

Earth Manifesto



AMAZING DISGRACE

A Save the World Publication

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

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

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

The early history of efforts to protect the environmental in our democratic republic was a remarkably bipartisan issue. Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, was one of the greatest presidents ever for establishing protections of the environment. After he became president in 1901, he sought to protect America's national resources from the greed of exploitive business entities, and one of his signature accomplishments during his time in office was to conserve forests and fresh water resources and wildlife habitats. His conservation convictions were so strong that he succeeded in having 230 million acres of land set aside for the public in the form of five National Parks and 150 national forests, along with more than 50 federal game preserves and bird sanctuaries, 18 national monuments and 24 fresh water reclamation projects.

Then in the 1960s and 1970s, truly broad and bipartisan leadership helped enact all the bedrock environmental laws, including the Wilderness Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. The book *Getting to Green*, written by political independent Frederic Rich, explains that beginning in the 1980s, a "Great Estrangement" began, with conservatives beginning a hard tack to the right and the Green movement drifting to the left. The result was that environmental issues underwent a disastrous transformation "from common cause to divisive wedge." And in the past 25 years, federal spending on environmental protections and conservation has been significantly reduced. The status in 2018? Shockingly worse!

We surely are in "a race between education and catastrophe," as the English writer H.G. Wells declared back in 1920. And the race since his day has become increasingly urgent. Canaries in the global mine are dropping dead left and right, along with almost 60% of the populations -- since 1970! -- of a representative selection of 10,000 species of mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians and fishes, as the latest version of the Living Planet Report confirms. And we are baking in an increase in global average temperatures that guarantees excessively high costs of coastal flooding and extremely harsh natural disaster events, unless we adopt bold efforts to alter this trajectory, and this will doom many species of life, including almost all in coral reef communities that are likely to suffer eternal bleaching extinction during coming decades.

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

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

The brilliant physicist Stephen Hawking once declared, "Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change." By that evaluation, the cowardly politicians who go along with Donald Trump's retrograde environmental policies are downright stupid in their efforts to promote the burning of increasing quantities of fossil fuels, for this will irreversibly increase the costs and risks of extreme weather events, destabilize the global climate, disrupt normal temperatures and amounts of precipitation, and obstruct adaptation to global warming, climate change, ocean acidification, coral bleaching and rising sea levels.

It is an extraordinary disgrace for *We the People* to be subjected to the successful ambitions of master manipulators dividing people so that they can irresponsibly impose a narrow agenda of extreme short-termism on the world, including maximized resource extraction and depletion, facilitated cost externalizing schemes, wealth and power concentrating priorities, scandalous corruption, pay-for-play political ploys, sacrificed public health, ignored scientific understandings, wrongheaded national policies, morally bankrupt anti-egalitarian elitism and spiritually misguided materialistic consumerism .

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

Conservative propagandists like Charles and David Koch, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh and Trumpian politicians have been extraordinarily successful in demonizing progressives to advance their greedy, corrupt and control-obsessed agenda, even though this cunning tactic has rationalized broadly anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic, anti-environmental and fiscally irresponsible stances that are stupidly sacrificing the greater good in favor of allowing wealthy people to gain unconscionably generous short-term benefits.

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

Today, the Office of Government Ethics has declared that it is essential to the success of our republic that citizens can trust that the decisions made by our representatives are motivated by the public good, not by narrow personal interests. Yet the American people have very good reasons to distrust the current rashly domineering party in power.

Professor Robert Reich makes it crystal clear in the film *Inequality for All*, and in his book *Saving Capitalism - For the Many, Not the Few*, that we should be striving to create a more inclusive and moral economy in which a virtuous

circle reigns, not a vicious circle. The American people should stand up together and declare that they are as mad as hell at power-abusing politicians, and that they are not going to take it anymore, and that they want a peaceful progressive populist revolution as soon as possible. I call on all Americans to make their voices heard in favor of fairer national policies and smarter national priorities.

Abraham Lincoln said you couldn't fool all the people all the time. Today, there are not that many people who are really being fooled, but their voices and best interests sure are being deeply disrespected and ignored in the zeal of rich people to grab bigger portions of the income and wealth generated through the exploitation of natural resources and working people. Inequality is more extreme than it has been since the just before the Depression of the 1930s, and the top 1% of households in the United States now owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined. Any honest tax plan would be structured so as to be highly graduated, to reduce this extreme level of wealth inequality, instead of making it worse. But scheming power-prepossessed conservative politicians have taken a pivotal step with their egregiously devious Tax Cuts and Jobs Act towards further redistributing wealth upwards and stratifying inequalities of income and wealth.

How is it possible in a democracy for power-abusing leaders to get away with this? The reason is basic -- because the vast majority of the American people effectively have no measurable influence at all on public policy. This stark conclusion was confirmed in January 2014 by Professors Martin Gilens of Princeton and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University, who analyzed about 1,800 policy issues -- and found that "the preferences of the average American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy." LET'S DEMAND BETTER!

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

These are tragic times for the American people as pathologically power-abusing Republican politicians are delivering great gifts to the rich with their tax plan con job, along with dirty coal in the Christmas stockings of the vast majority of Americans when the plan was rammed through without a single vote by a Democratic Senator in December 2017. These sycophants to the donor class are rigging the economic system ever more extremely in favor of wealthy people, and achieving this grotesque top priority by betraying greater good goals, shredding the social safety net, pitting folks in red states against those in blue states, displaying a severe deficiency of empathic understanding, sacrificing the environmental commons, favoring dirty non-renewable sources of energy over clean renewable energy, driving up the risks and future costs of climate disruptions, dangerously piling on the national debt, and undermining the well-being of all in future generations.

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

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

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

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

Political scientist Norman Ornstein of the conservative American Enterprise Institute declared of the tax cut plan

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

Think about this. While dishonest Republican politicians are selling the American people down the river with their one-party tax plan, again the beautiful sounds of refrains of *Amazing Grace* drift into my consciousness, and a recognition dawns. The lyrics to this great song were written by John Newton, a former sailor involved in the slave trade from Africa to the American colonies who had suffered a traumatic experience during a severe storm off the coast of Ireland in 1748. Newton found religion after having prayed desperately to God to save him -- and miraculously surviving the scare -- so he converted to evangelical Christianity and became a clergyman. Having once been lost as a crude and unprincipled reprobate in his younger years, he resolved after this crisis of conscience to repent and be found, having been blind and then suddenly seeing, and he changed course and become more respectful, morally responsible and willing to embrace true Right Action. He later penned a polemic opposing slavery titled *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, and his song *Amazing Grace* became a highly respected anthem to hope, courage and transformation -- a song that is often sung at times of social crisis of conscience. Let us sing it now, together.

Black Africans, after being captured and sold into slavery and brought in miserable conditions across the Atlantic Ocean to a land where they were accorded no rights, were often sold down the river to harsh fates in the Deep South, with or without their families, and for many generations. Today, despotic acts are being perpetuated that are much worse than those of King George III in the years leading up to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the Revolutionary War that followed, and modern "conservatives" are betraying the well-being of the American people and undermining the hopes of hundreds of millions of folks in considerably more consequentially harmful ways than levying colonial taxes on imported tea and refusing to allow fair representation to the people.

Harriet Beecher Stowe used the lyrics from the song *Amazing Grace* in her anti-slavery sentimental novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The character Uncle Tom was a long-suffering black slave and the novel depicts the harsh reality of slavery while also asserting that Christian love can overcome something as destructive as enslavement of fellow human beings. Perhaps love is all we need?

Humanity is increasingly in desperate need of a better modicum of salvation in the here and now, and our leaders are horribly missing the mark -- a real sin! -- so we must seek salvation and redemption through greater honesty, honorable principles, inclusive understanding, reason, precautionary wisdom and broad fair-mindedness. This is a more providential plan than to complacently wait for an imagined afterlife of heavenly good. In these efforts, we should be guided by the Golden Rule reciprocity principle, and we should embrace the farsighted provisions of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, as proposed in detail in the Earth Manifesto.

Where We Stand

The U.S. government has come to resemble a banana republic, corrupt in politics and featuring all too many officials even committing felonies in advancing their narrow, self serving, extremely inegalitarian, pathologically unjust and environmentally insane agenda. This is very scary, for the USA is a superpower and the world cannot afford to have it become like a banana republic, characterized by political instability, extremely stratified social classes, a large and unfairly exploited poor working class, and a crony capitalist, plutocratic, oligarchic, corporatocratic and authority-abusing ruling-class composed of power-abusing elites in business, political, military and corporate media circles. Having an incredibly dishonest, anger prone, bullying, emotionally unbalanced, dangerously vindictive egomaniacal narcissist in the Oval Office compounds this danger.

It should not be too much to hope that these self-interest-promoting hard-right representatives of a minority of Americans will see the light and change course, and commit to greater honesty and demonstrate a more inclusive concern for the common good, the general welfare, fiscal responsibility, peaceable coexistence, domestic tranquility, truer liberty and justice for all, a better overall quality of life, and a sustainable future.

A Major Problem: The Hegemony of the Corporatocracy

The Founding Fathers of the United States created a democratic republic in which the American people had power because their voices were to be heard through representatives who were supposed to actually represent the people's best interests and the general welfare. Today, however, the USA is ruled by a corporatocracy: a partnership of "too-big-to-fail" corporations, extremely wealthy people, and government officials who are collaborating with corporate interests, as psychologist Bruce Levine has written. In this corporatocracy, "as in most modern tyrannies, there are elections, but the reality is that giant corporations and the wealthy elite rule in a way to satisfy their own self-interest. In this corporatocracy, it's in the interest of corporations and the wealthy elite that the winning candidate is beholden to them, so they financially support both Democrats and Republicans, and corporations and the wealthy directly and indirectly finance candidates, who are then indebted to them. It's common for these indebted government officials to appoint to key decision-making roles those friendly to corporations, including executives from these corporations. And it's routine for high-level government officials to be rewarded with high-paying industry positions or lobbying jobs when they exit government, so that they use their relationships with current government officials to ensure that corporate interests will be taken care of." This generally results in wrong-headed national policies and priorities.

Thomas Paine famously declared that *We the People* have it in our power to make the world over again, and one thing is crystal clear: We need to take action now! A bugle horn sounds for solidarity of purpose. It's not like there are no excellent plans out there to address all our national ills. One document alone could transform our worlds: *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Make America Great Again*. Check it out online, or in *See Clearly, Sanity During Insane Times - Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto*.

Thomas Jefferson speaks to us today, from beyond the grave, about an impressive list of "what I deem the essential principles of our Government", as he spelled out in his First Inaugural Address in 1804. "Should we wander from these principles in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty and safety." Hallelujah!

When Thomas Jefferson spoke about what he saw as the essential principles of our government, he adduced what are essentially principles of *The Common Good, Properly Understood*, which should be honored in a democratic republic. Jefferson had just been through a hard-fought election contest, and noted: "During the contest of opinion through which we have passed ... this being now decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the Constitution, all will unite in common efforts for the common good. All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression. Let us, then, fellow citizens, unite with one heart and one mind."

Let's respect this honorable understanding, and come together in common cause!

In December 2017, a corruptly-financed and deeply unpopular Congress rammed through a deeply flawed and astonishingly anti-egalitarian Tax Cuts bill that contains more than 1,000 pages of system-rigging provisions designed by narrowly-focused lobbyists for special interest groups, and this disgracefully corrupt plan is chock full of inequality-stoking, deviously discriminatory, healthcare undermining, blatantly trust betraying, pollution encouraging and irresponsibly debt-burdening plans. And a historically unpopular president eagerly signed this legislation into law, in a deceitful Christmas present to the people.

Budgets are moral documents because they have determining impacts on economic outcomes and people's lives, and on the environmental commons upon which all future well-being is crucially dependent. All tax and spending decisions involve trade-offs, and changes in them create winners and losers. Government budgets and plans for raising revenues and allocating spending reveal the real priorities of our representatives, and these decisions are immensely consequential. Unfortunately, the new changes are unconscionably narrow in their focus and short-term oriented.

The real reason that the biggest element of the Trump Tax Folly is to cut taxes on corporations is because the top 1% of Americans currently gets an outsized proportion of the dividends and capital gains realized every year, so

this tax cut will mainly benefit shareholders and CEOs, and the politicians they buy. Capital gains, curiously, are taxed at exceedingly favorable rates. Rigged at every turn!

Republicans are sticking with their Big Lie trickle-down theory that they have been propagating since Ronald Reagan adopted it in 1981 as a rationalization for enriching the rich, incidentally exacerbating inequality. The billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer made incisive observations about the foolishness of the trickle-down theory in an article titled *The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats*. In this article, written in 2014 and addressed as a Memo to "My Fellow Zillionaires", Hanauer expressed this provocative understanding:

"The problem isn't that we have inequality. Some inequality is intrinsic to any high-functioning capitalist economy. The problem is that inequality is at historically high levels and getting worse every day. Our country is rapidly becoming less a capitalist society and more a feudal society. Unless our policies change dramatically, the middle class will disappear, and we will be back to late 18th-century France. Before the revolution."

"And so I have a message for my fellow filthy rich, for all of us who live in our gated bubble worlds: Wake up, people. It won't last. If we don't do something to fix the glaring inequities in this economy, the pitchforks are going to come for us. No society can sustain this kind of rising inequality. In fact, there is no example in human history where wealth accumulated like this and the pitchforks didn't eventually come out. You show me a highly unequal society, and I will show you a police state. Or an uprising. There are no counterexamples. None. It's not if, it's when."

Our tax code really should reward work, not wealth. And yet Republicans are egregiously trying to preserve one of the most blatantly corrupt provisions of anything in the tax code, the so-called carried-interest loophole. This notorious tax break allows highly compensated private-equity managers and real estate investors and venture capitalists to be taxed at extremely low rates, violating the progressive principle of a graduated tax system that makes the highest earners pay higher rates on the top levels of their earnings. "These are guys that shift paper around and they get lucky," said Donald Trump during the campaign. They were, he concluded, "getting away with murder." Now, Republicans have given a presidential pardon to these folks, despite knowing their guilt before Lady Justice, the lovely personification of the moral force in judicial systems.

The desperate Republican push to pass a cunning tax cut plan before they lose their narrow majority power reveals how nakedly corrupt our political system is, along with their grotesquely scheming basket of treacherous priorities.

This extremely partisan Tax Cuts plan is designed to lavishly reward rich people and corporate shareholders, and it is made worse by creating a new structure that will be excessively easy for wealthy people to game to claim new lower tax rates designed for "pass-through businesses". This plan narrowly redistributes wealth upward, at a terrible eventual cost to the majority of Americans and to everyone in the future when this deviously cold-hearted scheme comes tumbling down with an opprobrious debt crisis, an economic cataclysm, a rattling bursting of an artificially inflated stock market bubble, an ecological collapse, revolutionary strife, secessionary fervor, or whatever other disastrous outcomes will be delivered by this hard right, short sight, inequality stoking, greed driven, anti-precautionary and hubris exposing scam, with its scurrilously divisive provisions that would deplete resources, exploit working people, exacerbate crucial existential problems and sabotage the well-being of all in future generations.

We should shift our national priorities from a primary focus on pandering to the donor class and wealthy vested interest groups, and instead declare it to be our top priority to emphasize better national planning by acting much more responsibly, ethically, morally, humanely, justly, empathically, peaceably and sustainably, and with greater ecological awareness and more respect for farsighted precautionary principles. We should stop facilitating Tragedy of the Commons outcomes and allowing externalized costs to be foisted onto the general populace. The best way to accomplish this would be by ratifying a Bill of Rights for Future Generations and honoring its overarching guidance.

Listen for the echoes of a stentorian female voice reverberating down from the skies above a burning bush on the Mount, and visualize some word cartoon balloons with jagged edges proliferating like lightening across dark skies that spell out exactly how deeply dishonorable and extraordinarily irresponsible the nature is of the Trump Folly Tax Plan, with its anti-environmental, inequality stoking, anti-democratic and despotically authoritarian bent. Another flash of lightening illuminates parenthetical footnotes that include (1) *The Top Ten Ways Our System is*

Unfairly Rigged: (2) The Thirteen Main Methods Used to Concentrate Wealth and Power; (3) The Fourteen Worst Ways that Powerful People Abuse Power; and (4) The Con Goes On: A Triumphant Coup by Crooked Conniving Crony Capitalists. These essays can be found online, and are also included in *See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times - Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto*. They provide a vastly fuller understanding of the underhanded schemes, scams and swindles being perpetrated on the American people.

We are seeing that ambition, unchecked by moral constraints, can lead to atrocities. With their debt-financed tax cut plan, Republicans are trying to perpetrate what Senator Wyden of Oregon calls a "massive con job". It is likely that they are creating an atrocious brew of powerful trouble, "like a Hell-broth", pitting rich against poor and people in red states against those in blue states, and one can just hear the refrain of the witches in Macbeth who chanted "Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble."

Mark Twain famously observed that we Americans have the best government that money can buy. This satirical ridicule of the corrupting influence of moneyed interest groups in our politics has become an increasingly pathetic, indeed preposterous, parody of propriety in the USA today, as an epic flood of money has given us rudely anti-egalitarian political leaders who are ruthlessly dishonest and treacherously deceitful. These shrewd folks pretend to care about *We the People*, but what they are doing is selling the vast majority of Americans down the river -- in order to give increasingly gargantuan benefits to the few.

Existential Climate Change Considerations

Humankind is now in the midst of perhaps our highest stakes gamble of all -- deciding what to do, or what not to do, about the climate crisis. Scurrilous Republican leaders are rejecting prudent precautionary principles, and do not seem to have any viable backup plan to deal with the disastrous unfolding costs and damaging impacts of their wrong-headed actions. Scientists tell us that we must leave 80% of known reserves of fossil fuels in the ground to prevent a catastrophic onset of extreme weather events that will include heat waves, apocalyptic hurricanes, hellish wildfires, creeping desertification, coral reef bleaching, widespread coastal flooding and severe winter weather snaps like the three nor'easters that buffeted the Northeast in March 2018. But Republican politicians are working to prevent action designed to protect humanity from these destructive outcomes. What part of this thing don't they understand?

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

Here is an amazingly disgraceful fact. In December 2009, Donald Trump and his three oldest children, Ivanka, Donald Jr. and Eric, signed a letter printed in the New York Times, along with dozens of other prominent business executives, which urged President Obama and world leaders headed to Copenhagen for international climate negotiations to act on climate change. The letter stated that, "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet." Most unfortunately, now that there is a huge amount of money and power available to the Trump family by aggressively siding with the fossil fuel industry, they seem to be just fine with pandering to polluting companies, opposing climate action and appointing climate change deniers to positions of power. They thus betray common sense, the common good, integrity, precautionary wisdom and the moral good by contributing to the probabilities that humanity and planet Earth will suffer "catastrophic and irreversible consequences". This is a grotesque repudiation of social responsibility!

The cost and consequences of INACTION on climate issues are both economically unacceptable and morally indefensible. Climate science has reached the point that it can definitively say that failure to very aggressively try to "solve" climate change is neither a rational or moral option for a nation or humanity as a whole. And, according to a quote in Joe Romm's fascinating article *It's Not Too Late To Stop Climate Change, And It'll Be Super-Cheap*, "The

\$44 trillion additional investment needed to decarbonize the energy system ... by 2050 is more than offset by over \$115 trillion in fuel savings -- resulting in net savings of \$71 trillion."

In insightful writer Naomi Klein's provocative talk at a TEDWomen Conference in 2010, she gave a brilliant presentation titled *Addicted to Risk*, indicating that we have become far too willing to gamble with things that are precious and irreplaceable. How can this collective recklessness be explained? There are, of course, many contributing factors, noted Naomi Klein in this talk, which she gave right after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. These factors include greed, hubris, a surfeit of confidence in the righteousness of their close-minded convictions, a male eagerness to take risks, and the perils inherent in believing in excessive privileges for the few. All these factors are rationalized by archetypal narratives that tell us we deserve to reign supreme over others, and over Nature. But tools and technology designed to control Nature will ultimately fail, so we should work with Mother Nature, rather than against her.

Roguish Developments and the Rise of the Kakistocracy

The Republican Party seems to have gone rogue. Republican politicians and the shrewdly opportunistic crony capitalists they represent are blatantly imposing domineering rule over *We the People*, making our government a type of "kakistocracy" -- a term from Greek that means rule by the worst or least qualified or most unscrupulous citizens. One salient characteristic of this anti-democratic kakistocracy is that it seeks to impose some of the worst possible policies on the people, and to focus on nearly the worst possible national priorities. The top goal for these money-obsessed and power-mad Mammonites is to give more tax cuts to rich people to gain their generous support. These facts inextricably mean that seriously consequential common good goals and the general welfare are being rudely violated. Anyone who wants to know more details about the swamp denizens in the kakistocracy, see *Postscript One, Meet Members of the Kakistocracy*. Also see the *Postscript Two - The Top Ten Worst Aspects of Rogue Republican Rule in 2017*. These two postscripts can be found in the online version of *Amazing Disgrace*.

This modern-day kakistocracy is led by a Twittering Demagogue-in-Chief and his crony henchmen who are actually well qualified in one terribly retrogressive regard -- they are effective in their opposition to the common good by violating the principles, founding purposes, moral rightness and guiding missions of the government agencies they are charged with leading. How could they possibly act in such cunningly unconscionable ways, and get away with it? They should be ashamed to be so amazingly eager to fulfill the expectations of the corrupting persons and entities that have bought their allegiance. This is a special category of unscrupulousness. Ideological extremists should be completely disqualified when they can be seen to be corrupt exploiters who want to "serve" by divisively torpedoing social cohesion, saddling the nation with more debt, acting as shills for the rich, and contributing to a profoundly unprincipled environmental Tragedy of the Commons of the first order.

One of the most amazing aspects of Republican disgrace is their extremely male chauvinistic, virulently anti-choice and effectively misogynistic national policy preferences and their boorishly sexist willingness to trade their souls for power by letting male leaders get away with lying brazenly about sexual misconduct against women, and even, in the case of Alabama's Roy Moore, against teenage girls.

Let's Move Forwards, Not Backwards!

The Goddess of Irony flashes in the night sky. The main focus of the current illegitimate president is to undo every accomplishment made by the smart black man who preceded him in the White House, particularly with regard to the most consequential issues like those involved with environmental damages, socialized costs, resource depletion, clean air, clean water, fuel efficiency rules, emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, protections of public lands, family planning, and biotic extinctions that reduce biological diversity. This seems to be a curiously racist-tinged whim, and it is sad that this egregious stance can accurately be seen as myopic, obtusely selfish, vindictively bigoted, grotesquely contrary to the general welfare, and insidiously treacherous to young people and all those in future generations. The simple fact of the matter is that the NEXT president will be forced to undo the damages being done, and alter course from divisive swindles, irresponsibly short-term-oriented schemes, unethical scams, discriminatory executive orders, and assaults on National Monuments, National Parks, the vulnerable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other public lands.

We need progressive action, like the implementation of ideas espoused by Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand and Kamala Harris. We should act intelligently and with fair-mindedness foremost in our considerations, and elect significantly more women to office. We owe it to them, many of them having been cheated in the 2016 elections out of the opportunity to lead -- outstanding potential representatives like Zephyr Teachout in New York and Katie McGinty in Pennsylvania. We can no longer afford to hew to righteously wrongheaded policies and priorities.

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

Republican politicians have succeeded in gaining power, and in being able to abuse authority, by exploiting resentment-stoked populist sentiments and anti-immigrant fervor, and by invoking religion and even God. They misuse power for personal gain, engage in naked political malfeasance and corruption in office, use legislative powers for illegitimate private gain, misuse government power to torpedo political opponents, and rationalize injustices like class warfare, racial discrimination, hostility to the rights of women, mass incarceration, instances of police brutality and the violation of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

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

Another attribute of Republican politicians is their broad betrayal of the American public by pretending to be primarily concerned about people in the middle class and "the forgotten man" -- while pushing policies that primarily benefit the top dogs in our country, and irresponsibly incur more debt on top of the \$21 trillion that is already owed. Their motives are reprehensible: to provide huge tax breaks to top income earners and impose harsher austerity measures on the masses by slashing spending on healthcare, public education, environmental protections, nutrition programs and a hundred other initiatives that characterize a civilized society.

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

There is only one way possible that such a deviously disgraceful and despicably disingenuous tax plan, with its huge benefits for corporations and rich people, could possibly be imposed on the American people by a hyper-partisan phalanx of hubris-filled politicians who are exclusively from one political party. There is only one way this plan with its radically unfair hard-right social engineering provisions could squeak through into law when this absurdly narrowly focused generosity is financed using \$1.5 trillion of borrowed money, along with slippery slope plans to slash spending on social safety net programs, environmental protections and a host of other common good goals. There is only one way possible that these Republican politicians could succeed at this without any public hearings in Congress and using rashly anti-democratic tactics, and doing so in an all-fired hurry because the illegitimacy of their scandalously achieved electoral coup is being exposed by journalists and an investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller and a brilliant team of experts who possess a vast array of experience investigating financial fraud, public corruption, money laundering, foreign bribery and organized crime.

The only way these things are possible is because Big Money has domineering influence in our politics, and the Supreme Court has effectively sanctioned this outcome with its wrongheaded 5-4 decisions in the Citizens United

and McCutcheon rulings, and billionaires like Charles and David Koch and the Mercers and Sheldon Adelson and their ilk have been allowed to rashly corrupt our country's politics.

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

Remember the sentiments and perspectives articulated by Thomas Paine during tumultuous times in *Common Sense*, his revolutionary pamphlet published in January 1776. After famously declaring that we have it in our power to make the world over again, sure enough, guided by his courageous counsel and driven by people's love of liberty and antipathy toward despots who wield abusive power, our ancestors in the American colonies sought common purpose in gaining liberation from British tyranny. By July 1776, Thomas Paine's clarity of conviction in the cause of independence from despotism began catalyzing into a new form of fairly representative governance that better suited a liberty-loving people. Our Founders came together to bring forth a new nation, collaboratively concocting a farsighted Constitution and fair-minded Bill of Rights, and they put rules of law into place and a brilliantly flexible governing structure that has progressively adapted over the span of the past two centuries.

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

As the noose tightens on scandalous Republican malfeasance with Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, more details are being revealed of the cover up of coordinated efforts with Russia to interfere in the 2016 elections to help get Republicans elected. And the Supreme Court is reviewing overwhelming evidence of the unconstitutionally unfair influence of extreme gerrymandering by Republican legislatures across the USA, a ruse that has helped give socially disastrous domineering power to Republican politicians. These system-corrupting developments are allowing Republicans to egregiously abuse this excessive and unmerited influence by disenfranchising millions of Americans and imposing reactionary social and environmental policies on the populace. Satirist Andy Borowitz humorously observes, "Vice-President Mike Pence has requested that Jesus Christ rapture him up before the special counsel Robert Mueller can indict him ...". These leaders should be thrown out of office, and replaced with more honest and fair-minded representatives.

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

Jerry Brown also accused Republicans of "acting like a bunch of Mafia thugs" by targeting rich, high-tax and largely Democratic states in their tax cuts plan in order to redistribute money to Republican-leaning, low-tax states. The arrogantly unscrupulous Mafia-like Republicans in the Senate and the House have managed to get an extremely narrow majority of votes to pass tax cut bills in both chambers, without a single representative of Democratic districts included, and then engaged in the process of "reconciliation" in a conference committee to put final touches on the different schemes hatched in tax cut legislation narrowly passed in both chambers. An accurate understanding of this process, according to reports, was that they were "negotiating among themselves to find the tricky combination that can win over various GOP factions in both chambers without losing others, all the while keeping the projected increase in the deficit below \$1.5 trillion." This whole process was not only tricky, but the tax cut scam is a dishonest and risk-laden trick upon all people in the future.

The Republican tax plan is basically a \$6 trillion tax cut that will primarily benefit a small group of already well-off people and give more profits and power to corporate entities that are externalizing big costs onto society, evading taxes and abusing the power of their influence. This \$6 trillion boondoggle will be paid for by burdening tens of

millions of Americans with \$4.5 trillion in benefit cuts and implementing a fiscally irresponsible addition of \$1.5 trillion to the already riskily large national debt.

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

In 1980, the top tax rate on individuals was 70%. Then Ronald Reagan became president and managed to get the top tax rate slashed to 28% during his tenure in office, and since then budget deficits almost every year have driven the national debt to record levels that are dangerous because they represent a historically high percentage of GDP, a level seen only once before in U.S. history when the U.S. was fighting World War II against fascist aggressors. Today, the top tax rate is still less than 40%, and wealthy people make most of their money on capital gains that are taxed at much lower rates, and most wealth is passed on tax free to heirs after they die. Due in large part to tax cuts on the highest levels of income and on inheritances, and due to tax evasion schemes by corporations and rich people, the national debt has soared to from less than \$1 trillion in 1980 to more than \$21 trillion today.

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

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

A first instance of this came to light as Republicans were laser focused on trying to ram through this wrong-headed assembly of shrewdly targeted tax cuts. Nine million children were on the verge of losing their health care because funding had not be re-authorized for the Children's Health Insurance Program, a low-cost health insurance plan for children from low-income families that expired on October 1, 2017. During a debate in early December on the Republican tax bill, Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio asked about the future of this program, and Orrin Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee that presided over the tax cut hearings, claimed the program had not been renewed "because we don't have money anymore." This negligence was occurring even though there was bipartisan support for renewing the program rather than abandoning children. What was happening was that Republicans were once again cynically using important things as bargaining chips in their winner-take-all game.

An advocate for deficit-financed tax cuts, a man who is a smart ultra-high-net-worth investment advisor for a wealth management firm, claims that the Tax Cuts bill will not make inequality worse, and he echoes the claim that the plan will prove to be a good thing for most Americans because tens of millions of Americans have investments in the stock market through their 401(k) retirement plans. But a little research reveals the truth: only 32% of Americans are saving for retirement in a 401(k), and the perception that stock market gains would be broadly shared is misleading. While more than 45% of American households have direct or indirect investments in the stock market through 401(k)s, mutual funds, trusts, pensions or direct purchase of shares, the top 10% of households own more than 80% of the total value of those investments, while the vast majority have relatively

meager holdings.

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

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

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

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

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

The Congressional Budget Office found that the Senate version of the tax bill would cause all families making less than \$30,000 a year to be hurt financially by this legislation before 2019 -- "and by 2027, all families earning less than \$75,000 will be worse off. But corporations and the 1% will receive HUGE tax cuts -- and their tax cuts will be protected even if there is an economic downturn."

Retrogressive Leadership

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

Abraham Lincoln echoed the Bible during the Civil War, one of the most divisive times in American history, when he warned that a house divided cannot stand. Today, master dividers have seized power through an electoral coup and are abusing this power by exerting domineering control over the people and trying to rig the economy and tax law ever more extremely in favor of the few and against the common good. We should, as a consequence, rightly stand

up and throw these treacherous men out of office, and replace them with leaders who are much more honest, fair-minded, inclusive and justice championing, and who are truly more respectful of women and peaceful coexistence, precautionary principles, protections of a healthy environment and other important values. Moderation in all things!

When the prospects for well-being for every being in future generations are roundly betrayed by greedy apologists for outrageous abusers of power, this is not good. When the common good is betrayed through the use of deviously deceitful ideological arguments, this is anti-American. When the schemers who are brazenly perpetrating these outrages are working overtime to grab domineering power at any cost and to stack the courts with "conservative" collaborators, these zealots deserve the deep disdain of those who they betray.

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

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

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

Men's souls are being tried today, as Thomas Paine declared they were during Revolutionary times, and some of them are being found guilty. Dante regarded fraud and treachery to be the worst of his nine circles of Hell, and if there is a judgmental God, "He" is looking down with burning disapproval upon those who perpetuate highly consequential crimes against humanity and who betray principles of Golden Rule fairness, decency and environmental sanity. We are not lost and need now to be found; we have been blinded by deceivers, charlatans and demagogues, but now we can see. 'Tis grace that hath brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Postscript One: Meet Members of the Kakistocracy

Who are the main members of this misguiding kakistocracy? Let's meet some of them. Among the worst characters is the top legal authority in the country in the Department of Justice, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has lied through his teeth about his and the Trump campaign's collaboration with Russia to throw the election to Trump Republicans. This man wants to make the costly War on Drugs even harsher, selectively deciding that overreach by the federal government is a good idea, as evidenced by this decision to ratchet up the extremely unjust and oppressive criminalization of the use of cannabis by engaging in a crackdown on existing marijuana laws in eight states that have legalized it. This is a bizarre inconsistency with what was once a core Republican value of defending states' rights, and it reveals soul-less and unprincipled aspects of the Party. Sessions is also an exceedingly lousy representative of fair criminal justice reform or honestly dealing with the racial discrimination inherent in national policies that have made our system of excessive criminalization and mass incarceration extremely unjust.

Also among the worst members of the kakistocracy is the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, an agency created through common sense bipartisan agreement during the Nixon years. This sycophant brazenly favors short-term-oriented profiteering by the fossil fuel industry and the rash foisting of costs onto the public. These wide-ranging "cost externalities" include air pollution, water pollution, adverse impacts on millions of people's health, the unsustainable depletion of resources, and spiking costs related to emissions of greenhouse gases and the rapidly worsening conditions being caused by the climate crisis.

These reckless efforts undermine conditions that would help guarantee fairer treatment to young people and all people yet to be born in future generations. In keeping with this misguided ecological policy, the Secretary of

Education favors private education at the expense of the funding of public education, and shows inadequate concern for the heavy burden of debt imposed on students and their parents due to our system of student loans that have high interest rates and harsh terms.

The Treasury Secretary came from a private bank where he became known as an unscrupulous "foreclosure king" for his ruthless actions toward victims of the Credit Crisis of late 2008, and he is one of the main drivers behind the highly regressive and fiscally irresponsible tax cut plan that Republicans have rammed through into law without any input from representatives of more than half of all Americans who did not vote for their demagogic power grab.

Also, the billionaire Secretary of Commerce, it turns out, had investments that he suspiciously failed to disclose during his confirmation hearings in a shipping firm he once controlled that has significant business ties to the son-in-law of Vladimir Putin and a Russian oligarch who is subject to U.S. sanctions, according to the "Paradise Papers". This leaked trove of more than 7 million internal documents of a Bermuda-based law firm provide "a rare insight into the workings of the global offshore financial world, which is used by many of the world's most powerful companies and government officials to legally avoid paying taxes and to conduct business away from public scrutiny." Where the sun doesn't shine, you can bet the shenanigans are scandalous, and sure enough, more than 120 politicians and royal rulers around the world are identified in the Paradise Papers as having ties to offshore finance tax havens.

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

In the big picture, there is a gaping disconnect between Trump's populist rhetoric and the more conventional reality of how he's trying to govern. In signing this bill killing the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Arbitration Agreements rule, it will make it harder for folks who are gouged by big banks or subjected to discrimination to seek redress in the courts. Putting Mick Mulvaney, an opponent to banking regulation, in charge of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is blatant antagonism to the common good. "This is not the type of change most Trump voters were looking for. Perhaps that's why he signed the measure behind closed doors and with no fanfare."

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

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

Postscript Two - The Top Ten Worst Aspects of Rogue Republican Rule in 2017

1. Arrogant leaders are mindless ramping up assaults on life on Earth, despite the fact that humankind has already been decimating the population of almost all other forms of life on the planet. They are doubling down on plans that have contributed to wiping out more than half the populations of 10,000 representative species of mammals,

reptiles, birds, amphibians and fish, as ominously reported by the World Wildlife Fund in its sensational and sadly revelatory Living Planet Report 2016.

2. Meanwhile human numbers have tripled since 1950, increasing from 2.5 billion to 7.5 billion. And yet Republican politicians are making it more difficult and less affordable for women to get contraceptives, and they have instituted a version of the Global Gag Rule that is monstrously wrongheaded by being much worse than ever before, expanding prohibitions on abortions abroad to make them significantly more onerous than when Ronald Reagan first instituted this rash rule. This population explosion is a driving causative factor behind the shredding of the web of life on Earth, because increasing numbers of us are wreaking damage on wildlife habitats, poisoning ecosystems, altering normal patterns of temperature, precipitation and storm intensity, and altering the gaseous composition of the atmosphere and the acidic-alkaline balance of the oceans.

3. They are pushing policies that serve to squander natural resources at the fastest possible rate with no discernable shred of concern for either sharing the spoils more broadly or conserving these critical resources on behalf of all persons in future generations.

4. They are stubbornly refusing to take strong action to reduce carbon emissions or mitigate the increasingly severe damages and risks associated with the worsening climate crisis.

5. They are pushing a variety of scams, schemes and swindles to facilitate the socializing of externalized costs and increase inequalities and concentrate wealth ever more narrowly in the hands of the few. The sordid details of these shrewd ruses and con games is revealed in the sensational essays contained in *See Clearly: Sanity During Insane Times - Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto*.

6. They are working to undermine public education, goose private profiteering and oppose sensible steps to reduce student debts, and failing to strengthen protections of women from sexual assaults.

7. They are trying to maximize private profits for the few by rashly undermining sensible protections of Clean Air, Clean Water, public lands, National Monuments, National Parks, oceans, Wilderness Areas and endangered species.

8. They are ruthlessly using extremely divisive tactics to gain and maintain power, and abusing this power by disdaining broader efforts to expand inclusivity and social cohesion. Instead of honoring Golden Rule principles of mutual reciprocity and working to achieve common good goals, they are sowing division to control and dominate, and they are exploiting resentments, anger, fears, anti-immigrant sentiments and racial biases to discriminate against almost everyone in the USA who is not a white male.

9. They refuse to take steps to limit access to gun purchases by people on the terrorist watch list or known to be suffering from mental health problems, and they obediently march to the drummer of the NRA, a front group for arms manufacturers and assault weapons pushers. The NRA has nefariously produced a series of rabble-rousing videos using starkly inflammatory rhetoric by a scornful spokesperson named Dana Loesch. These darkly manipulative videos seem to be designed to provoke people's fears and hatred of advocates for sensible controls on gun sales and protestors in general, and even to incite violence against them.

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

Seeing Republican politicians in such an all-fired hurry to ram their abomination of tax legislation into law before anyone really understood the impacts it will have on various constituencies, it becomes clear that these operatives are trying to satisfy a driving lust for money and authority through this modern master plan of pandering to a corrupt coalition of corporate crony capitalists, wealthy conservatives, manipulative demagogues, resentment-filled right-wing populists, religious fundamentalists, anti-choice zealots, white supremacists, male chauvinists, opponents to sensible gun regulations, and anti-environmentalists. This is amazingly disgraceful.