



Good Proposals for Saving Humanity

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"A healthy and wholesome cheerfulness is not necessarily impossible to any occupation."

--- Mark Twain

We humans today face the most consequential global challenges ever in history right now, at a moment when billions of people worldwide are being afflicted by daunting challenges like climate change and the coronavirus contagion and associated economic adversities. It is clear that the need is growing ever more urgent for us to take smart steps to responsibly address these epic problems. Comprehensive understanding is needed to properly achieve this.

One of the best and most providential ways of seeing clearly is to cultivate big picture perspectives, ones that are expansive, inclusive, holistic, insightful, farsighted, open-minded and enlightened by appropriate understandings of consequential ethics. Yet our collective vision has become distorted by special interest groups propagating Big Lies and deceitful spin, and it is crucial that we try to correct our vision to 20/20. Let's demand big structural changes!

The great playwright William Shakespeare would agree, for he poetically encapsulated this sentiment in his most famous soliloquy, *To Be or Not To Be*. The Bard, in *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, provided humanity with the kernel of a marvelous suggestion, giving voice to Prince Hamlet to philosophize:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.

Today, democratic fairness and greater equality and justice in governance are under concerted assault. At this moment when we face existentially serious challenges at home and abroad, locally and globally, we should seek win-win solutions to big problems -- ones that are commendably consistent with the common good.

With all the daunting challenges in the world right now, it is vital that we deal with them well by transcending extreme partisanship and bitter conflicts and tribal triumphal supremacism, and come together in good faith to find the best consensus solutions to problems. As we strive to do this, we must never forget to take into account the consequences of our courses of action on our descendants in future generations.

Let's all help us save ourselves -- and life on Earth! The Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto show the way. Start here, by seeing clearly and striving to understand insightfully. Powerfully positive guidance for true Right Action is provided in my proposed *Bill of Rights for Future Generations*. Excellent recommendations are also made in the Earth Manifesto compendium of ideas, *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

The Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth, More or Less

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there."

--- Rumi

Benjamin Franklin, the great statesman, diplomat, political philosopher and Founding Father, was famously said to have responded to a group of concerned citizens asking what sort of government the delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia had created, and he said, "A republic, if you can keep it." The late Richard

R. Beeman, Ph.D., wrote in 1998 in an incisive article, *A Republic, if you can keep it*, "The brevity of that response should not cause us to under-value its essential meaning: democratic republics are not merely founded upon the consent of the people, they are also absolutely dependent upon the active and informed involvement of the people for their continued good health." Good citizens must play an active role in defending democracy.

Below, in *The Sad Truth of the Real Character of the Trump Republican Agenda*, I provide an unvarnished outline of the twelve main aspects of Republican political aims. And an exceptionally sensible contrasting to-do list is provided of twelve categories of good ideas for creating a healthier, safer and fairer future. Enacting such counterproposals would be consonant with Shakespeare's advice in *Hamlet*, where he advised admirable activism.

A big picture perspective confirms that the Republican agenda is antithetical to the general purposes for which our ancestors established a Constitution to guide our nation. The Framers of the U.S. Constitution declared their commendable purpose in establishing this founding document. Hear these words anew, as if for the first time: "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Despite the growing critical need for good remedial actions, Republican politicians in Congress are obstructing numerous pieces of legislation that have been designed to make our republic healthier, more secure, more ecologically sane and more fairly representative, and likely happier, to boot. Many bills, fortuitously, have already been passed by the House of Representatives, often with support from both sides of the partisan aisle. (This was before the unprincipled and coldly calculating Kevin McCarthy in the House gave away grotesque concessions in January 2023 to MAGA hard right extremist to gain power for himself.)

It is an egregious abuse of power by Republicans in the U.S. Senate to arrogantly, unfairly and irresponsibly kill the prospects for passing remedial reforms, thereby defying the will of the majority of the people -- and broadly betraying their best interests.

Rather than dealing responsibly, reasonably, intelligently and equitably with all the biggest problems we face, Republicans in Congress are fooling the American people and selling them down the river, along with all our descendants, by pursuing a rashly short-term-oriented agenda. This assertion may sound like a laugh-out-loud exaggeration, but a visceral awareness of its veracity can be gained by reviewing the incisively enlightening summary below, *The Sad Truth of the Real Character of the Trump Republican Agenda*.

The extraordinarily damning story of how this came about is told by Steve Benen his article *How the GOP Gave Up on Governing In Order To Keep Winning Elections*. He wrote, "Voters routinely elect Republicans to the nation's most powerful offices, expecting GOP policymakers to have the technocratic wherewithal to identify problems, weigh alternative solutions, forge coalitions, accept compromises, and apply some level of governmental competence, if not expertise. The party has consistently proven those hopes misguided. The current iteration of the GOP is indifferent to the substance of governing. It is disdainful of expertise and analysis. It is hostile toward evidence and arithmetic. It is tethered to few, if any, meaningful policy preferences. It does not know, and does not care, about how competing proposals should be crafted, scrutinized, or implemented."

"By any fair measure, the GOP excels at acquiring power and exploiting electoral structures to keep it, often in defiance of the American electorate's will. Republicans may fail in breathtaking fashion when trying to govern, but they have unrivaled expertise in gerrymandering and voter-suppression techniques."

Pathologically, one of the main ways Republicans achieve their overarching goals of winning elections is through the politics of dirty tricks. They are masters at playing dirty tricks to gain power, using things like the Southern Strategy that gained increased political support among white voters in the South by appealing to dominating White control over policymaking and bigotry against Blacks. Today, in the Internet age, voters are being manipulated by outrageous lies, doctored videos and impostors trying to influence elections, but even before the Internet, many dirty tricks were being perpetrated, in addition to negative campaigning and personal attack ads.

To defend democracy today, it is valuable to understand the world of dirty tricks in the age before the advent of the Internet and social media platforms. Elaine Kamarck wrote about this in 2019 in her article *A short history of*

campaign dirty tricks before Twitter and Facebook. Kamarck provides a summary of some of the dirty tricks in American elections, showing that they tend to have the following objectives: to create doubt around a candidate's character, to confuse the voters about the election, to break into the opponent's sphere and get information on them, and to affect actual election outcomes by interfering with the counting process. She goes on to provide details in recent history like the made-up and debunked 2016 Pizzagate conspiracy theory.

Former defense secretary Robert Gates once said on "Face the Nation" that "the values and the principles that the Republican Party stood for" under five Republican presidents are "hard to find" in today's GOP. Columnist Jennifer Rubin succinctly observed, "Well, that's one way of putting it. Another is that the GOP is no longer a political party with the aim of democratic governance, but a cult that spews lies and hatred to rile up its White base and retain power. John DiIulio, a University of Pennsylvania political scientist explained that the White House staff under George W. Bush "talked and acted as if the height of political sophistication consisted of reducing every issue to its simplest, black-and-white terms for public consumption, then steering legislative initiatives or policy proposals as far right as possible."

"DiIulio's frustrations were understandable. Scrutinizing institutions from an academic perspective, he expected to see Republican officials shaping policy the way the party had traditionally operated. Throughout the modern political era, the GOP was a conservative party with core philosophical principles — free-market solutions, limited government, balanced budgets, social conservatism, and a robust national defense — which Republicans generally pursued in a rigorous and intellectually serious fashion. But soon after arriving in the nation's capital (in 2001 to lead a White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives), DiIulio grew disillusioned, dejected by a GOP administration that valued electoral goals at least as much as governing."

"While absurd developments such as these played out in public, GOP lawmakers' offices privately stopped hiring policy staffers and started hiring media flaks, because as far as Republicans were concerned, messaging trumped governing, and selling a conservative vision to the public took priority over undergirding a conservative vision with serious legislative proposals that worked."

"Messaging!" Back in the almost quaint days under George W. Bush, Republicans used hot button social issues of "God, guns gays" and uncompromising opposition to abortions to gain support from those in their conservative political base to grab power. Over the years since then, these divisive wedge issues morphed into elevated claims of personhood rights for fetuses and corporate entities, and Republicans engaged in a crusade against unions, working people and poor people, along with a virtual war on women's reproductive rights and family planning.

Then they ratcheted up fear mongering about immigrants and began casting doubt about climate change, and they doubled down on peddling corrupting influence to fossil fuel producers and other Big Money influencers like billionaires in the Koch network. They also cunningly used system-rigging model legislation crafted by the scheming corporation-financed organization ALEC (the American Legislative Exchange Council).

GOP lawmakers nationwide are upset that their party lost major elections in 2020, so they are using Trump's Big Lie and conspiracy theories to pass new laws that make it harder to vote, especially for Black people and other folks in communities of color. These laws are fueled by the far-right corporate lobbying group ALEC that provides the language for the bills and pressures GOP lawmakers to push Trump's lies about the 2020 election. And it's working: GOP lawmakers introduced more than 400 bills with provisions that restrict voting access in 49 statehouses in the first 7 months of 2021. And some of them were passed in 19 states by the end of that year, including in the important states of Texas, Florida, Georgia, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. These shameful escalating attacks on our democracy are partially funded by major corporations, including many in Big Pharma and Big Fossil Fuel companies.

Conservatives have also been intently focused on stacking the Supreme Court and other federal courts with extreme partisans that are most likely to seek twisted rationales to defend the privileges of the rich over the rights of the poor, and Republicans over Democrats, especially in matters of voting rights and campaign financing.

The latest culture war issues involve book bans and "critical race theory", which holds that "racism is systemic in the United States, not just a collection of individual prejudices. This is an idea that feels obvious to some and

offensive to others." Conservative activists have seized this as a new wedge issue, alleging that efforts to inject awareness of systemic racism and White privilege pose a grave threat to the nation (especially the patriarchy!).

"This complaint has come to dominate conservative politics. Debates over critical race theory are raging on school boards and in state legislatures. Fox News has increased its coverage and commentary on the issue. And Republicans see the issue as a central element of the case they will make to voters in the next year's midterm elections (in Nov. 2022), when control of Congress will be at stake."

Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley once delivered an impressive response to GOP lawmakers whining about critical race theory. During a House Armed Services Committee hearing, he stated: "I've read Mao Zedong. I've read Karl Marx. I've read Lenin. That doesn't make me a communist. So what is wrong with understanding ... the country which we are here to defend?" Milley also discussed the necessity of understanding white rage, and the role it played in the Jan. 6th insurrection that Republicans tried desperately to prevent from being investigated.

"Imagine how crazy it is that House Republicans helped incite a deadly insurrection at our Capitol by promoting the big lie that Trump won the 2020 election despite getting 7 million less votes than Joe Biden, and then blocked the creation of an independent commission to hold its perpetrators accountable, and then voted AGAINST awarding medals of honor to the Capitol Police who defended our country on that horrific day."

"The Republican Party refuses to investigate the most violent act of insurrection since the Civil War because it might make the party *look* bad." It is clear that House Republicans today are committed to primarily serve Donald Trump and their own political interests -- not our country or the brave officers who protected them.

In what makes these tactics into a dastardly plot against decency, fairness and freedom in America, Republicans aren't stopping at heinous acts to undermine our faith in elections, and other such initiatives. They are going all the way to the heart of our democracy -- undermining the Constitution itself.

"Leaked conference call recordings caught Republicans in the act of plotting to destroy our founding document as we know it -- by using Republican-controlled states to call a constitutional convention. If they manage to call this convention, they could strip away most of the rights and freedoms the American people depend upon today. Republicans only need to flip FOUR more state legislatures to orchestrate such a constitutional crisis."

Remedial Actions

Think about this. In the Declaration of Independence, our colonial ancestors stated that prudence dictates that "Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; ... But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security." The commendable colonists declared Independence from Britain because they had suffered "repeated injuries and usurpations" at the hands of the British monarchy, "all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States." To prove this charge, our Founders "submitted to a candid world" a litany of Facts that made them so revolutionarily upset at British colonial rule.

Similarly, the American people today have suffered "repeated injuries and usurpations" at the hands of the ruthless and deviously dishonest Trump regime and its enablers. And their "long train of abuses and usurpations" were, in comparison, much worse. The long list of offenses against Right Action, ethical principles, honesty, reasonable responsibility, propriety and ecological sanity is too consequential to ignore.

The authors of the Declaration of Independence were well aware that "all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed." Today, the evils are becoming insufferable. It is an *Amazing Disgrace* that the Trump regime was so hubristic in abusing its authority as to compel the American people -- especially Blacks -- to rise up in struggle to combat our sea of troubles. And it is an outrage that *We the People* could not count on the honesty and integrity of MAGA Republicans to do the right thing. Instead, the majority of the people were forced to accept the government being broadly corrupt, and to watch almost powerlessly all the divide-to-conquer political chicanery, electoral cheating, and suppression of fair representation.

Trump told a rare truth when he said "you'd never have a Republican elected in this country again" if everyone is able to freely vote, without voter suppression and the many Republican measures that keep millions of American citizens from exercising their right to vote. Congress should pass the For the People Act AND the John Lewis Voting Right Advancement Act to rectify these wrongs and get Big Money out of the drivers seat in our politics.

The Sad Truth of the Real Character of the Trump Republican Agenda

See clearly, honestly and insightfully. Here is an incisive synopsis of the main twelve characteristics of the real nature of the today's Republican agenda. This concise summary includes good ideas for how patriotic Americans should respond to the ruthless Republican domination of our society, and thereby deal propitiously with each of these wrong-headed strategies.

1. The top Republican goal is to gain and maintain power, no matter how unethical the means used -- and no matter how contrary to the enlightened values set forth in the great Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Enact Democracy reforms that were passed by the House of Representatives in H.R.1 to prevent politicians in every state from gerrymandering, enacting unfair restrictions on voting, and misusing Big Money from system-corrupting big corporations and wealthy donors. And reinstate provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that the John Roberts court eviscerated in a wrongly decided, malfeasance-encouraging ruling in 2013.

2. Republican politicians give big corporations increased influence in corrupting our elections, skewing our national priorities and deciding issues in their narrow favor. They kowtow to polluters that have a vested interest in maximizing profits without regard to public health, safety and well-being, and they allow corporations to get their taxes reduced by the politicians they buy. At the same time, they work tirelessly to avoid being held to account, and cover-up their tribe's wrongdoing by torpedoing good governance.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Enact a Constitutional Amendment to constrain corporate corruption, as advocated by the Move to Amend coalition, and to reverse the Supreme Court ruling in the *Citizens United* case that allows private interests to corrupt our elections and skew our national priorities and distort our decision-making. Also take effective steps to prevent the subversion of accountability and proper governance in our democratic republic. Reject unconstitutional violations of the separation of powers by the executive branch, and strengthen the checks and balances that help promote the common good and defend people's personal liberties.

3. Republicans pretend to care about hard-working Americans in the middle and lower classes, while slavishly doing the bidding of wealthy elites and influence-abusing corporate entities. They follow the deeply unprincipled ploys of demagogues by bullying people, hijacking their emotions, scapegoating immigrants, lying promiscuously, intimidating critics, attacking opponents, opposing progress, and trying to undermine investigative journalists and the free press, as explained by the brilliant professor of law Eric A. Posner in *The Demagogue's Playbook*.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Demand that Republicans in both the U.S. Senate and the House work together with Democrats to pass needed legislation that is designed to make sure hard-working Americans in the middle and lower classes are treated more fairly, and thus respect the vast majority of the people rather than pandering so exclusively to corporate entities and wealthy elites.

4. The GOP stokes the fires of unbridled profligate consumerism, and accelerates the conversion of planetary assets to cash at the fastest possible rate, making sure to channel most of the profits into the hands of the few.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Embrace ecologically sane conservation measures to tamp down wasteful consumerism and prevent profiteers from irresponsibly converting planetary assets to cash at a completely unsustainable pace. This stimulated scheme to liquidate natural resources is too environmentally insane and socially treacherous.

5. Republicans facilitate cost-externalizing schemes by allowing waterways and lakes to be polluted and directly contribute to the destabilization of the global climate by spurring activities that wantonly spew greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These harms are foisted onto the public, along with costs resulting from correlated health adversities and amplified risks and mounting costs associated with extreme temperatures, floods, droughts, wildfires, deteriorating weather patterns, sea level rise and other climate-related disasters.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Strengthen constraints on cost-externalizing schemes to prevent corporate entities from imposing these costs onto the public. Recognize both the effectiveness and desirability of powerful incentives and disincentives to influence aggregate behaviors, and accordingly demand that our representatives levy a Carbon Offset Assessment on all fossil fuels burned. Structure this carbon fee in highly progressive ways, so that the bottom half of the population is not adversely affected by higher energy costs. And let's hammer out a sensible bipartisan Green New Deal that strengthens protections of the environment while significantly reducing economic inequality in the USA, and make sure social, environmental and climate injustices are mitigated.

6. Republican politicians drive up public borrowing in a national debt burdening swindle that gives Tax Cuts that primarily benefit the richest 1%, further concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the few.

Thomas Paine, the great American patriot and author of *Common Sense*, once thoughtfully wrote, "By a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to discover the line of our duty rightly, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect which a few present fears and prejudices conceal from our sight."

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Reverse part of the 2017 Republican Tax Cuts that reduced corporate taxes by a whopping 40%, mandating an increase in the nominal corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, and/or impose a minimum tax of 15% on net corporate taxable income to prevent tax evasion schemes. And help bring deficit spending under control by raising more federal revenues from profit distributions, capital gains and inheritances received by wealthy people. Do this in a smart and socially fair way that is structured to be much more highly graduated. This will make certain that corporations and rich people will pay a fairer share of the federal income tax burden. And consider a small annual wealth tax assessment on the rich to reduce the record high national debt.

7. Republicans stack the Supreme Court and other federal courts with "conservatives" who have partisan biases and are most likely to help sell the people down the river by siding with those engaging in all these schemes and misdeeds and fiscal irresponsibility and existential malfeasance.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Balance the Supreme Court with more progressives rather than allowing conservatives to continue their illegitimate domination of the court, and stop letting highly partisan conservatives get away with all their influence peddling. Congress should pass the proposed Judiciary Act to restore justice and democracy to the judicial system, adding four new Justices to the Supreme Court.

Impeach and remove Clarence Thomas from the Supreme Court and replace him with an eminently well-qualified candidate. The rationale for this removal, in addition to his #MeToo dishonesty with the American people about his sexual harassment of Anita Hill, is that he has broadly betrayed the ethical principles and judgments of his predecessor Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Supreme Court Justice, who had been an honorable representative of the best interests of black people on the high court from 1967 to 1991, and was infinitely better than the extremely partisan, ideological, Black-betraying Clarence Thomas, with his wife who pushed to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

8. The GOP divisively hypes up reactionary sentiments to gain support for forcing millions of women around the world to have unwanted children. They achieve this male-domineering hegemony over women with a dominion-demanding zeal and a moralizing piety. They insist on absolute rights for human zygotes, embryos and fetuses, while at the same time damning everyone that will be born in the future to existences in an increasingly dystopian, resource depleted, polluted, climate destabilized, conflict-ridden and overpopulated world. This modern *Brave New World* will be characterized by diminishing supplies of clean fresh water, worsening weather extremes, rising sea levels, spiking insecurity and heightening strife. The moral right and wrong that Republicans try to claim are twisted all out of true propriety, and their rationalizations are antithetical to true pro-life positions because they force pregnant women to bear unwanted children and degrade the quality of life and contribute to accelerating species extinctions, all to reinforce their self-serving beliefs and repressive actions.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Invest in educating and empowering women worldwide, and protect their health and reproductive rights. Now that Virginia, a required 38th state, has voted to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment,

remove the bureaucratic barriers that are preventing it from becoming the latest ratified Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is, after all, eminently sensible, for it simply stipulates, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex".

9. The GOP pushes hard-line foreign policies and conspires with autocrats in other countries to mutually advance their greedy authoritarian agendas and help each other get away with oppressive and hubristic abuses of power.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Embrace responsible diplomacy and fair-minded peace-building in all our foreign relations, and seek mutually beneficial compromises in all conflicts. And recommit to our allies who share our values, instead of siding with autocrats in places like Russia and Saudi Arabia that are ruled by power-abusing authoritarians.

10. Conservatives dominate many media outlets and push propaganda and deviously spin every development on social media platforms and Fox News, rationalizing their fundamentalist views and divisive, anti-democratic, equality undermining, anti-immigrant and ecologically insane agenda. In addition, they undermine the free press by treating it as "an enemy of the people", while acting in ways that makes Republicans themselves the real coldly calculating enemies of the people.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Strengthen protections of journalists and whistleblowers to make sure the media "Fourth Estate" remains a powerful positive influence in our society, and seek to create a media atmosphere that is more balanced, honest, scientifically true, inclusive, uniting, egalitarian and ecologically sane.

11. Trump Republicans abuse power to achieve the planks of their nefarious agenda, even if it involves activities that are unconstitutional, like encouraging foreign countries to interfere in our elections and our domestic affairs. And they act as accomplices to cover up their misdeeds to stay in power.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Prevent abuses of authority by any politician, and strengthen our national commitment to policies that truly benefit the majority of Americans, and that protect the well-being of all in future generations.

12. Republicans violate the Golden Rule of fair-minded reciprocity by treating others in ways they themselves just HATE to be treated. George Orwell wrote in his intriguing novel *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". The cruelty-prone pigs on the Trump Republican *Animal Farm* today are pursuing a rash agenda that gives them superior rights and power than all the other less fortunate and more ethical and principled animals.

COUNTERPROPOSAL: Recommit ourselves to the auspicious good sense ethic of the Golden Rule, being mindful of how positive this ancient time-tested tenet will be in fostering social cohesion and peaceable coexistence in an increasingly crowded and ruthlessly competitive world.

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again."

--- Thomas Paine

Republicans have defended a corrupt pay-to-play crony capitalist system that gives moneyed interests powerful domineering influence and control. Trumpism represents a "win-lose approach" to economics that facilitates the triumph of insiders over the common good. A top MAGA Republican priority is to try to make sure that the wealth-concentrating features of our government are not reformed in any meaningful way. To achieve this goal, they use demagogic tactics like lashing out vengefully against anyone who criticizes their corruption and abuses of power. Donald Trump, for instance, angrily lashed out at Republican Senator Mitt Romney after Mitt took a principled stand against his misdeeds in the first impeachment trial vote. Trump is a danger to our democracy and future well-being, and should be disqualified from any federal office for his egregious lies and malfeasance.

It is wrong to allow domineering influence by corrupt politicians and giant businesses to rig our economy in ways that are unacceptably short-term oriented, rudely regressive, extremely inequitable, harmfully polluting of oceans, waterways and skies, rashly wasteful of resources, and causing of woes because they contribute to the dangerous destabilization of the global climate. They are compounding these harm-engendering schemes by subverting proper governance and deeply and deviously distorting our understandings and using dividing-to-conquer tactics to get away with their far-reaching misdeeds.

Republican actions are made worse by patronage politics and a spoils system in which the Republican Party under Trump gave government civil service jobs to its supporters, friends, relatives and ideological allies during Trump's four years in office as a reward for their support, instead of fairly choosing people who were qualified, competent, effective, honest and responsible. The Republican attitude seems to be "Since the house is on fire, let us warm ourselves," as an old Italian proverb advises. Translated, the proverb means: "Grab the loot and run."

The great political activist and revolutionary philosopher Thomas Paine provocatively pointed out, "A body of men holding themselves accountable to nobody ought not to be trusted by anybody."

Republicans stimulate revolutionary strife with their divisive strategies and radical partisanship. It is highly valuable to have a clear understanding of the manipulative measures they use to sabotage our democracy, for they come straight out of a dastardly democracy-sabotaging *Demagogue's Playbook*. These despotic tactics, as summarized in Wikipedia's "Methods of demagogues", include the top 12 methods used by demagogues throughout history, in many times and places, to gain popularity, political support, obedience and dominating power and control. The twelve main methods demagogues use to make democracies into authoritarian dictatorships are summarized in *Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy* (see Home Page of this manifesto).

The lessons of history show it is risky business to defy the will of the people in such rash ways. And it is wrong to succeed at this by hijacking people's emotions and brainwashing them in order to betray their best interests.

John Fowles wrote in *The Aristos*, back in 1970, about the universal nature of many types of anxieties people feel. He observed, "To be alone in an office, with dozens of telephones all ringing at the same time. Anxieties should make us all feel as one. We all feel them. But we let them isolate us, as if the citizens of a country would defend it by each barricading himself in his own house." It would be a better plan to throw all the coldly calculating divide-to-conquer politicians out of office, and embrace solidarity and national policies that promote collaborative problem solving, social cohesion and the general welfare.

Authoritarian dictator wannabes vied for increased control worldwide during the pandemic. This trend is colossally dangerous, for they seized ungodly new powers under the cloak of darkness and the cover of distractions afforded by the crisis. These autocrats conspired together to help each other stay in power, and to get away with their outrage-provoking misdeeds. The outcome is pathetic: sustained assaults on people's liberties, the subversion of representative democracy, and repressive actions being taken against their peoples. Their baneful anti-social ambitions are to satisfy their greed for power, money, glory, celebrity and notoriety. One key to improved national security is improved mutual security. That is safer than unleashed maniacal pursuits of supremacy and the ability to abuse power by means of inflammatory rhetoric and treacherous activities.

Ominously for the American people, Trump press appearances and rallies and communications as he struts and frets his diminishing hour on the world stage resemble the most "tried and true" method of becoming a dictator in the 20th century -- "relying on extralegal methods, typically involving a mob of supporters who use violence to intimidate opponents, whether they are journalists, bureaucrats, judges, politicians, or ordinary citizens." The Trump-incited January 6 insurrectionary riot was the worst example of this so far.

Conservatives seem to relish a schadenfreude satisfaction of "owning the libs", even though this sometimes comes at the great cost of cutting off their noses to spite their faces. This is a pathologically poor recompense for the harms they cause. Great? "It sucks", as Jerry Seinfeld says in his funny comedy routine, *23 Hours to Kill*.

The Fix is In. Let's Fix this Fix.

Some of the best investments our government can make are in social insurance policies like a system of universal healthcare, and better and more affordable public education, which effectively improve prospects for the general welfare. This even happens to be in the best interests of the ruling profiteers, for they are standing on very thin ice by ramping up inequalities, insecurities and stresses on the restive populace, and ruthlessly profiting off the labors of working people while abandoning them whenever convenient. And they are working at cross purposes to wrangle ever bigger debt-financed tax cut swindles to primarily benefit the top 1%.

Their treacherous Trumpian Trojan Horse got away with election cheating efforts in the Ukraine plot to extort another country while soliciting their interference in our elections to benefit Trump. He also so far has gotten

away with a litany of abuses of power, including having stonewalled Congress in a despotic refusal to provide the legislative branch with any documents or to comply with official subpoenas that would shed light on the depth of the treachery in which the Trump administration was engaged. This is a despotic instance of having violated the saving-grace separation of power in the U.S. Constitution in order to evade accountability. This violation shred the liberty-defending system of check and balances that was designed to help prevent despotic acts.

A Thought Experiment

See clearly, Republicans! Imagine how outraged you would have been if Barack Obama had engaged in so many abuses of power and so much public corruption, scandalous behaviors, propagation of disingenuous spin and telling of outright lies as Donald Trump has. Imagine how you would feel if President Obama had indulged in so much obstruction of justice, stonewalling of Congress, cover-ups of wrongdoing, and other unconstitutional actions that seriously undermined the checks and balances and separation of powers established by the U.S. Constitution.

Conservatives: Imagine how outraged you would have been if Barack Obama had so rudely violated all of the founding principles of the U.S. Constitution, as spelled out in its great Preamble. If instead of striving to create a more perfect union, he had used cunning emotion-hijacking divide-to-conquer tactics. If instead of trying to establish justice, he had pushed oppressive anti-Black injustices, discriminatory social policies and elitist corporate-kowtowing economic policies. If instead of working to create greater domestic tranquility, he had used demagogic fear mongering, emotional hijacking and twitter attacks to cause social cohesion to fray. If instead of focusing on the general welfare, he had swindled all taxpayers in every future year with regressive debt-financed Tax Cuts, and undermined protections of the environment, and arrogantly opposed steps to prevent the destabilization of the global climate. If instead of providing for the common defense, he had heightened risks of war with Iran and helped cause other countries to falter, and courted terrorist blowback. And if he had been weak on human rights and antagonistic to the health and reproductive rights and prerogatives of women, rather than honorably striving to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

Imagine if Barack Obama had engaged in so much bullying and so many maniacal tweetstorms and chaos-causing edicts. Imagine if he had suppressed criticism by wreaking retribution against anyone who dared question him or denounce his corruption. Imagine if he had told more than 30,000 falsehoods during his time in office (as documented by the Washington Post's FactChecker) -- and then pushed a Big Lie that a free and fair election was fraudulent, and then incited a riot to try to prevent the peaceful transfer of power to a duly elected successor.

Imagine if Barack Obama had heaped scorn, derision and contempt on his opponents, and cheated, lied and taken crude advantage of people's emotions to grab power and desperately try to cling to it. What if Barack Obama had weaponized religion and used it against the virtuous precepts of Jesus' teachings to advance an agenda favorable to the few against the general welfare of the many? Imagine if he had tried to exclude tens of millions of people from health insurance coverage because they have "pre-existing conditions", instead of having responsibly worked to help improve healthcare with the Affordable Care Act. Imagine if he had rashly assaulted public lands and Clean Water, and wantonly contributed to the natural disaster-intensifying instability of the global climate.

Imagine how you would feel if any future Democratic president were to use these precedents set by Trump Republicans. Imagine if any future president tried to drive us on a doom-like trajectory by pandering to Big Oil and Big Coal, instead of responsibly heeding the increasingly urgent scientific warnings as to the advisability of leaving 80% of greenhouse gas-producing fossil fuel resources in the ground for the rest of this century.

Imagine how you would feel if Barack Obama had acted as a self-serving authoritarian who harshly criticized the teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg, Time Magazine's 2019 "Person of the Year", who committed herself and her generation to helping save humanity from future climate hell. And think about the bizarre contrast of a manipulative egomaniac who would fly to the elite billionaire's enclave in Davos, Switzerland to brag about supposedly salubrious economic effects of extreme short-termism in sabotaging environmental protections and cutting taxes on the wealthy and stoking the fires of materialistic consumerism, resource depletion, the burning of fossil fuels and the rashly irresponsible externalizing of costs and risks onto all persons in the future. And imagine if Barack Obama had arrogantly adopted all of the harshly Machiavellian techniques and tactics of *The Demagogue's Playbook*, as assessed by Eric A. Posner, the astute Professor of Law at the University of Chicago.

Imagine if Barack Obama had engaged in corrupt swindles like pushing the regressive 2017 Tax Cuts bill, financed by a dangerously mounting public debt burden, which is contributing to drastically exacerbating disparities in income, wealth, health and security between the haves and the have-nots. And imagine him adding to the risk of a calamitous debt crisis that will amp up pressure to impose harsh austerity budgets in the future.

Remembering the strong Republican opposition to remedial spending undertaken to reboot the economy in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, one can see clearly how hypocritical and coldly calculating Republicans are. They manifested a rash willingness during Trump's reign to fling open the public treasury and the Federal Reserve to wildly benefit corporate CEOs, investors and shareholders that are prospering, instead of focusing on helping families and working people and the poor who are in desperate need.

Wrongdoing and Rightdoing Evaluated

The diabolical Mitch McConnell is a self-described "grim reaper" of progressive reform who succeeded in impeachment trial wrongdoing by leading a party of obsequious co-conspiring Republican politicians in the Senate to acquit Donald Trump in two impeachment trials, despite the extensive evidence of his wrongdoing. Trump Republicans rallied around their Dear Leader and made the trials historic shams by refusing to hear any witnesses, and by covering up relevant evidence. By this act of infamy, they abjectly violated their duty to exercise accountability over usurpations of power and abuses of authority by the executive branch.

The first acquittal did not mean Trump was innocent of the proven allegations against him in the first impeachment trial for having extorted Ukraine to gain personal political advantages, to the detriment of our national security. "That's not what I would have done," ventured Senator Lisa Murkowski, in one of the weakest expressions of criticism imaginable, but bolder than all the other sycophantic and complicit Republican Senators. Even the retiring Tennessee senator Lamar Alexander had to contort proper understanding in unbelievable ways to rationalize not upsetting the anger-prone and loyalty-demanding despot. He basically said, "Well, of course the House proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Trump was guilty as charged in the Ukraine Plot, but it was more important to the American people to have Trump remain in power than to remove him from office for the most serious and consequential impeachable offenses ever committed in U.S. history."

The acquittal in these impeachment trials without witnesses marked dark days in American history, for they are instances of our institutions being insufficiently strong to withstand our country's march toward authoritarianism. We must honorably strengthen our democracy. Not only didn't the acquittals mean that Trump was innocent of abuses of power, but former National Security Advisor John Bolton confirms this fact in his book *The Room Where It Happened*. Trump is, in actuality, guilty of the charges and many other offenses in serious ways. Irresponsible ways. Discriminatory ways. Excessively despotic ways. Unethical and illegal ways. Immoral ways.

If the shoe had been on the other foot, and a Democrat like Barack Obama had engaged in even a small fraction of the intrigue and violations of law and propriety and decency that Trump has, Republicans would have pursued a scorched earth policy and torn the man to shreds -- and removed him from office. Instead, Republicans stood by their terribly tainted man, and violated their special oaths in Senate impeachment proceedings in which they vowed they would impartially consider Trump's actions. This revealed desperate efforts to remain in power so that they could continue to abuse authority in the long litany of mean-spirited ways that their agenda represents.

Make no mistake about it: our colonial ancestors hated despotic rule for very good reasons. We are like proverbial frogs in a pot of water being brought to a boil, endangered by the insidious encroachment of MAGA Republican despotism and by its sneaky deceitful cheating propaganda-spinning misinforming emotion-manipulating nature.

A Riff on the Perverse Usefulness of Enemies

The use of the term "enemy" serves the social function of designating a particular entity as a threat, thereby invoking an intense emotional response to that entity. The enemy, as an object of social anger, has throughout history been utilized as a propaganda tool to focus fear and anxiety within a society toward a particular target. Enemies are often set up to hijack people's emotions and conquer them by driving divisive wedges between them.

When the pandemic began to spread in the United States, denial was pervasive among many in the Trump administration, and among Trump's supporters and followers. One expert evaluated this situation as a pattern used

to spread misinformation that resembles a textbook propaganda campaign. As Dartagan explained in his online post, *By making the pandemic a battle of 'us and them', the pro-Trump media set their audience up to die*: "Modern conservatism and what we understand as the 'right', with its torch-bearer, the Republican Party, does not thrive in this country based on its inherent ideas or philosophy. The absolute dearth of legislation passed by the Republican-dominated Congress during the first two years of the Trump administration (beyond a singularly skewed tax cut for corporate America) is the best evidence of that. Republicanism and conservatism do not exist because of their 'ideas', because, frankly, their ideas are largely repugnant to most Americans. That is why they rely on inflaming division and prejudices in their base while seeking to suppress the votes of as many non-Republicans as possible. Their 'ideas' ... are toxic and unpopular."

"So the right wing always needs an enemy to blame, someone 'conspiring' against them, and they need a media apparatus to stoke fear of that enemy in their supporters. The enemy can be African American, Latinx, Muslim, or a member of the LGBTQ community; the villains can be teachers, government employees, or even college professors. More generically, that enemy can be the 'media,' 'liberals,' or 'Democrats'. And even more broadly, 'financial elites' -- which, roughly translated, usually means 'Jews'. It really doesn't matter." ... "Tobin Smith, a former Fox News anchor, explained last year in an op-ed for the New York Times how the network deliberately creates enemies for its viewers, to bind them to the network by providing them a sense of grievance, of someone conspiring against their interests. He explains the psychology as activating the Fox viewer's 'fight or flight juices', making the viewer feel as if he is being attacked. He compares it to the administration of a highly addictive drug, prompting the viewer to come back again and again for another 'conspiracy fix.'"

Almost Biblical Ravages

We find ourselves at an extraordinary focal point in human history when our burgeoning human numbers, now totaling 8 billion, are threatening our future and the sustainability of our activities, and even our own species' survival. As a result, our societies are experiencing almost biblical adversities on planet Earth. The contagious coronavirus that began in China rapidly spread from country to country, killing over 6.7 million people by the end of 2022 around the world, and infecting more than 670 million. This cratered economies and threatened the lives and prospects of billions of people. Swarms of desert locusts ominously decimated crops in 2019 and 2020 in a number of poor countries in East Africa, and other almost biblical disasters are occurring, like terrible wildfires that burned tens of millions of acres in Australia in December and January 2020, adding to the horrifying spate of climate change-exacerbated wildfires that have taken place in the last few years in California, the Pacific Northwest, Canada, the Arctic, the Amazon and many other places.

And scary information is coming to light about a glacier in Antarctica, which scientists have dubbed the Doomsday Glacier. This Antarctic glacier, Thwaites, is one of the largest glaciers in the world. "The trouble with Thwaites ... is that it's also what scientists call 'a threshold system.'" As it melts, it may be reaching an ecological tipping point. What this means is that, "instead of melting slowly like an ice cube on a summer day, it is more like a house of cards: It's stable until it is pushed too far, then it collapses. When a chunk of ice the size of Pennsylvania falls apart, that's a big problem. It won't happen overnight, but if we don't slow the warming of the planet, it could happen within decades. And its loss will destabilize the rest of the West Antarctic ice, and that will go too. Seas will rise about 10 feet in many parts of the world; in New York and Boston, because of the way gravity pushes water around the planet, the waters will rise even higher, as much as 13 feet. 'West Antarctica could do to the coastlines of the world what Hurricane Sandy did in a few hours to New York City,' explains Richard Alley, a geologist at Penn State University and arguably the most respected ice scientist in the world. "Except when the water comes in, it doesn't go away in a few hours -- it stays."

These apocalyptic developments are far worse than the ten plagues that the God of the Israelites brought down on Egypt due to Pharaoh's ruthlessly hardhearted actions, according to the Exodus story in the Bible. This story is one of the greatest tales ever told. According to this story, ten biblical disasters were inflicted on Egypt. God repeatedly hardened the heart of Pharaoh for some inexplicable reason, and made Pharaoh's hardheaded refusal to let the Israelites go exceedingly opprobrious.

Scientists are the visionary prophets of modern times, and they sharpen the acuity of their understanding by using their knowledge of physics, biology and ecology to improve the accuracy of their prophetic prognostications. They study the natural world and look at evidence in geologic history, and then extrapolate trends, and use the scientific method to test and verify predictions. This evolution of knowledge is crucially important to our future.

The Age of Reason isn't dead. Many scientists regard it to be their professional and moral responsibility to warn us of the probable consequences of failing to heed risks that "conservative" leaders are amplifying by denying climate change, undermining environmental protections and engaging in other existence-threatening follies.

Mother Nature is not some imaginary God, favoring the chosen faithful and wreaking retribution against enemies. She is mercilessly unconcerned about our particular fates, and may even regard both flourishing biological diversity and mass extinctions with the same detached equanimity. We anthropomorphize nature; it is our human evolutionary propensity to see human attributes and motives and spirits in animals and trees and even mountains and other physical aspects of the natural world. Giving respect to Nature is in our own best interests.

How much longer will Republicans be able to get away with their system rigging, obstruction and engaging in betrayals of the public trust, graft, violations of the Constitution, and irresponsible derelictions of duty?

Let's not despair. Here's the Good News! We need not wait until after we're dead for measures of salvation. We simply need to plug our ears against the dangerous voices of the devious promoters of this dastardly agenda, and ignore the lies they are telling us. We should emulate the hero Odysseus, who withstood the allure of seductive Sirens that tried to perfidiously lure him and his sailors with their enchanting music and singing voices, to cause them to be shipwrecked on the rocky coast of the Sirens' Greek island. Odysseus succeeded at this by having his crew stuff their ears with beeswax and lash him to his ship's mast to restrain him until danger was past.

Once *We the People* throw the co-conspiring scoundrels who are promoting and perpetuating a villainous backward agenda out of office, greater hopes for salvation will be at hand. We should expeditiously proceed to implement eminently salubrious and wholesomely providential remedial plans, coming together to create a stronger, fairer and more broadly inclusive society, and a more meaningfully healthy, flourishing and peaceable humanity.

Let's adopt this visionary virtue of Right Perspective, and pay forward provisions for a more positive legacy to all of our heirs. Do this by demanding a global ratification of a *Bill of Rights for Future Generations* to commit all people to the guidance of Golden Rule reciprocity with regard to all persons in the future. Let's abide by the wisdom articulated in my essay *Intelligent Precautionary Principles Enunciated — Holy Cow!* And let's focus on *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*, as set forth in this manifesto.

With all the global challenges going on in the world right now, and all the serious shortcomings in the way they are being addressed, people are well justified to feel like flinging open their windows and shouting like a half-demented Howard Beale in the film *Network*, "I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!"

The current dire situation reminds me of cartoonist Gary Larson's "The Far Side" cartoon that shows two guys in a rowboat on a lake watching as multiple nuclear mushroom clouds billow in the distance. "One fisherman gawks, cigarette dangling loosely from his lips, head cocked slightly back. He has obviously just blurted out the obvious question. His companion, far less interested in the imminent destruction of the planet than what it means for their outing, cuts right through all the nonessential parts. The caption reads: "I'll tell you what this means, Norm -- no size restrictions, and screw the limit."

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
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