climate-friendly jobs over the next 10 years. The policy agenda also advises eviscerating greenhouse gas regulations and clean energy programs."

5) It would undermine good governance by firing tens of thousands of public servants and replacing them with treacherous loyalists to MAGA Trumpism against more responsible patriotic propriety. It would dangerously further concentrate power in the presidency, with a goal of giving Trump (if he wins) and his appointees more power over the executive branch relative to nonpartisan civil service professionals (who are disparaged as the so-called "deep state"). This would obviously lead to abuses of power and more opportunities for political malfeasance. Such policies would help impose repressive rule on *We the People* that would be "of corporate entities and the rich, by corporations and the rich, and for the rich and rightwing extremists."

6) It plans to allow the president to weaponize the Department of Justice against political opponents, including those who protest against abuses of authority.

7) It would wage an offensive against responsibility, transparency and accountability of elected officials in favor of political corruption and Trumpian malfeasance. It would carry out these nefarious plans through recommendations for key White House staff, cabinet positions, Congress, federal agencies, commissions and boards, in addition to civil servants.

8) Project 2025 plans would give states the ability to impose work requirements on Medicaid, which would reduce benefits that help cover medical costs for low-income people, and in general to reduce federal spending on the social safety net and the poor, while achieving another longtime conservative priority -- ramping up military spending and facilitating private profiteering.

9) It pushes anti-democratic plans against having free and fair elections and fair representation, through efforts to restrict voting and suppress voter turnout by people most likely to be opposed to their fascistic plans. Also, they plan to prevent the proper certification of votes that express the popular will, using the cunningly deceitful tactic of falsely claiming that there is widespread voting fraud in our elections, thereby perpetrating massive fraud against the vast majority of the people.

10) It would ramp up assaults on LGBTQ rights and wipe out certain federal protections for queer Americans, which would facilitate an increase in the current avalanche of anti-LGBTQ legislation being introduced in Republican-led statehouses, and it would make the "epidemic of violence" much worse against these groups that is encouraged by extremist rhetoric.

11) The Project 2025 agenda on guns would favor profit making by gun manufacturers to the detriment of gun safety and a more secure citizenry.

12) The right-wing blueprint contains rhetoric claiming that the biggest problem in America today is "anti-white racism", in furtherance of their efforts to deny the anti-black racism that persists in the USA today, and to permanently cement white supremacy in the status quo by abolishing affirmation action programs, among other things. One goal of this is to ignore the onerous racism against people of color and "to erode 1960s-era policies that have nourished economic opportunities for Black Americans, as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that have flowered since the 2020 murder of George Floyd."

13) Project 2025 pushes decidedly anti-immigrant plans like deporting millions of immigrants, circumventing Congress and the courts, and terminating the legal status of hundreds of thousands of young Dreamers.

### Conclusions about Project 2025

Republicans are trying to fool the people and sell them down the river to harsher fates with their Project 2025 plans, doubling down on their demagogic use of tactics scapegoating immigrants and trying to shift blame that they deserve onto moderates and liberals.

As The New Republic notes, Project 2025 is "a remarkably detailed guide to turning the United States into a fascist's paradise." The primary document of Project 2025, the magazine explains, lays out what is essentially a "Christian nationalist vision of the United States, one in which married heterosexuality is the only valid form of sexual expression and identity; all pregnancies would be carried to term, even if that requires coercion or death; and transgender and gender-nonconforming people do not exist."

"It's a terrifying vision of what American life could look like, but what's most concerning about Project 2025 is its playbook of the for the first 180 days of a hypothetical second Trump term. Much of the 180-Day Playbook reads like a cult's recruiting pamphlet, explaining how department and agency heads should be vetting potential candidates."

Paul Dans, a former Trump administration official who is the director of Project 2025's Presidential Transition Project, wrote this in the introduction to the Playbook: "This book is functionally an invitation for you the reader - - Mr. Smith, Mrs. Smith, and Ms. Smith -- to come to Washington or support those who can." ... "Our goal is to assemble an army of aligned, vetted, trained, and prepared conservatives to go to work on Day One to deconstruct the Administrative State."

### The Best Plan

Bravo, Kamala, for having chosen an honorable champion of the middle class in Tim Walz to be Vice President. It sets up a extraordinary contrast between him and the fake populist J.D. Vance, a faux populist who is using the right-wing tactics of exploiting people's emotions, engaging in rabble rousing, deceitfully using bait-and-switch strategies, and pushing an agenda that is anti-women, plutocratic and fascistic in promoting apologism for the rich against the best interests of the middle class and the poor -- and the common good.

In a brazenly preposterous effort to discredit Tim Walz in their concerted efforts to grab unmerited power, Republican spin-meisters are calling Walz a "radical leftist". These claims that their political opponents are radical are completely absurd, because they themselves are clearly and provably the most radical and reactionary Party in generations. The proof is in the Trumpian Republican 2024 platform, and in their Project 2025 wish list for an extreme agenda.