



Earth Manifesto

Happy Harbingers in Good Ideas for a Better Future

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
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Welcome to the Earth Manifesto. My name is Tiffany Twain, and this is my story.

I fancy myself the great-granddaughter of the legendary American character Mark Twain. It has been a well-kept secret that my mother, Nina Clemens Gabrilowitsch, gave birth to out-of-wedlock twins in 1950 after a passionate love affair in Hollywood, California. Nina named us love children Tiffany and Tom. My mother Nina was the only child of Mark Twain's second daughter, Clara Clemens. The year before Mark Twain died in 1910, Clara had married Ossip Gabrilowitsch, a world-renowned Russian-American pianist, and they had spent many years in Germany and New York City before they moved to Michigan, where Ossip became the long-tenured conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

With all the travels that my mother Nina had done with her parents as a youngster, Ossip had nicknamed her "the International Monkey". My clever brother Tom and I have done a lot of travel ourselves, and we have seen a good part of the world and its ways. It helps to have inherited a small portion of Mark Twain's estate, since this boon has allowed us to lead quite charmed and interesting lives. Our father Jules brought us up, mainly because our mother Nina had slipped into a serious dependence on alcohol and drugs in the last decade of her life, before she died way too young at the age of 55. Clara Clemens' second husband Jacques Samossoud helped us out with money from time to time during our childhood. It was one of the best things he did in his life, and like Huck Finn's Pap, the town drunk, there were not all that many! He may have been trying to make up for his reckless gambling, a bad habit that resulted in his squandering of most of the income Clara had received from Mark Twain's estate.

I have always loved dramatic mountains like the Himalayas, the Andes, the Rockies, the Cascades and the Sierra Nevada, as well as lovely coastlines, but I occasionally visit "America's Hometown" in Hannibal, Missouri, to reinvigorate my connection to my great-grandfather's riparian literary roots. Visualize yourself there with me, high atop Lover's Leap on the west side of the Mississippi River and just south of Hannibal's town limits. As we look intently upriver from this promontory, let's settle in to a reflective mood and think about all the news and big issues of the day, and the important things in life. And imagine taking the time to appreciate the wonderfully vitalizing views of the natural world from any of a countless number of beautiful vantage points like this.

My story is largely one of an almost evangelical dedication to clear thinking and open-minded exploration of Big Picture ideas and the greater good of human societies. Doggone those conservative evangelical proselytizers who have given the word *evangelical* such disgraced connotations! For this shame, the overly zealous fundamentalists among them deserve the regard of lamentful eyes and the sounds of sibilant aspersions.

My crafty great-grandfather's genes are coursing through my arteries and heart and the neural synapses of my brain, and this may be one reason why both Tom and I tellingly developed an almost eerie love for tall tales. This expression of our great granddad's propensities for storytelling and exaggeration have veritably oozed from our souls like unmistakable genetic echoes of the many creative days Mark Twain spent writing at his family home in Hartford, Connecticut, or in his octagonal study atop a ridge at Quarry Farm in western New York state, where he and his family spent many summers.

Tom and I have always marveled about how Mark Twain was fascinated with twins, switched identities, multiple personalities, imposters, and the true reality behind appearances -- and here it turned out that his granddaughter ironically gave birth to twins! For a good perspective on the tone, tenor and particulars of the great author's life, check out the details of my biography of Samuel Langhorne Clemens in *A Quite Curious and Illuminating Biography of Mark Twain*.

One hundred and twelve years have passed since Mark Twain died on April 21, 2010. Cultural changes and many advances in understandings since those days have imprinted modern-day sensibilities upon me, and I have been caught up in new worldviews and more enlightened social and ecological perspectives. I am a bold progressive in my economic and political ideas, and a committed environmentalist with a keen awareness of social and ecological truths. I have a deep respect for balanced perspective, and an evolving sense of fair-minded feminism. The creative writing bug has bitten me, just like it did my great-granddad, and I try to temper my inherited incisive sense of observation with a somewhat sarcastic sense of humor. At the same time, I strive to be as perceptive and precise as possible in all of my evaluations and interpretations of reality. Picture Ernest Hemingway striving to express a true sentence, as portrayed in the evocative Woody Allen film, *Midnight in Paris*.

"My role in society, or any artist's or poet's role,
Is to try and express what we all feel.
Not to tell people how to feel.
Not as a preacher, not as a leader, but as a reflection of us all."

--- John Lennon (1940 - 1980)

Grandiosity or Common Sense?

I have great respect for the stature Mark Twain achieved in the popular imagination and in the world of literature. His philosophical perceptivity, incisively humorous wit, funnily sardonic perspectives on human folly, and sharply astute criticisms of injustices and imperialism are highly commendable. I have leveraged my Twainian inheritance, both genetic and philosophic, with common sense and uncommon thinking, and in the process, I have articulated grand ideas that could meaningfully improve the prospects of the human race, and indeed of most species of life on Earth.

This optimism may sound delusional. It may appear unlikely that we could easily improve our prospects, due to the daunting nature of challenges that lie before us. The prolonged pandemic drastically compounds the challenges we face due to political obstinacy and extreme political partisanship and the perverse priorities of divide-to-conquer leaders who obstruct constructive reform and pursue myopic and selfish agendas. Humanity is being buffeted by periodic economic crises, organizational dysfunction, systemic injustices, extreme weather-related disasters, and the rash depletion of resources. All these developments are being complicated by rapid global human population growth. Our current courses of action are driving an untold number of species of life toward eternal extinction, and it couldn't possibly be a good idea to heedlessly continue on this path.

More than two thousand years ago, a Sicilian scientist named Archimedes declared that he could move the world if he had the right lever and the right place to stand. Here we stand together, still poised on the limestone promontory of Lover's Leap, and we have the right levers in hand to choose to make historically positive changes in the future course of world history.

It is for good reason that I optimistically believe it would be relatively easy and painless for us to achieve more auspicious outcomes for society as a whole. Keep in mind the cosmic principle of both politics and human nature, the Rule of Two Impossibles. When something is declared politically impossible, and yet an alternative option is proved to be impossible to a greater degree, the first impossibility becomes curiously much more feasible.

How could we easily solve a good many of the formidable challenges we face? To start, we could make more concerted efforts to improve healthcare and precautionary preparedness in the U.S. And surely we could act with greater commitment to safeguard the health of ecosystems that sustain us. We could strive to stabilize the number of human beings on Earth before it reaches an overwhelming 9 billion people. Tens of millions of unwanted pregnancies could be prevented every year, for instance, by providing affordable access to modern contraceptives

to women around the world who need them.

Success in these endeavors would reduce the risks, to a significant degree, that come with escalating demands we are placing on ecosystems and the finite resources of our providential home planet. The most important of these solutions are spelled out in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

We could also easily make our system of Social Security indefinitely sustainable without cutting benefits for people who need them, and without increasing the retirement age. We could do this without indulging in the roguishly unfair expediency of borrowing money from people in the future to preserve the status quo of the current system. We could courageously address the challenging conundrum of big increases in medical and drug costs, and we could mitigate the stark racial injustices in workplaces and in our healthcare system. We could reduce the risks related to our rapidly increasing national debt by finding fair and effective ways to reduce the outsized budget deficits that are caused by regressive tax cutting, which are adding to the record high public debt every year. Some of these positive solutions are spelled out 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*. We just need the political will to make such far-reaching fair-minded changes.

Not only are good solutions achievable, but it is our overarching obligation to strive to make them happen. The main obstacles to solving these problems are found in powerful opposition by vested interest groups, and in correlated internecine battles by our political representatives to triumph over each other in their struggles to gain power and control. This strife generally results only in illusive Pyrrhic victories, at the public expense.

Specific proposals to achieve socially propitious goals are made throughout *Common Sense Revival*, and in Part Four of the *Earth Manifesto* online. Note that this manifesto contains more than 2,500 pages in about 100 separate essays. Peruse the Home Page for a good idea of the scope, tenor and organization of the contents. And read on for good ideas for how we should be changing our economy and political system.

"If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans."

--- Woody Allen

The Continuing Need for a New and Fairer Deal

President Theodore Roosevelt proposed a Square Deal in 1904. He vowed not to favor any single group of Americans, but to be fair to all. The Square Deal was a proposed domestic program that was based on three main ideas, according to Wikipedia: "conservation of resources, control of corporations, and consumer protection. Thus, it aimed at helping middle class citizens, and involved attacking plutocracy and bad trusts while at the same time protecting business from extreme demands of organized labor."

Theodore Roosevelt worked to break up big business trusts and fight against monopoly practices that railroad conglomerates and other big corporate trusts engaged in. He endorsed new federal regulations designed to limit egregious business practices, improve unsanitary working conditions, and prohibit harmful ingredients in various products -- things that were being exposed by the commendable "muckraker" writers of the time.

As President, Roosevelt was one of the first American leaders to support a form of universal health insurance. He did this, he said, because he believed that no country could be strong whose people were sick and poor. More than 100 years have passed since Roosevelt's presidency, and today there are millions of Americans without health insurance. "Conservatives" today are stubbornly opposing sensible reforms that would make healthcare more affordable and preventative in focus. And life spans of Americans have declined for the last several years (even before the pandemic), a sad trajectory contrasting starkly to that of many other nations.

The time has come for us to provide healthcare for all that includes effective cost controls and is socially affordable. All interested parties should work together to make this happen!

Politics, *n.* A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage."

--- Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

Our political representatives are responsible for our national decision-making and policy formulation in domestic and international arenas. But politics is far too narrowly focused to give fair and sensible consideration to the best plans for the greater good in the long run. This is why the honorable progressive Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota once said that politics should be about the improvement of people's lives and advancing the cause of peace and justice in our country and in the world.

What politics is, and what it should be, are distinctly different things. Politics today has become an internecine conflict between opposing factions competing for influence, power, money and greedy advantages. Compromise has become a dirty word, and working together has fallen out of favor. Obstruction and inflexible "purity pledges" by conservatives were the order of the day when Barack Obama was in office, and now with Joe Biden antagonistic refusals to compromise or act honorably characterize many partisans.

One primary theme of this manifesto is that more comprehensive Big Picture perspectives could lead to more responsible collective actions in our societies. To prevent the disintegration of our societies and the perceptible environmental degradation of our marvelous home planet, we are obliged to find ways to reduce the influence of short-term thinking, ignorance, denial, overly ruthless competition, mismanagement, greed and hubris.

An Important Recommendation

I enthusiastically recommend that every person watch the extraordinary film *Home*. This is a 93-minute-long documentary film produced by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, the eminent French ecologist and aerial photographer, which can be seen online right now. Appreciate the astonishingly beautiful visual images of lovely planet Earth, taken from above in this film, and absorb its profoundly important ecological messages, as narrated by actress Glenn Close. *Home* provides an excellent understanding of the nature and scope of societal and environmental challenges that we all face together, and it makes ecological truths come alive by providing vividly compelling images and cogent insights into the nature of reality and the real impacts of our human activities.

In your mind's eye, fly along with Yann Arthus-Bertrand across the South Pacific over crashing waves on the coastline of Easter Island in the remote reaches of the South Pacific, and see the magnificent and imagination-provoking volcanic stone statues that were erected long ago by the peoples of a vanished civilization. To help in this visualization, check out the film, and you can even toggle to minute 53:36 for the specific footage of a flight over Easter Island and the accompanying observations about it.

Visit a Holy Place

Imagine my great-grandfather looking down on us, bursting with mischievous wit, and making some droll and drawling exaggerations. He would surely ridicule our on-going human foibles, and would not hesitate to express satirical sentiments about our forbearance for abuses of power by corporations, governments and conservative religious authorities. He would likely be aghast that pretentious conspicuous consumption has had such a profligate expression in modern years, since it approaches the extremes experienced during the Gilded Age he wrote about. He would be practically apoplectic that we still have such a national enthusiasm for interventionist wars and economic imperialism, and he would probably sharply criticize our sadly reprehensible and unaffordably costly military occupations of other countries, and our aggressively hawkish military adventurism in general. He was, after all, a leader in the Anti-Imperialist League, America's first national peace movement.

The next time an American leader proposes that we get involved in another long-term military occupation of some foreign country, we would be wise to heed Mark Twain's perceptive words: **"It is easier to stay out than get out."** And that would certainly be a less costly and more good neighborly strategy, to boot!

President Dwight Eisenhower's caveat to the nation in 1961 resonates anew with these ideas: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. *Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.*"

Most people are unaware that Eisenhower regarded the entities that were perpetrating significant threats to a proper balance between national security and individual liberties to be a military-industrial-Congressional complex. The outsized role that Congress, lobbyists, Big Money and other corrupting influences play in our political system cannot be overstated. These driving forces have gotten much worse since Eisenhower's days.

Today, most unfortunately, dire threats to our collective security and personal liberties have arisen from within.

Mark Twain was notably clamorous, back during the courageous trust-busting days of Theodore Roosevelt, about the all-but-evil ways in which giant conglomerate "trusts" abused power by using monopoly practices and operating with unsafe workplaces, long working hours, six-day work weeks, child labor and the like. After all, the last three decades of his life coincided with those of the reform-minded Progressive Era and the muckraking exposés of that time.

Mark Twain himself had invented the phrase the *Gilded Age* when he co-wrote a book about this era in 1873 titled *The Gilded Age - A Tale of Today*. This was a story about materialism, deception, lobbyist shenanigans, graft and corruption in public life. One theme of the novel is that lust for material things is pervasive in society and people want to get rich by speculating in land and other assets. This book told stories of the pretensions of the nouveau riche and their preoccupations with high status, as reflected in their extravagant consumption.

Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist who first visualized a Hierarchy of Human Needs, expressed the opinion that once people have their basic biological and safety needs met, they seek meaningful things like belonging, intimacy, friendship, love, family, and healthy community relationships. Intermixed with these impulses, and higher up the pyramid -- but still far, far short of enlightened self-actualization -- is a province of self-esteem, achievement, self-gratification, aggressive ostentation, hedonistic pleasure seeking, and a quest for the respect of others (or at least for their envy). ((Or, for malicious narcissists, a quest for notoriety.))

Since *The Gilded Age* was written at the beginning of the first *Gilded Age* in the late 19th century, it did not yet emphasize the degree of industrialization, corporate dominance, labor strife and urban machine politics that were to come in the decades that followed. Nor did it highlight the obscene amount of extravagance and showy resource-squandering consumerism that became so distinctive a characteristic of the years to follow. Queue up a few commercial jingles to sell some more unnecessary stuff!

I also recommend watching the documentary film *George Harrison: Living in the Material World*, for it inspires a musically enlightened spiritual perspective on the overly materialistic nature of modern societies. The film was produced by Martin Scorsese and George Harrison's second wife, Olivia, who incidentally reveals her simple key to a long marriage: "Don't get divorced." (Aha!)

It is interesting that the Beatles had evolved from struggling musicians to heroes of love, and then ascended to superstardom. When the band progressed to sitar-playing introspection, they adopted alternate personas as members of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. This role seems to have provided them with expansive license to experiment with creative songs, songwriting and techniques, and the new alter ego of the Beatles as the Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band freed them to achieve new heights of creative expression. That album was to become one of the most widely acclaimed albums of all time.

After the Beatles performed their last live concert in August 1966, in San Francisco, the four members of the group went their own separate ways, and in 1971 John Lennon recorded *Imagine*, a song with some of the greatest lyrics ever written. Give it another listen, and read the *Imagine* lyrics to doubly appreciate them.

Sometimes it is valuable to adopt a new point of view to see the world in a more accurate light. In the classic film *It's a Wonderful Life*, for instance, the main character George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, focuses on what's wrong in his life, until an angel shows him what's right with it. This led him to the realization that he actually already had a wonderful life. Be Here Now!

These are the best of times in some ways for the fortunate, and the worst of times for those wracked by debilitating doses of the coronavirus or forced to live with desperate food or financial insecurity. Seeing this, we are obligated to develop more empathetic and compassionate national policies. May Day! May Day!

A Psychological Perspective

A small modicum of greater social justice would be positive for the well-being of all. Even the famous economist Adam Smith would have corroborated this assertion, for he stated in his veritable manifesto of capitalism, *The Wealth of Nations*, that the wealth of a nation is measured by the productivity and living standards of ALL of its people, not just by its accumulated wealth. Adam Smith's book was essentially dedicated to improving the welfare of the common man, not just that of merchants or the upper class. It is one of the most colossal ironies in the history of ideas that this book has been used by wealthy people and the industrialist class as a justification for NOT seeking to remedy the scandalous social ills caused by industrialization. Bah, humbug!

Inequities exist in the access people have to the sources of happiness in capitalist societies. By giving free rein to ruthless and unalloyed greed, a great conundrum is made worse: one of the chief sources of happiness in capitalist societies is found merely in having access to it. Capitalist nations tend to condition their citizens to envy and be envied. As John Fowles pointed out in *The Aristos*, envious people covet not just the apples in an orchard, but the access to the orchard itself.

Such envy is an impulse, and thus a form of movement. As such, it contains the seeds of its own transformation. The positive expression of this potential is found in people who demonstrate a socially responsible support for fairness and progress and integrity in governance, and humane dealings with others.

Since the average person feels like a pawn in the game of national and international politics, and a smaller and smaller pawn as the size of the electorate grows, people's civic senses tend to atrophy. This is bad news for democratic self-governance. A withered sense of real civic responsibility is, according to John Fowles, "one of the most striking phenomena of our age." And it has gotten worse since 1968, when he made this observation.

Puritans in the American colonies and our early democratic republic had a credo that professed both faith and good works together are necessary for personal salvation. Others curiously asserted that God regarded dutiful faith in Him as enough alone to attain salvation. In contrast, Gnostics in the early days of Christianity believed salvation was to be found in enlightenment. God and scriptures are not clear on this matter, so let's consult the providential ideas of Humanism. This philosophy holds that reason, ethical action and fairly-applied justice should be the basis for morality and decision-making. Humanists consequently posit that good works are more desirable for society than do-nothing policies -- or retrogressive ones! -- in the face of an unjust status quo.

Humanism is a philosophy that specifically rejects religious dogma, pseudoscience, supernatural deities and superstitious beliefs as a basis of either morality or public policy decision-making. Hallelujah for this sensible philosophy! Essential aspects of Humanism include a central faith in reason and a continuous adaptive search for truth through philosophic exploration, open-minded reasoning, critical thinking, scientific understandings and honest intuitive awareness.

We should initiate a movement that seeks the truly best ideas about how to successfully adapt to the changes taking place in our societies, and in physical conditions on Earth. And we should strongly support those who are committed to protecting the natural foundations of our prosperity.

I think once again of H.G. Wells' compelling observation: "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." These words are especially relevant today. Dr. Dana Meadows, who is famous for her 1972 book *The Limits to Growth*, was known to optimistically declare that we have exactly enough time to prevent catastrophe -- as long as we begin, "starting now." Folks who are concerned about growing risks of disruptions in the global climate strongly agree with this sentiment, as they demonstrated in New York City and around the world on September 21, 2014 in huge People's Climate Marches, and in advocacy efforts that led us to the Paris Climate Accords in December 2015, and in Women's Marches and the inaugural March for Science on Earth Day 2017, and countless other demonstrations against treacherous abuses of authority.

Change seems to be accelerating as technological innovations proliferate like an algal bloom, and as conditions deteriorate on our home planet. It's as if we are hurtling more than 66,000 miles per hour around the Sun, and picking up speed. (Wait a minute! That would be 575 million miles in a year. Whoa -- steady the course!).

I recommend that readers enjoy some hot Ginger-Infused Health Beverage or icy cold Delicious Mango Papaya Banana Lassi while perusing these words. For simple recipes to make these hyper-healthy beverages, see *Tiffany Twain Entertains: A Philosophic Cookbook*. These two beverages, with their addition of twelve good-health Ayurvedic spices, might in themselves change the world! Ginger helps one's body maintain a proper alkaline balance. This is a key to good health because too much acidity causes a variety of health problems. Acid-forming foods deplete electrolyte minerals like calcium, potassium and magnesium in vital organs and bones, and thus make people more susceptible to diseases and afflictions. All foods tend to be either alkaline-forming or acid forming. Fresh fruits, vegetables and ginger help maintain a healthy pH balance, while acid-forming foods have the opposite effect. Acid-forming foods include meat, eggs, sugars, dairy, most grains, white flour, coffee, carbonated beverages, artificial sweeteners and alcohol.

Enjoying one of these good health beverages may help readers maintain a cool, calm and collected attitude, which is desirable because we need to give serious consideration to the overarching challenges that face the human race in the world today.

Two Remarkable Feminists Speak Up

I love the insights articulated by Olympe de Gouges, one of history's most extraordinary feminists. She lived contemporaneously with Thomas Paine, and was a great humanitarian whose ideas shine brightly like a brilliant beacon flashing from a lighthouse on a rocky headland in dark and stormy weather. Olympe de Gouges was outraged when, after the French Revolution in 1789, the details were revealed of a first written Constitution for France. Her chagrin was enflamed by the fact that this Constitution had been created by revolutionaries to lead France to a fairer future, yet it did not even consider women's suffrage or other key women's issues. It did not mention legal equality in marriage or the right of a woman to divorce her spouse if he abused her, or a woman's right to property or the custody of her children. These omissions motivated Ms. de Gouges in 1791 to create a *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* to provide an important missing part of the proposed Constitution, and to help women get the legitimate rights they deserve as human beings. Today, more than 230 years later, men continue to ignore such courageous ideas; but hear anew the transcendental truth of their common sense fair-mindedness by reading her 17-point *Declaration* online.

We need not look far back in history to see significant gender inequities. Ponder the Equal Rights Amendment to our own U.S. Constitution. This proposed amendment declares, simply: *Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex*. It should be a no-brainer to pass this amendment! Nonetheless, our representatives have been unable to agree with this sensibly fair proposition in adequate numbers to get it ratified, even though it has been introduced in Congress every year since 1923. Congress did finally pass the Amendment in 1972, and President Richard Nixon endorsed its approval by the 50 states, but the forces of reaction and male privilege managed to stymie its ratification by a required three-fourths majority of the states, falling just short. Let's get 'er done!

Back in 1890, a People's Populist Party swept into power in Kansas and took control of the legislature. Mary Elizabeth Lease, one of the party's foremost orators, became a nationally famous stump speaker as she toured all over the country between 1890 and 1896, and she was one of the most prominent women of that decade. Remember that females were denied the vote until 1920. Lease and her husband had lost their farm in the Panic of 1873, so she felt strongly about the ruthlessness of industrialists and Wall Street bankers. She was a powerful speaker who was adept at articulating the discontent of the people, and she had a sharp tongue, so some of her offended opponents bitterly assailed her in the press, accusing her of being a "petticoated smut-mill" and a "virago". Many people thought that a woman's place should be in the home, not on the political stage, so Mary Lease became a favorite target of vitriol, especially because she advocated gender and racial equality. Some opponents altered her middle name from Elizabeth to Ellen, so that they could call her "Yellin' Mary Ellen." She was no doubt one of the "harpies" mentioned by staunch Republican journalist William Allen White in an 1896 editorial, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*

William Allen White was being critical of the Populist influence when he wrote this editorial, but something he belittled happens to ring with a resounding epiphany, in light of conservative spin today about the almost divine

providence of the trickle-down theory: "There are two ideas of government," said our noble William Jennings Bryan at Chicago. "There are those who believe that if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class and rest upon them." Right on!

RBG is an excellent documentary film about a supremely inspirational woman, the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Known as the "Notorious RBG" for having been a strong advocate for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights, she earned high regard from admirers on account of her common sense fair-mindedness, intelligence, success in improving the stature of women, and brilliant dissenting opinions against decisions made by partisan conservatives who illegitimately dominate the high court. Superhero-like status has been conferred upon RBG, and she became a "pop culture icon". Her stands naturally engendered powerful criticism from right-wing proponents of male privilege in our excessively patriarchal society. A smart rap song went viral commemorating RBG and female Supreme Court Justices. Check out the book *Notorious RBG*, the film RBG and the song *Notorious RBG* by Kelly Cosby and Elizabeth Gavin (watch it on YouTube).

Wes "Scoop" Nisker, a Buddhist meditation instructor and author who was a famous radio commentator in the 1970s, always concluded his radio programs with a provocative tagline that merits my endorsement here: "If you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own!"

Herald the Good News!

Great hope exists for achieving the goal of dramatically improving our societies, and for making them more secure for all. Good hopes also exist for making our economies more inclusive and sustainable. One of the happiest harbingers signaling positive change today is that people are beginning to come together over big issues. When I heard Pope Francis come out with powerful moral arguments for action to mitigate climate change, it was heartening. When almost 200 countries got together in Paris and agreed to bold climate action, I saluted that progress. It is reassuring to know that some evangelicals are championing "creation care", and supporting initiatives to help protect Earth's natural ecosystems with proper stewardship. This is vastly better than spending huge amounts of time, energy and emotion on relatively less consequential hot button social issues.

And when I see thousands of evangelical congregations of many faiths collaborating together in Interfaith Power and Light organizations to conserve energy resources and reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere, I regard these things as very good, indeed. When I imagine that people might begin to listen to others with opposing viewpoints, and try to think critically about weaknesses in their own arguments and cultivate a greater willingness to seek consensus on the most accurate ways of seeing, I find it to be hope inspiring. When I read thought-provoking books like *Getting to Green - Saving Nature: A Bipartisan Solution*, it inspires hope that sanity will prevail and we will choose new leaders who will step forward to satisfy our overarching national obligation to be better stewards of nature by collaborating together for the greater good. A bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus in Congress provides a basis for the beginnings of such collaboration.

These developments give hope that we may begin to be more responsible in dealing with unfolding existential challenges. I feel strongly that it would be an excellent idea for us to invest our emotions in important issues to a degree proportional to the consequences involved, and thus put more of our energies and money into addressing the biggest issues that confront humanity, like excessive consumption and waste and activities that damage creation and produce too much trash and pollutants and plastics and environmental toxins.

I regard foresightful awareness as humanity's most important quality for its value in achieving prosperity, well-being and survival. In rash contrast, denials of the most responsible and farsighted understandings, especially in the service of narrowly self-centered ideological agendas, is one of the most ominous harbingers of a failure to adapt to changing circumstances, as time lapses steadily and inexorably into the future. It is curiously true that, despite the fact that simple and good solutions exist to achieve healthier goals, two particular problems stand in the way. The devil, as they say, is often in the details.

First, we are collectively addicted to living beyond our means and indulging in national spending financed by borrowing more money from taxpayers in every future year, without offsetting it by finding new revenues. And

second, there is the elephant in the room: wealthy people, who are easiest able to help pay for improved education and healthcare, a stronger social safety net, infrastructure investments and protections of the environment are the very ones who have the power and propensity to prevent initiatives that require them to pay higher taxes to fund greater good goals and a fairer, more sustainable society. A majority of rich people, tragically, are opposed to plans that would assess higher rates of taxes on the highest levels of incomes, or that would close tax loopholes that primarily benefit the wealthiest 1% of Americans.

All the insights contained in *Sad Implications of the Two Dueling Santa Claus Strategies in Political Economics* are included herein by this reference, in all their redundant splendor, in these aspirational Happy Harbinger ideas. So are the understandings contained in *Climate Change Considerations, Carrying Capacity, and Ecological Overshoot*. A good balance of yin and yang is almost always a superior amalgam.

Perhaps the happiest harbinger of all is how starkly clear it has become to most Americans that substantive and meaningful change is needed in our country and the world. This may be the happiest harbinger to be materializing in the 21st century, among a passel of portentous and potentially unhappy harbingers. We Americans face a choice between leaders that are willing to pursue common sense positive changes and those who advocate far-right doctrines and a wrongheaded agenda and reactionary impulses. Trump Republicans, unfortunately, represent manipulative fear-exploiting power-abusing steps backward, in the wrong direction.

Reflections on Rogue Actors

The masts on our ship of state are creaking ominously, and the right-wing spin machine keeps prescribing remedies that do more harm than good. "More of the Reagan medicine, that's what we need," they intone. "We want none of those generic drugs, what we need is full strength uncompromising Reaganism. More military spending, less taxes on the rich! Down with unions! Repeal regulations!!" Significant factions supported the Tea Party and right-wing House Freedom Caucus, and now the MAGA Trump cult, and they all strive to rally the faithful to their backwards causes, despite the objectionable nature of their agenda. Donald Trump is an egomaniacal wild card in this calculus, and he and his supporters threaten to sink the ship of our democratic republic altogether.

Freedoms are inextricably accompanied by a need to act responsibility. The same is true of wealth. This is an aspect of ethical humanism enunciated by Will and Ariel Durant in their thought-provoking book, *The Lessons of History*, and it is echoed by John Fowles in *The Aristos*, and by many others.

In a speech at the Brandenburg Gate in 1987, Ronald Reagan extolled freedom, security and world peace. He implored the Russians, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." Beliefs can become reality, he said. This can actually be quite true! I believe we should cultivate wholesome beliefs that are consistent with liberty and security for all people in our nation, AND we should strive for peace everywhere in the world. We should sensibly insist on giving valid reasons to our heirs in future generations for them to believe we have acted fairly enough to make our societies less expediently short-term-oriented. We should move toward a balanced budget and avoid rashly exploiting resources and damaging ecosystems so severely that the prospects for well-being of people in the future are excessively compromised. Listen to the TedTalk, *How to be a good ancestor!*

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1989 after 10 years of having its military forces occupy Afghanistan. As fate would have it, the U.S. did not learn the costly lessons of the folly of having intervened militarily in Vietnam after the French had given up their own 8-year long war there. As a result, we rashly blundered into an almost 20-year-long military occupation of Afghanistan -- and no good end of turmoil in that region is in sight. Not only that, but we compounded the terrible cost of our brash and pious Middle East adventurism by aggressively attacking and occupying oil-rich Iraq for many years. And war hawks like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo have aggressively rattled the saber for a war with Iran.

"What a gyp!", exclaimed Thomas Twain. He was talking about the absurdly high cost of wars with questionable goals in Southeast Asia and the Middle East over the course of the past 70 years. When the vaunted Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap celebrated his 100th birthday in 2011, I did a quizzical double take, but said nothing. (General Giap died in October 2013.)

Who profited the most from these wars? It would be eminently reasonable to assess higher taxes on those who profit from wars to help finance with the far-reaching problems created by imperialism and violent conflicts.

Introspection into Government

Mark Twain's observation that "We have the best government that money can buy" is an odd and thought-provoking one. Almost everyone I know would agree that when we allow Big Money to buy our representatives, it allows rich people to have an excessively domineering influence, and common folk are forced to endure impacts that are highly negative on the masses and society and the providential ecological commons. In this sense, we are vastly overpaying for our government!

We are paying a ridiculously excessive premium for a political system that is corrupted by entrenched interest groups. Greedy rich people are the primary culprits in this state of affairs, because they jealously insist on getting and keeping the biggest proportion of the economic benefits of our system for themselves. And as a consequential result, our government has been rigged to give insufficient influence to common good goals.

The richest one percent of households in the U.S. own just about as much of the country's wealth as the bottom 90% of households in the USA. That is morally wrong, and steps should be taken to reduce this inequity.

Critics charge that the U.S. government is dysfunctional, and many opinions in this manifesto corroborate such a characterization. But in the big picture, this is nonsense. Let's look again. The government is not the least bit dysfunctional from the standpoint that it is very successfully achieving the main function that power-abusing vested interest groups want it to do: RUTHLESSLY ADVANCING THE SELFISH GOALS OF THOSE WHO ARE MOST PRIVILEGED.

The government is, however, horribly dysfunctional from the perspective of the vast majority of the American people. This majority would be much better served by having a government that is managed more fairly and guided more properly. We would be much better off having a government that would honestly and courageously adopt more sensible national priorities. It would be much better if the representatives we elect would work together better and make fair compromises that take into account the greater good for all. We would be better off, in aggregate, if our leaders acted responsibly to choose to enact national policies that really reduced inequality of opportunities and outcomes in our country.

Political corruption and institutionalized bribery are the primary reasons that the federal government fails to enact policies consistent with the common good. Economic inequality and environmental injustices are, to a large extent, political phenomena. They are NOT necessary states of affairs.

An oath of office is required of all our national representatives. In this official oath, they swear to support and defend the Constitution. This oath requires them to "well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office" to which they have been elected. The American people today hold their representatives in low regard because of nasty partisanship in Congress, and also because of cyclical high rates of unemployment in the nation, and stagnating wages for most working people, and now in 2022, rapid inflation to go with dangerously high levels of national debt. In addition, scandalous sweetheart deals that our representatives give themselves are sometimes revealed, earning deserved scorn.

"There is nothing wrong with America that can't be fixed," said President Obama once observed. "What's broken is our politics." Understanding this, it becomes obvious that we need to demand fairer fixes!

Congress has made many revealing December compromises, confirming a fact that should be apparent to every observer. Deep down beneath the sound and fury of rancorous political discord and the ruthless competition between our representatives for the most lavish possible pandering to wealthy people, a complacent calm prevails. We can see that this underlying collaboration between the two wings in our political duopoly acts as one in its purpose and outcomes. This basic intent is to stay the course in the über-arena where influential wealthy people all agree together that national tax policies should not be made more progressive, so that wealth can continue to be concentrated in the bank accounts of the top dog wealthiest 1% fat cats.

Even the Supreme Court has gone along with Congress and the Federal Reserve in this overarching game-rigging

strategy. The five "conservative" Justices on the Supreme Court before Antonin Scalia died often basically violated the oaths of office they once took by betraying *We the People* when they made decisions using ideological rationalizations, twisted logic, narrow legal interpretations, partisan political predispositions, and unfair lavishly generous favoritism of the interests of rich people and giant corporations.

The Judicial Oath of office that Supreme Court Justices are required to take before they begin fulfilling the duties of their offices is straightforward and clear. They put their hand on a Bible and must declare: "I, _(name)_, do solemnly swear that I will administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich, and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon me as Supreme Court Justice under the Constitution and laws of the United States. So help me God."

When these Justices make decision after decision in favor of moneyed interests, and against the greater good, and do so by a narrow majority of conservatives, this reveals a direct violation of the intent of this oath. This is systemic corruption. It is anathema to the valuable democratic ideal of a truly independent judiciary. The conservatives on the Court must begin to be much less ideologically partial to the rich! Let's demand that Congress pass a proposed Judiciary Act to expand the number of Justices to give more balanced influence.

Supreme Court Fail

Conservatives deem it "politically impossible" to achieve reforms that require increases in federal revenues. To the extent that this is true, it is mainly so because wealthy interests, corporations and other anti-democratic forces control our public decision-making, using the undue influence of their Big Money to gain Big Power, thanks in part to the nakedly partisan conservative majority on the Supreme Court that ruled 5 to 4 to give them more influence with the 2010 *Citizens United* decision and the later *McCutcheon* ruling.

When the Supreme Court struck down even the anemic efforts that have been made to control the financing of election campaigns in its *Citizens United* ruling, basically endorsing institutional bribery, former Justice John Paul Stevens expressed a strongly worded dissent. He stated that conservative ideologies about campaign finance laws "rejected the common sense of the American people, who have fought against the distinctive corrupting potential of corporate electioneering since the days of Theodore Roosevelt." Yes, siree!!

Justices John Roberts, Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Trump's new partisan appointees Gorsuch, Kavanaugh and Barrett should begin to heed the implications of the understanding that money is subverting the greater good in our nation by giving far too much power and privileges to the wealthy few. This is having distinctly detrimental real consequences for the American people. A tsunami of secretive dark money and special interest funds from Super PACs has created such a barrage of distorting and negative political ads that it is driving Americans practically crazy, while undermining the adaptive health of our democratic process.

Inside Job

Charles Ferguson expounded on the topic of inequality and oligarchy in his stunning book, *Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America*: "The Occupy Wall Street protestors were deeply right about one thing: over the last thirty years, the United States has been taken over by an amoral financial oligarchy, and the American Dream of opportunity, education and upward mobility is now largely confined to the top few percent of the population. Federal policy is increasingly dictated by the wealthy, by the financial sector, and by powerful (though sometimes badly mismanaged) industries such as telecommunications, health care, automobiles, and energy. These policies are implemented and praised by the willing servants of these groups, namely the increasingly bought-and-paid-for leadership of America's political parties, academia, and lobbying industry."

"If allowed to continue, this process will turn the United States into a declining, unfair society with an impoverished, angry, uneducated population under the control of a small, ultra-wealthy elite. Such a society would be not only immoral but also eventually unstable, dangerously ripe for religious and political extremism."

"Thus far, both political parties have been remarkably clever and effective in concealing this new reality. In fact, the two parties have formed an innovative kind of cartel -- an arrangement I have termed America's political duopoly, which I analyze in detail below. Both parties lie about the fact that they have each sold out to the

financial sector and the wealthy. So far, both have largely gotten away with the lie, helped in part by the enormous amount of money now spent on deceptive and manipulative political advertising. But that can't last indefinitely; Americans are getting angry, and even when they're misguided or poorly informed, people have a deep, visceral sense that they're being screwed."

Charles Ferguson added another interesting perspective: "The rise of predatory finance is both a cause and symptom of an even broader, and even more disturbing, change in America's economy and political system. The financial sector is the core of a new oligarchy that has risen to power over the past thirty years, and that has profoundly changed American life."

This political duopoly arrangement makes clamorous sound-and-fury about the intense fighting over values issues like affordable healthcare, abortion and equal rights for gay people, but this distorting noise inimically serves to divert attention from the financial sector's "quiet coup," to use a phrase coined by economist Simon Johnson. This strategy shrewdly divides potential opposition to it. People who should be aligned together in calling for fairer taxes, campaign finance reform, stricter financial regulation, better and more affordable public education, and needed investments in America's infrastructure are instead divided by their opposing views on issues like tax policy, immigrants, gun laws, contraception, women's reproductive rights and gay marriage. This strategy has worked well for politicians in both parties, but the uncontrolled growth of America's financial sector and a correlated consolidation of wealth and power by the rich, with the help of their Trojan Horse conservative politicians, has had poisonous and deleterious ramifications for most Americans.

This is part of a long-term on-going plot against America and democratic fairness, and the general welfare. As the days slide past like turbulent water over a succession of cascades, the magnitude of the threat posed by divisive demagoguery increases. Yes, the establishment has perverted the broad positive values of global fair trade by letting ruthless corporations turn it into a racket where working people and consumers are exploited and ecosystems and the environment are harmed to benefit CEOs and investors. This means that change must be made, and the overall happy harbinger concealed in this understanding is that the proper nature of needed reforms becomes clearer with Right View and Right Mindfulness.

Mark Twain would have guffawed with wry and sardonic amusement at the onward trajectory from his astute observation that "we have the best government that money can buy." Charles Ferguson adds: "Unless America reverses course, things will end badly, at least for the bottom 90% of Americans, and possibly for the wealthy who consider themselves safe." The pitchforks will eventually come out if we fail to fix things by enacting smart and far-reaching reforms, and likely sooner rather than later -- and pitched battles would be devastating.

These historic expressions of truth come at a critical juncture in American history. We are still waiting for effective efforts to expand overall well-being in the USA, and I'm hoping humanity will honestly begin a peaceful revolution that will help assure a more salubrious future. We can all help make this come true by embracing the resounding force of progressive ideas, like those recommended in this manifesto, and by widely hearing and respecting them. Hear ye now -- Lend your voice to these ideas -- and vote for leaders likely to represent greater good goals!

Basic Economics and Corporate Power

Corporations long ago began sprawling across national boundaries, and their power has grown beyond that of any nation's government. Globalization has some positive economic merits, but corporations are far too socially and environmentally irresponsible to allow them to continue monopolizing business and growing too big. They can no longer be allowed to privatize profits while foisting many real costs of production activities upon society and future generations. Corporations cannot be allowed to continue running roughshod over the greater good.

Capitalism and democracy are, in one sense, opposed to each other, just as freedom and equality are essentially competing and often conflicting values. The greater the freedom a society allows, and the fewer the number of fairness-oriented regulations, the more that inequalities naturally multiply. And the rich get richer.

Capitalist societies have incorporated many "socialistic" provisions into their economic systems to ensure a somewhat fairer modicum of equality. Meanwhile, socialistic societies have included capitalistic provisions of free

enterprise and some individual liberties in their economic systems in order to offer a greater stimulus to entrepreneurial activities. "East is West and West is East, and soon the twain will meet," the historians Will and Ariel Durant once poetically opined, in *The Lessons of History*.

Socialism benefits from capitalist ideals by providing people with stronger motives to be productive, and by allowing people to benefit from their labors and thus enjoy more freedom. Outcomes of an interesting Russian social experiment many years ago showed that individual farmers were much more productive on small private plots than farmers who worked on acreage devoted to big collective farms. This is one reason that China, Russia and other socialistic societies have embraced laissez-faire economics to a degree.

Capitalism puts the profit motive on the highest pedestal of our imaginations. But then it allows wealthy people to invidiously commandeer most of the benefits of increased productivity for themselves. This is why capitalist societies need to limit abuses of power and ruthlessness of monopolies through "socialistic" legislation and tax plans that effectively share wealth more broadly.

Unfortunately, the tentacles of Shock Doctrine Disaster Capitalism are squeezing the vitality out of workers and the middle class. These corporate tentacles are sapping the strength and fairness from our great American experiment in democracy, and consequently causing a ruinous erosion of public health, the common good and trust that government in democracies can succeed in improving conditions. The scheming corporate squeeze is an assault on the majority of people by the few, an assault on good governance, fairness, and the health of the environment that sustains us. It is an assault on the quality of life and standard of living of the majority of people. No amount of hyperbole is sufficient to express the outrageousness of this inequitable exploitation, or the amount of damage it is doing to our home planet and the healthy biological diversity of life on Earth.

It is a revealing aspect of our capitalist economic systems that corporations are allowed to make the maximum profits that they can, by hook or by crook. Yet this state of affairs need not necessarily be changed to reduce the distortions caused by corporate cost-externalizing practices. We should start by requiring all businesses to include all costs of production in the prices of the products and services they sell. They can pass these costs on to consumers if they are able. This requirement would have the positive effect of mitigating misallocations of resources caused by cost-externalizing gambits and their distorting impacts on purchases, consumption and decision-making. A specific proposal to achieve this sensible goal is contained in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

The Struggle by Capital to Exploit Workers

Capitalist economic systems seem to have triumphed over societies that listened to the ideas of Karl Marx, with his oh-so-Marxian declaration, "Workers of the World, Unite!" Capitalists today are triumphing over workers in a more startlingly unfair manner than at any time since the end of the Roaring Twenties.

To prevent worker unity and power to the people, wealthy people in our capitalist societies have collaborated with right wing ideologues to use the power of their money to create ever-more insecure conditions for workers. CEOs made 20 times as much as the average worker in 1950s. In 2017, the average amount a CEO of a Fortune 500 Company made was more than 350 times as much as the average worker. And yet the net effective rate of taxes that these highly compensated people pay has been reduced significantly. One way that CEOs have proven their value to corporate profit-making is by ensuring excessively tight control over employee headcount and worker pay, overtime and benefits, and by terminating employees whenever convenient. These developments are bizarrely unfair in light of the crucial value of workers to the success of businesses.

The rich are winning a Pyrrhic victory over the greater good of the people. They are also winning a similarly shortsighted victory over the common good of our communities, our countries, peoples of other nations, and all people in future generations. And they are spearheading a kind of ecological Pyrrhic victory over all other forms of life on Earth. The original Pyrrhic victory was a victory won in battle where the victorious forces suffered devastating losses, led by Pyrrhus, the conquering-crazed King of Epirus in modern day northwestern Greece, over the Romans in 279 BCE at Asculum, in what is now southern Italy. The Greek Pyrrhus used war elephants and a

superior cavalry to gain this costly triumph over the Romans, but the heavy losses he suffered caused him to exclaim: "One more such victory, and we shall be undone."

Today's Pyrrhic victories by capitalists over workers are temporary triumphs where workers are required to work harder without adequate increases in compensation and security. These ephemeral victories are achieved to give rich people more wealth. High costs for worker healthcare and retirement security are being foisted onto others, and the harm done to people and the health of our communities is tragic and costly. We cannot allow these Pyrrhic victories to cause our societies to become more undone!

There are three reasons that Pyrrhic victories by rich people presage future calamities. First, there are health reasons. It is foolhardy not to invest in the health of the nation's people merely to stimulate profits by insurance companies and drug companies. Second, there are economic reasons. It is a poor strategy to undermine the solvency of the majority of consumers, who are responsible for 70% of the total spending in our economy. And third, it is politically risky to court the wrath of the poor and the middle class by imposing austerity measures on the majority, thus harshly exacerbating inequalities while allowing the highest income earners to pay the lowest rates of taxes in generations.

"The war against working people should be understood to be a real war. It's not a new war. It's an old war. Furthermore, it's a perfectly conscious war everywhere, but specifically in the United States ... which happens to have a highly class-conscious business class ... and they have long seen themselves as fighting a bitter class war, except they don't want anybody else to know about it."

--- Noam Chomsky, *Propaganda and Control of the Public Mind*

The international economy is practically predicated on American consumerism. Since over two-thirds of the U.S. economy is based on consumer spending, it is inevitable that consumers cannot keep up this spending spree when economic bubbles periodically create high rates of joblessness. Real incomes of workers were about flat from 1981 through 2020, after the Reagan Revolution began to undermine the power of workers and give most of the enormous benefits of increased productivity to CEOs and investors, and very little of it to workers. The economy had been supported until the housing bubble burst by high levels of borrowing against home equity, before a temporary steep decline in home prices.

A more stable and fairly distributed prosperity would be better for all concerned, in the long run. This is true because the equitability of having wealth more broadly distributed would ensure less insecurity for the masses. When people are subjected to ever-growing insecurity, it is a dangerous condition because it harms people, encourages crime, increases the potential for violence, and provides a powerful impetus toward political instability and even violent revolutionary change. This is one reason why we should enact fairer legislative partial redistributions by means of more steeply graduated taxes. In the short term, we should strive to ensure that poor people and those in the middle class are made more secure. This would stimulate the economy much more holistically and sanely than allowing policies to prevail in which national debt-financed regressive tax cuts principally benefit the richest Americans. Fairer treatment of working people would result in economic growth, more tax revenue and reduced budget shortfalls.

I challenge all Americans to demand that their representatives begin to honor the greater good and promote the general welfare of the majority of people. We should reject the insidiously unfair goals of giant corporate entities and rich people when they undermine our common prospects for prosperity. We have been goosing the world economy with stimulative deficit-financed consumerism for decades, and this game is now reaching a crescendo that makes fairer and more prudent policies necessary. The paradigms of human behavior simply must become more sustainable.

Rich people have been abusing the power that comes with their increasing monopoly on the nation's wealth by refusing to contribute a fairer share of the total tax burden. They are slowly strangling American workers by tightly controlling the compensation and benefits that workers receive, and by demanding that federal and state governments cut spending on programs that benefit the poor and the middle class while perpetuating the many methods by which the rich prosper. They do not want to share their prosperity, and they are strongly opposed to sharing any sacrifices needed to make our system more sustainable.

As a result, the U.S. has the highest inequality of wealth in the industrialized world. The implications and outcomes associated with this fact are unconscionable. It reminds me once again of Warren Buffet's astute observation: "There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning it." President Obama repeatedly proposed ending the low tax rates enacted under George W. Bush. But rich people insist on their entitlement to these boondoggle-like boons, so little progress has been made in this regard. Paul Ryan, responding with vitriol to such a proposal in 2011, accused the President of "class warfare".

One thing should be perfectly clear to Americans: class warfare started long ago with political favoritism of the wealthy and regressive tax policies. Ending this excessive favoritism in our nation is a goal that is important. Republicans are on the wrong side of this issue. Once again, as in their opposition to many progressive reforms in the past century, they are also on the wrong side of history. Pandering to Big Money may be good politics in the short run, but it sure isn't Christian, or fair, or responsible, or ultimately sustainable.

Uniting Americans to Achieve Greater Good Goals

E Pluribus Unum appears on the Great Seal of the United States. This motto is also shown on coins, the \$1 bill, and passport covers. It means "Out of Many, One." This was the *de facto* motto of the U.S. from 1776 until 1956. *E Pluribus Unum* is a symbol of both an ideal and our national challenge of seeking unity while respecting diversity. As such, the idea has played a crucial role in shaping our history, our literature and our national character. Uniting with others to oppose egregious injustices and extreme inequalities is appropriate, honorable and eminently ethical. It gives recognition to the overarching wisdom of the Golden Rule. The values embodied in the Golden Rule are like basic functional acts of hygiene, rather than being merely optional expediencies or something motivated by anticipated pleasure or self-satisfaction or feelings of social esteem.

True security resides in the twin Golden Rule concepts of more equal social justice for all and lesser financial hardships for the majority. True security is not to be found in an ever-more extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and real security is not to be found in the harsh repression of dissent. Improved national security is best achieved by avoiding extremely costly and aggressive military conflicts around the globe. I believe that drone bomber attacks on people in sovereign nations are especially unjust and unwise. Strategies like these provoke deep antagonisms and give counter-support to destabilizing extremists, and they incite episodes of harmfully dangerous blowback retaliation.

A new paradigm of social action is needed that is more inclusive, holistic, peaceable, fair, long-term oriented and sustainable. This new way of living should be designed to protect the underpinnings of our prosperity by including measures that help ensure the health of natural ecosystems and the environmental commons.

Many people, ever since the days long ago when Aesop was telling his pithy stories, have noted that "United we stand, divided we fall". In pathetic counterpoint to this wisdom, some of those who control our nation -- most notably, reactionary conservatives -- find that it is easiest to control people by sowing division and conflict between people, and by taking advantage of feelings of grievance, rather than by trying to foster harmony and make collaborative efforts at problem solving. We should reject the usurpation of power by those who try to scapegoat minorities and divide Americans in their zeal to control and dominate us. By uniting, we could alter our collective destinies and give control of our country back to the people.

An old maxim states that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Vigilance is an alert quality of attentive watching and seeing, and of true understanding of what is going on. It is clear that we would be best served by coming together in unity of purpose to take back our country from those who are abusing their power and undermining the foundations of well-being and liberty for the vast majority of Americans. I encourage readers to support a movement that champions farsighted ideas and propitious public policies.

Our National Motto Significantly Altered

In 1956, Congress passed an Act that adopted a new official national motto: *In God We Trust*. A trust in God may be a fine virtue for individuals, because faith can help provide hope and moral guidance. Faith may assuage people's fears, insecurities and natural trepidations about the fact that each of us, sooner or later, is going to die. But

faith sure seems to me to be a poor strategy to rely on as an honest or adequately effective means of solving our domestic and international problems.

The views of Texas Governor Rick Perry unfolded bizarrely during his brief run for President in 2012. His evangelical faith stood in stark contrast to the idea that we should courageously act to improve our societies. He claimed instead that prayer is the best approach for solving problems. But really, God is far too elusive to be relied upon to fairly adjudicate conflicts between all the competing interests in our society.

Fine, fine, fine with all the prayer stuff, evangelicals. There are positive qualities associated with the practice of praying, but let's not make the mistake of placing our trust in a providence designed by reactionary male social engineers who represent the interests of the few, and who apparently don't give a damn about equality of opportunity or true social fairness, or women's rights, or resource conservation, or environmental protections, or protecting open spaces and National Parks and saving wilderness areas. Let's reject efforts by apologists and operatives who claim they believe in creating a "kinder and gentler" society, when in reality they push obtuse policies that make our country more unequal, less fair and overly lacking in empathy and compassionate caring.

Placing our trust in God has an accompanying liability: people argue intensely about whose God is the right one. This leads to a wide range of problems including religious strife that intensifies the already serious conflicts between people of differing faiths. Beware of conservative religious fundamentalists! There are many master manipulators in our midst.

All the great prophets of every faith espoused transcendent virtues of peace, love, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness. There must be something critically important to them!

A Proclamation by Thomas Twain

My twin brother Tom has always been a real rascal. When I told him that the motto *E Pluribus Unum* had been abandoned in favor of *In God We Trust*, he veritably chortled. "Think about it," he said, shaking his head. "We tossed aside the most admirable principle in the history of national unity and diversity-respecting ideals, and replaced it with a divisive parochial religious doctrine that in practice might as well be, <Hail to the chosen few, all others go to Hell.> No wonder our nation is going to hell in a handbasket."

Tom snorted triumphantly in gleeful rapture at his clever witticism. We had been talking in a desultory way about how the good old USA had spent the decades after the trauma of the Second World War investing in a great system of public schools and universities, an extensive national highway system, worker protections, a social security safety net, civil rights initiatives, a modicum of gender equality, and protections of Clean Air, Clean Water, public lands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas and endangered species of life. I had mentioned that these forward-looking public policies were financed from 1940 to 1980 by a progressive tax structure in which rich people paid taxes on the highest levels of incomes at rates of at least 70% every year.

Then Tom did an interesting thing. He methodically placed a soapbox on some low risers in the living room, put on an old military hat, saluted an imaginary flag, and began a stentorian-voiced harangue: "I say unto you that, without a shred of doubt, we create the conditions in our societies by choosing to institute the specific policies we pursue. It is almost as if we live in a world of cause and effect!" Then he collapsed in a paroxysm of laughter. Perhaps you had to have been there, and I must admit that a good friend once deemed Tom to be trying to be "too clever by half."

We laughed together at Tom's antics, and wondered if the physicist Werner Heisenberg, who had articulated an abstruse physical uncertainty principle, had ever thought about formulating a Social Uncertainty Principle. Bertrand Russell certainly gave us pause for thought when he expressed this opinion: "The fundamental cause of trouble in the world today is that the stupid are cock-sure, while the intelligent are full of doubt."

America prospered during the 40-year period before 1980 when high-income people paid taxes at more steeply graduated rates. Then Ronald Reagan launched his folksy anti-egalitarian revolution in favor of the rich, and against progressive taxation and the rights of workers, and he set us on a trajectory of excessively wasteful military spending and huge debt increases that diminish the general welfare and erode our national security.

President Reagan shrewdly couched his powerful ideas in soaring rhetoric about a Shining City on a Hill. He asserted that the United States is "the last best hope of man on earth." But then he espoused insidiously unfair "voodoo economics" policies and acted to stoke inequality in America. He took a nap and let his minions try to extinguish the hope of the masses -- there I go again -- by using hyped-up fears of Communism to ram through regressive taxation schemes and anti-regulation initiatives. He worked to reduce collective bargaining rights of workers, and diverted the public's attention by contending that, to make everything work better, we should enact a new Constitutional Amendment that would decree individual and group prayer must be allowed in public schools. Surely that would help provide providential succor for the democratic masses, the suckers! Ha!

Tom was in one of his not infrequent spells of braggadocio, so he adopted a voice of mock indignation and chided me for being deeply concerned about social problems. "Get a life!", he suggested. Tom is a big thinker, not unlike Mark Twain's character Tom Sawyer, always hatching clever plans and trying to work new angles and pulling pranks and looking for adventure. Remember that Tom Sawyer took advantage of unsuspecting friends to help him with what he considered the opprobrious chore of spending the day whitewashing a tall fence.

Today, mere whitewashing will no longer do, here or anywhere. We must agree that the fence is dilapidated and needs to be fixed as well as painted, and we must come to a consensus on the type and color of paint to be used -- and we need to begin the project! Let's not subcontract the difficult job of improving our societies to rip-off artists, hypocritical deceivers, manipulative bait-and-switch priority changers, giant multinational corporations, no-bid contractors, naysayers, or right-wing conservatives intent on unfair and domineering control. And let's reject the snide and coldly calculating money-grubbing Mercurial Trickster Trump and his loyalist enablers!

The Denouement of Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine apparently loved his role as a rabble-rouser for revolution so much that, after having helped launch the American Revolution in 1776, he spent most of his time in England and France once the French Revolution began in 1789. He wrote heretical tracts there, including *The Age of Reason*, and *The Rights of Man*. Fearing his writings would be suppressed, he sent Part One of *The Age of Reason* to America, and asked for his ideas to be safeguarded. In the Introduction, he wrote: "You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every Man to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it." He added, "The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall."

In 1792, Thomas Paine was forced to flee from England to France because *The Rights of Man* had been banned as seditious libel against the monarchy in England, and he was convicted in absentia. The French people embraced him, but the nobility did not, and he was imprisoned in Paris from late 1793 until July 1794 for his liberal ideas. He was fortunate not to be sent to the guillotine, and was freed when Maximilien de Robespierre, the architect of the Reign of Terror, was himself sent to the guillotine.

One reason Thomas Paine became notorious is because *The Age of Reason* advocated the deist idea that one and only one God exists, and it criticized theistic dogmas that posited a Holy Trinity of three Gods in one -- a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost. He promoted freethinking and reason, and argued against institutionalized religion in general, and Christian doctrines in particular.

The French Revolution ended the feudal privileges of the nobility, and led to the establishment of freedoms of speech, public assembly and the press. Some of the Church's wealth was expropriated after the Revolution began to help rescue a bankrupt nation in the aftermath of the overthrow of King Louis XVI. Later, these positive outcomes of the French Revolution were followed by some destructive excesses. Note that the increased likelihood of social instability when inequities become too pronounced provides us with an excellent reason today to take bold and broad-minded steps, in advance, to prevent financial instability, worsening economic inequities, and increased dissatisfactions that contribute to impetuses for revolution.

The Revolution against the French nobility and most of the religious authorities of the Roman Catholic Church was a salvo against tyranny, but it suffered from the big risk that during revolutionary unrest, injustices are

increasingly likely to take place. A violent revolution is a thing we should strive to prevent, and NOT by means of repression but rather by means of reasonably fair reforms and a modicum of egalitarian measures. During a violent revolution, democratic reforms are generally suspended while a new despotism arises that allows new assaults and tyrannical abuses of authority. This often results in terrible atrocities like thousands of people being beheaded that happened during the Reign of Terror several years after the French Revolution began.

King Louis XVI was executed by having his head chopped off by a guillotine in January 1793. The question of what to do with "Let them eat cake" Queen Marie Antoinette was a tumultuous one. Thomas Paine advocated that she be exiled to America. But by October, her fate was settled, and she too was sent to the guillotine.

What's Up, Doc?

A few years ago, I read the phenomenal book, *Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future (And A Way to Get There From Here)*. This book, according to Thom Hartmann, is "a world-changing book that offers a heartening view of humanity's destiny. Built on the foundation of the latest discoveries in science, it points us in the direction of functional politics, sustainable economics, and individual responsibility in the context of an interdependent community."

We surely have a great need for a better functioning political system! It would also be an excellent idea to encourage economic activities that are more likely to be sustainable, and to foster collective behaviors that are consistent with these goals. We need people to demonstrate greater individual responsibility in the context of interdependent communities. I can't imagine any sensible person disagreeing with the idea that we all have some degree of obligation to leave a fairer legacy to people in the future than current trends portend. These things can be achieved by embracing a new holistic worldview, as provocatively proposed in *Spontaneous Evolution*, and as articulated in many of the ideas set forth in this manifesto.

Every good architect and engineer knows that a solid foundation is critically important to building a safe edifice. Skyscrapers, for instance, need to be anchored on bedrock, and it would be shortsightedly crazy to build them with inadequate foundations, shoddy structural materials, or overly rigid frameworks, especially in areas prone to high winds or earthquakes. Likewise, to build a sound economy and a healthy commonwealth in an age of epidemic, choleric, chaos and turmoil, a flexible framework of smart public policies is needed that takes into account the best knowledge and understandings.

Riane Eisler posits in *The Chalice and the Blade* that we have a realistic possibility to shift from a system that leads to chronic wars, widespread social injustice and ecological imbalance to a system of greater social justice, more egalitarian relationships, peaceable coexistence and more farsighted ecological balance. What is needed to accomplish this transformation is new intellectual and cultural perspectives, and radically reformed social and political institutions -- and better management. And less institutional corruption and a diminished ability of narrowly self-interested actors to dominate politics and the economic system.

To paraphrase Swami Beyondananda in *Spontaneous Evolution*, we need more than just a theory of evolution, we need to make a better practice of it! Prosperity and the quality of life, and even our species' survival, hang in the balance.

An Aside on Criminal Justice

Some people have faith in the fairness of our American criminal justice system. I myself am an agnostic. I do feel strongly, however, that we should strive to do two things simultaneously:

(1) Foster a modicum more fairness in our society to reduce the risks associated with hard-nosed attitudes and heavy-handed tactics and discriminatory policies and the shackling of workers to their employer masters in an unfairly extreme triumph of capital over labor. Greater fairness would help ensure that our societies as a whole would be healthier, happier and more secure, and this would create a much truer form of democracy!

(2) Sow a greater modicum of international justice to improve the prospects of achieving peace. An expansive perspective of this dualistic idea can be cultivated by pondering the perspectives expressed in the Earth Manifesto essays, *Sow Justice, Harvest Peace*, and *Reflections on War - and Peace*.

Try This Thought Experiment

Suppose you feel that you may be coming down with some serious affliction, so you choose to go to two doctors to get their diagnoses, and it turns out that the doctors give you drastically different diagnoses and prescriptions. You really want to trust your doctors, but when you are presented with two conflicting courses of action, you must assess which one is best. Further, imagine being in a country where the doctors do not adhere to the Hippocratic Oath -- "First, do no harm" -- and in fact they have many ulterior motives like profiting by pushing unnecessary surgical procedures and high cost prescription drugs, so you understandably are very leery. What are you to do?

First, you need to objectively evaluate the credentials and character of the two physicians, along with any evidence for what their motives may be, especially if they may be in conflict with what is in your best interests.

This is basically the situation all voters found themselves in, during the 2016 elections. All the Republican candidates for president accused the black man in the White House with having screwed up the world, and they tried to stoke fears about immigrants and Muslims and refugees and the government taking away people's guns. These ambitious politicians repetitively vowed that they would fix everything by bringing back policies similar to those pushed on the USA by George W. Bush, only more extreme when judged in terms of more tax breaks for rich people, bigger budget deficits, and efforts to reduce the collective bargaining power of working people and give more influence to the wealthy and big corporate entities. These perverse priorities were made worse by intrigue targeted to give less voice to minorities and students and women -- and to adopt more aggressive military stances on the international stage.

The Democratic candidates for president in 2016 competed by advocating more substantive proposals on how to improve our nation's prospects. They offered much better plans for fair representation for all constituencies, including more broadly equitable taxation plans, more honest approaches for addressing the far-reaching impacts of growing social inequalities, less burdensome student debt, more responsible protections of the environmental commons, more level-headed approaches in global affairs, and leaders that respect people's concerns and honors their best interests.

These choices are starkly different, and the messaging machines worked at full bombast volume, so it was quite confusing for some to choose which course to take. It was my hope, before the 2016 elections, that this Common Sense Revival would have cut through the noise with a good dose of plain truths that would help sway the American people to choose wisely. Alas, it was not yet to be.

The prescriptions for healing the patient are astonishingly different on the right than on the left. Hard right partisans not only fervently oppose progressive changes in taxation and better control of military spending, but they stand opposed to designing a better system for providing affordable universal healthcare and maintaining a strong social safety net, and guaranteeing reproductive rights to women and civil rights to gay people. They refuse to come to the table in considerations of comprehensive immigration reform, and they work to diminish women's rights and options regarding abortions. In standing against workers' rights to collectively bargain, they prevent working people from exerting a fairer modicum of power to offset some of the overweening, nearly unaccountable power of big corporations. Their stubborn opposition to environmental protections and smart action to mitigate the risks and damages caused by a greenhouse gas destabilized global climate are particularly dumbfounding. And when they prevent campaign finance reform, and work to gerrymander congressional districts and curtail voting rights of those who would be most likely to vote for more progressive policies, they make our political system less representative of the common good.

They also tend to support harsh punishment and lengthy incarcerations, and fail to support reforms that would reduce the multitude of injustices inherent in our criminal justice system. Right now, there are more people incarcerated in America than in any other country in the world. The U.S. has less than five percent of the world's population, but something like 25 percent of the persons in prisons. And racial injustices are severe, with the majority of those locked up in jails and prisons being people of color. There are lots of people who have "earned" prison, but there are way too many nonviolent offenders serving unfairly long sentences. Reform!

A Clarion Call for Good Solutions

It is as easy as pie to be cynical in the face of deep economic injustices and ridiculously lopsided unfairness of political representation that gives the controlling few domineering power. And you just have to shake your head when realizing how monolithic the monopolistic domination of our economic and political systems is, due to the entrenched political duopoly in America today.

But good and simple solutions really do exist. Here's one. As soon as practicable, an Office of Public Integrity should be created by Executive Order. In a new tradition, a woman should head this post. She should have the title of National Ombudswoman, and the position should be a Cabinet-level job that reports directly to the President. The mission of the Office of Public Integrity should be to establish a system of Citizen Civil Grand Juries in every county in the United States, and of state Civil Grand Juries in every state, and of a federal Civil Grand Jury to be headquartered in America's heartland, America's Hometown, Hannibal, Missouri.

These Civil Grand Juries will be modeled after the exceptional system in California that recruits citizens to serve for unpaid one-year terms to help improve government by soliciting suggestions from citizens and then prioritizing them and examining the issues carefully, and preparing reports to the public on their findings and recommendations. This "watchdog role" of Civil Grand Juries gives citizens a voice in the function of their government, and puts a bright spotlight on issues of public concern. Civil Grand Juries thus perform an important role in citizen oversight of county government. They basically investigate, monitor and report on the performance of local governments, and often come up with excellent ideas on how to improve them.

Judges should be assigned in every county and state to select volunteers to fill these honorable positions. In every county in California, about 100 people generally volunteer each year for Civil Grand Juries, and about one-third of that number are selected by the Presiding Judge. Then about 20 of these people are chosen to serve on that year's Civil Grand Jury. These folks agree to commit one year of their time to work together with other civic-minded citizens to better the governance of their communities. Almost everyone who has served on a Civil Grand Jury attests to the fact that it is a rewarding and intimately fascinating involvement and experience, personally as well as for providing insights into the workings and value of real direct democracy.

The National Ombudswoman should be chosen in an online vote by every American who chooses to participate, from a field of three highly respected candidates selected by a consensus of the 50 Governors in the USA. The resumes of these candidates should be posted one month before the vote on an Office of Public Integrity National Intelligence Assessment Node website (OPINIAN), and these resumes should also be widely circulated in the national media, along with a clear statement of the purpose and mission of the Office.

Civil Grand Jurors at the State and Federal level should be paid for full-time work, and have three-year terms, staggered for good continuity, and they should be carefully chosen to ensure that they are committed to fairness. No politicians, extreme partisans or religious fundamentalists would qualify. And Federal Civil Grand Jurors should be given subpoena power to assist in their investigations. The Jurors should serve on one or more of 12 permanent subcommittees, including Education, Health and Social Services, Gender Issues, Campaign Financing, Environmental Issues, Foreign Affairs, War and Peace, Law, Finance and Audit, Pensions and a Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

An Aside on Happy Harbinger Goals

Forgive me, readers, for I have sinned. Some less than happy harbingers have insidiously infiltrated this intended paean to positivity. I intend to refocus the tone and content of this story to make it more positive once I fully grasp more enlightened perspectives. I am working on it, and will continue to update these ideas as I more fully grok paradigm-changing worldviews like those contained in books such as *Spontaneous Evolution*. This book explores how we human beings, with our big brains, perceive the world -- and how different it may turn out that reality actually is. We should make no mistake about it: early-life programming and general social conditioning have profound effects on our brains, and so do the impacts of pervasive promotion and advertising. A barrage of images impinges on our awareness: devious propaganda is propounded astoundingly.

I am going through many Earth Manifesto essays and revising the tone, tenor and substance of the perspectives expressed to incorporate more hope-providing and heart-conscious understandings of reality that are consistent

with those contained in *Spontaneous Evolution*. Meanwhile, this manifesto contains many answers for questions we've been collectively asking, and it proposes many win/win solutions to the major problems we face.

Optimism is a hopeful and positive outlook on the world and the future and ourselves. Optimism turns out to be good for one's physical health and mental resilience in helping us get through tough times. An attitude of realistic optimism can help us see big picture perspectives, and make things turn out better. Optimism and the practice of gratitude can even be good for our immune systems and healing. So let's look on the bright side of everything, and work together to make our world a better one!

Think about this. A 2014 Pew Research study of young people in the millennial generation found them "burdened by debt, distrustful of people, and in no rush to marry." But, despite all that, they were surprisingly "optimistic about the future". Think about this optimism in the context of the forms of populism that are being manifested in America today. This populism is characterized by deep suspicion of corporate, political and media elites, and it is revealed in the eagerness of young people who are new to politics to get mobilized, along with an expanding willingness of people to embrace policies that have long been on extreme fringes. On the right, this has meant support for discriminating against immigrants, Muslims and outsiders of all kinds, and anti-choice fervor against women who become pregnant. On the left, it has meant demands to better regulate big banks, and crack down on tax-dodging multinational corporations, and shift to a much more progressive tax system and get more serious about rectifying injustices and honestly addressing the need to prevent worst case scenarios resulting from climate destabilization. Bernie Sanders has promoted leftist ideas that have resonated among many Democrats, particularly young people. This is not surprising, for one study showed that between 1975 and 2012 nearly half of all the pre-tax income growth in the U.S. went to the richest 1% of households.

Surveys by the Pew Research Center show that half of millennials describe themselves as political independents and almost one-third say they are not affiliated with any religion. These are near the highest levels of political and religious disaffiliation recorded for any generation in the quarter-century that the Pew Research Center has been polling on these topics. "At the same time, however, Millennials stand out for voting heavily Democratic and for liberal views on many political and social issues, ranging from a belief in an activist government to support for same-sex marriage and marijuana legalization."

Americans millennials -- those born between 1981 and 1996 -- are approaching middle age in worse financial shape than every living generation ahead of them, lagging behind baby boomers and Generation X despite much economic growth and generally low rates of unemployment. Hobbled by the financial crisis and recession of 2008, which struck as they began their working life, they have failed to match every other generation of young adults born since the Great Depression. They have less wealth, less property and fewer children, according to data that compares generations at similar ages. The coronavirus pandemic is making this gap worse.

"Millennials have also been keeping their distance from another core institution of society -- marriage. Just 26% of this generation is married. When they were the age that Millennials are now, 36% of Generation X, 48% of Baby Boomers and 65% of the members of the Silent Generation were married. Most unmarried Millennials (69%) say they would like to marry, but many, especially those with lower levels of income and education, lack what they deem to be a necessary prerequisite -- a solid economic foundation.

Combine this state of affairs with the fact that students are being burdened with record high levels of debt for their educations -- and then face relatively high rates of unemployment and under-employment -- and it is easy to see why Millennials are justifiably cynical about the politicians who have contributed to making our society increasingly unfair. This is why young people gave such strong support to Bernie Sanders, who calls for revolutionary change to make our society much fairer. And this is why filmmaker Michael Moore made such a strong case for smarter public polices in his entertaining and thought-provoking film *Where to Invade Next*.

A Closer Look at Iowa

Iowa Republicans have a long history of backing Christian conservatives like Mike Huckabee in 2008 and Rick Santorum in 2012 and Ted Cruz in 2016. But a survey by the Pew Research Center indicates that pious God-talk that is common with Republican candidates was actually more than usually effective in 2016, until the Trumpster

managed to win using ungodly vitriol. More than 50% of Republican voters said that there is "too little" discussion of religion and prayer from political leaders during the 2016 campaign season (only 39% said the same in 2012).

The number is even larger among white evangelical Protestants -- Ted Cruz's core constituency -- 68% of whom wish candidates would talk more about their faith, compared to 55% who said the same in 2012.

The reason this is so bizarre is that a sharper focus on substantive ideas about the positions a candidate intends to support would be much more important in informing voters about the qualifications and desirability of choosing a candidate to represent them than having a politician pander to voters by sermonizing about how faithful he or she may be to a Christian (or whatever) God they believe in, or how fervently they pretend to believe.

Jeb Bush made an eminently valid point at a town hall meeting in New Hampshire after the 2016 Iowa caucuses, when he questioned whether his opponents Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio had ever sacrificed any of their personal ambition for the public good. Surely Ted Cruz was primarily focused on getting attention and press coverage when he grandstanded on the Senate floor in a 21-hour long filibuster-like harangue in support of shutting down the federal government in September 2013 over budget issues and funding of the Affordable Care Act. This stunt led to a costly two-week long shutdown of the government. Even after that expensive disaster, Cruz contemplated a repeat of that government shutdown in September 2015 to demonstrate his extreme ideological opposition to having the federal government provide funding to Planned Parenthood clinics, which importantly help provide life-saving healthcare to needy and vulnerable women.

This nakedly irresponsible display of ambition, manipulative political calculation and scurrilous tactics may have stimulated rigid support for his scheming pursuit of power, but it is contrary to the greater good of society. Ted Cruz also panders to anti-gay zealots so vociferously that one liberal Christian group fairly criticized the stances he has taken as "bigotry wrapped up in the Bible".

"To God be the glory," Cruz told jubilant supporters after he managed to win the 2016 Iowa caucuses, partially by having used a dirty trick on voters in which his campaign propagated a lie about Ben Carson having dropped out of the race. Cruz briefly became the leading Republican candidate before trickster Trump eventually quashed all primary contenders, but God, I would think, would not have looked favorably on his use of dishonest tricks to gain power. We should not allow shrewd hucksters and political opportunists to use the name of God to advance their political careers and to hijack the electorate into supporting a socially regressive national agenda.

The outcome of Iowa caucuses has an impact on the choosing of our leaders, and it seems downright dumb in these modern times to accept this influence, given that more than two-thirds of the voters in Iowa are evangelicals who do not fairly represent the broader American public. We should, of course, let people everywhere in our great nation believe in any God they want to, but we should not give some of the most gullibly delusional and fear-prone conservative folks in America the opportunity to exert an outsized role in influencing the determination of who should lead us in these perilous modern times.

Imagine if the states of Virginia, Colorado and Washington were the first three states to have all the candidates spend time visiting every single county, appealing to these more moderate voters, instead of letting Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina have unwarranted influence. After the near tie vote between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders in Iowa in 2016, Senator Sanders declared that, "given the enormous crises facing our country, it is just too late for establishment politics and establishment economics." His candidacy had already forced Hillary moderately to the left on several issues like international trade agreements and income inequality, so his astonishing success was a positive development to the extent that he shifted the Democratic platform toward a less establishment and more fairness-oriented populist national agenda.

Marco Rubio had finished third in Iowa by wooing evangelical conservatives, running an ad in which he spoke of "the free gift of Salvation offered to us by Jesus Christ." I believe in a smart separation of church and state, and feel strongly that the American people should work together to improve the prospects for humanity while we are alive in the here and now. We should not settle for casting our hopes into the heavens for salvation in some imagined future life after we are dead, just as we shouldn't allow rich people and big corporations to stack the deck against the vast majority of people. The plain truth is that the most likely persons to experience either heavenly well-being or hellish conditions will be our descendants who will live on a devastated Earth, so we should give greater

consideration to making decisions most likely to favorably impact them.

Public opinion polls taken in the wake of a last minute federal debt limit increase in August 2011 gave our representatives the lowest approval rating ever recorded in a CNN poll. Even worse evaluations were recorded after the October 2013 government shutdown in which Senator Ted Cruz tried to filibuster for 21 hours and many functions of the federal government were shut down for 15 days. The American people see that our leaders are often pathetically ineffective in their performance at the helm of our ship of state. Our political system is paralyzed, and our representatives seem to be incapable of acting in ways that are responsible to either the majority of people alive today or those to come in future generations. Many Americans are getting tired of the unwillingness of our leaders to seek common ground. We are collectively outraged that it seems impossible to implement win/win solutions, or ones that are more socially just than the status quo.

When a Gallup Poll was released in August 2012 indicating that the approval rating of Congress had fallen to an all-time low of 10% of Americans polled, one member of the House of Representatives at the time said, "We're below sharks and contract killers." This lousy approval rating of the job Congress was doing is as close to unanimity as Americans get. It shows that people want their political representatives to begin collaborating together in better faith to sensibly address national problems.

Actions Speak Louder than Words

I have a friend who proclaims she is a social liberal and a fiscal conservative. She generally supports Republican politicians, even though Republican presidents have consistently increased overall government spending more than Democratic presidents, and have also presided over bigger amounts of deficit spending and larger percent increases in the national debt. How have shrewd Republicans managed to erroneously paint themselves as fiscal conservatives when, in fact, they are the most irresponsible spendthrifts and regressive tax cutters?

It is instructive to see how Republicans end up increasing spending more than Democrats. They tend to rant and rave about the urgent necessity of cutting spending on domestic programs that Democrats support, but their meager successes in such efforts are more than offset by their eagerness to throw much more money into the military. The Editorial Board at the New York Times succinctly encapsulated the state of affairs in the run up to the 2016 elections with these surprising but true-sounding words:

"For the past painful year, the Republican presidential contenders have been bombarding Americans with empty propaganda slogans and competing, bizarrely, to present themselves as the least experienced person for the most important elected job in the world. Democratic primary voters, on the other hand, after a substantive debate over real issues, have the chance to nominate one of the most broadly and deeply qualified presidential candidates in modern history."

"Hillary Clinton would be the first woman nominated by a major party. She served as a senator from a major state (New York) and as secretary of state -- not to mention her experience on the national stage as first lady with her brilliant and flawed husband, President Bill Clinton. The Times editorial board has endorsed her three times for federal office -- twice for Senate and once in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary -- and is doing so again with confidence and enthusiasm."

When Hillary finally gained enough delegates to be declared the presumptive presidential nominee in June 2016, she became the first woman to accomplish this feat in U.S. history. She deserved congratulations on having gained the official nomination at the Democratic Convention in Philadelphia in July. Millennials gave strong and enthusiastic support to Bernie Sanders, and judging from the growing need we have for revolutionary positive change rather than continuing to prop up the status quo or make retrogressive changes, they have good cause. Their interests need to be well reflected in the national agenda, and American citizens would have been best served by choosing more Democrats in Congress to get done the important business that Republican politicians in the U.S. Senate have been obstructing for years.

Another Viewpoint: A Fanciful Proposed Deal on the National Debt Limit

A good friend of mine who fancies himself El Gaviero (the Lookout) was captaining his boat near Cave Rock on beautiful Lake Tahoe's eastern shore in August 2011. We looked out to the northwest across the dark blue waters

of the lake toward lofty Squaw Peak. Subliminal perceptions of cavemen and cave women, and the entire panoply of their respective behaviors, pulsed through the charged atmosphere as thunderclouds rumbled behind us. Ghosts of native Washoe Indians buried in sacred crevices of Cave Rock could almost be heard grumbling about highway tunnels blasted through the rocky promontory, but we moderns apparently decided long ago that we can ignore the sensibilities of our natural-world-respecting Native American predecessors with impunity.

Somehow the conversation on the boat had drifted to big picture perspectives and politics and deficit spending. El Gaviero, looking out smartly, shook his head pensively and proclaimed that there was only one solution to the National Debt Limit Crisis, which at that moment seemed to be so starkly affecting our communities, thanks to the self-interested, stubbornly uncompromising and grandstanding "conservatives" in Congress.

"There's only one thing to do", proclaimed El Gaviero. "We default on our national debt and give Washington D.C. and Newark to the Chinese. Throw in a cool place like Barstow for a kicker."

Ha! LOL. Let's deal fair and square with China, I thought, and throw in something they would really want, like Las Vegas. We should remember to bargain in good faith, after all. God only knows! I even gave momentary consideration to the idea that the Grand Canyon should be thrown in to make it a better bargain, for this would have been an appropriate salute to the perfect symbolic channeling of the Goddess of Poetic Justice, seeing that such a move would echo across the absurdly deep chasm of debt we have incurred by indulging in the intergenerationally unfair expediency of unprecedented levels of deficit financing of wars and low marginal tax rates on the highest income earners. But I rejected this idea in deference to my enthusiasm for protecting beautiful places, public lands, wilderness areas, National Parks and open spaces.

Then I thought, in a comedic puff of dust, that there's got to be a silver lining to all the dark clouds that are gathering on our human and biotic horizons. And there is!

Introspections into Tea Party Leaves

People have been striving to divine and tell fortunes from tea leaves for thousands of years. This practice is accomplished by someone with alleged clairvoyance that seeks to see symbols or omens in the patterns found in the dregs at the bottom of a cup of tea. This practice even has a name: Tasseomancy. Using a modern new method of enlightened divination, let us explore the big picture of tea parties.

Great economic thinkers of the past 250 years have strived to understand and explain the nature of economic activities in aggregate. In doing so, they have formulated some fascinating theories. Adam Smith claimed that an "invisible hand" propitiously guides market economies. Robert Malthus predicted that agriculture would inevitably be unable to provide enough food for rapidly growing numbers of human beings. Karl Marx expressed the conviction that "surplus value", i.e. profit, was created primarily by the productive efforts of workers, so that social justice requires workers to be treated more fairly. Karl Marx also advocated greater social justice rather than an overarching emphasis on industrial efficiency.

Joseph Schumpeter analyzed the dynamics of business cycles and described entrepreneurs and innovation as being part of a "perennial gale of creative destruction." John Maynard Keynes stated that the economy should be stimulated by the government during economic recessions by means of deficit spending, but he sensibly pointed out that this should be a short-term expediency that would necessarily require being offset by reducing spending and balancing the budget when economic growth recovers and the threat of a spiral of inflation begins to be felt, so that more fiscally sound policy is called for.

These great thinkers are being discounted by the demagogue-stoked fervor of people in the Tea Party and now "conservatives" in the Trump base. Why, one might naturally wonder, are these folks committed to ideologies consistent with a right-wing agenda that is socially intolerant, economically fundamentalist, and environmentally unwise? In 2012, presidential candidate Michele Bachmann assured the American public that, if she became President, "I guarantee you the Environmental Protection Agency will have doors locked and lights turned off". That was a radical anti-environmental proposal! And Donald Trump and Scott Pruitt and his EPA successor and their Republican cronies pursued similar goals from 2017 through 2021, as do Republicans in Congress today.

The Tea Party ironically constituted the most passionate political movement in the U.S. during the Obama years, until Trump exploited that movement's foundational anger at establishment politicians for his own narcissistic McCarthyesque advantage. Conservative politicians are an odd coalition of healthcare reform opponents, anti-choice activists, adherents to trickle down voodoo economic ideologies, Libertarians, climate change deniers, religious evangelicals, Creationists, "birthers", authoritarian followers, gun lovers, those who fear government, and those who oppose sensible protections of the environment. Wealthy people and their well-financed front groups have taken big advantage of such believers to get them to agitate for policies that are retrogressive, divisive and beneficial to millionaires and billionaires at the expense of the majority of Americans. At a time when we should be moving in the direction of solving big problems that confront us, "conservative" politicians have become a major roadblock to progress. Throw the bums out of office!

Politicians in the Tea Party, House Freedom Caucus and loyalist Trump base in Congress are preoccupied with torpedoing Democratic initiatives and reforms, but this helps engineer a more unfair society, and creates increased risks of an austerity recession in the process. Their shaky "platform" is incoherent because it contradictorily supports both higher spending on the military and lower taxes. It denies the risks of climate disruptions that are being recklessly caused by unlimited emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and it supports politicians who propose regressive changes in tax policy and a retrogressive social agenda, and promotes the idea that men are more equal than women by opposing fairness in pay for equal work.

Faithful adherents to this incoherent platform inadvertently help facilitate corporate prerogatives that allow large companies to externalize costs of pollution and worker healthcare onto society. They mindlessly go along with the rights of corporations to dominate "free speech", and they support anti-immigrant policies and are tacitly in favor of racial and gender discrimination. They support religious fundamentalism -- as long as it is the right religion; others are regarded as heretics or evil people.

A classic political "double con" is going on here. Conservative politicians pander to Tea Party folks and social conservatives and religious fundamentalists, and then use the support they gain to elect corporate enablers and economic fundamentalists to positions of leadership. In turn, these politicians use the power they obtain to raise lots of money, and they use these Big Bucks to push policies that advance the interests of a narrow minority of wealthy people at the direct expense of the majority of people.

Conservative voters, wise up! You are being duped, manipulated, taken advantage of, and double-crossed by shrewd operators. Subversive agitators have lit a fire under angry conservatives with their anti-government, anti-tax, anti-immigrant, anti-healthcare reform, anti-progressive and anti-science dogmas. These subversives are a radically different breed from the peace advocates and idealistic Berkeley radicals of the 1960s. Instead of advocating peace and social justice, they give strength to insiders who do the bidding of billionaires like Charles Koch, and shells for corporate entities like the notorious ALEC and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and right-wing think tanks like the Federalist Society. These insiders aggressively propagate deceptive propaganda.

Many Republicans pretend to be populists, but the policies they push are actually primarily in accord with the interests of fat cats. Republican ideologies are aligned with constituencies opposed to expansive ideas of fairness. They act as if they care about good management and the greater good, but they pander narrowly to rich people and the interests of CEOs and shareholders. They should instead give more consideration to the interests of working people and the majority of Americans. But because they are figuratively in bed with wealthy people, they generally oppose fiscally sound ideas, Golden Rule principles, ecological sanity and even sensible precautionary principles.

Republicans often toe the line of "purity pledges" and refuse to support increased government revenues for any purpose, and they punish any politician who will not endorse such pledges. They also threaten anyone who makes such a pledge and then subsequently makes compromises that accept any tax increases or the closing of tax loopholes. This purity curiously contains a distinct portion of defilement and corruption, and it appears to be pure pig-headedness, ruthless partisanship, dishonesty, and an anything-but-pure grab for power.

This purity, from one perspective, is pragmatic, since uncompromising positions were the best hope that committed conservatives had to undermine the presidency of Barack Obama. After all, by striving to paralyze the country and to prevent good solutions, they made the incumbent president less popular due to persistent high levels of

unemployment, underemployment and wage stagnation. But this purity is much more like hostage-taking. It is ossified manipulative tantrum-throwing immaturity, rather than a noble Golden Rule willingness to deal fairly with all competing interests in our society. This purity is a form of reactionary political fundamentalism that is contrary to the greater good. Fundamentalism, whether religious, economic or political, is about power and manipulative control and strict adherence to doctrine -- NOT about honest ideas or fairness.

"Fundamentalism comes from very primitive parts of us that have always been the default setting of our species: amity toward our in-group, enmity toward out-groups, hierarchical deference to alpha-male figures, and a powerful identification with our territory. This is the brutal default setting that all civilizations have tried to raise us above. But civilization is always a fragile thing, and it must be achieved over and over and over again."

--- Reverend Davidson Loehr (paraphrased)

Republicans hem and haw and pretend that their ideologies are honorable and moral. They claim their ideas are full of integrity, rectitude, righteousness, and providential wisdom. Give us a break -- the emperor has no clothes! Republicans should stop obstructing efforts to manage our society more fairly. They should accept greater social responsibility and begin to help enact smart, fair and long-term oriented solutions to our national problems. They should stop acting as they have for the past ten years to obstruct every initiative designed to right the ship of state.

Extreme partisanship is sharpening distinctions between the two dominant political parties. The Trump faction seems to represent grave potential vulnerabilities, and the self-proclaimed "grim reaper" Mitch McConnell and his minions seek unity in perpetuating policies that benefit wealthy privileged people at the expense of the majority of people. This is a losing proposition for our country, and for humanity as a whole.

Our colonial ancestors bridled at taxation without fair representation. That is what the original Boston Tea Party was about. The reason they felt so strongly about being fairly represented was that they hated the despotism of the colonial British mercantile system. Social conservatives today have been duped into a fervor in which they think the federal government and taxes are the main problems in our society. In this, they have been deluded into believing the spin and propaganda promoted by wealthy conservatives.

Conservative "patriots" are incoherent in their ideologies because they generally defend hard-nosed military Keynesianism, in which poorly controlled and profligately wasteful military spending and debt-financed wars are staunchly supported, year after year after year.

I have a sensible message for such conservatives: Let's come together to hammer out consensus policies and champion priorities that are more visionary, broadminded and longer-term oriented. Let's focus our attention and energies on issues that are vitally important to the greater good, and to people in future generations. Let's try to transcend doctrinal convictions and dogmatic conditioning. Let's relinquish impulses to control and dominate and repress others. Let's breathe deep and exhale slowly, and resist the impulse to be obedient to the voices of fundamentalists, conservative ideologues and authority-abusing leaders.

Honest efforts must be made to solve the problems we face. We should make these efforts in the best ways possible. We should remember to recognize how wide the array is of competing interests in our society. Let us listen to others, and try to see things from other people's point of view, and be open-minded and empathetic.

Conservatives: Please help find a way for all factions to work together to begin honestly addressing mega-problems like deficiencies in public education, corporate abuses of power, high-risk and predatory Wall Street activities, the exorbitant costs of healthcare, social inequities, wasteful spending on the military, climate-disrupting carbon emissions, the rapid growth in human numbers in the poorest countries on Earth, and the exploitation of young people and future generations by powerful vested interests.

Let's demand that our government become a more trustworthy proponent of the people, rather than a patsy for the powerful or an expediency-addicted and wastefully profligate spender. The words of Swami Beyondananda echo once again across the interstices of space: We don't need more theories of evolution, we need to make a better practice of it! Prosperity, a better quality of life, and even our species' survival hang in the balance.

Tiffany Twain Investigates the Noble Assertions of Tiffany & Co.

Tiffany & Co. was founded in 1837, a little over a year after Samuel Clemens was born. In 2011, in keeping with modern times, this high-end retailer of diamonds and precious metal objects claimed to be committed to social and environmental responsibility. The company's CEO and Chairman of the Board, Michael Kowalski, wrote a laudable article that took a stand against gold mining in the Bodie Hills, east of Highway 395 on the dramatic east side of the Sierra Nevada range in California.

This issue was related to a modern day land grab by conservatives attempting to open up wilderness areas to private exploitation. Politicians in the House of Representatives were considering a bill sponsored by Kevin McCarthy that would have eliminated protections of wilderness areas and allowed development on more than 43 million acres of America's most fragile wild lands. Observers called this effort a "Great Outdoors Giveaway" because it would have mined beautiful public lands and undermined decades of conservation protections.

This land-grab scheme was similar to financial scams in which entrenched interests monopolize the nation's wealth. Both ploys are unacceptable as official public policy. Kevin McCarthy was Majority Whip of the House at the time, and he demonstrated a passion for whipping up public lands in a slurry of socially disastrous profit maximizing. McCarthy was one of the so-called Republican "Young Guns", along with arch-conservatives Eric Cantor and Paul Ryan. It's sad to have had such a cast of "young guns" trying to undermine the greater good with such perseverance and dedication to hard-right principles. A new calculus came to dominate political conservatism after the startling defeat of Eric Cantor by an even more radically "conservative" Tea Party unknown in 2014, lending a compelling twist to this state of affairs.

Even more extreme conservatives forced the resignation of John Boehner from his position as Speaker of the House in September 2015. Then Rep. Kevin McCarthy foolishly made a revealing gaffe about the Republican efforts to politicize the Benghazi tragedy, and was forced to withdraw from his advantaged position to replace Boehner. This development revealed the uncompromising partisanship of the House Freedom Caucus, and it exposed how the on-going takeover of the Republican Party was creating chaos in government.

But anyway, the fact that McCarthy attempted to allow a 43-million-acre land grab for private exploitation is stunning, and it casts a new light of shame on his opposition to Renewable Energy initiatives and his votes against a proposed Cap and Trade Program that would have assigned a fair cost to emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. To help understand Kevin McCarthy's psyche, consider the strange fact that he played a clip from the movie *The Town* at a closed-door meeting just prior to the August 2011 debt ceiling vote. He was reportedly seeking to foster a sense of unity among House Republicans. In the clip, a bank robber says to his accomplice, "I need your help. I can't tell you what it is. You can never ask me about it later. And *we're going to hurt some people.*" Cheers may have erupted from the Republican audience.

Hurt the American people to advance really narrow interests? This seems to be the overarching mindset of Republican politicians. There is Happy spin in this: once we see things in the clearest possible light, the chances increase that we will be able to make much better decisions about how to proceed in the most propitious manner possible. Broad-minded collaboration, not ruthless competition, may be the key to survival. Insanity has been defined as doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results. Let's go SANE!

Swami Beyondananda wisely contended, "Stick to your story and you're stuck with it."

People have been arguing heatedly about the theory of evolution ever since Alfred Russell Wallace, a commoner, and Charles Darwin, an aristocrat, courageously proclaimed that all species of life have descended from predecessors over eons of time through a process of adaptive evolutionary transformation. The stakes are too high today to be distracted by arguing about WHETHER life has evolved. It's high time now that we begin agreeing passionately on a better practice of evolution, an intuitive, practical, common sense, intelligently directed, positively adaptive and fair-minded evolution that will alter the unsustainable state of the status quo.

Alfred Russell Wallace believed that cooperation is the dominant feature of evolution, not ruthless competition. Today we are finding out that laissez-faire economic ideologies are having exceedingly undesirable consequences for most Americans. Let's emulate the 50 trillion cells in our bodies and work together to maximize prospects for the well-being of the whole.

The Time Has Come Today

Here is great news! We can take back our country by twelve primary means, enumerated below. Believe me, I know that a "Curse of Knowledge" can afflict the salubrious stickiness of ideas, so feel free to merely give a cursory review to this summary list for now. Twelve Proposals:

(1) Bring the national debt under control without imposing severe austerity measures on the masses. To accomplish this goal, reverse the markedly regressive changes made in the tax code since 2001, in ways recommended in specific detail in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

(2) Improve our vulnerable and costly healthcare system so that hospitals, patients, doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers are better protected, and strengthen social safety net programs like the Social Security system to make them more affordable and indefinitely sustainable. Recommendations on how to do this are contained 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*.

(3) Implement the best ideas in the *Progressive Agenda for a More Sane Humanity*.

(4) Reform our political system to reduce the overwhelming influence of corporate lobbyists in Washington D.C. In particular, enact farsighted restrictions on the financing of politicians' campaigns by corporations and wealthy people. Move to Amend! Also, require disclosure of donor contributions to political campaigns, and put stronger Congressional ethics rules into effect.

(5) Adopt a Bill of Rights for Future Generations. This move would help ensure that we succeed in protecting the best interests of humanity in the long run, and it would also serve to prevent us from continuing to sacrifice the best interests of our descendants in future generations to primarily enrich the few today.

(6) Find sensible ways of establishing fairer protections of working people and the environmental commons.

(7) Implement a 2% Future Viability Assessment on all products and services to cover some of the costs being externalized onto society, so that there will be a "full cost accounting" inclusion of the real costs of making goods and providing services. The details of this proposed Assessment are spelled out in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

(8) Reverse the concentration of Big Media by requiring a break-up of enormous conglomerates that control television networks, newspapers, radio stations and online platforms. Also, take steps to alter the trend toward "too big to fail" corporatism in the banking industry by limiting the multiples of leverage allowed and raising capital requirements for the world's largest financial institutions.

(9) Reduce military spending, and create a cabinet-level Department of Peace to commit our nation to "soft power" initiatives rather than hard power aggression. At the same time, extricate our troops from so many overseas deployments and military occupations of other countries.

(10) Devote at least 2% of our federal budget to foreign aid, and target it to helping other peoples by reducing poverty, mitigating desperation and reactionary extremism, helping pay for family planning, developing clean energy, and protecting forests, wetlands, rivers, oceans, fresh water sources and ecosystems worldwide.

(11) Impeach Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and/or Brett Kavanaugh for their ideological rigidity and deep conflicts of interest, and replace them with a Justice who is committed to the greater good of the people, instead of narrow prerogatives for corporations and wealthy people and social conservatives.

(12) Ensure that we make a national commitment to a fairer society and a greener future by striving to achieve a good portion of the goals specified in *Common Sense Revival* (and Part Four online of the *Earth Manifesto*).

Reasons that Progressive Tax Reform is Required

Consider three indisputable facts: (1) The national debt has increased by more than \$30 trillion since 1980; (2) The net worth of the top 1% of Americans has increased from less than \$3 trillion in 1981 to more than \$40 trillion

today; and (3) rich people are paying nearly the lowest tax rates in generations on their incomes and capital gains, and on their estates when they die.

In a very real sense, \$30 trillion has been borrowed in the past 42 years from people in the future to give it to the richest few. This \$30 trillion heist is a Big Cheat and a Big Fraud. A significant portion of the large additional deficits that are anticipated in future years is due to on-going insidious effects of regressive tax cuts enacted by Republicans during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush and Donald Trump.

People are thrown in prison for the rest of their lives if they rob a liquor store three times in any one of the 25 states that have enacted Three Strikes laws. But rich people who are part of this \$30 trillion class-action rip-off of our children, and theirs, are treated as though they deserve to have impunity for their grotesquely unfair participation in this all but criminal malfeasance.

The people who have benefitted most from this fraud resemble the robber barons of the late 19th century. In many respects, their success has been achieved by corrupting our democracy instead of fairly competing or providing superior products or services. Their success has often been achieved not through innovation or personal integrity, and certainly not through fairness to future generations. This state of affairs emphasizes the need for an overarching Bill of Rights for Future Generations to fairly guide our national decision-making.

The more that wealth is concentrated, the more power becomes concentrated. And as power becomes more unfairly distributed, the impetus increases for it to be abused. Where, one might wonder, are we headed? Better social insurance? Or pitchforks?

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

--- The historian and moralist Lord Acton

It was inevitable when Ronald Reagan slashed marginal tax rates on the highest incomes by a rash 60% between 1981 and 1988 that this fiscally irresponsible action would increase the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few at the expense of most Americans. It was also inevitable that, when inheritance taxes began to be reduced under George W. Bush's tax cut plans, such policies would serve to lock in a financial Easy Street forevermore for heirs of the richest 1% of wealthy people. The writer John Fowles pointed out in *The Aristos* that the envious masses tolerate wealth in this order: most, they applaud wealth acquired after birth by pure luck; next, they admire wealth that is fairly earned according to the current system; and least, they are cynical about all huge amounts of wealth acquired at birth through inheritance.

People are especially opposed to concentrations of wealth that are inherited, instead of being earned through hard work or intelligence, merit, taking smart entrepreneurial risks or making positive contributions to society.

Our political system has been so skewed by moneyed interests that the outrage of socially-unaffordable low tax rates on the richest Americans has been concealed under a barrage of propaganda, subterfuge, and deceptive ideological arguments that advocate low tax rates on the highest incomes and biggest fortunes. It is foolish for us to have allowed inequality to grow so extreme in the U.S. This trend is strongly correlated with increases in the power of individuals and groups who have a stake in doing little to counteract the disparities between the Few, who have the most income and wealth, and the Many, who have much less. The manipulation of public opinion by the entities with the most money and power is a big factor in perpetuating this state of affairs.

Extreme social injustices, in all their many specific manifestations, are especially pathetic when they are harshly perpetrated by privileged people to selfishly gain more advantages at the expense of those with fewer privileges and less power. The sad irony is that many social injustices not only have harmful impacts on people today, but they also have unconscionably detrimental implications for the prospects of all people in the future.

It seems downright immoral for our leaders to create ever-increasing inequalities of opportunity, privilege, income, wealth, security, and access to healthcare. And it is unfair, mean-spirited and cruel to push economic policies that are designed to increase already glaring social inequities.

"Courage sometimes skips a generation."

--- The 2011 film, *The Help*

The Seven Primary Challenges We Must Honestly Deal With

Once we get through the terrible medical and economic calamity of the coronavirus contagion, we should reduce the national debt back toward the \$20 trillion level that it was when Donald Trump took office. This should be done through a one-time wealth assessment on the capital assets of the wealthiest people.

Understand the extraordinary good sense in this action. By reducing the national debt, we will reset it to eliminate the malfeasance of Republican debt-financed tax cuts AND cover much of the cost of the calamitous pandemic and accompanying economic crisis. Thereafter, we will be able to afford to make smart investments in public health, better public education, a stronger social safety net, safer physical infrastructure and responsible protections of public lands and the environment.

Then, let's tackle the seven biggest problems we collectively face:

(1) The deterioration of the ecological foundations of our physical well-being and a related global water crisis and the risks inherent in massive extinctions of species on Earth.

(2) Changes in weather patterns and correlated increasing incidences of natural disasters that are being made worse by increasing concentrations of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere. The human activities that are contributing the most to these harmful impacts include excessive burning of fossil fuels, slash-and-burn deforestation, and maintaining large herds of methane-producing ruminants like cattle and sheep.

(3) The strife that threatens peaceful coexistence and the mutual security of nations worldwide. This strife is made substantially more risk-laden by profligate spending on armaments and wars and the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the U.S. having set an international precedent of initiating preemptive warfare that destabilizes other countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

(4) The fiscal irresponsibility of leaders in the U.S. and other debt-ridden nations and the concomitant increases in risks of heightened economic turmoil and potential recession.

(5) The inadequate upkeep of the physical infrastructure of the U.S. and the failure to invest in the well-being of people in future generations.

(6) The increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the richest few, and a correlated diminishment of the security and prospects of prosperity for workers, young people and people in the future.

(7) Population overshoot and the dangers associated with wasteful uses of fossil fuels, along with a failure to put into effect smart measures focused on resource conservation, efficiency of energy use, and the development of cleaner and more renewable energy alternatives.

Sly Hands on the Scales of Justice

All Americans love the courage and ideals championed by our country's Founders, and yet every single one of the Founders, if alive today, would be horrified to see how easy we have made it for special interest groups to rig the system and usurp and abuse power. After all, the Founders had strived valiantly to establish the safeguards of a balance of power between Congress and the Executive Branch and the Judiciary, and between the Federal Government and the States.

But Big Money speaks loudly and carries a big stick. The Supreme Court even ruled by a narrow 5-4 majority of conservatives that we should give expansive "freedom of speech" to moneyed interests, even though this stance gives moneyed interests an excessive ability to manipulate and control our national planning.

This insight again leads us straight to the purpose for implementing a more progressive system of taxation. Here is the convincing rationale. Since Big Money has an outsized influence in determining the rules of our economic system, and since Big Money yields Big Power, overly heavy hands are laid on the scales of justice. These shrewd hands collude to manipulate markets and establish unfair rules. The result is a profusion of tax evasion schemes, regulation loopholes, subsidies for resource depletion and accelerated depreciation, negative externalities, no-bid contracts and exemptions from environmental protection laws and regulations.

Big corporations abuse the power of their size to the disadvantage of consumer fairness and small businesses and non-profit organizations. Big corporate entities exploit the system, often by making competition unfair through monopoly-like practices. Banks that are too-big-to-fail and huge conglomerates are one result.

The crux of the matter is that the interest groups with the most money have manipulatively rigged the system so that it gives them most of the benefits of economic activities. So a balancing mechanism is needed to counterbalance the heavy hands on the scales of justice and public policy-making that are being applied by rich people and top management in big corporations. This is one good reason why a more steeply graduated tax system is needed on corporations as well as on individuals. Such a plan would level the playing field a bit, and make fairness a truer cornerstone of our democratic republic.

Business taxes should be assessed on a progressive scale. All business entities that have gross incomes less than \$5 million should be assessed lower rates of tax on their net profits, and bigger businesses should be assessed progressively higher rates on their net profits above \$5 million. A plan like this would have a collateral benefit of diminishing the attractiveness of corporations to grow in size until they are "too big to fail", and thus risk requiring periodic bailouts by taxpayers.

Additionally, all corporations should be required to pay at least a minimum amount of tax every year on their net incomes to prevent many large corporations from evading the payment of any taxes on their incomes in any given year. General Electric, for instance, earned \$14 billion in worldwide profits in 2010, but paid no federal taxes, and the company employs over 900 highly compensated tax lawyers and accountants to game the system to get such a benefit. Similarly, Apple Inc. develops creative accounting to shelter much of its profits abroad.

A Propitious Plan Enunciated

Oddly, the remedy mentioned in the Introduction to *Common Sense Revival* involves *PROPER ACCOUNTING* to address the burgeoning risks associated with high levels of deficit spending and record levels of national debt. We need not accept smoke-and-mirrors gimmicks anymore; we simply must stop allowing profits to be privatized while considerable costs are socialized.

Given that the smartest way forward is often found in the clearest understandings, the optimum solutions come from the best and most comprehensive understandings. Our capitalist "free-market" economy allows gigantic corporations to abuse the power of the undue influence of their wealth to gain enormous subsidies, and to evade paying taxes on all their income, and to indulge in the insidiously undesirable gambit of externalizing a wide range of costs onto society. Many significant socially disadvantageous effects are associated with allowing corporations to have these privileges.

Millions of individual buying decisions are distorted by allowing real costs to be externalized onto society rather than more fairly including them in the prices of products and services. Once again I recommend that readers refer to *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*. It contains a Future Viability Assessment as proposed in the seventh initiative, *A Vibrant and Sound Economy*. This is a fair-minded proposal that would be effective in shifting all the significant costs of producing products and services that are currently being externalized onto society back to the products and services that are the source of these costs.

Many negative externalities are involved in allowing costs to be shifted from the prices of products and services to taxpayers and folks in future generations. It should be noted that there are also many kinds of "positive externalities", like the ways in which taxpayers provide funding for propitious investments in the public good. The most distinct examples of these positive externalities are public investments in education, infrastructure, healthcare, and protections of the environment.

Public investments in education generally cascade into future earnings and greater social well-being. They also cut down on needs for spending more money on social support programs for low-income people and incarcerating people in prisons. Increased investments in education lead to better prospects for employment and expanded kinds of job opportunities. And they tend to lead to a lower population growth rate, which benefits the capacity of natural resources and ecosystems to sustain us. Also, public investments in universal healthcare would lead to lower costs,

fairer health outcomes, and a healthier work force. It would also give people some reassurance for them to become more confident in taking entrepreneurial risks without the fear of losing health insurance.

We need to find the political will to do what needs to be done. We should embrace smart thinking, cooperative problem solving, common sense, intergenerational fairness, empathic understanding and a courageous willingness to govern well. We can no longer let every public decision be made by K-Street lobbyists and corrupt politicians in Washington D.C. If we do not change this state of affairs, inequalities will continue to increase between the Haves and Those Who Don't Have Much. It's as if we are failing to realize that turning up the flame under a simmering pressure cooker with a malfunctioning pressure release valve could cause a deadly explosion.

For the greater good of ALL concerned, we should immediately implement a more steeply graduated tax system with fewer loopholes for the wealthy, as recommended by Warren Buffet, the Oracle of Omaha. And let's crack down on people and corporations that use offshore tax havens to avoid paying taxes.

These thoughts evolved out of the essay *Sad Implications of the Two Dueling Santa Claus Strategies in Political Economics*. At the same time of this development, I was reading the revealing book *Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future*. This book provides compelling understandings of how we could be co-creating a more propitious future for ourselves and our descendants. It gives a good sense of hope for how we could be moving forward in positive directions. NOW is the time to start!

The Overarching Need for a New Paradigm of Human Perception

There have been four principal paradigms of human perception since the Cave Clan days of our early ancestors. Long ago in prehistory, Animism prevailed. Then came Polytheism, and later Monotheism, and then current day Scientific Materialism. Animism was a spiritually harmonious state in which early humans made little distinction between themselves and the environment where they lived. Every animal, plant, rock, mountain and living thing was seen as possessing a spirit, and all of the world's spirits were regarded as a part of the collective whole. It was a period during which humanity was emerging from a primitive but ecologically integrated existence into a new era of greater knowledge, but less unity, and more discord and less respect for our home planet.

Polytheism came into prominence 4,000 years ago. This was a way of regarding the world that involved a more sophisticated religious story in which intangible spirits were projected into deities that represented elements of Nature. Presto, gods and goddesses! Earth Mother Goddesses were primary in many early human concepts of divinity. The ultimate expression of this paradigm was found in ancient Greek and Roman deities that exhibited archetypal human qualities. During the time polytheistic beliefs were in ascendance, people began to feel disconnected from Nature. This has gotten worse as religious and materialistic paradigms have changed.

The next leap forward (that's debatable!), was the Eureka! revelations of Monotheism. Aha -- there are NOT lots of gods and goddesses, there is only ONE God! Unfortunately, most competing faiths claim that their God is the one and only true God. Holy books proliferated, and everybody's God, proclaimed in written words, shared one aspect in common: all tended to be moralizing disciplinarian males. In this dogmatic new era, the God of every other faith was regarded as false, and evil to boot. This has sparked terrible conflicts. Monotheism was a more sophisticated conception than seeing deities in everything, but it involved such obedience-demanding faith, and such harsh condemnations of a curious set of sins, and of non-believers that it became destructive. One outcome was widespread and long lasting divisiveness, and enmities between believers and non-believers became much more pronounced.

The theory of biological evolution came along, providing a more sophisticated and accurate way of understanding life, and how it has come to be, than is told in holy book catechisms. Along with this more accurate explanation, Scientific Materialism gained great power, and the Industrial Revolution and economic competition facilitated rapid economic expansion and an astonishing growth in the population of human beings on Earth. It also tragically caused unprecedented environmental destruction and has led to mindlessly wasteful usages of natural resources.

Now, a new way of seeing the world is needed, a new existential paradigm of perception. The latest materialistic paradigm to dominate humanity's worldview does not give enough respect to the natural world and its crucially vital ecosystems. This is exceedingly odd, because the human race ultimately depends completely upon these ecosystems

for our prosperity and survival. And we depend on the biological diversity of life on Earth that healthy oceans and terrestrial habitats support.

Every species of animal has its own animal awareness, its own appreciation of pleasure and well-being, and its own sensitivity to pain. It is beyond folly to allow the poisoning of the environment, the "paving over of paradise to put up parking lots", and the slaughter of wildlife in Earth's terrestrial and marine habitats in heedless obedience to domineering materialistic worldviews. The paradigm of human behaviors that is directed by marketing-stimulated wasteful consumerism is unethical in much deeper senses than all the admonitions of humankind's holy book moralities put together.

One of the biggest contradictions of our human nature is that we have great difficulty living the lofty principles we claim to hold dear. When we understand the contradictions of our nature, perhaps we will be able to more easily forgive ourselves, and others as well. This might be a key to seeing more clearly how to sensibly and feelingly control the impulses that undermine the vital greater good.

The new worldview that is needed must be accompanied by a reformed means of organization and new behavioral incentives. Let's give this new worldview a name: Life-Affirming Healthy Ecosystems Protectionism. This new paradigm will be one that gives greater respect to Mother Earth and is willing to protect the health of the vital ecosystems that sustain us.

A primary measure of our progress toward achieving this new paradigm and a sustainable existence will be found in our making a commitment to intergenerational fairness as defined in a Bill of Rights for Future Generations. The agonizing death throes of unsustainable practices and old ways of living are converging with the growing pains of new ways of being that are struggling to be born. In this condition, a variety of morbid symptoms appears and intensifies and struggles to persist. We would be wise to essentially re-program our perceptions and perspectives, and redesign our economic and political systems to adapt them to be consistent with the long-term greater good of the human race in its pursuit of happiness, its quest for pleasure, and its inextricably interdependent struggle for security and survival.

Alexander von Humboldt was one of the more honorable people in history. He was a German naturalist and world explorer who has been hailed as "the second Columbus". He traveled widely in South America and Mexico and Cuba from 1799 to 1804, and then visited Thomas Jefferson in the United States before returning to Europe to live in Paris from 1804 to 1827. He was an "enlightened discoverer" who published 30 volumes on the scientific findings he made during his travels in the Western Hemisphere. He understood the link between living things and their environment, and this insight provided a key inspiration to Charles Darwin, who called him "the greatest travelling scientist who ever lived."

Humboldt's science had heart. In *The Passage to Cosmos, Alexander von Humboldt and the Shaping of America*, Laura Dassow Walls writes that "Humboldt blended an Enlightenment-derived certainty in the agency of reason, factuality, and precision with a Romantic's enthusiasm for feeling and poetry." She says Humboldt spoke out boldly against American slavery and European imperialism, and took courageous stands against racism and inequities, and viewed nature holistically, and explained natural phenomena without resort to religious dogma. For these ways of clearly seeing, I give him a happy and hearty salute!

Voltaire famously concluded his great short story *Candide* with the simple prescription that despite all else, "we must cultivate our garden." The authors of *Spontaneous Evolution* tell another great story that has arisen like a hope-inspiring phoenix firebird rising from ashes, providing great hope that we can identify and implement ways of changing the world for the better and creating a new renaissance of hope and auspicious portents.

"*Spontaneous Evolution* introduces the notion that a miraculous healing awaits this planet once we accept our new responsibility to collectively tend the Garden rather than fight over the turf."

--- Dr. Bruce Lipton and Swami Beyondananda

Let us all embrace such broader visions!

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Hannibal, Missouri

Latest update: November 1, 2022 (originally begun in early 2012 and revised occasionally thereafter)

Feedback? Contact me at SaveTruffulaTrees@hotmail.com

"Before my departure for the Elysian Fields, I must leave behind me what the Eternal Spirit has infused into my soul and bids me complete."

--- Ludwig von Beethoven, 1817

"The Earth Manifesto is destined to become the most widely read manifesto in all of eternity, or whatever is left of it before the End Times."

--- God (imagined)

Mark Twain introduced his great novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with the following notice:

NOTICE

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

--- BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain likewise has a Notice or two to give readers of this manifesto.

NOTICE

PERSONS failing to recognize the good sense and sensibility in the ideas found in these writings will be judged critically, after a fair hearing, and people who give kneejerk denials to the providential value of the peaceful revolution and clear-eyed guidance recommended herein will be subject to being exposed as sycophants to the status quo, or treacherous frauds.

SECOND NOTICE

Frankly, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain is a *nom de plume*, just like Mark Twain was a sly pen name used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens. How this whole project came about is a long and evolving story, and one that is better left a mystery than being disclosed in the full scope of more prosaic actual circumstance.

"Who the Author of this Production is, is wholly unnecessary to the Public, as the important thing is the IDEAS THEMSELVES, and not the author. Yet it is necessary to say that she is unconnected with any Party, and under no sort of influence, public or private, other than the influence of reason and principle."

-- Thomas Paine (gender revised)