

Earth Manifesto



Thirteen Main Methods Used to Increasingly Concentrate Wealth and Power

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Our democracy is in crisis right now, and the number of democratic nations worldwide is diminishing as right-wing anti-immigrant sentiments rise. In an honest and true democracy, leaders would compete for the presidency and positions in legislative bodies by fairly appealing to the best interests of all citizens. It is because our great American experiment in democratic governance has been so corrupted by moneyed interests that our democracy has been transformed into a new form of plutocratic oligarchy, a "repressive kleptocracy" in which we have government of the wealthy, by the wealthy and for the wealthy, and the many are ruled ruthlessly by the few.

This essay sets forth a summary of the thirteen main schemes used to monopolize wealth and power. These ploys have been called an "ethical rot" that has been growing for many years like a cancer in the halls of power all across the land of the free.

Consequential ethics provide context and value assessment to these understandings. One reason that these 13 unprincipled principles for the concentration of wealth are vitally important is precisely because the far-reaching consequences of their top priority in our politics are so seriously contrary to the common good.

Virulent new forms of egregiously corrupt politicians have now seized power as a result of the success of emotion-manipulating demagoguery and deceitful dishonesty. A hostile takeover of all three branches of our federal government is in the process of being rigidly cemented in place, and the apprentice Demagogue-in-Chief is brazenly betraying his supporters and all Americans -- and every human being to be born in future generations -- by putting in place an elitist cabal of billionaires and captains of industry and resource exploiters and climate change deniers and anti-worker capitalists and Wall Street bankers and irresponsible profiteers and shrewd speculators and authoritarian loyalists, all of them seemingly eager to abuse their ill-gotten power for the narrowly shortsighted benefit of the few.

The priorities of these leaders are terribly askew, grotesquely perverted by money and the pursuit of power into a despotic effort to increase the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small minority of the people.

This scam constitutes a consequentially harmful vicious cycle in which moneyed interests buy power that is then abused, contributing to a variety of insidious harms that undermine both the well-being and hopes of a vast majority of the people.

The brilliant linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky spells out the top ten ways that elite groups shrewdly accomplish the goal of greedily increasing the narrow concentration of wealth, and I have taken the liberty of adding three more main methods used by wealthy people to achieve this goal. In Noam Chomsky's insight-filled documentary film *Requiem for the American Dream*, he reveals how wealthy people undermine the aspirations of common folks by selfishly sabotaging people's hopes of sharing in the prospects of achieving a fairer measure of prosperity and social mobility. Chomsky explains in this thought-provoking film how people in power pathologically abuse influence to get more money and power for themselves.

Chomsky's incisive understandings give attentive viewers a powerful justification for demanding fairer national policies. They also represent a warning to rich elites for why they should act to prevent the proverbial pitchforks from coming for them by beginning to compromise more reasonably with the people and accepting reforms that would make our economy fairer, our tax system more progressive, our society healthier, and opportunities improved

for people to be able to live better lives.

Chomsky has provided bright illumination on the shrewd strategies that wealthy people utilize to increase the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few by undermining fair representation so that power can be more narrowly concentrated. These tactics allow them to legislate an ever-increasing concentration of wealth, which then concentrates more power, perpetuating a vicious cycle that is creating severe adversities and revolutionary strife.

In *Requiem for the American Dream*, Chomsky lists and elaborates on these ten cunning principles that are used to gain more wealth and power. Really wealthy conservatives have ruthlessly exploited these strategies in the USA, especially since 1981 when Ronald Reagan took office. But crucial differences exist between the days when Reagan first began slashing taxes in favor of the wealthy and the conditions that prevail today. First of all, inequality is much more extreme now: the top 1% of Americans have a share of the national wealth four times larger than they did 36 years ago. Also, the number of people living in poverty today is near an all-time high. In addition, the American people were much more financially secure in 1981 because they had just been through a period from 1945 to 1980 when the rewards for work and productivity were much more broadly shared, while today American workers have been subjected to three decades of stagnation in real wages and compensation. Even more importantly, the national debt was less than \$1 trillion in 1981 -- or 32% of annual economic activity -- while today it is \$20 trillion -- or over 100% of the U.S. gross domestic product.

The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth and Power that Chomsky adduces involve reducing democratic fairness, shaping rationalizing ideologies, rigging the economy in favor of the few, shifting burdens to the people, attacking solidarity, corrupting the regulatory process, corruptly engineering elections, keeping the citizenry in line, shrewdly manipulating public opinion to manufacture consent, and marginalizing the people through divisive strategies and demagoguery that exploits people's emotions.

All Americans should see clearly what is going on here -- and brilliant illumination is at hand with the simple details provided in Chomsky's eye-opening exposé. Here is an elaboration of his sensational summary of the "10 Principles" that wealthy elites use in a vicious circle of concentrating wealth and concentrating power:

1. Reduce Democracy. "Right through American history, there's been an ongoing clash between pressure for more freedom and democracy coming from below and efforts at elite control and domination coming from above." Governments basically have a choice of reducing inequality or reducing democracy, and wealthy people in recent years have irresponsibly decided that they prefer to reduce democracy by a variety of anti-democratic ploys like gerrymandering congressional districts and opposing campaign finance laws and voting rights for many.

2. Shape Ideology. Chomsky cites the infamous Powell Memo from the corporate right and a first-ever report by the non-governmental, non-partisan Trilateral Commission in 1975 that was titled *The Crisis of Democracy* as roadmaps for a backlash against democratic fair-mindedness. The Commission's report referred to an "excess of democracy" and the over engagement of young people with civic life, and the view that young people were just not receiving proper "indoctrination."

3. Redesign the Economy. Since the 1970s, banks and other financial institutions have grabbed an ever-larger role in the economy. By 2007 they "earned" 40% of corporate profits. Deregulation has produced wealth concentration and economic crashes, followed by capitalist bailouts, making for more wealth concentration. Offshore production has reduced workers' pay and served to promote job insecurity, which is beneficial to economic elites, according to Alan Greenspan in testimony to Congress.

4. Shift the Burden. The American Dream in the 1950s and 60s was partly a real thing. Both the rich and the poor got financially better off. Since those days, there has been a steady advance of what Chomsky calls the plutonomy, or the wealthy few who run the show and get all the new wealth, and the precariat, or the precarious proletariat. Back then, corporations paid a much larger proportion of the total federal tax burden and taxes were higher on dividends and capital gains and inherited wealth. That is not the case today.

5. Attack Solidarity. Chomsky says that for wealthy elites to try to reduce funding for Social Security and public education, the normal emotion of caring about others needs to be driven out of people's heads. The United States in the 1950s was able to make college essentially free with the G.I. Bill and other public funding. Now a much

wealthier USA is full of "serious" experts who claim that such a thing is impossible.

6. Run the Regulators. The 1970s saw enormous growth in lobbying. It is now routine for the interest groups being regulated to control the regulators, which makes things much easier on the regulated.

7. Engineer Elections. Partisan politicians corruptly gerrymander congressional district and suppress the vote. They assert that corporations have rights of personhood, so that they can get extra special privileges under the law. They equate money spent in elections with free speech, and promote ideological rationalizations for money being contributed in unlimited quantities and substantial secrecy by giant corporations and rich people. They have managed to get the Supreme Court to unconscionably agree to the *Citizens United* ruling since January 2010 without conservative justices admitting that there is a profound corrupting influence of money in our elections. How large does the writing on the wall need to be before conservative-biased and ideologically blinded Justices can see it, and admit it, and change their rulings to be fairer to the vast majority of the American people?

8. Keep the Rabble in Line. Here Chomsky focuses on attacks on organized labor, like that of the Taft Hartley Act. But criminalizing protest is another obvious way that authorities are trying to keep the people in line, especially as a strong Resistance of rabble-rousers arises that is powerfully motivated by awareness and outrage at abuses of power.

9. Manufacture Consent. Obsessive consumers are not born, they're molded by advertising. Marketing and public relations have a goal of directing people to superficial consumption, partially as a means of keeping people in their place. In a market economy, Chomsky says, informative advertisements would result in rational decisions. But actual advertisements provide poor information and tend to promote irrational choices. Here Chomsky is talking about election campaigns for political candidates as well as ads for automobiles, beer, prescription drugs and the like.

10. Marginalize the Population. This seems to be as much a result as a tactic, but it certainly has been achieved. The greater good and what the public wants generally do not determine what our representatives do.

"Regarded by many as America's most influential intellectual, Noam Chomsky is also a great story teller. Without overwhelming the viewer or the material, he marshals data, example and anecdote, cutting through 250 years of history to distill ten basic principles of wealth and power that have conspired against the American Dream. More than anything, the film is a well organized, thoughtful look at these forces and their consequences."

--- Michael Berkowitz

Most thoughtful viewers of Chomsky's interviews in *Requiem for the American Dream* might have other things to add. Here are the three most significant ones that indubitably help the rich and powerful to concentrate power and wealth at the expense of the many:

11. Dump Massive Funding into Militarism. Military spending is the biggest public program in the USA. It represents more than half of all federal discretionary spending. Lobbyists help concentrate wealth and power through their influence on the federal government, and this single budget item is a huge pot of funding that is inadequately controlled. Military spending allows cronies, investors and speculators to make big profits at the public expense. It also generates excessive public support for fighting foreign enemies, serving as a distraction from smarter plans like opposing cunning foes of the people who are pulling the banking strings on Wall Street. This is one of the worst aspects of political corruption that inflicts our country, because the nefarious impacts of this fraudulent swindle are so far-reaching and wide-ranging. This military spending, one might note in support of the spending, "does militarize the police for free, however, just in case Wall Street generates any disgruntled customers."

Transparency International, a "global civil society organization leading the fight against corruption" in countries around the world, has published a *Government Defense Anti-Corruption Index* that measures corruption in the defense sector of 82 countries. It stresses the far-reaching importance of more transparency and better control in the military sector.

12. Stack the Courts. Republicans now dominate the Executive and Legislative branches of government, and have a

5 to 4 conservative ideological advantage on the Supreme Court after forcing the seat occupied by Antonin Scalia to be given to an extreme conservative. So the American people are exceptionally vulnerable to a hard-right agenda. The newest Justice is Neil Gorsuch, who is a Constitutional "originalist" like the deceased Antonin Scalia, and he opposes the progressive evolution of the Constitution and rules of law, and believes in a strictly limited role for the federal government. This stance basically upholds the God-willed right of what is in effect a moneyed aristocracy in the USA to be free from the democratic mob's desire to have the government play a stronger role in protecting people from abuses of power and in creating a fairer society in which freedoms and security are more broadly shared.

13. Dominate the media. Reams have been written about how the mainstream media, dominated by a handful of giant corporations, has collaborated with the ruling elite in perpetuating inequalities, and in helping our leaders get us into wars, and in failing to inform and educate the people with accurate understandings on important issues. Right-wing media outlets have also pushed skewed propaganda so effectively that millions of Americans have been brainwashed into believing in reactionary causes and "conservative" spin. Also, in the past decade, the Internet has become a much more powerful phenomenon and social media has had profound effects on people, causing more extreme partisanship and echo chamber effects that tend to divide people and confuse them so that they do not see clearly. Fake news has also become a real problem in our elections and in preventing us from achieving more accurate understandings and fairer governance. So the media has been another in the many factors that have contributed to making the "political duopoly" establishment one that is dominated by the few, into whose hands wealth and power are excessively concentrated, at the great peril of the populace.

Revelations Contained in Budgets

Government budgets are moral documents. They are blueprints that reflect the values and priorities ascendant in a society during the current era. The Trump budget plans tell us a lot about the imbalances between Republican priorities and American values. It is a "hard-power budget" that would give \$54 billion more money to the military while slashing discretionary spending on many programs that serve to make our society a fairer, healthier, saner and more culturally rich one.

The scheming and ideologically uncompromising Republican goal is to cut spending in almost every arena except the military. Their goal in this, transparently, is to justify giving huge tax breaks to rich people and giant corporations, and to have an overbearing military to enforce the status quo when revolutionary opposition to this perfidious scheme erupts.

The Trump budget would also slash funding for the State Department and the Environmental Protection Agency both by nearly one-third, eliminating thousands of staff positions. They would do crazy things like eviscerating Meals on Wheels and defunding Superfund site cleanups, and leave little money for things like air quality programs and clean energy research. These are insane priorities!

Executive Summary

While policies of debt-financed low tax rates for the top 1% of American taxpayers help concentrate wealth and power in the hands of the few, they also wreak many unnecessary hardships on people today and in the future. The primary reasons that Republicans attack affordable health care and Social Security and Medicaid and food stamps, and environmental protections and funding for regulatory agencies, is to help pay for the increasing amount of money dedicated to filling the coffers of the already wealthy. This is insane! Rich people are no happier, and ultimately less safe, as inequality gets worse due to these spending cuts coupled with regressive changes in taxation.

The deeply disturbing dimensions and infinitely far-reaching implications of this liberty-threatening affliction shout out for all patriotic Americans to rise up and oppose Republican efforts to make our society increasingly unfair. We must resist and protect our country and Constitution and rules of law from these 21st century "barbarians at the gates", who are just about to put the final nail in the coffin of our democratic republic with their outrageous trickle-down Big Lies, dastardly deceits, scandalous deficit spending swindles, and aggressive efforts to undermine good governance and reduce the power of working people. These schemes are sadly effective in undermining the well-being of all Americans by imposing austerity measures on the masses, and they are serving

to subvert fair-mindedness and people's hopes for more inclusive and broadly shared prosperity.

Our Founding Fathers trumpeted their legitimate concerns about despotism and the overarching need for eternal vigilance to prevent tyranny and to protect the people from abuses of power. Now today, tens of millions of Americans have been bamboozled into trusting and supporting a Master Deceiver and his co-conspirators, and this misplaced trust will end very badly, unless we rise up together to resist and stop the worst assaults.

The excessive concentration of wealth in the hands of the few is on the verge of being ratcheted up to such a dangerous extreme of inequalities and injustices that two outcomes are becoming almost certain during the coming year: revolutionary turmoil and harshly repressive measures in reaction. We cannot afford to be complacent in the face of this onslaught. We must demand that our representatives act to restore integrity and moderation, and to be willing to honorably protect small businesses and families and communities from the rude predations of ruthless abusers of the public trust.

"We are standing on the precipice of a really dark time", says a representative of women's rights groups. This feeling is also being experienced by environmentalists, people in civil rights groups, and those who responsibly care about our descendants in future generations.

Consider the vital issue of healthcare in the USA. Two of the top priorities of the Trump administration are to cut taxes on the wealthy and to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which was one of President Obama's signature accomplishments. Michael Hiltzil explained why a repeal of Obamacare is a top goal in his article *The real reason the GOP is gung-ho on repealing Obamacare: It would give the rich a huge tax cut*. Hiltzil makes this cogent observation, among many:

People wondering why Republicans are so hell-bent on repealing Obamacare even though that would cost 20 million Americans their health insurance haven't been heeding the old investigator's maxim to "follow the money." The path leads to the Affordable Care Act's tax provisions, and the discovery that repeal would provide the wealthiest taxpayers with an immediate tax cut totaling \$346 billion over 10 years. Every cent of that would go to taxpayers earning more than \$200,000 a year (\$250,000 for couples). ... And, Obamacare repeal would reduce the average incomes of Americans in the lowest 60% of income earners, mostly because of the loss of tax subsidies for insurance premiums.

It is a dangerous time to make onerous and regressive tax cuts like this right now. Tinderbox conditions at the time these words were first being written in 2017 made it a time that we need more egalitarian reforms, and it is a terrible time to implement changes that make inequities in healthcare and economic security much worse. The American people are being ruthlessly deceived and betrayed by Trump and his Cabinet of millionaire and billionaire cronies, and it will prove to be disastrous if he treacherously refuses to change course.

Republicans did an insidiously effective job of being the reactive opposition party from 2009 to 2016, voting on more than 60 occasions to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. Once they gained power, they wanted to demonstrate how committed they are to this principle of getting rid of an entitlement that has provided health insurance to more than 20 million people, so they whipped up a hasty plan and tried to ram it through into law before the people who voted for Trump and other right-wing Republicans realize how dastardly it really is. Then, after spectacularly failing in this "repeal and replace" effort, they seem likely to work on sabotaging the Affordable Care Act for political expediency, despite the cruel implications this has on the health and well-being of tens of millions of Americans.

The bottom line of the "repeal and replace" Trumpcare plan was so nakedly corrupt as to make it stunning that so extremely unfair a plan could possibly have seen the light of day before the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office showed exactly what the main purpose of this "reform" actually is -- to give Americans with the highest earnings a whopping total of hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks in the next decade while cutting healthcare insurance for tens of millions of Americans.

Remember the reasons why the famous words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are true when he said "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." By cutting spending on healthcare for millions of Americans, we will have a less healthy society, and many more people will die prematurely because they will not be able to afford medical care.

Why are conservative Republicans so unwilling to courageously reform national healthcare to honestly improve the system. What really should be done is to replace the entire patchwork of employer-based health insurance, and Medicare for old people, and Medicaid for the poor, and a Children's Health Insurance Program, and last-resort emergency room healthcare for millions of people, with something much better: a comprehensive single-payer plan that covers every American, and does so at lower costs with more extensive coverage.

In *The Lessons of History*, Will and Ariel Durant observe that revolutionary change generally destroys wealth rather than redistributing it, so a vastly more sensible national priority for all concerned would be to negotiate a reasonable peace between competing parties by requiring the highest income earners to invest in moderately better social insurance policies to preserve most of their own great privileges. The best social insurance policy would be one that features a universal system of cost-effective healthcare and a truly more secure social safety net.

Ronald Reagan famously "criticized Social Security for *supplanting* private savings and warned that subsidized medicine would curtail Americans' freedom". He then expressed the bizarre conviction that with such a course of action, "pretty soon your son won't decide when he's in school, where he will go or what he will do for a living. He will wait for the government to tell him." Republicans ever since have warned that social safety net programs would curtail people's freedoms, though in truth they help reduce desperate circumstances for tens of millions of Americans.

Paul Ryan, Republican Speaker of the House, seems to have one overriding principle -- to "liberate the affluent from the burdens of progressive taxation". One of the main goals of the extremely anti-egalitarian healthcare reform scheme was to help concentrate wealth ever more extremely in the hands of the richest 1%. When the Congressional Budget Office evaluated this Trumpcare proposal and found that the impact of the plan would be an alarming cost of the loss of health insurance to 14 million people by next year (and 24 million people within 10 years), it should have cast even deeper suspicion on why Republicans were hurrying up to ram it through Congress. When this bizarre Republican plan to "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act was nakedly revealed to be a plan to reduce spending on social insurance policies and give huge tax breaks to high income earners, more Americans should have realized that this plan was designed to create increasingly severe inequities and injustices and economic hardships for millions of Americans. This outcome would give even stronger impetus to revolutionary strife and increasingly passionate and desperate discord, and the rich would spin their propaganda ever more incessantly to rationalize repression in defensive reaction. This would not be good.

A Big Picture Aside on the Industrial Revolution

To gain a better and more comprehensive understanding of the historical context of the struggle between wealthy people trying to increase the concentration of wealth and power in their hands and the vast majority of others, consider the following ideas.

A brief history of the Industrial Revolution provides revealing context of where we stand today in this eventful and often internecine struggle between Capital and Labor. This story is one of a Goliath and a David that features turbulent episodes of conflict between capitalists, who tend to be overly obsessed with money and power, and workers who are striving to earn a living and make ends meet.

Our lives, and world history, have been profoundly affected by this Industrial Revolution that began some 250 years ago with the invention of the steam engine in Great Britain. This technological advance launched a long and eventful transformation of human civilizations from being primarily agricultural and rural to being primarily manufacturing and consumer oriented and urban. The population of human beings grew ten-fold during this period, from 750 million in 1750 to 7,500 million today, and the population of the USA increased even more drastically from 2 million to 325 million.

The growing pains have been terrible, and have featured a particularly strife-torn history of conflict between Goliath Capital and David Labor. This story of the exploitation of working people "is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire," according to the sociopolitical economist Karl Marx.

Capitalists had transformed commerce from feudal days into mass production in increasingly urbanized factory towns, and they abused their power so much that Karl Marx published a *Manifesto* in 1848 urging that "Workers of

the World, Unite“.

Vast wealth was generated as mass production processes came into being, and this wealth was monopolized by the few, creating a tawdry *Gilded Age* of rich robber barons indulging in conspicuous consumption, and a stark contrast of working people subjected to terrible working conditions in factories and squalor in growing cities. This state of affairs generated violent conflicts with unions that began organizing in the last half of the 19th century to bargain collectively with the ruthless taskmasters.

A powerful progressive movement arose in reaction to alter the status quo and protect workers from low pay, long working hours, poor benefits, extreme insecurity, harsh discrimination, child labor, dangerous working conditions and other oppressive circumstances. A World War from 1914 to 1918 roiled the water, providing big opportunities for profiteering, and this led to the Roaring Twenties and an episode of extreme inequalities, increasingly concentrated wealth, rampant speculation, widespread malfeasance and then a bursting bubble that led to the most severe global economic depression in world history.

This economic cataclysm forced capitalists to make a New Deal with workers to create a fairer bargain, and from the 1930s to 1980, the wealth generated through the efforts of working people and their increases in productivity was more fairly shared, and the world enjoyed an era of more broadly shared prosperity.

Then the B-movie actor named Ronald Reagan came along with his folksy good-old-boy charm, and he launched a revolution against working people by rolling back the collective bargaining rights of workers, giving huge tax breaks to the rich, hyping-up military spending to stoke opportunities for profiteering, and acting to reduce regulations that had served as safeguards to keep banks and giant corporate entities from engaging in money-prepossessed predatory behaviors. This salvo of crony capitalist scams was financed by foisting the costs onto future taxpayers by means of borrowing gigantic amounts of money and adding it to the national debt.

Fast forward three decades, and inequalities have reached new extremes, due in no small part to Ronald Reagan having slashed top tax rates from 70% or more, which had been in effect from 1936 to 1980, to 28%. This new extreme of inequality was accompanied by a variety of injustices associated with the domination of our national decision-making by wealthy elites and giant transnational corporate entities, and these developments ratcheted up pressures for another era of progressive reforms. But NO! An unhinged egomaniacal narcissist celebrity comes along, mentored in the tactics of demagoguery and bullying and the politics of division. He has a sordid personal history of engaging in ruthless exploitation of working people and contractors and investors, and communities and females, and he has abused real estate laws and bankruptcy laws and used many shrewd lawyers to game the judicial system to make more money.

And this master manipulator engineers a cunning coup to grab power for himself with the abundantly clear intention of abusing power to concentrate wealth even more narrowly in the hands of the few. He fooled just enough citizens into supporting him by using a variety of treacherous tactics, and he lied pathologically to the electorate to gain support. He brought along enough amoral and unscrupulous Republican politicians to give them almost unchecked power in Washington D.C. and in the majority of the States, and they are indulging in the most grotesquely unfair crusade imaginable against the rights of workers and women, and against protections of consumers and the environment. And they vow to undermine the healthcare system and the social safety net in order to save money that will allow them to give huge new tax breaks to the wealthy, who are generous in providing big bucks, often in secret, to the coffers of the campaign war chests of these ambitious, servile and obedient politicians.

The transparent goal of these shrewd operators and their trickle down Big Lie and other deceitful ideologies is to give rich people a more ruthless monopoly on wealth and power, sacrificing fairness and social justice and workers' rights along with clear water, clean air, voting rights, women's reproductive rights and prerogatives, family planning programs, the atmosphere, the oceans, coral reefs, and the prospects for safeguarded individual liberties and peaceful coexistence and the hopes for flourishing of all people in future generations. They even sacrifice the potential well-being and survival of the preponderance of all species of life on Earth in order to achieve their greedily shortsighted goals.

Economist Paul Krugman observed that it doesn't matter to Republican politicians "whether slashing taxes on

billionaires while giving scammers and polluters the freedom to scam and pollute is good for the economy as a whole; it's clearly good for billionaires, scammers, and polluters."

Why do these scheming politicians do these things, which subordinate principle to ambition and promote personal gain over the common good? The answer seems clear: to achieve their ruthless drive to get more money and gain domineering power. In the process, they are irresponsibly wreaking havoc on natural habitats and assaulting the biological diversity of life on Earth.

The primary goal of these manipulative partisans has been to get an increasing monopoly on the nation's wealth and to gain and abuse power and privilege for a tiny fraction of the people at the expense of all others. As a result, politicians are doing a terrible job of representing the best interests of the American people. They are betraying the people because they are so preoccupied with pandering to partisans who finance their political campaigns and careers.

----- Dateline: May 1, 2018: To Do! -----

The remainder of this essay is dedicated to the proposition that intelligent and fair-minded planning for a healthier future is a vastly better approach to managing our affairs than pushing deceitful propaganda to confuse and distract people from understanding what is really the matter with America and the world.

To help ensure the general welfare, let us look in history to find examples of success stories. Many nations abroad have created successful economies without generating extreme levels of inequality and injustice, like Scandinavian countries. But let's look nearer to home. The United States itself provides clear evidence that smarter national policies can contribute to the greater good. During the period from 1945 to 1980, national policies were implemented that helped create a vibrant middle class, including the G.I. Bill, large public investments in higher education, and the construction of an extensive interstate highway system. To pay for these initiatives while having record levels of debt incurred in fighting World War II, marginal tax rates on the highest levels of income were 70% or higher every year. We basically invested in opportunities for working people to earn good wages instead of allowing politicians and conservative front groups to rig our economic and political systems ever more extremely in favor of the wealthy few.

The famous economist John Kenneth Galbraith once provocatively declared that "The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness." It is becoming clear today that inferior and immoral rationalizations for greedily selfish indulgences are causing terrible hardships in the world, and creating extremely dangerous existential trends, and that we must find ways to reduce the overwhelming influence of rich conservatives and socially irresponsible giant corporate entities so that fairer, safer and more sustainable behaviors come to fruition.

Honoring these words and understandings, let's all join together to launch a farsighted Humanitarian Revolution. This epic change would have some primary tenets. For starters, Ecological Sanity. This Humanitarian Revolution must, of necessity, evolve quickly in tandem with a revolution of changes in attitude toward protections of biotic habitats and other forms of life on Earth. Humankind is in effect rashly chopping off the branches of the tree of life, and enterprising capitalist schemers are chipping away at the trunk itself by doing a hard sell to get people to agree to let them plunder natural resources at the fastest possible rate while stoking consumerism and polluting the commons and spewing unlimited amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

This is, in reality, a very far from optimum plan. One sad consequence of these activities is that the relative acidity of the oceans is increasing, and this is causing most of the extraordinarily beautiful corals in underwater reef communities to be driven toward eternal extinction. This is a harbinger of biological calamity that we simply cannot accept. The Bible may have urged humankind to be fruitful and multiply, but religious and secular authorities tell us that we have a transcendent moral duty to protect Creation and be responsible for the sensible stewardship of planet Earth's ecosystems, so that we help ensure that the prospects for our planet to remain livable for countless generations to come are not severely compromised.

Secondly, this Humanitarian Revolution must feature Electoral Sanity. Big Money has corrupted our politics. The five conservatives on the Supreme Court in January 2010 claimed that they could see no corrupting influence of allowing rich people and giant corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money, in secrecy, to influence our

elections. But their narrow *Citizens United* ruling has given such a big assist to corrupt schemes that more than 90% of the winners in the November 2016 national elections were those who outspent their opponents. Political influence has clearly been auctioned off to the highest bidders, and pandering politicians are now marching to the orders of the people who bought them. They are doubling down on propaganda that asserts they care about the middle class and poor people, but make no mistake about it, they are pushing policies brazenly designed to give rich people more of the spoils of our economy.

Consider this closely. A rationalizing refrain echoes eerily from every Republican plan: "Jobs, jobs, jobs." Why do they say we must build another pipeline carrying extremely dirty oil sands across Native American lands and under beautiful rivers? "Jobs, jobs, jobs." Why must we deny scientific understandings about the calamitous consequences of unlimited greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere? "Jobs, jobs, jobs." Why must we unleash corporate power to use up nonrenewable resources at the fastest possible rate, and to allow many costs of production to be externalized onto society? "Jobs, jobs, jobs." Why must we have stringent requirements for poor women to work to qualify for Medicaid to cover their healthcare needs, and force them to start working again soon after giving birth to another child? An abstruse connection can be made to the twisted logic and sinister deceit contained in the three German words spelled out in infamous iron scrollwork over the entrance gate to the Auschwitz concentration camp in southern Poland. It reads, "Arbeit Macht Frei." Aha! "Work Makes You Free." Sell us some more of that spiffy propaganda!

The smart and commonsensical billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer concluded in *The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats*, "The most ironic thing about rising inequality is how completely unnecessary and self-defeating it is. If we do something about it, if we adjust our policies in the way that, say, Franklin D. Roosevelt did during the Great Depression -- so that we help the 99 percent and preempt the revolutionaries and crazies, the ones with the pitchforks -- that will be the best thing possible for us rich folks, too. It's not just that we'll escape with our lives; it's that we'll most certainly get even richer."

A "curse of knowledge" afflicts efforts to express complex ideas in simply ways, memorably, engagingly, credibly, and in an effectively motivating manner. We are now seeing the reality that a contrasting "curse of ignorance" can afflict millions of people when emotionally manipulative messages are used deviously, dishonestly, disingenuously and deceitfully to get the people in our democracy to go along with the dastardly schemes of a demagogue who is ruthlessly misleading our great nation into being a House Divided, with rich against poor, men against women, whites against blacks and Latinos, straights against gays, police against the people, citizens against immigrants, people in red states against those in blue states, and the richest folks against the best interests of all.

We should not go along with these exploitive engineers of hyper-partisanship and hot button-division who have rendered our country a House Divided. On the issue that has been our top national priority since the beginning of the Ronald Reagan revolution, the people should reject the trickle down Big Lie that rationalizes giving huge tax breaks to people on all incomes in excess of \$250,000. The vote should be 99 to 1 for a more steeply graduated progressive tax plan that would be more favorable to the many.

It is crazy to allow millionaires and billionaires to pay taxes on the highest levels of their earnings at rates so low that they are near the lowest since the Depression of the 1930s. Worse yet, it is fiscal folly to finance this colossally misguided generosity by shoveling mountains of debt onto the already dangerously high \$21 trillion national debt.

This understanding is not only about the way things are in America, but in countries worldwide. Increasing inequalities will lead to extreme social unrest, and this will strengthen both terrorist groups and fear-oriented and insecurity-exploiting appeals of authoritarian rule.

One of the most important priorities of our elected representatives should be to defend the Constitution and the American people and our democracy from despotic rule. Eternal vigilance is required of Americans to make sure our representatives honestly support this effort. But today, with a dangerous demagogue having managed to use extremely scurrilous means to gain the presidency, and with one-party domination of our national decision-making, our great experiment in representative democracy is suffering a calamitous setback that threatens our freedoms and security.

Donald Trump is a lousy candidate for fulfilling the serious responsibility of protecting our freedoms and well-being. He is a braggart and an elitist who has demonstrated authoritarian propensities, and he is not really concerned with "draining the swamp" of politicians who oppose worker rights or consumer protections from the predations of bankers. He is certainly not concerned with adequately protecting people's health, or clean air and clean water, or of giving the environmental commons adequate protections from abuses of power by profiteers. He also significantly threatens safeguards in our democratic republic from abuses of authority. And he broadly threatens what really matters most in our lives: our American values, personal freedoms, hopes of more broadly shared economic well-being, and expectations that our government will be a force for creating overall more inclusive fairness. Trump and Republican politicians threaten the truest expressions of individual and national security, and undermine fundamental principles that serve as a bedrock in preserving our democratic republic.

To understand the scope of the treachery and the depths of the ethical lapses that threaten to subvert our democracy from within, one need only give attention to the Code of Ethics for U.S. Government Service. To summarize it, this ethical code of conduct requires any person in government service to demonstrate "loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country". Public service should be rightly regarded as a public trust that requires employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, rules of law and ethical principles above private gain. Every person in the Executive branch, as well as in both houses of Congress, should be accountably required to adhere to this code.

This Code of Ethics includes stipulations that are being widely abrogated by today's Republican leaders:

"Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty."

"Employees shall not use public office for private gain."

"Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest."

"Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those -- such as Federal, State, or local taxes -- that are imposed by law."

"Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap."

"Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth herein. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts."

"Expose corruption wherever discovered."

What we need is a peaceful "political revolution" that favors the 99% of Americans. What we have gotten is a reactionary political revolution that will exacerbate inequalities and make injustices dangerously worse. The shrewd politicians that have foisted this revolting state of affairs on our country often recite a mantra of "jobs, jobs, jobs", but they use a range of deceitful schemes to gain power and abuse it by preying on the fears, insecurities and resentments of a large swath of the people without offering truly beneficial policies and plans.

The top priority of conservatives has been to gain power and control using any means possible, no matter how unethical or dishonest or anti-American. Extreme conservatives are in the process of cementing the power they have grabbed through a wide range of often immoral schemes. Evaluate the ways that they have gained support by rigging our national elections to their unscrupulous advantage:

1) They created cynicism and citizen distrust of the government by spreading a lot of propaganda and acting to undermine the well-being of the 99%. Their purpose in this has been to help the wealthiest 1% get an increasing portion of the wealth generated by the exploitation of natural resources and the labors of working people.

2) They have championed international trade agreements that contain corporate-friendly provisions that make it more profitable for manufacturing jobs to be sent abroad to cheap labor countries that do not have as many laws protecting working people and the environment.

- 3) They alleged that the rules were rigged against them, while simultaneously making concerted efforts to create contorted gerrymandered congressional districts that favored Republicans, and they discouraged millions of voters who are poor or members of racial minorities by using intimidation and voter suppression tactics.
- 4) They intentionally and inadvertently helped propagate fake news stories and manipulative misinformation.
- 5) They used demagogic strategies to scare people and divide them, and they used emotion-hijacking techniques to gain support, and they exploited the frustrations many people feel and their racial prejudices, hostilities and fears of immigrants and terrorists in this effort to gain unchecked power.

Conservatives have blamed liberals and tried to scapegoat them for all that ails us in the land of the free, but progressive ideas and plans are now needed to make our nation a better place. The proposals contained in the Bill of Rights for Future Generations and other recommendations in *See Clearly*, and in *Common Sense Revival*, could change the world and our collective prospects in dramatically positive ways.

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Tiffany B. Twain is a concerned American and the founder of the Earth Manifesto. She has been inspired by imagining herself as the philosophic soul mate and valiant though illegitimate great-granddaughter of the highly esteemed and irreverent writer, lecturer, humorist and philosopher Mark Twain. She has published Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto, a save-the-world treatise that contains wide-ranging and far-sighted observations dealing with all the biggest issues facing humanity here in the second decade of the 21st century. Check it out at <http://earthmanifesto.com>.

Appendix -- How to Prevent Despotic Abuses of Power!

Robert Reich published an article titled *The 15 Warning Signs of Tyranny*, just before Donald Trump assumed the office of the presidency. Since Trump has made many statements that sound more like the diatribes of a tyrant than the reasoned discourse of a champion of democracy, it is important for *We the People* to give close consideration to these warning signs. We must be vigilant against tyranny by recognizing how tyrants take control of democracies. Here is what they typically do:

1. Exaggerate their mandate to govern -- claiming, as Trump has done, for example, that he won an election by a landslide even after losing the popular vote by almost 3 million votes.
2. Repeatedly claim massive voter fraud in the absence of any corroborating evidence, in order to discourage people from voting in elections.
3. Call anyone who opposes them "enemies."
4. Turn the public against journalists or media outlets that criticize them, calling them "deceitful" and "scum" and fake news outlets and "enemies of the people."
5. Hold few news conferences, preferring to communicate with the public directly through mass rallies and unfiltered statements -- like on Twitter!
6. Tell the public big lies, causing them to doubt the truth and to believe fictions that support the goals of the tyrants.
7. Blame economic stresses on immigrants or racial or religious minorities, and foment public bias and even violence against people in such groups.
8. Attribute acts of domestic violence to "enemies within," and use such events as excuses to beef up internal security and impose limits on civil liberties.
9. Threaten mass deportations, registries of a religious minority, and the banning of refugees who belong to particular religious groups.
10. Seek to eliminate or reduce the influence of competing sources of power, such as labor unions and opposition parties.

11. Appoint family members to high positions of authority and power.
12. Surround themselves with their own personal security force rather than a security detail accountable to the public.
13. Put military generals into top civilian posts.
14. Make personal alliances with foreign autocrats and dictators.
15. Draw no distinction between personal property and public property, and try to profit from public office.

These warning signs should be of concern to everyone, says Reich, regardless of political party. "In fact, historically, conservatives have been especially vigilant against potential threats to our constitutional rights."

"All Americans must join together to protect American democracy against tyranny. Consider yourself warned."

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