

Earth Manifesto



A Bill of Rights for Future Generations

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
May 1, 2023

"Each generation, sharing in the heritage of the Earth, has a duty as trustee for future generations to prevent irreversible and irreparable harm to life on Earth and to human freedom and dignity."

--- Jacques-Yves Cousteau

One galvanizing reason for the creation and articulation of this Bill Rights for Future Generations is to point the way to our becoming better ancestors. How? By contributing whatever ways possible to helping prevent the dooming of our descendents to harsh fates in a depleted, despoiled and dystopian world. Every person plays a role in this, and wealthy people have the biggest responsibility, having potentials for making the most difference.

Congress passed the original Bill of Rights in 1789 to guarantee essential human rights and personal liberties to the American people. This great Bill of Rights consisted of the first Ten Amendments to the Constitution. As stated in the Preamble to this Bill of Rights, former colonists, disgusted with despotism, expressed an insistent protective desire "to prevent misconstruction or abuse" of the powers of the new federal government over its citizens. They clearly recognized the value of extending "the ground of public confidence in the Government", and sought reassurances in these guarantees that our democracy would be directed toward "beneficent ends."

Our Founders gave Congress the power in the Constitution to provide for the "general Welfare". In the long run, the general welfare and the common good are completely dependent on fair institutions, equitable laws, principled social policies, strongly protected basic human rights, wise investments, honest economic accounting, sensible fiscal discipline, resource conservation and commitments to safeguarding the health of the natural environment. These needs can be satisfied in the long run only by a proper framework of respected rights for our descendants in the future. This, propitiously, just happens to coincide with our ultimate moral imperative.

"Freedom is not license but responsibility -- the gift we have received and the legacy we must bequeath. Although our sojourn in life is brief, we are on a great journey. For those who came before us -- and for those who will follow -- our moral, political and religious duty is to make sure that this nation, which was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all are equal under the law, is in good hands on our watch."

--- The honorable journalist Bill Moyers

People tend to compete ruthlessly to gain advantages. Many interest groups seek a variety of goals in our society, and a lot of them strive to get more perks and benefits from the government. Some groups are exceedingly well represented -- especially rich people and big corporations -- while many millions of people are poorly represented. The interest groups that are most under-represented are young people under the age of 18, because they cannot vote, as well as with every one of the countless multitudes of powerless persons to be born in the future.

"The status quo has many guardians, but the future is an orphan."

--- Timothy Wirth, United Nations Foundation and Better World Fund

This disenfranchisement results in extreme inequities and injustices. It is our ethical obligation to collectively make an overarching commitment to fairer guiding principles in the form of this proposed new Bill of Rights.

This Bill of Rights, once ratified worldwide, would represent a universal declaration of solidarity for making honest efforts to leave a legacy to all persons in the future of reasonable prospects for health, prosperity, security,

dignity and a fair quality of life. This Bill of Rights would help prevent damages and disruptions to our home planet's vital biosphere, natural ecosystems and global climate. These reckless threats right now are unconscionably causing numerous species of life to be driven toward eternal extinction. The bell tolls for us all.

The ratification of this new Bill of Rights would demonstrate a vital and necessary commitment to the greater good in the long run. Leaders in nations worldwide would be "paying forward" good deeds through this action. This is how we should improve the prospects of leaving a livable world to our children, and theirs, and theirs, and theirs -- to the Seventh Generation, and beyond. This Bill of Rights could propitiously provide better confidence and trust in our governing institutions -- by succeeding in keeping system-rigging scoundrels in check, along with their influence-abusing puppet masters. People deserve a much more transparent, accountable and trustworthy government, and vastly more honorable integrity in leadership.

The incisive words of progressive Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis must be remembered: "We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both." Republicans strongly support narrowly concentrated wealth, so under their domineering undemocratic political influence, the USA has become an increasingly inadequately-controlled corporatocracy and plutocracy. This is antithetical to more broadly shared well-being, and it is consequentially contrary to the common good in the long run.

Today, let us be mindful of the fact that the well-being of all people in the future is seriously threatened by extremely short term oriented activities and present-day expediencies, and by excessive consumerism and the rashly unsustainable and profligate greed-driven exploitation of natural resources.

Let us eat the fruit of one of those sublime Trees of the Awareness of Right and Wrong, and let's share it universally, and acknowledge together that the ultimate moral good is to leave a fairer legacy to all people in the future than current trends portend -- and better conditions than current policies and priorities make probable.

As Victor Hugo once wrote, "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come."

PROPOSED BILL OF RIGHTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Article 1. Sustainable Resource Use

Enact an Ecological Sanity Initiative that includes powerful incentives and smart green fees that would be effective in encouraging a cleaner energy regime and the conservation of resources, healthier forests, reduced reliance on non-renewable resources, good protections of Clean Air and fresh water supplies, regenerative agriculture, sustainable fisheries, the preservation of biological diversity, restorative urban renewal and beneficial protections of open spaces, National Parks and Forests, Bureau of Land Management lands, wildlife preserves, free-flowing rivers and wilderness areas. This Initiative should give priority to safeguarding the health of natural ecosystems and the crucially valuable services they provide to humanity. This goal would best be achieved by investing in stronger protections of public lands, forests, wetlands, coral reef communities, marine sanctuaries and other wildlife habitats, and by striving to restore the resilience and symbiosis inherent in healthy biological diversity.

"The nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value."

--- Theodore Roosevelt

Conservatives should naturally ally themselves with those who champion resource conservation. Instead, these folks detrimentally tend to be looking backwards and throwing their lot in with corporate entities and right-wing authoritarian politicians whose top priority is to gain narrow advantages for themselves while imposing austerity and more oppressive control over others. To achieve these goals, they are treacherously willing to deny scientific facts and act in ways certain to be harmful to people in the future, and to evade individual responsibility for their negative impacts and the broadly harmful influence of their overly greedy and self-serving agendas.

"Whatever happens to the Earth, happens to the children of the Earth ... All things are connected, like the blood that unites one family. Mankind did not weave the web of life; we are but one strand within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."

--- Attributed to Chief Seattle in 1844, in a warning against the misuse of land, water, air and animal life.

This Ecological Sanity Initiative would salubriously have 12 primary provisions, as enumerated in *Three Bills of Right: A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good*. See that essay in the Earth Manifesto online, or in *Healthy Recipes and Provocative Worldviews - Book Five of the Earth Manifesto*.

Article 2. Prevention of Excessive Anthropogenic Climate Disruption

Levy a cost on carbon to deal with the adverse impacts of global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions, and of related changes in weather patterns, storm intensity and extremes of temperatures and precipitation. Create a progressive plan by making the higher costs associated with this assessment fully offset for everyone in the bottom half of income earners. And use funds generated by this plan for two purposes: first, to create a "rainy day fund" that covers the costs of natural disasters being caused by extreme weather events, including more powerful hurricanes, floods, droughts, destructive wildfires, heat waves, winter storms, ocean acidification and rising sea levels; and second, to provide generous financing for the incipient and necessary 'green transition' to a cleaner and more renewable energy future.

Remember: "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and the planet." Donald Trump knew this in 2009 when he attested to it by signing on with 100 prominent business leaders to a full-page ad in the New York Times that urged bold and responsible climate action at a then soon-to-take-place Copenhagen Climate Conference in December 2009. Denial of this understanding is proving disastrous, and unconscionably costly.

This ad contained an existential plea: Lead the world by example "to ensure meaningful and effective measures to control climate change, an immediate challenge facing the United States and the world today." Let's do it!

Article 3. Pollution Control and Mitigation

Require corporations that pollute rivers, lakes, oceans and the atmosphere to pay for prevention and mitigation measures to offset the harmful impacts caused by their polluting activities. These costs should be included in prices of all products and services, rather than being allowed to be externalized onto the public and persons in the future. Strong steps should furthermore be taken to ensure that big corporations and governments adhere to precautionary principles that require cost-effective measures to be implemented to prevent the degradation of the environmental commons.

"As people alive today, we must consider future generations. A clean environment is a human right like any other. It is therefore part of our responsibility toward others to ensure that the world we pass on is as healthy, if not healthier, than we found it."

--- The Dalai Lama

Article 4. Peaceful Coexistence

Strengthen international institutions to build peace between nations, and to prevent violent conflicts between countries. Finance this effort to minimize wars by levying a surcharge on all U.S. sales of arms abroad. Target this surcharge to raise a total \$100 billion per year. Also, seek to ratify nuclear arms control agreements with other nations, and dial down belligerence toward other countries like North Korea and Iran. At home, every American should seek to join a consensus in helping solve far-reaching injustices and other challenges we face.

Article 5. Sensible Family Planning and Women's Reproductive Healthcare

Significantly increase funding at home and abroad for women's healthcare clinics, family planning services, AIDS prevention, and free contraceptives for all women and men who want them. Strongly support sex education programs that are truly comprehensive, and make sure they are medically accurate and socially sensible so that they will be successful in preventing sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

Honor the primacy of ORIGINAL CHOICE. Long ago, after thousands of generations of evolution, a realization dawned on females that there is a direct correlation between a sex act with a specific male and the birth of a baby 9 moons later. This awareness altered instinctive drives, and motivated females to become much choosier

about what male they would accept as a mate. Dr. Leonard Shlain labeled this biological prerogative "Original Choice" in his fascinating book *Sex, Time, and Power: How Women's Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution*.

This Original Choice cannot now be overridden by authority-abusing social conservatives who want to deprive women of any right to get a safe and legal abortion, outrageously even when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest. Such hubristic prohibitions deprive females of agency over their lives and their destinies.

See that the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* ruling made by the U.S. Supreme Court was an eminently reasonable decision that established a fair balance between the natural rights of females to exert a measure of control in their own lives and an implied right of a fertilized egg and incipient clump of cells to be nurtured until it becomes viable. The revolution wrought by the birth control pill in the 1960s, and the morning-after pill, altered the "dance of selves in relationship", causing women's liberation movements to blossom. Social reactionaries cannot now be allowed to turn back time and ruthlessly impose the hegemony of their oppressive control and false moralities on females. The *Roe vs. Wade* decision should be codified into law through legislation such as the Women's Health Protection Act that was passed by the House in September 2021, despite intransigent Republican opposition.

By the end of their childbearing years, something like one out of every seven U.S. women in current times will have never had any children. Think about these women! A good portion of them freely choose not to ever reproduce, so it is particularly offensive to have dogmatic "be fruitful and multiply" Bible believers and social "conservatives" come along and conspire to force women to have children they do not want. This is wrong!

Making matters worse, conservative politicians have used this emotion-hijacking hot button issue to galvanize zealous support from anti-choice voters, especially in Southern states like Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida and Georgia. And they have pathologically parlayed this Trojan Horse subterfuge into shrewd rationalizations for structural gender discrimination, flagrant abuses of power, concerted efforts to undermine democratic fairness, a harsh war on the poor, wealth concentrating scams, cost externalizing schemes, scandalously corrupt governance, initiatives to mortgage the future by enacting regressive tax cuts that mostly benefit the well-to-do, and efforts to make ominously consequential justifications for sacrificing the environment and the biosphere on the altar of exploitive greed and profligacy.

Aretha Franklin soulfully sang out, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, Find out what it means to me!" Find out -- See the coherent Rationalizing Reasoning below, which follows my Conclusion.

Article 6. Social, Environmental and Intergenerational Justice

Increase the fairness of economic opportunity and security for all people by creating a more level playing field in our currently winner-take-all societies. This would have a collateral benefit of reducing desperation, crime and the costs of mass incarceration. Also, improve environmental justice to assure that the disadvantaged poor do not bear such undue burdens of exposure to toxic wastes, air pollution, environmental damages and "natural disasters" that are made worse by climate change. Provide fairer treatment and generous foreign aid to people in developing countries around the world to mitigate damages caused by excessive profiteering by giant corporate entities. And enact policies that are much fairer to all those in younger generations.

Article 7. Stabilization of the National Debt

Prevent the federal government from using deficit spending to excessively obligate every taxpayer in the future for today's expediencies. People today should not be allowed to saddle future generations with high interest cost obligations on rapidly accumulating sums of borrowed money spent for dubious purposes. This goal should be accomplished by establishing an effective mechanism that reduces the U.S. national debt to less than 100% of annual GDP, as it had been from a few years after the end of World War II until recently. Such a proposal is outlined in a Balanced Budget Initiative proposed in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*. This initiative would have a compelling influence on the primary drivers of our national policies -- rich people and giant corporations -- by pressuring them to SEEK COMMON CAUSE with the American people, rather than being stubbornly opposed to equitable and sensible solutions to our daunting budgetary challenges. More steeply graduated tax rates and a wealth tax would be broadly advantageous, so they should be evaluated and put in place.

A significantly positive impact could also be achieved by implementing the proposals made in *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*. These proposals contain detailed plans on how we can help solve our tax, budget deficit, Social Security and healthcare challenges.

Conclusion

We should rightly ratify this Bill of Rights for Future Generations -- in the USA and in countries worldwide -- to protect the interests of those in the future from need-driven and mindlessly materialistic and irresponsibly greed-driven consumerism and status-seeking conspicuous consumption. See clearly that the bottom line drive that is so perverting our national policies and priorities is an excessive compulsion to get money, social status and power.

Look, here's the deal. We Americans supposedly have the right to choose good governance that represents government "of the people, by the people and for the people." We should demand that the leaders we choose genuinely represent the vast majority of us, and demonstrate greater concern for the general welfare and liberty and justice for all. Let's act to make ours a nation united, indivisible, rather than one whose citizens are divided against each other by cunning master manipulators who exploit grievances, resentments and antagonisms and take ruthless advantage of people and circumstances for their own personal gain.

Social cohesion is a public good, and the surest path for creating unifying bonds is by ensuring that prosperity is more broadly shared. The sad nature of the corrupt status quo is proof that our representatives care more about their own ambitions and wealth than the public good. Elections have major consequences, and we should surely choose more wisely! Citizens should be alert to scams, swindles, deceit, public graft and foreign intrigue treachery. The time has come for us to make a radical rededication to common good values, and have it be informed by strong commitments to this new Bill of Rights.

Thomas Paine valued freedom and despised oppression above all, and he noted of his times in revolutionary colonial days, "THESE are the times that try men's souls." He laudably added, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again." Let's just do it!

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain www.EarthManifesto.com

Rationalizing Reasoning

An admirable eminence in conservation is the primatologist and anthropologist Jane Goodall, who once shared this simple visionary insight: "There's a saying, 'We haven't inherited this planet from our parents, we've borrowed it from our children.' When you borrow, you plan to pay back. We've been stealing and stealing and stealing. And it's about time we got together and started paying back."

Bill Moyers' cogent words again resonate in the interstices of my mind. Moyers noted soon after 9/11 that when he reads the news about all the things humanity is doing in the world, he concludes it's not as if "Father, forgive us, for we know not what we do." He thought as he looked at photos on his desk of his five grandchildren: "We do know what we are doing. We are stealing their future. Betraying their trust. Despoiling their world."

Pope Benedict XVI expressed his conviction clearly in *Light of the World*, "We are living at the expense of future generations. In this respect, it is plain that we are living in untruth."

Many people pay close attention to leading economic indicators. These are, misfortunately, lagging indicators that distort measures of what is really most providentially propitious for sustainable existence and future general well-being. It is our overarching obligation to be good ancestors, and treat our heirs considerately, responsibly and caringly by paying forward a considerable respect for the Golden Rule reciprocity principle, doing unto our descendants as we surely would have wanted them to have done a better job of doing unto us.

Sir David Attenborough, renowned naturalist and natural historian, has produced an extraordinary documentary film *A Life on Our Planet* that serves as his "witness statement" to the far-reaching changes that have taken place in his 93 years alive. In this must-see film, Attenborough makes vividly clear the basic existential reasons for his concerns about the increasingly grave consequences of human impacts on habitats and ecosystems, and he

importantly issues a hope-inspired clarion call for remedial action. Wisdom is required, he says. And surely, we cannot continue to be guided by irresponsible scheming and shrewd calculations of the rich, and materialistic consumerism and short term-oriented profit-obsessed zeal for exploiting and liquidating natural assets.

In defiance of Sir David's clear-eyed crucial understanding, "a vast right-wing cabal" of super-rich Big Money interests bought domineering control of the White House and federal government agencies with the Trump administration, along with the U.S. Senate, the Supreme Court and more than half of state legislatures and governorships and attorney general positions. They did this despite not having support from a majority of the people. Vote for candidates in all future elections who will honestly make efforts to change this sorry state!

Let's respect and appreciate Rachel Carson's deathbed appeal in 1964 to next generations. "A great deal of our onslaught on Mother Nature is not really lack of intelligence but a lack of compassion for future generations and the health of the planet: sheer selfish greed for short-term benefits to increase the wealth and power of individuals, corporations, and governments. The rest is due to thoughtlessness, lack of education, and poverty. In other words, there seems to be a disconnect between our clever brain and our compassionate heart. True wisdom requires both thinking with our head and understanding with our heart." Perhaps love is the answer?!

Poet Robert Frost famously took the path less traveled by, when he came to a juncture where paths diverged in a woods. Let's all salute poetic justice and join like-minded responsible folks who favor drastically different courses of action than those that are being imposed on the populace under excessive influence by wealthy conservatives and corporate profiteers and their treacherously obedient MAGA Republican politician lackeys.

The 2020 elections were one of the last best chances for the majority of the American people to begin "to save the world" by taking back control of the rudder of the ship of state from unprincipled conservatives and the reactionary Religious Right, and emotion-manipulating media outlets like Fox News, conservative talk radio and the extreme alt-right. There is a profound truth in Thomas Paine's incisive observation, "A body of men holding themselves accountable to nobody ought not to be trusted by anybody."

Conservative judges and Supreme Court Justices strive mightily to set forth what economist John Kenneth Galbraith called "one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness." They have become reactionary purveyors of ideological interpretations of the U.S. Constitution that give the super-rich and far-right partisans and corporate entities -- and religious conservatives -- excessive rights and power over real people and their destinies.

In Ancient Greece, people believed in Nemesis, a Goddess of Divine Retribution that was regarded as meting out implacable justice against those who display hubris. Recognizing the arrogance of influence peddling Republicans and their wealthy puppet masters, we must demand that they relent in their onerous abuses of power.

Alert here now! A climate crisis is unfolding that is also a serious health crisis -- from the cataclysmic impacts of worsening natural disasters on hard-hit communities to proliferating diseases and the role of air pollution in rising cancer rates around the globe. In a sensational instance of surprising timing, after 18 months of the worst global pandemic in more than a century, 230 of the world's largest medical journals united and authored a joint letter in September 2021 declaring the climate crisis to be the biggest threat to public health of our lifetimes. The medical journals warned that the warming climate is the "greatest threat" to global public health. This unprecedented joint statement urged world leaders to cut heat-trapping emissions to avoid "catastrophic harm to health that will be impossible to reverse." Otherwise, we risk creating conditions like what David Wallace-Wells basically describes ominously in his book, *The Uninhabitable Earth*.

The editorial letter, published in leading journals such as *The Lancet* and *The New England Journal of Medicine*, said the world can't wait for the COVID-19 pandemic to pass before addressing climate change. It said, "No temperature rise is 'safe'. In the past 20 years, heat-related mortality among people over 65 years of age has increased by more than 50%."

Beating back the threat of the climate crisis demands fundamental changes to societies and economies worldwide -- not just a simple swap of dirty technologies for cleaner ones. "Governments need to treat the climate crisis with the same urgency as COVID-19, committing massive investments toward the redesign of cities, transportation

networks, food systems, health care, and more."

There is a powerful convincing overriding good reason why we must heed increasingly dire "code red" warnings about climate change -- and why we must take unprecedented remedial action through concerted national and international efforts to stave off climate change. This is because of tipping points. According to the UN, we're rapidly approaching several tipping point thresholds for our planet after which damage will accelerate even further and become irreversible.

Here is one really inconvenient truth: a feedback loop materialized in real time as devastating wildfires caused record-high emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in the Northern Hemisphere in 2021. "The number of fires, the size of the areas they burned, and their intensity and diligence as blazes" converted wood into burned carbon at the highest rate ever recorded in July and August, according to a report by Copernicus, the European Earth Observatory. Global warming trends "increase the frequency of wildfires, which in turn increases the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere from burning trees, which leads to an increase in global temperature, which means, you guessed it, even more wildfires."

One temporary solution to the increasing amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would be to remove this greenhouse gas from the atmosphere by planting billions of trees that would remove carbon through the process of photosynthesis. Unfortunately, one outcome of a warming climate is that hotter weather and a destabilized climate is producing drier conditions in many locales -- and worse wildfires. So this solution could go up in smoke.

In the sensational article '*Tipping points' in Earth's system triggered rapid climate change 55 million years ago, research shows*, it is disclosed that scientists have identified seven climate tipping points that could change the world forever. Various elements of the Earth system are at risk of reaching points of no return. "These elements broadly fall into three categories -- ice, sea, and land -- and range from the melting of permafrost and the Greenland ice sheet to the death of coral reefs to the raging of more and more wildfires."

These things are tragically only a preview of much worse changes to come, "and they are coming fast", as David Wallace-Wells puts it in *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. "Without a revolution in how billions of humans conduct their lives, parts of the Earth could become close to uninhabitable, and other parts horrifically inhospitable, as soon as the end of this century."

Consider the reckless Trumpian ruse of going rogue against humanity on the existential issue of human-caused climate change. Look specifically at the Paris Climate Accords. These are the most widely supported agreements in world history. They are a first step, albeit inadequate, towards trying to mitigate the most dire harbinger of future hard times that is found in anthropogenic climate disrupting activities.

In a climate change question at the Vice Presidential debate with Kamala Harris in 2020, Mike Pence doubled down on rigidifying the Trump Discords, in effect declaring that America First is *über alles* -- and that it is what some say is our "asshole government's absolute right" to reject our ultimate moral responsibility to try to mitigate the extreme social and environmental injustices that climate change is causing in the world today.

"Behold my brothers, the Spring has come; the earth has received the embraces of the sun and we shall soon see the results of that love! Every seed is awakened and so has all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being, and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even our animal neighbors, the same right as ourselves, to inhabit this land. Yet, hear me, people, we have now to deal with another race -- small and feeble when our fathers first met them, but now great and overbearing. Strangely enough they have a mind to till the soil and the love of possession is a disease with them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break but the poor may not. They take their tithes from the poor and weak to support the rich and those who rule. They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own and fence their neighbors away; they deface her with their buildings and refuse. The nation is like a spring freshet that overruns its banks and destroys all that are in its path."

--- Sitting Bull, a Lakota Sioux Chief, 1877

For visionary good guidance, the enactment of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations will help ensure that each and every year we invest in the common good rather than letting rich people hubristically continue to get away with

their rigged tax evasion schemes and Tax Cut swindles. The current status quo has allowed the nearly 650 billionaires in the USA to enjoy a wealth increase of about \$1.3 trillion -- or something like 40% -- in the 18 months from mid-March 2020 through September 2021, according to the 40th annual Forbes 400 list of the wealthiest Americans.

Ponder this. "America's nearly 650 billionaires now have more than twice as much wealth as the bottom half of the population -- 165 million people." And, according to Forbes rankings, the 400 richest Americans have as much combined wealth as the poorest 64% of American households. Highlighting the dastardly consequentiality of the economic rigging that has helped create this state of affairs, the national debt has increased by something like \$8 trillion since the pandemic began in early 2020, at a time that 50 million people temporarily lost their jobs, millions went hungry, and 12 million lost their employer-provided health insurance. This, during a period in which tens of millions of Americans were infected by the contagious coronavirus, and over one million have died, many unnecessarily, due to the treacherously manipulative deceitful irresponsible divide-to-conquer shenanigans involved in Republican politicizing of science, mask wearing, social distancing and getting vaccinated.

Back in October 2020, the Federal Reserve released data that showed rapidly increasingly stark disparities in U.S. wealth by race, age and class. The numbers cast a laser-like light on the structural systemic injustices that are so bad that white Americans hold 84% of the nation's wealth, while Black households have only 4%. Shame on all who stand athwart progressive plans for ameliorating these adversity-engendering real world conditions. The Fed data revealed that the top 1% of Americans have a combined net worth of over \$34 trillion, while the poorest 50% hold only a little over \$2 trillion of all household wealth.

An ethical rot lies at the core of the swamp monster culture of corruption in Washington D.C. This violation of ethics and moral rectitude is a main causative factor in perpetuating this grotesque degree of inequality and injustice in the land of the supposedly free.

COVID-19 exacerbated inequality in the U.S., because job losses fell heavily on low-wage service workers, and the virus disproportionately infected and killed people of color. Meanwhile, many professionals in the upper-middle class are working from home, and watching their equities rise in value in response to the U.S. Treasury and Federal Reserve pumping record amounts of stimulus into businesses, the economy and markets.

And the Trump administration pushed to get the partisan "conservatives" on the Supreme Court to take a stand for the rich against everyone else by declaring the Affordable Care Act unconstitutional because it assessed a 3.8% tax on their Net Investment Incomes in order to pay for expanded healthcare that has helped tens of millions of Americans. Lobbyists for the rich and big insurance companies hate restrictions on their freedom to increase profits, like by having their ability limited to discriminate against those with preexisting conditions.

"One commonsense reform to the tax code would be to enact a wealth tax, which would annually tax the net worth of the super-rich. It would be similar to the taxes on real estate and (in some places) personal property like luxury automobiles." A wealth tax could raise more than \$2 trillion annually, and only the wealthiest 0.1% -- or 75,000 households -- would be subject to the tax. A vote on this issue would rightly be 99.9% to .1%.

"Once the super-rich start paying their fair share in taxes, we could dedicate more funds to critical services for struggling families and vulnerable people, including making sure people have food, housing and health care." And we could do critical work of strengthening the social safety net, investing in better infrastructure, and protecting the environment -- and achieving so many other socially desirable objectives.

A wealth tax would help address the extreme inequities that allow rich people like Trump and his family and "friends" and co-conspiratorial enablers to pay little or no taxes. Look at Trump's record on paying taxes. The *New York Times* made explosive revelations that he paid no federal income taxes in 11 out of 18 years, and paid just \$750 in 2016 and 2017. This shows that Trump skirted tax law, and likely broke it, through improper deductions and other accounting maneuvers. It also makes clear out that it would be a positive plan to make America fairer by requiring rich people to contribute more to making our country more broadly prosperous.

Another reason that millionaires and billionaires can get away with paying zero dollars in income tax is because the enforcement capabilities of the IRS have been severely weakened by Republicans in Congress. "Nine years

ago, 12% of millionaires' tax returns were audited. Now, it's just 3%. Remarkably, the very poorest taxpayers -- those eligible for the poverty-fighting Earned Income Tax Credit -- are about as likely to get audited as the wealthiest 1%." Demand that Congress fully fund the IRS to hold tax cheats like Donald Trump accountable.

Republicans arrogantly abused power from 2017 through 2021 by stacking federal courts with conservatives who are biased against mainstream views that favor stronger voting rights, affordable healthcare, a woman's right to choose, better treatment of workers, gun safety, equitable human rights, and real power to the people rather than to corporate entities and other moneyed interests. Immediately after the greatly respectable Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, these diabolically scheming politicians seized the opportunity to ram through another far right partisan onto the Supreme Court, in an all-fired hurry to stack the court in anticipation of electoral fireworks and achieving narrow partisan goals just before the November 2020 elections.

It is diabolically wrong to stack federal courts and the Supreme Court with ideologically extreme judges who rationalize system-corrupting Big Money in our elections and the evisceration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, thereby letting state legislatures engage in suppressing millions of people's voices. This anti-democratic action is profoundly wrong due to the harmful impacts such partisan rigging has on our governance and policy priorities.

Big Money in politics is a critically important problem. It is not merely a partisan political issue, for it directly affects people's day-to-day lives. In other words, it isn't just an arcane policy issue, it is an issue involving good governance and democratic fair representation, and has consequential impacts on decision making. **MOVE TO AMEND!** We need strong and smart leadership, not chaotic bad management, pathological deceit, and denials of facts, science, reality and truth. We must take steps to dramatically strengthen our democracy by passing federal voting rights protections like those in the For the People Act or the proposed Freedom to Vote Act, a bill introduced by U.S. senators to protect access to the ballot and get big money out of politics, and ensure fair representation to all, regardless of race or what neighborhood people live in. In addition, a deep dive into the nature of the Electoral College, and undemocratic outcomes associated with it, makes it desirable that we get rid of it to fairly move to the direct popular election of presidents.

The hubristic Republican goal of replacing the laudably liberal-minded Ruth Bader Ginsburg with a religious absolutist and partisan conservative was a rude affront to Ruth Bader Ginsburg's great legacy of having strived to achieve fairer dealings for women in our overly male-dominated patriarchal society. Not only was this raw abuse of power a gross violation of the great liberty-strengthening principle of a strong separation of church and state, but it is also anathema to true democratic fairness and good governance.

Trump's appointee, Amy Coney Barrett, is a staunch Catholic, and a favorite of both the religious right and the far right Federalist Society. This choice is one more huge plank in the eye of the insidious Republican effort to consolidate their grip on power through the courts, instead of making honest, responsible and honorable efforts to gain a popular majority by siding with the majority in promoting the greater good. "More and more, they are faced with a choice between THEIR power and OUR democracy — and they're making their choice clear." They apparently don't give a damn about democratic fairness or the general welfare, or helping facilitate "domestic tranquility".

It was consequentially wrong to have replaced the greatest champion in American history of fairer treatment of women with an orthodox ultra conservative defender of white male supremacy. Far from mainstream views, conservative women like Amy Coney Barrett are traitors to their sex and humanity when they ally themselves with fundamentalist male authorities in a conservative hierarchy that perpetuates the oppressive subordination of females in the name of a stodgy old Church and a jealous, judgmental, unjust, misogynistic, homophobic, capricious and vindictive 'Strict Father' male God -- created in their own image!

Women should not be treated as pawns in culture wars, and never as handmaids forced into child-bearing slavery in a theocratic society like that depicted in the dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. For this reason, religious fundamentalists deserve the ridicule Mark Twain directed at them in *Letters from the Earth*, in which he wryly lampooned religious dogmas for their preposterous claims, and made a merited critique of the Christian bible with the observation, "It is full of interest. It has noble poetry in it; and some clever fables; and some blood-drenched history; and some good morals; and a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies."

Mark Twain emulated the great Voltaire by using wit, satire and ridicule to throw a bright light onto the follies, absurdities and injustices embedded in established governments, societal hierarchies and reigning power structures. He lampooned both overweening government and religious authorities, and dished out cyclones of laughter with a goal of inspiring societal change and a needed remodeling in the face of established inequities.

I was recently perched on a hillside with a commanding view of San Quentin prison, and felt fortunate to be able to enjoy the relative freedom of those outside the fortress walls, as opposed to the complete lack of freedom within.

Mass incarceration is only one aspect of the multitude of sins involved in the domineering status quo, with its structural racism, white male supremacy and sexism. Let's make sure to see clearly right now.

Democracy is obviously better for the people than despotic authoritarian rule. And the slope is slippery, and getting very steep as the Trump tenure in office is morphing into a treacherous attempt to poison future elections by deceiving MAGA supporters and pushing the big lie about the 2020 election having been stolen. Trump's loss and desperate lies and his failure to win any of his many post-election lawsuits are revealing -- as is the treachery of the January 6 insurrection he incited. Preventing a resurgence of Trump and his loyalists is crucial for ensuring greater fairness, responsibility and environmental sanity.

DEDICATION

The idea for this Bill of Rights for Future Generations recognizes the vital inspiration of Eleanor Roosevelt, a champion of human rights who spearheaded the effort by the United Nations' Human Rights Commission to enact the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Eleanor Roosevelt called this Declaration the "International Magna Carta for all mankind". The Bill of Rights for Future Generations would eminently equitably expand this respect for natural human rights to all people in the future.

This *Bill of Rights for Future Generations* is dedicated to both Eleanor Roosevelt and to one of the most perceptive and visionary persons I've ever met, a man who died tragically of a sudden heart failure a few years ago at the age of 49. He was a remarkable person who was boyish at heart and yet exceptionally aware, intelligent, energetic and gregarious. He greeted his friends and acquaintances alike with an enthusiastic hug, and conversed with them passionately about important causes and ecologically sane ideas, and he was commendably committed to making the world greener and more sustainable.