



Earth Manifesto

What's Happening Here

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Coronavirus stalks the land around the world. This essay is not merely idle criticism. Excellent remedies to the great challenges we face are close at hand, as proposed herein and throughout this manifesto.

There's something happening here, and what it is ain't exactly UNCLEAR. Everybody look what's going down! The following is a summary of many of the wrongful activities that are taking place right now in the USA that are undermining the purposes set forth in the great Preamble to the U.S. Constitution "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."

A majority of American voters want their political representatives to work together and compromise to achieve common good goals. They "don't want crazy." Unfortunately, with fomented conflicts and the success of divide-to-conquer roguery, and the polarization inherent in gerrymandering and social media, he cannot remedy failings.

Economic Schemes

See Clearly. The powers-that-be are relentlessly pushing an agenda that has a top goal of driving up private profits by stimulating economic activities. In the process, resources are being depleted, big costs and risks are being socialized, and protections of the environmental commons are being sacrificed. And too many people and organizations are denying the damages and accumulating dangers associated with an unfolding planetary warming-induced destabilization of the global climate. To get away with the overarching irresponsibility of this course of action, well-connected leaders are selling political influence and engaging in public corruption, conspiring especially with fossil fuel companies that are in one of the most polluting and under-regulated industries in the world. They are thus wrongly prioritizing short-term profits over long-term stability and the common good.

The age-old two-for-one capitalist swindle prevails, in which most of the benefits of economic activities accrue to corporate CEOs, stockholders and rich people -- and working people are left behind. Big Businesses strive to crush collective bargaining rights in order to more easily control their employees and tightly control wages and benefits. This creates increased job insecurity that makes it easier for management to take advantage of workers -- and to lay them off whenever they want. This state of insecurity pathologically keeps employees from demanding better treatment and a fairer deal.

Trump Republicans are foremost among those pushing this wrong-headed agenda. They seem to subscribe to the Mushroom Theory of Management: Keep employees in the dark, heap bullshit on them, cultivate them and let them stew for a while, and finally "can them" whenever they want. They have staunchly allied their Party with the ruling class to further rig our economic and political systems to their radical advantage, ripping off the people. In this time of pandemic crisis, politicians secured a huge bailout in the CARES Act that included \$500 billion to be doled out to businesses by the most corrupt federal administration in American history. Democrats in Congress agreed to this big business bailout "slush fund" only after getting reassurances that there will be transparency and accountability in funds given out. But in a naked show of corrupt intent, when Donald Trump signed the bill, he gave the finger to the American people and penned his signature to a signing statement refusing to be constrained by transparency and accountability measures.

The Impacts of Cults of Personality on the Way Things Are

Some of the worst atrocities in world history have taken place because cult leaders have exercised a sinisterly mesmerizing and deeply affective thrall of their compulsive personalities over their followers or peoples. There have been many political authority cults as well as religious authority cults, and valuable lessons can be learned by understanding both varieties. Right Mindfulness is required.

Authoritarian political cults of personality have generally involved worse misdeeds, malfeasance, abuses of power, criminality and whole phalanxes of crimes against individuals and humanity than the relatively less harmful religious cults. Among the worst in this category have been authoritarians Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler and Donald Trump, along with many other notorious autocratic leaders in history. Among totalitarian religious personality cults are those of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his "Moonies", of Jim Jones and his People's Temple followers, of Bhagwan Rajneesh and his Rajneeshes, of Keith Raniere and his NXIVM followers, and of acolytes of the Church of Scientology and L. Ron Hubbard and his curious Dianetics.

A cult of personality, or cult of the leader, arises when an individual or a country's regime uses the techniques of mass media, propaganda, the big lie, emotion manipulation, fear mongering, spectacle, the arts, patriotism, and government-organized rallies and demonstrations to create an idealized and heroic image of a leader, often through unquestioning flattery and praise.

--- Get Woke

Characteristic commonalities can be seen between leaders of various cults, who tend to exhibit pathological and overweening narcissism, craven needs for attention, preposterous exaggerations of achievements, a compulsion to be given absolute loyalty, an acrimonious or mocking disparaging and reactive vindictiveness against anyone who questions or defies them, and a demonizing subversion of opposition parties and media outlets that expose them.

A glaring instance of how political authoritarians gain power is found in Donald Trump who, Lucifer-like, calls honest and responsible sources of information an "enemy of the people", while championing -- and being championed by -- right-wing front groups and media outlets that prominently include slanted news and jaundiced opinion broadcast by Fox News, Newsmax, Breitbart and OANN. These propagandists spin reality to emotionally manipulate their viewers and advance their too often malign profit-prepossessed agenda.

For years now, ever since the Fairness Doctrine in public broadcasting was eliminated in the late 1980s, right-wing media has spread misinformation, propaganda and conspiracy theories and called it "news". In recent years, social media platforms, which have decidedly inadequate content moderation controls, spread lies and conspiracy theories across the Internet like a viral contagion. A self-feeding cycle of twisted facts and outright lies results between network, voter, demagogic leaders and Republican lawmakers.

Cult followers like Trump's find it hard to break free, for core members of his political base face the challenge of abandoning their identification with the scheming cult leader Trump and their adopted skewed worldviews, and they also find it hard to acknowledge they have been fooled and taken advantage of by a cunning con man demagogue. "It would mean accepting on some level that you were wrong."

Most followers of cult-like leaders find it hard to escape from the manipulative and intimidating psychological control of cult authorities. Hundreds of family members of cult leader Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church used services of "deprogrammers" to get their children away from church membership and the "Moonies". The church's activities were widely reported in the media, generally in a deservedly negative light.

Steve Hassan is a former member of the "Moonies" who is now a mental health counselor specializing in harmful cults. He is an expert on "the unethical use of powerful psychological influence techniques". Years ago, Hassan recruited and indoctrinated new members into the Unification Church, where "Moonies" blindly followed their cult leader, who involved himself and his followers in political activism during the Cold War as a fierce advocate for anti-communism. He professed to believe that democracy had to defeat communism "as a necessary step in the Divine Providence to establish the Kingdom of God on earth." Many evangelical religious fundamentalists today seem to regard Trump with a similar bizarrely misplaced reverence, which helps enable him to abuse influence.

The Divine Comedy

It is apt that these ideas were first expressed on Easter Sunday in the year 2020, for Dante's journey with Virgil took place beginning 720 years earlier, on Thursday evening before Good Friday in the year 1300, and ended several days after Easter Sunday.

Dante and Virgil, seeking understanding, illumination, solace and salvation, journeyed down through the descending depths of Inferno, with its nine concentric circles of hell, witnessing all the unrepentant sinners who were being subjected to eternal punishments for their sins. Then Dante and Virgil ascended the seven terraces of Mount Purgatory, where they witnessed sinners seeking forgiveness for their "seven deadly sins" transgressions.

These eventful passages eventually led to Dante arriving in Heaven, where he was reunited with his muse Beatrice. Dante's allegorical depiction of Paradiso, guided by Beatrice, is a series of nine concentric celestial spheres surrounding the Earth. These lofty spheres were a representation of the ascent of the soul to God, and were based on the four cardinal virtues -- Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Courage, and the three theological virtues -- Faith, Hope and Charity.

Understanding the deeper meanings of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, we come to realize that virtues are better for humanity, and sins of those who hold power over us are too dastardly to allow them to remain in power. Throw the bums out of office!

The Personification of Amoral Aspects of Capitalism

Dante does a great job of personifying love in *Inferno*. Personification is a literary device used to give authority and human-like qualities to an abstract idea.

Understanding this, let's insightfully and incisively personify "conservatism" in our turbulent and tempestuous world today. Conservatism has come to embody a malign force that stands against the tide of progress and the common good. It is at once authoritarian and anti-government.

See this for what it really is: the true purpose of Republican orthodox ideology is to strongly support the engines of enforced order, including a bigger military and stronger police forces and more ruthless immigration enforcement agents. At the same time, Republicans powerfully oppose good governance, adequate social programs and needed public investments in things like healthcare, physical infrastructure and protections of public lands and the environment.

This is what makes them simultaneously treacherously authoritarian and anti-government. One stark proof that anti-government ideologies can be deadly can be seen in statistics of African-Americans dying from the COVID-19 disease at far larger numbers than their proportion of the populace.

We were all subject to the oppressive hegemony of the Trump regime, and as the divide between the fortunate and the unfortunate becomes more drastically extreme, risks are escalating of crimes, violent unrest and desperation. Insecurity of workers may be advantageous to capitalists, but increasing the amount of desperation of the masses from an already extreme disparity is irrationally unwise -- in addition to being grotesquely immoral.

Tens of millions of Americans are getting as mad as hell, and may soon demonstrate that they are not going to take it anymore. Especially if they become aware that one of the largest provisions of the \$2.2 trillion borrowed under the CARES Act gave huge benefits to people like Donald Trump and Jared Kushner. "Republicans added a \$170 billion tax giveaway that primarily benefits wealthy real-estate investors, and even allows them to offset losses they incurred before the pandemic. That tax break is larger than the bill's provisions back-stopping hospitals (\$100 billion) and all state and local governments (\$150 billion). It's indefensible, and Republicans would rather not have to talk about it."

While most Americans received a \$1,200 check with the Egomaniac-in-Chief's signature on it, as part of the first big coronavirus relief legislation, those who made over \$1 million per year will reap a huge windfall that will cost the rest of us \$90 billion. "That's because Senate Republicans snuck in a provision into the coronavirus relief bill that removes a limit of how much 'pass-through' businesses can deduct on their tax returns. What this means is that 43,000 millionaires and billionaires (the richest 0.1%) will receive more than 80% of the tax benefits from this provision in the stimulus. This is class warfare against the rest of us."

According to the story in the Epistles to Timothy in the New Testament of the Bible, the Apostle Paul exhorted Saint Timothy, the first Christian bishop of Ephesus, to make intercession prayers to those in authority. Paul said, "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." Hallelujah!

Prayer is notoriously ineffective in getting desired results. Rather than such an obsequiously passive supplication, *We the People* should demand that self-proclaimed superiors acknowledge the rights of the people, and actually Stand and Deliver conditions conducive to peaceable coexistence, social cohesion and vastly improved public health; that is, much more widespread security and well-being.

The Advent of Socialism

As Catherine Rampell, a columnist at The Washington Post, made clear in her July 2019 opinion piece *Trump is the True Socialist*, Donald Trump not only tried to gain political advantage by scare-mongering the American people about his opponents being "socialists", but also acted as a perverse type of socialist himself. "Trump has actually implemented anti-market, Soviet-style, centrally planned policies, and he has used the power of the state to punish political enemies. He has merely chosen different beneficiaries (and victims) of his Big Government bigfooting."

"In some ways, in fact, Trump has proved himself a more successful socialist than Sanders is likely ever to be. Many of Sanders' core 'socialist' agenda items, after all, are opposed by not only Republicans but also by moderate Democrats and even Democratic leadership. Trump, meanwhile, has bullied and brainwashed his supposedly free-market party into backing a command-and-control-style economy. When it's commanded-and-controlled by Trump, anyway." ... "With nary a peep from his party, Trump has tried to prop up pet industries, such as coal, by government fiat. Indeed, other Republicans have since copied his strategy at the state level."

"Likewise, in a move that once would have had Republicans screaming bloody murder, Trump has slapped tariffs on virtually every major trading partner around the world to protect favored industries, such as steel. This not only failed to rejuvenate steel but also led to widespread retaliation, including tit-for-tat tariffs aimed at farm country, a key part of the Republican base."

"Trump then decided even more central planning was in order. Again, his party didn't stop him. First, the president unilaterally decided to use taxpayer funds to bail out farmers hurt by his trade wars. When that didn't work, he did it again. In a tweet Friday, he suggested that a third bailout might yet be necessary. Already, Trump's farmer trade bailouts are more than double the size of the 2009 auto bailout."

"A decade ago — with the global economy on the verge of another depression — Republicans howled that this U.S. auto industry rescue package was 'the leading edge of the Obama administration's war on capitalism' and would set us on 'the road toward socialism'. Then when Trump gained power, these same Republicans seemed curiously unperturbed. Conservatives, likewise, complain that Sanders and his socialist allies wish to bloat budget deficits. Under Trump, of course, this has already happened. The deficit in fiscal 2019 was a whopping 48 percent higher than it was in fiscal 2017, thanks to GOP policies. And while "Crazy Bernie" did say he would jack up tax rates to (partly) offset his proposed spending, Trump has raised some taxes on Americans, too — he's just done it more regressively, through taxes on imports rather than income."

"Trump's version of socialism soaks the poor, not the rich." ... "If conservatives are genuinely frightened by Sanders' proposed downward redistribution of wealth, they might consider the sort of redistribution practiced by Trump -- in particular, the many ways Trump has used his office to redistribute taxpayer dollars into his own pocket. Just last week, during a tour of western states, Trump elected to fly his entourage back to his hotel in Las Vegas each night rather than stay in the other cities he was visiting. Whatever Sanders' flaws, at least he doesn't try to steal everything that's not nailed down."

"If you're a Never Trumper worried that Sanders will take this country down the road to serfdom, beware: President Trump has already paved the path."

The Perspectives of Peter Meijer, Republican Representative from Michigan

American democracy faces an existential threat -- subversion from within. Our Founders were rightly concerned with foreign interference in our domestic affairs, and they were also acutely aware of the historical dangers of an overthrow of the constitutional order from within. It is our patriotic duty at this crucial point in history that we do not allow manipulative betrayers of the public trust to end our great experiment in fairly representative democracy. Party over Country attitudes are starkly contrary to core (desirable) American values.

Dan Rather notably wrote on Memorial Day 2021, "In my book it's pretty simple. If you work hard to PREVENT people from voting, you pretty much admit your ideas aren't popular and you fear the verdict of the people." Let all Americans join in common cause to deliver the deserved verdict in every election contest from now on!

On that Memorial Day in 2021, Peter Meijer blasted conservatives in a series of tweeted messages. This veteran of the U.S. Army wrote about military veterans and their sacrifices to protect the American people and our democracy and liberties, stating "... there are those who take this sacrifice for granted, waxing patriotic while salivating for civil war. Claiming they need to destroy the Republic in order to save it is the ultimate betrayal of oaths sworn. Those treacherous snakes can go straight to hell."

He added, "Today & always, remember the fallen and those who loved them. Remember what it was they sacrificed for. And remember the need to protect it from the greedy delusions of craven demagogues who'd burn it all down if it meant more power or profit for them."

Meijer was one of 35 Republicans to break with his party and vote in the House to establish an independent commission to investigate the Jan. 6 attack on Congress in the U.S. Capitol. He described the creation of a commission as an "objective, authoritative, even-handed" attempt to understand how and why the insurrection took place -- and what steps should rightly be taken to prevent it from happening again.

"At the end of the day, we need accountability. We need an open transparent investigation that will yield a public document that the people can reference," Meijer told CNN's Jake Tapper shortly before the vote in May 2021 on the January 6 commission. "Right now we still have more questions than answers on what occurred on Jan. 6, on what led up to that. Really it's essential we don't move past this without that sense of accountability."

The effort to create an independent inquiry to investigate the Capitol Hill riot passed in the House, but failed in the Senate after Republicans scuttled the initiative with a ruthless and irresponsible filibuster.

Peter Meijer had also voted to impeach Trump following the Jan. 6 attack, saying he felt it was "important that we have elected leaders who are not thinking solely about what's in their individual self-interest, not what is going to be politically expedient, but what we actually need for the country."

Peter Meijer lost his 2022 bid to be re-elected to the House in a Republican primary because of his principled stand and his unwillingness to march lockstep with Trump sycophants. He lost to a 2020 election denier and self-aggrandizing extremist who preposterously claimed that the 2020 election had "mathematically impossible anomalies." This bit of deluded election-denying extremism cost Republicans dearly, being a part of many House election losses in the 2020 general elections.

Divide-to-Conquer Treachery

See clearly. Republicans are using relentless divide-to-conquer tactics and weaponizing fake news and following a long litany of cunning emotion-manipulating tactics, as explained in *Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy*, and in *Divide-to-Conquer Roguery*. The professor of law Eric Posner summarizes these tactics in *The Demagogue's Playbook: The Battle for American Democracy from the Founders to Trump*.

One of their top tactic is to scapegoat immigrants. Trump Republicans are building walls and tearing down bridges between people for partisan advantage. The Trump administration enforced stringent income-based requirements for green cards and certain visas, instituting the most ambitious unilateral effort in recent history to reduce legal immigration to the country.

Republicans even chose to politicize law enforcement while demonizing and dehumanizing undocumented immigrants. Actions like this tend to not only wreak grave injustices, but also to reduce public faith in the democratic process and subvert traditional American values.

Another top Republican tactic is to demonize liberals. Trump and his supporters take a perverse pleasure in "owning the libs". This is a twisted tribal orgy of self-satisfied complicity in abusing power and exerting domineering repressive control over the masses. After the dangers of the pandemic began to multiply in the U.S., Trump cynically said, "Some people said I am trolling the Democrats and maybe I am." Oh, isn't that just swell -- politicizing the response to a global pandemic, at a cost of countless thousands of lives, in order "to own the libs".

These scheming politicians are taking advantage of human nature to create tribal divisions and exploit in-group fundamentalism to prevent the citizenry from uniting and coming together around common good goals. In dividing people against each other, and scaring them, they are fooling them into going along with a corporate oligarchic agenda that runs roughshod over the greater good. "We, the people, have the power to build a better future."

Trump Republicans frequently attack the free press, using grandstanding appearances on TV and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter where they micro-target people with emotion-manipulating disinformation designed to prevent reforms and undermine social cohesion and diminish democratic institutions.

They are trying to deceive people with spin broadcast by the Fox News propaganda machine, which is reinforced by far-right news and opinion commentary from right-wing talk radio and alt-right media outlets like Breitbart News. These news purveyors constitute a "conservative media complex" that resembles State Propaganda media in fascist regimes, and for the same purpose -- to brainwash people into supporting or tolerating an agenda of corrupt profiteering and proliferating abuses of power.

Demagogic authoritarians today use jawboning tactics and moral suasion, and bully people and intimidate and threaten critics to get them to obey their authority, no matter how contrary to the common good. They float a whole raft of false conspiracy theories, microtargeting people whose profiles make them gullibly susceptible to being angered by the disinformation. They do this with a cunning concealed motive of confusing and distracting people from what's really going on. This is a real coldly calculating sell-the-people-down-the-river conspiracy to gain power and cling to it.

What trickles down is exacerbated inequality, harsher injustices, public corruption and a divided populace that is confronted with a colossal challenge in trying to throw off the yoke of their treacherous dominating hegemony.

Government Abuses of Power

Good leaders are strong and responsible, not authoritarian strong men who run roughshod over the best interests of the citizenry.

Trump Republicans are acting with an unethical and immoral lack of honesty, integrity, honor, rectitude, or true patriotic support for the best interests of the Country. They seem to abhor democratic fairness, choosing to play coldly-calculating politics to gain narrow advantages for their Party.

They are cementing in place a corporatocracy in the USA that is ruled by wealthy plutocrats and elites in business, government, Christian religions and conservative media.

Trump Republicans reduced regulations that had been put in place to protect people from predations by big banks and other corporate entities. They pushed devious trickle-down Big Lies and laissez-faire ideologies that benefit the few at the expense of the many.

Also, in the category of irresponsible environmental harms, the Trump administration slashed budgets for the Environmental Protection Agency and denied scientific understandings in order to help corporations maximize private profits. The list of egregious actions by conservatives in the environmental arena is too long for the space available in this essay. They are spelled out in detail in *See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times - Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto*, which can be viewed online.

The Trump administration made a sharp dark turn toward authoritarian abuses of power during its tenure in office, violating the rule of law and norms of behavior, and finally provoking an insurrection on January 6 to try to prevent a peaceful transfer of power to Joe Biden, who got more than 7 million more votes than Trump in the 2020 election, and a solid electoral majority of 306 votes to 232 in the Electoral College.

The ruthless juggernaut of the authority-abusing Trump regime assumed increasingly domineering control over the airwaves and the U.S. government -- and the lives of Americans. It unconstitutionally wielded authority and engaged in overly aggressive governing by executive order and Twitter proclamations, and worked tirelessly to diminish the power of the legislative branch to exercise oversight and hold those who abused power accountable.

Republicans exploited the failure of Congress to limit system-corrupting Big Money campaign contributions, and the failure by the John Roberts Supreme Court to rule fairly in numerous cases. The grandfather of these wrongly decided cases is the *Citizens United* ruling that facilitated the socially undesirable impacts of allowing rich people and giant corporations to exert excessive influence in our national policy-making and priority setting.

Donald Trump often purged people from the government who were not loyally marching lockstep with his corrupt authoritarian agenda. He and his minions engaged in suspect business dealings, and told lies habitually to try to get away with these shenanigans.

Trump Republicans worked to promote Trump's best interests, putting Party over Country by reducing the independence of the Justice Department and going after their perceived political opponents while helping cronies and friends of the administration. One glaring instance of this was when Trump and his collaborating Attorney General Bill Barr undermined the independence of the Justice Department in the sentencing of the self-described dirty trickster Roger Stone. By politically interfering in cases involving Trump loyalists, Trump stoked controversy and provoked outrage, creating yet another distraction from more consequential wrongdoing that was going on. Trump loyalists were even put in charge of the important U.S. Attorney's Office for Washington D.C. And Trump simultaneously sought to harm anyone who seemed to be insufficiently loyal to him personally, or who criticized him or expressed opposition to his abuses of authority.

Trump also put his heavy hands on the scales of justice by attacking judges who made decisions he didn't like. And Republicans stacked federal courts with partisan judges who were chosen to be most likely to help enable this corrosion of constitutional checks and balances, and to side with their agenda and its enablers in many legal battles against their attempts to expand executive power, in violation of laws and provisions of the Constitution. In doing so, they drastically diminished the independence of the judiciary. This was bad news because it eroded the separation of powers in the Constitution, which was designed by our honorable despot-despising ancestors to providentially assure all Americans with the blessings of liberty for themselves and all their heirs -- us!

Healthcare Wrongs

Republicans have been trying their damnest for the last dozen years to eviscerate Obamacare and its preexisting conditions coverage, telling bald-faced lies about this money-addled and power-obsessed treachery against tens of millions of Americans. Throughout the pandemic, having such a fragmented and inhumane for-profit system of medical care and health insurance actually made everyone more vulnerable to being afflicted by the contagion.

Trump Republicans failed to control excess profiteering on pharmaceutical drugs by giant multinational drug companies. In fact, they in effect made it ever easier for those profiteering giants to prosper. While drug company shareholders liked it, it was very costly to millions of human beings.

They strongly opposed a fairer system of more affordable and universal medical care and health insurance coverage. They failed to rein in costs for critical needs of people without medical insurance, and tried to make it easier for giant insurance companies to discriminate against people who have "pre-existing conditions". Their selfish goal in this was to further increase profits for corporate behemoths involved in these industries. This turned out to be one of the most consequential aspects of the REAL overarching malaise in our society.

They continued to perpetuate the highly unjust war on drugs that has inflicted terribly unjust and dramatically disproportionate negative impacts on downtrodden poor people, especially Black people and Latinos. This failure pathetically contributed to making our *Incarceration Nation* even more unacceptably unfair.

The Trump administration was slow to ramp up coronavirus testing to identify persons who are contagious, putting everyone at greater risk. Also, doctors, nurses and health professionals across the country were not provided with enough personal protective equipment that they needed to keep themselves and their families safe. "And when they aren't protected, patients are put at higher risk." The administration even moved to decrease nursing home

oversight and infection-control regulations, making older folks more vulnerable to this contagious affliction.

Trump asked African Americans for their vote before the 2016 election, saying, "What do you have to lose?" We are now seeing what his white supremacist, racially discriminatory, reactionarily insensitive policies and priorities really are. Republican opposition to expanded and improved healthcare is practically like genocidal negligence, due to the impacts it has on racial minorities. We all have repeated the Pledge of Allegiance throughout our early school days -- well, let's demand that our leaders dramatically improve their efforts to create "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" in our democratic Republic, for which the American flag stands.

The fickle finger of fate gave us this cruel contagious epidemic at the wrong time in history, for we need strong, responsible leadership and an effective national action plan, yet we were dealt a federal government led by rigid, scheming, profit-prepossessed anti-government "conservatives" who are pushing a retrograde agenda. This is a true tragedy, for we have a critical need of honest and science-believing leaders who trust experts and are committed to public health and security -- and who are knowledgeable, intelligent, fair-minded, flexibly adaptive and free from the powerful sway of corrupting influences and conflicts of interest.

The optics of these things look outrageous, especially when desperate people were forming long lines to get something to eat from food banks across the country, early in the pandemic. A near daily Survivor-like Reality TV show went on for months that gave the Narcissist-in-Chief a platform for his daily fix of attention, and a combative opportunity to blame others and deceive the citizenry, as he strutted and fretted and preened and twisted the truth in his hour upon the stage. This was a tale told by a conniving idiot, and the American people would have been far better off if his malign influence had been removed from the bully pulpit earlier -- like after his first impeachment trial -- and he were to be heard from no more.

A new word impinged on my awareness as the COVID-19 stalked the land: shambolic. The word means chaotic, disorganized and confused. Derived from the word shambles, it casts a pathological light on politicians and the Demagogue-in-Chief who promised to fix the rigged systems that have created extremes of inequality and injustices in the land of the free. In reality, once they fooled just enough people to squeak out an electoral college victory in 2016, despite having lost the popular vote by almost 3 million votes, they chose to blatantly abuse their positions of power and arrogantly and outrageously betray the public trust.

If Barack Obama had indulged in even a fraction of the socially irresponsible, intentionally divisive, self-serving malfeasance and public corruption as Donald Trump has, Republicans would have reacted with such outrage that they would have hounded him out of office. Just imagine if Barack Obama had manifested a Trump-like attitude of arrogance and snide volatile anger-prone hot-headedness, and presumptuous egomaniacal hubris, or if he had shown himself to be a prissy insult-hurling prima donna who plays an aggrieved victim card to get his way.

This infinitely antagonistic hypocrisy puts in proper context the irrational double standard of Republican apologetics and their enabling of Trump's treachery against the common good. It reflects a perversely immoral collateral white supremacist male domineering attitude that is harmfully discriminatory against Blacks and Latinos -- and biased against women, particularly pregnant ones.

Taxation and Debt Intrigue

Republicans ran up the national debt from 2017 to 2021 by almost 40%, partially due to a shrewd strategic initiative of giving debt-financed tax cuts to primarily benefit the wealthy. This put pressure on national budgets to cut spending on smart social insurance and safety net programs that help protect people, including Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps and dozens of other programs. This resulted in an orgy of deficit financing that violated the basic Keynesian principle that prescribes balanced budgets or running a surplus during times of a growing economy and low unemployment, so that a safer economy is pragmatically created that ensures the government will be able to stimulate the economy when deficit spending is critically needed, like during contagious disease outbreaks and economic recessions in which businesses lay off millions of working people. Check out *Intelligent Precautionary Principles - Holy Cow!*

See this gambit for what it really is. These cunning politicians indulged in extremely short-term-oriented deficit spending for narrow partisan political benefits. This bit of crony capitalism was an unrestrained orgy of private

profiteering and public debt burdening that is unsustainable, and will leave a harsh legacy to our heirs in the future. This rash strategy painted the American people into a risk-encumbering corner, and accelerated the probability of a calamitous debt crisis, heightening its eventual severity. Republicans, in essence, emulated a treacherous enemy that indiscriminately planted landmines behind them, which will endanger all that follow.

Foreign Affairs Roguery

Trump Republicans governed the country like a banana republic, but with a hyper-stimulated military-industrial complex and a power-abusing hegemony of military might over peaceable conflict resolution. This endangered world peace. Bernie Sanders once said he would embrace American exceptionalism, declaring, "As the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, we have got to help lead the struggle to defend and expand a rules-based international order in which law, not might, makes right."

Conservatives are further endangering peaceable coexistence by stoking sectarian conflicts between Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims, the two main schism factions of Islam in the Middle East, and they are rattling the saber against countries like Iran, exploiting violence-prone rifts between extremists.

Republicans are hyper promoting the proliferation of guns and weapons of war around the world. Russia and the U.S. are the world's largest arms exporters. As a result, we are witnessing people singing songs and carrying signs hooraying for conflicting sides, with scheming leaders failing to lead to improve the general welfare of the people.

Trump Republicans hollowed out the State Department, undercutting its diplomacy functions. And they pursued hard power military options instead of smarter, fairer and more mutually secure soft power approaches.

They allied themselves with conspiring autocratic rulers in countries like Russia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to continue over-exploiting fossil fuel energy resources, despite knowing the huge costs and dire outcomes that are resulting from this wrongful course of profit prepossessed and power-hungry action. Tellingly, the three biggest oil-producing countries are the United States, Saudi Arabia and Russia, and they are all aware that climate experts say we must leave 80% of known reserves of coal, oil and natural gas in the ground during the remainder of this century. Much profit can be made, however, and much corrupt power can be usurped, by denying the necessity for "meaningful and effective measures to control climate change". As an Open Letter signed by 100 business leaders, including Donald Trump, stated in December 2009: "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet."

Trump Republicans are thus collaborating with an international cabal driven by Big Oil corruption, and they have created what Senator Bernie Sanders accurately called "a new authoritarian axis" of countries corrupted by Oil Politics. This is Vladimir Putin's "authoritarian kleptocracy", as Sanders described it in a speech in 2018: "There is currently a struggle of enormous consequence taking place in the United States and throughout the world. In it we see two competing visions. On one hand, we see a growing worldwide movement toward oligarchy and authoritarianism and kleptocracy. On the other hand, we see a movement toward strengthening democracy and egalitarianism and economic, social, racial and environmental justice."

Michelle Goldberg wrote in early 2020 that Vladimir Putin seems bent on subverting the rules-based international order. "By most accounts, he's less interested in cultivating faith in his own system than in destroying belief in alternatives. He aims to paint liberal democracy as nothing but an empty slogan papering over zero-sum contests for power." As with all demagogic autocrats, Putin does this for corrupt purposes. "In this project, Trump couldn't better serve Putin's interests if he were a conscious Russian asset. Under Trump, the U.S. has abandoned the pretense of backing democracy and human rights, meaning there are no longer any great powers that even pretend to put morality at the center of foreign affairs. The horror of this era isn't just the emergence of an axis of authoritarianism, but the fact that there are so few allies to counter it."

"Almost any Democratic president would represent a victory over the authoritarian kleptocracy Putin has sought to export all over the world." As a presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders, for instance, expressed the conviction "that American foreign policy should be oriented around expanding democracy in the face of what he called 'a new authoritarian axis.'" **DO NOT VOTE FOR DONALD TRUMP EVER AGAIN.** Overthrowing domineering rule will be a blow against the corrosive cynicism in which authoritarianism thrives.

America could become a country where we heed the voices of women and young people of all races who demand better than having plutocratic rule and nationalist demagoguery. We shall overcome the tactics and tools that men like Vladimir Putin have used to bring liberalism to its knees. "To young idealists around the world, America would look -- dare I say it -- great again."

Michelle Goldberg also noted in her Feb. 2020 Opinion article, "Building a multiracial social democracy is one of the great political challenges of our time. Few nations on earth have figured out how to create, in heterogeneous populations, the solidarity needed to sustain a robust public sphere. Putin has exploited this difficulty, stoking tribal fears in countries with changing demographics to make liberalism look like a form of social dissolution."

The Politicization of National Intelligence Agencies

Trump ignored evidence that Russia was interfering in our elections, and instead actively suppressed such evidence from being released -- even to Congress. An intelligence official gave a classified briefing to the House Intelligence Committee in February 2020, once again warning that Russia is interfering in our elections "with an eye toward aiding Trump -- as it had in 2016", as a New York Times editorial explained it.

Trump was furious about the briefing, "not over the threat of foreign meddling, but that Congress had been told about it". So he replaced the Director of National Intelligence with John Ratcliffe, a former commentator for Fox News and Trump loyalist, and one of the most conservative members of Congress. In this firing and replacement with a loyalist, Trump further politicized intelligence agencies, and put a partisan in a position for which he was poorly qualified, having had little intelligence experience and having never run a large bureaucracy.

Back in 2019, Trump intended to nominate Ratcliffe to replace Dan Coats as Director of National Intelligence, but then Ratcliffe was forced to withdraw his name after some senators and former intelligence officials said his resume was too thin, with no experience in the intelligence community, and that he was likely to politicize intelligence agencies. Media reports criticized the job Ratcliffe had done when he was involved in prosecuting terrorism and immigration cases. He is a former small-town Texas mayor who had a history of embellishing his law enforcement career, so he was a poor prospect to have led the nation's seventeen intelligence agencies.

Here is another outrage-provoking instance of Trump having politicized national intelligence agencies to benefit himself personally. In a reactive move reminiscent of Nixon's "Friday Night Massacre", Trump made a vindictive decision on April 3, 2020, 'under the cover of darkness', to fire Michael Atkinson, the inspector general of the intelligence community. This was the duty-bound man who had rightly forwarded a whistleblower complaint to Congress concerning Trump's violations of laws, ethics and apparent impeachable offenses against provisions of the U.S. Constitution in the Ukraine Plot.

The signal here, to the intelligence community and personnel in the military forces and all Americans, was to not "dare tell the president what he doesn't want to hear." This signal was wrong, because our national security is irrevocably tied to having honest, responsible and more truly patriotic officials in government. "Inspectors general are government watchdogs traditionally granted a great deal of independence so that they can ferret out waste, fraud and other misconduct in government agencies without fear of reprisal. But Trump demonstrated repeatedly that he has little regard for the positions, which were created by Congress after Watergate to increase government accountability, and he expects executive branch officials to serve his interests."

At a briefing the day after firing Michael Atkinson, Trump endorsed the firing of Captain Brett Crozier of the Navy, who was removed from command of the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt after sending his superiors a letter pleading for help for his coronavirus-stricken crew. An almost stupid-seeming Secretary of the Navy, another member of the Trump kakistocracy, told the thousands of sailors on the aircraft carrier in Guam that Captain Crozier, their well-regarded leader, was either "too stupid, or too naive" because he indirectly publicized the predicament aboard the aircraft carrier. Perhaps Crozier went outside the hierarchical military chain of command to get help to save the crew from the contagious coronavirus, but it was a selfless act of heroism to make efforts to stop the insidious spread of this infectious disease through the crew's tight quarters.

Consider this in the context of Trump's grant of clemency to Eddie Gallagher, a Navy Seal platoon leader who had been convicted for having posed for a photo of him with the dead body of a teenage captive in Iraq that he had killed with a hunting knife. Fellow platoon troops described Gallagher as a "toxic" character who was "OK with

killing anything that moved."

The Great Value of Scientific Understandings

Rush Limbaugh's "four corners of deceit" dogma was revealed in a 2010 article in Nature research journal titled *Science Scorned: The anti-science strain pervading the right wing in the United States is the last thing the country needs in a time of economic challenge*. Limbaugh, the "conservative" radio host who is widely listened to across the U.S., pushed this propaganda that there are "four corners of deceit": government, academia, science and the liberal media. "Those institutions are now corrupt and exist by virtue of deceit. That's how they promulgate themselves; it is how they prosper." The Nature editorialists observed, "It is tempting to laugh off this and other rhetoric broadcast by Limbaugh, but Limbaugh and similar voices are no laughing matter."

Rush Limbaugh's "dittoheads", who believed his manic propaganda, should instead try to see clearly. Limbaugh incessantly urged his gullible listeners to be suspicious of science, misleading people in ways that are now proving to be fatal in the global pandemic. He and right-wing media have prospered by manipulatively exploiting people's fears and sowing doubt, cynicism, confusion, misinformation and disinformation. These ratings resemble textbook examples of propaganda campaigns, producing intentional ignorance and obedient belief and immersion in echo chambers that endanger even their occupants.

We should inoculate ourselves against those who zealously take advantage of the "illusory truth effect" that makes people regard falsehoods as true just because they have been endlessly repeated. We should also inoculate ourselves against the virtual pathogen of right-wing treachery in pushing propaganda and divisive tactics in order to gain and maintain power and domineering control over the populace.

There is a corollary to the illusory truth effect: there is no such thing as bad publicity. An untold number of people in the Trump base are fooled into mistaking familiarity with honesty, trustworthiness and responsibility.

Instead of "draining the swamp", Trump Republicans have made the rotting morass of public corruption into a winner-take-all concession stand where crony insiders feast while the masses suffer increased privations and predations and insecurities. These divide-to-conquer schemers are rigging the economy and political system even more unfairly than they were before their power grab by deregulating and privatizing and greasing the wheels of cost externalizing schemes and risk-socializing scams. They are lying through their teeth about their agenda, and relying on the "illusory truth effect" to catapult the propaganda that helps them get away with these scams. During Trump's tenure in office, they worked to cripple vitally important government functions like State Department diplomacy and Environmental Protection Agency efforts to protect people and vital ecosystems and the global climate from mindless exploitation.

Measuring the Authoritarian Mind-Set of Trump's Followers

Some of the biggest questions about Trump involve his followers. "Who are they, what do they want, and why do they support him no matter what?" The book *Authoritarian Nightmare: Trump and His Followers*, co-authored by John W. Dean and Bob Altemeyer, is an effort to answer those questions. Without his supporters, "Donald Trump would be nothing but a Twitter troll," they assert. Dean has seen presidential malfeasance firsthand. He served as White House counsel for Richard Nixon, was involved in the Watergate cover-up, later provided congressional testimony about Nixon's culpability, became a key prosecution witness in the trials of Nixon administration officials and pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice.

Authoritarian Nightmare effectively combines Dean's knowledge of politics and the presidency with Altemeyer's expertise in authoritarianism. The first hundred pages deal with Trump's upbringing, business career and presidency, and cover some of the same ground as Mary L. Trump's *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man*. Like her, Dean and Altemeyer consider Trump to be a narcissist with an incessant need for attention and praise who was trained by his authoritarian father "to intimidate and control others", and whose bullying behavior was evident even in childhood.

A poll by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in 2019 found that most Trump supporters are both highly authoritarian and very prejudiced, and revealed that authoritarian views are deeply embedded in the belief system of many Republicans. Trump's followers don't care much about his dishonesty and questionable actions because

their primary concern is the perceived corruption of the purity of American society, write Dean and Altemeyer. Trump's base is oblivious to his unpresidential behavior, endlessly forgiving of his incompetence, and stands "ready to give Trump all the power he wants" in exchange for his promise to reverse societal change and protect them from the purported danger posed by "lawless" minorities and immigrants.

No matter what he said or did, [Trump's approval ratings](#) consistently stayed around 40 percent throughout his presidency, thanks to the unwavering support of his base supporters.

To Do

(1) We should rightly demand that the Fairness Doctrine in public broadcasting be brought back to strengthen democracy and defend it from corrupting vested interest groups and their pandering puppets, demagogues and deceivers. This was a policy of the U.S Federal Communications Commission from 1949 to 1987 that sensibly required holders of [broadcast licenses](#) "to both present controversial issues of public importance and to do so in a manner that was honest, equitable, and balanced."

(2) Enact a revised version of the For the People Act that was passed by the House and was being considered by the Senate in June 2021. The bill had strong bipartisan support among voters -- 67% of Americans supported the bill, including 56% of Republicans and 68% of independent voters. Unfortunately, conservative Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) announced he did not support this transformative voting rights bill because of lack of bipartisan support from Republican Senators. But many Republican lawmakers are too afraid of Trump and his base to support this fair initiative, and they are playing politics to try to regain power by cheating with new laws that suppress the votes of poor people, Blacks, Latinos, students and other constituencies that tend to vote for the general welfare instead of voting in accordance with the urgings of Big Money donors and right-wing front groups. The bill (S1) , which dates from before the 2020 election, should be revised so that it addresses "what is by far the most pressing problem of the moment, which is Republican-controlled states taking vote certification out of the hands of election officials and giving it to partisan state legislatures."

(3) Expand the Supreme Court from 9 Justices to 13 to give an opportunity to reform-minded and corruption-busting leaders to choose new Justices to balance out the far-right politically partisan tilt of the three Trump judges who ally themselves with the excessively extreme Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito and Chief Justice John Roberts. Under the tenure of Roberts, federal courts have allowed Big Money and Dark Money to corrupt our elections, and to be contributed in secret. These malign influences have been made worse by court-sanctioned gerrymandering and restrictive voting laws passed by Republican state legislatures. Partisan conservatives on the nation's highest court have also allowed a whole bloomin' litany of wrongs in structural racial discrimination and environmental destruction, and failures to ensure public safety by sensibly allowing better gun regulation.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

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