



An Open Letter to the Mayor of Hannibal, Missouri

Sept. 21, 2016

Mayor James Hark
c/o Hannibal City Hall
320 Broadway
Hannibal, MO 63401

Copy to: Mike Murphy, Publisher, *Hannibal Courier-Post*
200 N. Third Street, Hannibal, MO 63401

Dear Mayor Hark,

Hi! My name is Tiffany Twain. I am a writer and philosophic heir of Hannibal's most famous historical citizen, the esteemed humorist Mark Twain. Like this inspirational literary figure, I also hail from Hannibal and have done a fair amount of travel around the United States and abroad to see what's going on in the wider world.

I have long loved the fact that Hannibal is known as "America's Hometown", and it has been my goal for many years to restore Hannibal to a more prominent place in the great American mythology. We Midwesterners are known for our genuineness -- and doggone, today the need to 'get real' has arguably never been greater. As the mayor of Hannibal, James, you know all about local politics, especially considering that your father Roy served as the previous mayor of Hannibal for five terms. And as publisher of the venerable *Hannibal Courier-Post*, Mike Murphy no doubt has a pretty expansive view of local and regional issues, as well as of national and international ones. Both of you must be richly aware that our societies could be made much fairer and healthier, and that it would be a very good idea if we SOON took bold steps to ensure such an outcome in the world. And while we're it, we should also take courageous action to make sure that our economies become more sustainable and ecologically sane.

You may be familiar with the wonderful book *The Further Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which was written by Greg Matthews in 1983. The book imitates Mark Twain's style, and it almost outdoes Mark Twain in its clever and heartening humor and highly entertaining plot. I'm still chuckling! The book begins thusly:

"There was another book I writ before this one which gives the story about how me and Jim went down the river on a raft, him looking for freedom on account of he's a (N-word racial slur) slave and me looking to get away from the Widow Douglas who's trying to sivilize me, and you could say we both wanted the same thing."

Freedom! Freedom is a fabulous thing, and arguably our human 'magnetic true north'. But freedom comes with responsibility, and this is the beginning of my story. I have been writing extensively for the past 20 years, and assembling these ideas in a series of manuscripts that are included online in the *Earth Manifesto*, and in twelve books available from the on-demand publisher Lulu Publishing. A wide world of ideas is explored in these writings. They thoroughly investigate important social, cultural, economic, financial and political issues, along with the implications of the way we see 'reality' and the 'truth'.

The most important of these understandings are contained in *Common Sense Revival* in Book One of the *Earth Manifesto*, which includes an urgently needed Bill of Rights for Future Generations. This fair-minded and farsighted Bill of Rights represents the ultimate human responsibility for people in current generations to leave a fair legacy to our descendants in the future. As such, it should be ratified as an Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution to help guide our national policies. Countries worldwide should follow suit and agree to similar sensible precautionary actions to ensure future well-being.

A compendium of sensible, detailed, creative and positive ideas are also suggested that could and should be used as a smart guide to significantly improve our societies and the prospects for people in future generations. Check out Part Four of the online Earth Manifesto website for details of these ideas. These writings may well prove to be some of the most important understandings in the history of human thought. They contain both intuitive and rational ideas and perspectives, together with astute judgments and incisive points of view expressed by a multitude of eminent writers, philosophers, scientists, statesmen, civil rights activists, politicians, deep ecologists and spiritual leaders.

Humanity faces crucial challenges that we really need to boldly address sometime soon. The consequences of failing to deal fairly with global problems are more serious than ever before in history, so there is a prodigious need for well-conceived and radically compelling ideas that forcefully convey the necessity for smart changes in our economic and political systems, and in our national leadership.

Most folks aren't particularly aware that the town of Hannibal is named after the famous Carthaginian military commander who marched an army of some 50,000 men and several dozen war elephants over the Pyrenees and through southern France and then across the Alps into northern Italy in 218 BCE. In his subsequent battles with the Romans, he demonstrated brilliant military tactics. After the end of the long Second Punic War in 201 BCE, he became a statesman who strived to reform the corrupt oligarchy of Carthage.

Today we Americans are in increasingly desperate need of good tacticians and great strategists who are able to confront our own corrupt rule-by-the-wealthy corporatocracy. If we can thereby establish more noble goals and fairer means of accomplishing them, we will achieve better results than we are reaping under the status quo. By effectively implementing reforms that respect the greater good, we can create a fairer economy and healthier societies and a more ecologically sound civilization. Maybe we can collectively create a truer Golden Age, rather than a tawdry neo-Gilded Age that special interest groups and assorted marketing geniuses and wily spin-meisters and scheming "conservatives" have managed to bring into being.

Practically revolutionary political unrest is stirring in the land of the free, and bravery and vision are needed in response. The lessons of history tell us that Solon-wise compromise is the best course of action when conflicts become too intense between jealous hyper-privileged wealthy citizens and the envious democratic majority.

We Missourians have long suspected that we are on shaky ground, both literally and figuratively. We are literally on shaky ground because we reside in the New Madrid Seismic Zone. We tend to deny the full realization of the implications of this fact, even though it is somewhat well known that some of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded in American history took place in this region between December 1811 and March 1812. Let's harken back to these events and recognize that similar earth movements will eventually happen again, sooner or later, so preparedness is a bona fide good idea. Those earthquakes caused huge ruptures in the land, and the mighty Mississippi River even flowed backwards for a period of time. A geographer and geologist, Henry Schoolcraft, was so moved by the scary and calamitous nature of these events that he turned to poetry:

"The rivers they boiled like a pot of coals,
And mortals fell prostrate, and prayed for their souls."

People at the time quite naturally feared that the devil had come, and that the world was coming to an end. But superstitions have but a small space in this story, and doom-prophesying End Times stories have none. The real point is that we people of the Hannibal area suspect that we share a simple truth with all others on our lovely home planet: we are on shaky ground in a larger figurative sense. We are shortsightedly leading lives that are not sustainable, and our business and government institutions are seriously failing us by wastefully spending taxpayer funds, borrowing heavily, stimulating the depletion of resources, polluting the commons, manipulating the populace, acting unfairly, invading citizens' privacy, getting us into wars, stoking global destabilizing injustices, allowing religious fundamentalists to torpedo family planning efforts, and generally making everyone less secure.

One of my pet theories is that the key to making the world a much better place is simple. If we sow greater social justice, we will salubriously harvest greater general well-being and expanded opportunities for happiness and more auspicious harmony and peace. Fortuitously, the price of social insurance policies that would create vastly fairer and more stable and sustainable societies would not be that high. And Hallelujah! -- the biggest share of the cost, by far, for these social safety net measures would be contributed by the wealthiest 1% of Americans, who are the people who have benefited so lavishly in the past 40 years from excessively generous national tax policies. A more steeply graduated national system of taxation might initially provoke indignation in those with Big Money, but ironically it would make them safer by saving their necks from revolutionary strife and by creating a more prosperous, healthier, saner and safer society in which to live.

We are clearly living our lives in unsustainable ways. Our national policies encourage wasteful consumption and the profligate burning of non-renewable greenhouse gas-emitting fossil fuels. They also stimulate suburban sprawl and rapid global population growth, and they facilitate increasing inequalities between Americans. And these policies are failing to create adequately fair opportunities in education and job seeking, or in universal healthcare, and they allow a variety of unaffordably generous privileges for rich people and giant corporations. Many of these policies run completely contrary to our founding principles of democratic fairness, and they violate the laudable intent of promoting "the general Welfare", as emphasized in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

One of the most foolish aspects of our national policies is that they allow profits to be maximized in private hands through the unwise expediency of allowing significant costs to be externalized onto society as a whole. This scheme is completely antithetical to the tenets of my pet theory about the desirability of more sensible egalitarian national priorities, because it is so inconsistent with the common good and general long-term prosperity. True well-being must be broader and more consonant with conditions that provide for ecologically sound initiatives and indefinitely sustainable human activities.

The rules in our economy should be changed so that dominant institutions serve to protect the environment, conserve resources, cut carbon emissions and minimize pollution and toxic wastes. We should not allow so many costs of producing goods to be foisted onto society. Excessive pollution and resource depletion are NOT a necessary price for economic prosperity. The clash between public stewardship and private profit is especially glaring in conflicts over usages of public lands. These conflicts are made worse by ideology-driven politicians who work to guarantee "personhood rights" to giant corporations, a ploy that diminishes the rights of the people and gives too much influence and legal privilege to corporate entities, which really should be subject to fuller social and environmental obligations and responsibilities.

I hope these ideas will help change the world in salubrious ways. Maybe this will put Hannibal back in a more distinctive place on the map of American awareness, and tourism in lovely Hannibal may even pick up! Hannibal is a relatively small town that does not have as many challenges as big cities, but even here we must be versatile and become a part of forward-thinking solutions to national and international problems. Let's 'get the lead out' (and I'm not talking about merely intensifying mining activities to get more lead out of Missouri mines to make more ammunition for guns and wars!)

Our esteemed hometown boy, Samuel Clemens, made good by creating evocative works of fiction under the nom de plume Mark Twain. He also cleverly lampooned the distinctive foibles and absurd behaviors of humanity. He earned the respect of many people for his honorable efforts opposing the Philippine-American War (1899 - 1902), and he also spoke out strongly against Yankee imperialism when he acted in his role as the vice-president of the American Anti-Imperialist League from 1901 until his death in 1910.

Hannibal residents are known as resilient characters, like the hometown gal Maggie Brown who became famous as the 'Unsinkable Molly Brown' after surviving the sinking of the Titanic on its maiden voyage across the Atlantic in 1912. Maggie Brown's life story serves as a marvelous inspiration for us all: she married for love, not for money, and when her husband later became wealthy, it allowed her to become a philanthropist and good-citizen activist, and she promoted the rights of working people and women, and she strongly supported literacy and opportunities for the education of children. She was also generous in helping needy young people and the destitute. Yay for the

Unsinkable Molly Brown!

My primary goal in the Earth Manifesto is to communicate a coherent and convincing worldview that transcends dominant biases and ideologies, and thereby effects a re-ordering of our hyper-unfair economic and political systems. Stubborn orthodoxies and the powerful influence of Big Money are the foundation of established interests in nations around the world, and profound inequities are stimulated by laissez-faire globalization, economic fundamentalism, domineering corporatism, and authoritarian leaders and followers.

We Americans have a vast untapped reserve of willingness to do the right thing for a good cause. We need to collectively capitalize on this resource with greater intelligence, candor and integrity. The sensibly visionary leaders of the twenty-first century will be those who can tap into people's eagerness to be a part of fair solutions and common purpose, and who are able to inspire people to follow smart policies to accomplish positive ends. Working with such motivations is far more desirable for society as a whole than allowing manipulative vested interests to stoke people's fears or pander to selfish greed for ignoble purposes!

We should be giving greater respect to overarching principles, but instead they are drowned out and obscured by a cacophony of conflicting opinions, self-interested demands and deceptive dogmatic doctrinal arguments. To solve the great challenges facing us, we need to unite and cooperate together. We should stop allowing our leaders to divide us to accomplish narrowly focused self-serving ends, and we should demand more honest and competent management, and broader coalitions, and better preparedness.

Our leaders should be held accountable for a principled dedication to the greater good for all, and to smarter long-term priorities, rather than being allowed to pander so expeditiously to the short-term-oriented goals of entrenched interest groups. If the American people were more fairly represented, we would move smartly in these directions, so it is our overarching obligation to get Big Money out of the driver's seat!

Because powerful politicians have been taking advantage of people by advancing policies that benefit the few at the expense of the majority, this is a root cause of the surprisingly strong anti-establishment fervor that was revealed by the widespread support given to the liberal Bernie Sanders and the deceitful manipulative demagogue Donald Trump in the 2016 primary elections.

Wealthy conservatives who champion policies that increase inequalities in our society are misguided. They have over-reached, and the Occupy movement and subsequent developments like anti-establishment political campaigns have brought heightened attention to this abuse of power. Professor Robert Reich in the film *Inequality for All* makes this cogently clear, as does economist Joseph Stiglitz in his thought-provoking book *The Price of Inequality*. Yet Merchants of Doubt and wizards of deceit have been peddling uncompromising political obstruction for years, dividing people in order to perpetuate this sad state of affairs. We should renounce the brazen men behind the curtain who manipulate our system, and their fundamentalist collaborators who are so intransigent with regard to hot-button social issues and egalitarian measures and environmental protections and fairly democratic representation.

In a 2012 version of this Open Letter, I wrote: To "fix" the economy and deal sensibly with issues of high unemployment and widespread foreclosures on homes, we need all parties to compromise on both cuts to debt-financed government spending and increases in tax revenues. Then, after the 2016 elections, the "fix" we need is more comprehensive and more urgent. We need to calm tensions in the world by making it a mutually safer place. To do so, we would be wise to use social justice tools like the ones employed to build the strongest middle class in American history during the 1945 to 1980 period. This would be a Better Deal for All, making it an eminently good idea.

To reform our political system, we need to limit the influence of moneyed interest groups and Dark Money, and reduce the power of big corporations and rich people. We need to stop "fixing" the economy in the sense of rigging it ever-more extremely in the favor of the wealthiest 1% of Americans. And it is far too foolhardy to trust Donald Trump, the rash, megalomaniacal and unhinged face of the Republican Party, who boastfully and deceitfully declared, "I alone can fix it." He is seriously messing things up!

Missouri native Edwin Hubble was the famed extragalactic astronomer who first understood and popularized the really big picture understanding that humanity is living in a universe much bigger than the Milky Way Galaxy alone. Hubble was one of the most important "observational cosmologists" ever, because he proved that the mysteriously nebulous phenomena known as "nebulae" were actually galaxies many light years further out in space beyond the Milky Way. Since it turns out that the biggest, most expansive and inclusive understandings are crucial to peaceful coexistence, and indeed to our very survival, I salute Edwin Hubble's perspicacity and scientific acumen.

Some folks at Becky Thatcher Restaurant in downtown were recently jawing on about the new Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, about 400 miles to the east of Hannibal. The so-called 'museum' heralds the Genesis version of Creation in the Bible. Its Mission is to "proclaim the authority of God's Word." It is thus a museum dedicated to ignorance, dogma, doctrine and propaganda, not to scientific and historical understanding. The Old Testament of the Bible is, after all, a nearly 3,000 year-old story written for religious purposes by men who didn't have a clue about modern scientific understandings of the universe. If one wanted to see human beings riding on dinosaurs, in impossible contradiction to the actual gap of 65 million years between the extinction of dinosaurs and the advent of Homo sapiens, this "museum" is the place to go! I roll my eyes, perhaps not unlike that teenage girl whose parents, according to a satirical story in *The Onion*, wanted to euthanize their daughter because she was only capable of texting and rolling her eyes!

People should be allowed the freedom to believe what they like, but it seems to me that we must be fair to all of our children, so 'Jesus Camp' indoctrination methods should give way to a more positive kind of education. We should teach critical thinking skills and dedicate our nation to expansive understandings and more accurate knowledge and important humanitarian and spiritual insights. We should protect our children and young adults, and deal effectively with properly prioritized civic concerns. And frankly, any time a dogma comes down hard on some category of people, like people of other religious faiths, or immigrants, women, blacks, Latinos, Orientals, lesbians or gay men, it must be rejected.

The leaders of influential Churches have been presiding over institutions that are excessively undemocratic. While Churches have had many positive and virtuous motivations, religious establishments have too often sided with political establishments that strive continuously to brainwash people and manipulate them for dominion, power and profit. To be truly responsible institutions, they should wholeheartedly support goals of reducing conflicts between people and the harms their divisive doctrinal stances cause to millions.

There are lots of "true believers" in Missouri, so I must sound the alarm: a book published in 2007, titled *The Atheist's Bible: An Illustrious Collection of Irreverent Thoughts*, is a damning document. The book humorously highlights the calamitous conflicts that have been associated with religions and religious establishments throughout history. The premise of atheism is that there is serious doubt that any God lies behind Creation, which is a mighty unsettling notion to many people. Agnosticism makes a lot of sense to me, because the uncertainties in the world are ultimate and profound, and religious scriptures and holy books are myths, not anything near absolute truths.

A primary Creation explanation in Missouri is that God created the whole shebang of the Universe just over 6,000 years ago. In the Biblical creation story, God made human beings in 'His' own image -- or rather 'Their' own image, since God was surely speaking to others in Genesis when He said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"!

Folks generally agree that sacreligion is bad luck and ain't proper in polite society. But let's get real! Let's not be 'ridickerless', as Huck Finn would say. The best scientific estimate is that the Universe is almost 14 billion years old, and Planet Earth formed about 4.5 billion years ago, and that our human ancestors in the fossil record have existed as a distinct species from our predecessors for about 150,000 to 200,000 years. Some creation stories are more probable than others, but explanations that posit an anthropocentric male God seem SO suspiciously improbable. The more obvious truth is that God has actually been made in OUR own image.

But no matter, there is simply no use holding it against anyone if his or her beliefs differ from yours or mine or anyone else's. This is why the Golden Rule plays so prominent a role in the ideas contained in the Earth Manifesto, along with a commitment to a strong separation between Church and State and a fair-minded Bill of Rights for

Future Generations. Live and let live!

There was a time that slavery abolitionists were considered "low down". Many folks put agnostics and peace activists, environmentalists and strong supporters of civil liberties in the same boat nowadays. Human rights may sound fine as rhetoric, but when people actually choose to live their lives freely, it makes many people uncomfortable, especially social conservatives and religious fundamentalists. Broad-mindedness and longer-term vision, nonetheless, must gain sway in our societies. And the whole deeply unethical "Southern strategy" scheme of Republican politicians exploiting racial resentments to gain power needs to be rejected, and its bigotry-stoking emotional hijacking of national policy to rationalize regressive tax policies and radical deregulation and uncompromising stances on hot button social issues should be renounced in favor of more fair-minded national priorities.

Maya Angelou was a highly esteemed poet, writer, and actress who died in May 2014. She had been born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1928, and became one of the foremost African-American writers and thinkers of her time. She was commendably outspoken in her commitment to social justice, and she laudably left a legacy as a fierce advocate and activist for civil rights. She was also courageous and did not shy away from political controversy.

It is noteworthy that, back in Mark Twain's days, very good reasons existed for having riverboat pilots to navigate the Mississippi. Nature can be treacherous, and the River can be either a friend or a foe. An alert and knowledgeable pilot is needed to guide boats to keep them from running aground. Today, it's as if we've decided to dispense with the pilot of our modern forms of public transportation in order to hire a shrewd casino manager on board. This is perzactly why we need to do some real depth-assessor conponderation to figure out how to gain better guidance and achieve greater good goals. I reckon that maybe we should all go up to Lover's Leap and gaze across to the Illinois shore, and try thinking nothing at all, "which is possible I can tell you". The expansive view and fresh air and correlated open-minded attitudes might prove salubrious in the search for greater enlightenment and common ground!

There is actually quite a bit known about *What's the Matter with Kansas*, and this affliction is spilling over into Missouri from our neighboring state to the west. Every concerned citizen should be aware of the nature of why people vote against their own greater self-interest to do the bidding of "conservative" billionaires.

Freedom is a lot more than Janis Joplin's "just another word for nothin' left to lose". In fact, the more we have to lose, the more important freedom becomes. Political freedom, for instance may not be much to hooray about if you are one of the 3 billion people on Earth who subsist on earnings of less than \$2 a day. Edward Stettinius, U.S. Secretary of State in 1945, made this insightful and important observation: "The battle of peace must be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace."

Our societies should rightly allow a maximum of freedom and opportunity to all citizens. Only by enacting a revolutionary reform of our economic and political systems can we ensure that greater justice is available to all. These reforms include a more steeply graduated system of taxation and a better social safety net, and at least some basic form of universal health care that is not so reliant on emergency rooms in desperate circumstances for the less fortunate among us.

War and terrorism always at least temporarily set back the causes of freedom, security, justice, civil liberties and peaceful coexistence. And the "war on terror" has demonstrable been turned into a war on American ideals, as cogently revealed in Jane Mayer's award-winning book *The Dark Side*. These are excellent reasons for us to work very hard to prevent wars and to address the root causes of violent conflicts and terrorism. These causes include the ruthlessness and unfairness of competition over resources and the marginalization of people in the world by means of large disparities of wealth and power and economic inequities. Fairness, true justice, peace and domestic tranquility need to be re-established as soon as possible in the world, wherever and whenever they are upset. More comprehensive perspectives and wide-ranging points of view like this are needed to provide energy to effect positive change.

Missouri was admitted to the Union as a slave state in 1821, under the terms of the Missouri Compromise. This was a political compromise in which the state of Maine was simultaneously admitted as a free state. Missouri slaves were principally domestic slaves who were treated more humanely than plantation slaves of the Deep South. This is why people regarded it to be a terrible fate for a slave to be 'sold down the river'. Slave traders ruthlessly tore families apart and treated slaves as sub-human chattel.

Astutely observant Mark Twain vividly recalled an incident from his boyhood in his Autobiography. A little slave boy named Sandy had been taken away from his family and his friends on the East Coast and sold to someone in Hannibal, and he later came into Mark Twain's family home. Mark Twain noted that Sandy had a cheery spirit and a gentle innocence, and he would often sing and whistle and yell and whoop and laugh all day long. One day Sam Clemens lost his temper because of Sandy's noisy antics. Jane Clemens, Mark Twain's mother, explained that Sandy would never see his own mother again, and if singing and laughing helped him to forget his grief, it should not be discouraged. Jane Clemens' sensitivity to meanness and injustice deeply affected her son, so he never let Sandy's noisiness bother him again. The incident, wrote Mark Twain, "stayed in my memory, clear and sharp, vivid and shadowless, all these slow-drifting years."

A pastor in Hannibal once described Jane Clemens as "a woman of the sunniest temperament, lively, affable, and a general favorite." Personally, I am an enthusiastic believer in the positivity of sunny outlooks and cheery dispositions, so this passage has a compelling resonance for me. My memory in these change-accelerating times looks backward into my personal past and sees few images of childhood as vividly as Mark Twain did. The memories that do surface most vividly in my mind seem to involve exhilarating activities, shocking realizations, excruciating embarrassments, or other intensely emotional feelings.

Jane Clemens once made an interesting observation about her son, and I love this understanding of the great writer:

"He is a well spring of truth, but you can't bring up the whole well with one bucket. I know his average, therefore he never deceives me. I discount him thirty per cent for embroidery, and what is left is perfect and priceless truth, without a flaw in it anywhere."

It is noteworthy that Mark Twain was one of the most widely traveled people on the planet in his day. His experiences of other peoples and other cultures broadened his worldviews and contributed to his sometimes wise and incisive understandings. I myself inherited some of his wanderlust and appreciation of the expansive aspects of encounters with other people abroad. I spent several years as a young gal in my twenties vagabonding around the world, mostly in Europe, North Africa, "Across Asia on the Cheap", and in Southeast Asia and in Australia, New Zealand and across the South Pacific. As a consequence, I appreciate a perspective that Mark Twain expressed long ago:

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, and charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

At another time, the estimable philosopher expressed this opinion:

"You never saw a bigoted, opinionated, stubborn, narrow-minded, self-conceited, almighty mean man in your life but he had stuck in one place ever since he was born and thought God made the world and dyspepsia and bile for his especial comfort and satisfaction."

Note that I not only fancy myself a somewhat objective and far-seeing philosopher, but also an excellent chef. The latter talent is verifiable -- make something from *Twelve Delicious Recipes for Good Health and Gourmet Appreciation* for confirmation. That compendium contains outstanding recipes that could contribute to an auspicious revolution in American eating habits by providing ways to easily prepare yummy and healthy food that just happen to be relatively light in their environmental impacts.

There are also four additional sets of "recipes" in the Earth Manifesto in the form of extensive collections of

thoughtful ideas about how we could dramatically improve our societies and the prospects of people in future generations. These ideas, found in Part Four online, include:

- (1) One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies;
- (2) Three Bills of Right: A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good;
- (3) Radically Simple Ways to Make America Fairer, and to Fix Both Social Security and Health Care So We Can Move On to Address Much Bigger Issues; and,
- (4) A Progressive Agenda for a More Sane Humanity.

Sensationally, the 2016 Democratic National Platform was the most liberal one in modern history, and in stunning contrast, the 2016 Republican National Platform was probably the most reactionary one. This simple fact is reason enough for American voters to have chosen Democratic candidates in the November 2016 elections, and to have sent Republican politicians packing until they formulate a fairer and more sensible agenda.

We Americans seem to be at a juncture today that is similar to those heady days in 1776 when Thomas Paine anonymously articulated plain truths in his famous pamphlet *Common Sense*. In it, Paine asserted that "now is the seedtime of continental union, faith and honor." We are now again in such a seedtime, and the need is becoming urgent for greater unity rather than allowing exploitive elites to divide us for narrowly selfish purposes. So there is much that can be gained by revisiting Paine's themes and purposes, as I have done in my *Common Sense Revival*. While there is no monarchy to oppose today, far-reaching abuses of power are taking place in our corporate-dominated government, and they are extensively opprobrious to the people. You know, abuses like excessive influence of money in elections and policy formulation, and the decline of fairness in participation and representation in our national politics, and an overwhelming use of manipulative spin and deceptive political advertising by hyper-partisan politicians, and the increasingly uncivil language of political and policy discussion. These shortcomings of our political system "provide contemporary analogues to the difficulties and dilemmas faced by the early Americans under colonial rule."

I have taken the liberty of posting this Open Letter on the Earth Manifesto website, Mr. Mayor, where it will evolve like the rest of the ideas contained therein. If you would like to include a civic statement on behalf of our fine town, I would be very happy to include it.

Thank you for your attention to these ideas. They may well propel us forward in the evolution of human understandings and sane undertakings. If there is any poetic justice in the world, the Earth Manifesto will not only put Hannibal back on the map of greater national consciousness, but it will also help preserve and protect the qualities of our Mother Earth that are most vital for our future and the well-being of untold generations of people who will follow us.

Mark Twain would have heartily approved of the legacy of his ideas in these words!

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

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