



Earth Manifesto

The Top Ten Ways Our System Is Unfairly Rigged

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
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Robert Reich in his book *The System: Who Rigged It, How We Fix It*, makes clear the problems with how our systems are rigged. "Millions of Americans have lost confidence in our political and economic system. After years of stagnant wages, volatile job markets, and an unwillingness by those in power to deal with profound threats such as climate change, there is a mounting sense that the system is fixed, serving only those select few with enough money to secure a controlling stake. With the characteristic clarity and passion that has made him a central civil voice, Robert Reich shows how wealth and power have interacted to install an elite oligarchy, eviscerate the middle class, and undermine democracy."

"Using Jamie Dimon, the chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase as an example, Reich exposes how those at the top propagate myths about meritocracy, national competitiveness, corporate social responsibility and the 'free market' to distract most Americans from their accumulation of extraordinary wealth, and power over the system. Instead of answering the call to civic duty, they have chosen to uphold self-serving policies that line their own pockets and benefit their bottom line. Reich's objective is not to foster cynicism, but rather to demystify the system so that we might instill fundamental change and demand that democracy works for the majority once again." This highly commendable and existentially important purpose turns out to be vital to the overall well-being and general welfare of the people of our nation, now and in the future.

Preliminary Observations

Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump both gained substantial influence during the run-up to the 2016 elections by recognizing and articulating the legitimacy of anger and grievances felt by millions of people due to job losses and the pathetically poor representation of their best interests in our national priorities. Most Americans are frustrated on account of the corrupting influence of Big Money in our elections and the harm-engendering abuses of power by big corporations. Both Sanders and Trump made clear that our economic and political systems are rigged in many ways against the populace in favor of established interest groups.

Bernie Sanders, it turns out, has a much more accurate understanding of the complexities of the problems we face than Donald Trump. Just ask the Millennials, the largest generation in world history. Millennials under the age of 30 have a longer-term stake in social and environmental well-being than older folks, so it is readily understandable why Bernie got many more votes from this group in the 2016 presidential primaries than both Trump and Hillary combined. We need broadly beneficial solutions to the challenges we face, and thus more unifying ones, NOT "solutions" that are more narrowly beneficial for the small minority of Americans who gain outlandishly from the way our system is rigged.

Abraham Lincoln echoed the Bible in a famous speech about the precarious destiny of "a house divided", and I believe with great conviction that the American people could negotiate a much better deal with the powers-that-be if we united together to actualize common good goals. This is true for people today, and it would also be fortuitous for all our descendants in future generations. I also feel strongly that a proper understanding of problems is crucial for us to come up with the best and most fair-minded solutions, and that democratic fairness is the key to

honestly fixing problems in the most sensible ways. So I have created this Top Ten list of the best ways to understand the causes that are contributing to making our economic and political systems unjust.

As we consider each of these aspects of our rigged system, let's give fair and scrupulously honest consideration to whether Republicans or Democrats in the White House and in Congress are most effective in fixing problems like those assessed. Who would be most likely to address these big challenges in comprehensive, peaceable, just, inclusive, sustainable and unifying ways? Let's think clearly about who would most likely do the better job in fixing our corrupt systems, and in dealing effectively with the special interest groups that have been responsible for how unfairly our societies are structured. My own evaluation and long-winded analysis follows.

Here are the Top Ten Ways our system is rigged:

1. Young people are being treated shabbily, most notably by the sacrifice of a stable climate through inaction on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Also, the policies that saddle students with heavy burdens of debt for their educations are creating a modern form of indebted bondage that is similar to the indentured servitude common in the thirteen Colonies before Independence. And interest rates on student loans are too high, and repayment provisions are more onerous than loans for almost anything else.

2. The best interests of females are being severely underrepresented in our societies due to pronounced male supremacism in our overly patriarchal culture. As a result, women are still being paid less than 80% as much as men for equal work, and they lost jobs during the pandemic in disproportionately high numbers. Also, opprobriously, their reproductive rights are under serious assault, with "conservatives" and religious fundamentalists intent on denying every woman the right to make her own personal decision about whether or not to choose to have a safe legal abortion.

Women are still extremely underrepresented in Congress -- less than 24% of the 535 members of Congress are female after the 2020 elections, and throughout our country's history, no woman has yet been elected to serve as president. Trump's bait-and-switch demagogic mob boss electioneering swindle cheated women in this regard.

3. Our national policies, tax code, laws and regulations are wrongly focused on creating an increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, exacerbating growing inequalities. This dangerous trend is due mainly to our political representatives having become pawns of wealthy proponents of regressive taxation schemes and the enabling trickle down theory, which is basically a rationalizing Big Lie told by the riggers. The illegitimacy of allowing this tinderbox situation to grow ever more extreme threatens our national security and the general welfare of the American people.

4. Giant corporations have too much power to increase private profits by socializing costs and exploiting working people, and undermining reasonable protections of the environment, and wantonly depleting natural resources. One of the most outrageous instances of this rigging of our economic and political systems is found in international trade deals designed with primary input from giant multinational corporations, so they have led to "a race to the bottom", causing widespread job losses, worker migrations and severe economic dislocations and globalization inequities. Another aspect of this system rigging is found in extensive tax evasion efforts by big corporate entities that often hide huge sums of money in tax havens abroad. And another is the nefarious abuses of power by giant drug companies, as exemplified by instances of large price increases for critical drugs and rash "roadblocks to competition" provisions that prohibit the Medicare system from negotiating lower prices for prescription drugs or allowing generic drug maker competition in the Republican-pushed new entitlement "Medicare Modernization Act" of 2003, which has driven up the national debt by more than \$1 trillion in order to give bigger profits to huge pharmaceutical companies.

5. Big Money corruptly influences the politicians who should be representing the best interests of the people. As a consequence, our national priorities are radically askew. Moneyed interest groups have abused the power of their influence to gerrymander congressional districts and promote inequitable tax policies and pass laws designed to prevent minority voters from having their voices heard and respected. The wrongly decided *Citizens United* ruling by the Supreme Court in January 2010 has drastically worsened this problem of *Dark Money* corrupting our system. Among the most blatant Big Money offenders are billionaires like those in the plotting Koch network, who have

spent hundreds of millions of dollars to torpedo affordable healthcare and crush the collective bargaining rights of working people in order to maximize private profits. What zeal they have shown in treating working people as stingily as possible! Being owners of big corporations that pollute extensively, plutocrats like the Kochs also strive to weaken crucially important protections of the land, rivers, oceans, forests, wildlife habitats, endangered species and the atmosphere.

6. Wall Street has too much power, and this diminishes the influence of *We the People* on Main Street. In addition, the concentration of banking power in too-big-to-fail institutions is putting the entire global financial system at risk. Surprisingly, financial institutions have gotten significantly bigger today than they were back in 2008, when their excessive size posed a great danger during the severe financial crisis.

7. The criminal justice system is deeply unjust, resulting in black people and Hispanics being incarcerated at shockingly excessive rates. Also, more people are imprisoned in the U.S. than in any other country in the world. Prison privatization plans have compounded this hyper-costly problem, causing even more profound injustices. Donald Trump's first Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, was about the worst person possible to ameliorate this situation, calling as he did for an intensification of the harm-engendering war on drugs. The near traitor Attorney General Bill Barr may have been even worse, judging by the facts that resulted in his having been voted the worst of all of Trump's Cabinet members due to the wrongful consequentiality of the power he abused in his obsequious fealty to the Egomaniac-in-Chief.

8. Climate change. Giant fossil fuel subsidies persist, threatening the economic, political and environmental health of countries around the world. One particularly objectionable way this is accomplished in the U.S. is that fossil fuel industries have been paying the public only 12.5 percent of the value of what is extracted from federal lands - - as they have been doing every year since 1920. Profiteers rejoice! It is the vast corrupting influence of power-abusing fossil fuel industries that makes it our duty, my fellow Americans, to fight public corruption, and enact reforms, and hold wrongdoers accountable. Make no mistake about it: remedial actions are not "socialism"; they are consistent with common good goals.

Such subsidies have serious global consequences, for they boost emissions of greenhouse gases by about 2% every year. A carbon fee-and-dividend plan like that proposed by the non-partisan Citizens Climate Lobby should be instituted to spur the necessary shift to a sustainable future. Opposition is powerful to shifting from perversely misguiding subsidies to putting a price on carbon, despite the fact that a well designed fee-and-dividend plan would not only auspiciously shift incentives from dirty, nonrenewable resources to cleaner and more sustainable sources, but it would be designed to do so in ways that would help reduce environmental injustices and economic inequities. Clean energy initiatives are part of real climate justice, and more democratic decision-making is a way that we could make sure our government is listening to the people not just to polluters.

9. The mainstream media, dominated by a handful of giant corporations, has been failing to fairly present issues of public importance ever since the Fairness Doctrine of the FCC was eliminated in 1987. This doctrine had been in effect since 1949, and when it was revoked, federal requirements were ended for TV and radio broadcasters to present important issues in an honest, equitable and balanced manner. Simultaneously, there has been a stunning concentration in the ownership of daily newspapers, magazines, television, books and motion pictures in the United States, a trend that has dramatically reduced media diversity.

These are dangerous developments because the centralized control over information, either by the government or corporate entities, is often contrary to freedom of expression and understanding. Modern democracies need an expansive choice of ideas and political policies, and such choices require access to truly diverse competing sources of news, science, understanding, literature, entertainment and popular culture. Additionally, as Catherine Rampell made clear in *Origins of a GOP Debacle*, Republicans have built an extreme right-wing media machine that is hyper-divisive because it has convinced the faithful in the Republican base to believe "completely bonkers, bigoted garbage." This troubling propaganda is pushed by media outlets like Fox News and right-wing talk radio, along with one-sided communications on social media that are promoted by scheming politicians, top corporate management, and the extremist alt-right, and propagated in "alternate facts" and fake news stories. And echoed by angry tribe members, and conspiracy believers, and Internet trolls. Independent-minded media reforms are needed!

10. Vested interest groups involved with the military-industrial complex have joined with rich investors to drive up military spending and run up the national debt by giving big Tax Cuts to the highest income earners and capital gains recipients -- and to rich persons after they die. This has enabled coldly-calculating scheming politicians and their occasional henchmen, the "engineers of austerity" to usurp and abuse power, forcing hardships onto the vast majority of people and undermining the effectiveness of government to invest in high priority goals like improving public education, expanding opportunity, maintaining physical infrastructure, fostering peaceable coexistence, actualizing global justice initiatives, better protecting the environment and advancing other hallmarks of civilized societies.

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

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A Powerful Reason in Favor of Intergenerationally Fairer Plans

The Seattle-based billionaire entrepreneur Nick Hanauer made some sensational observations in an article in 2014 titled *The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats*. Here is an excerpt, edited for brevity:

"I want to try to change the conversation with ideas -- by advancing 'middle-out' economics. It's the long-overdue rebuttal to the trickle-down economics worldview that has become economic orthodoxy across party lines -- and has so screwed the American middle class and our economy generally. Middle-out economics rejects the old misconception that an economy is a perfectly efficient, mechanistic system, and embraces the much more accurate idea of an economy as a complex ecosystem made up of real people who are dependent on one another.

The fundamental law of capitalism must be: If workers have more money, businesses have more customers. Which makes middle-class consumers, not rich businesspeople like us, the true job creators. Which means a thriving middle class is the source of American prosperity, not a consequence of it. The middle class creates us rich people, not the other way around.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress can't shrink government with wishful thinking. The only way to slash government for real is to go back to basic economic principles: You have to reduce the demand for government. If people are getting \$15 an hour or more, they don't need food stamps. They don't need rent assistance. They don't need you and me to pay for their medical care. If the consumer middle class is back, buying and shopping, then it stands to reason you won't need as large a welfare state. And at the same time, revenues from payroll and sales taxes would rise, reducing the deficit.

One Percenters take note: many of our fellow citizens are starting to believe that capitalism itself is the problem. I disagree. Capitalism, when well managed, is the greatest social technology ever invented to create prosperity in human societies. But capitalism left unchecked tends toward concentration of wealth and power and potential collapse. It can be managed either to benefit the few in the near term or the many in the long term. The work of democracies is to bend it to the latter. That is why investments in the middle class work. And tax breaks for rich people like us don't."

I encourage everyone to read Nick Hanauer's entire article, for it is well worth reading! And ponder it in the context of the thought-provoking ideas in the 2016 article *Trump's Yuge Bamboozle*: "Trickle-down economics has proven itself a cruel hoax. It's cruel because it rewards people at the top who least need it and hurts those below who are in greatest need. It's a hoax because nothing trickles down." All is clearly not right with America. Inequality is getting worse as the wealthy continue to benefit from national policies that excessively favor them. Right-wing policies and sycophantic loyalists to abusers of authority are broadly harmful to the American people, and require reforms in responsible forward-looking progressive policies.

A rotten plank corollary to the trickle down Big Lie is the dirty Republican orthodoxy of committing to "ideological purity" by pushing for Santa Claus tax cuts until government is forced to shrink, and it can be "drowned in the bathtub." The main proponent of this strategy for the past 20 years has been Grover Norquist, who "has done great damage to the institutions in this great nation upon which he and we all depend."

The time has come for the majority of Americans to stand up and declare that they will not accept all these broad abuses of power anymore!

Additional Reflections

In Athens at the time of Plato's death just over 2,400 years ago, the landed aristocracy had been supplanted by merchants, bankers and businessmen at the top of Greek society, and a feverish struggle for money and dominating influence prevailed. The Greeks called this a *pleonexia* -- an immoderate appetite for more and more. "The middle classes, as well as the rich, began to distrust democracy as empowered envy, and the poor distrusted it as a sham equality of votes nullified by a gaping inequality of wealth." The attendant conflicts created bitter divisions within the populace, and made the Greek city-state vulnerable to a dictatorship -- which soon thereafter materialized.

The insightful historians and philosophers Will and Ariel Durant concluded, as Thomas Piketty has more recently, "that the concentration of wealth is natural and inevitable, and is periodically alleviated by violent or peaceable partial redistribution." We are faced with a crucial decision right now with Republicans having exerted excessively anti-egalitarian influence in recent years; to wit, shall we sensibly choose to alleviate the extreme inequalities in America today with a stronger social safety net, which would represent a better social insurance policy in a smart form of "peaceable partial redistribution", or shall our leaders obtusely choose the route of ramped up inequities and attendant social unrest and required repression in reaction. The latter course risks a gravely heightened probability of being accompanied by violence. The right choice is clear, and our extreme right leaders are in dangerous denial to have made historically regressive changes in our tax system to favor the already fortunate, especially now during the spiking throes of the crushing pandemic.

The overarching emphasis of my online Earth Manifesto, and of the twelve 212-page books that contain these ideas, is on ecological sanity. So I augment these observations by pointing out that our civilizations are mainly structured to indulge in materialistic consumerism and a rash willingness to sacrifice the habitats of all life on Earth to meet our needs and greedy desires. By the year 2024, there will be 8 billion of us humans alive, and anti-family planning forces seek despotic control over the people. This is an overarching reason that we need revolutionary progressive change with the goal of making our societies more sustainable. And this is why all countries should support and ratify a Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

Towering Lincoln Project-Like Perspective

Lincoln Project Republicans laudably and rightly urged the American people to vote Donald Trump out of office in the run-up to the 2020 elections, along with his scheming cronies. They advocated this because of brazen betrayals being made of the public trust in consequentially harmful ways.

In a bizarre twist in the Trump Reality show, bystanders were astonished by Trump antics after he contracted the contagious coronavirus. Obviously having drunk some of his own delusional Kool Aid, which he has repeatedly tried to hawk to the American people, Trump recklessly came down with the miserable affliction himself, and became a COVID-Superspreader-in-Chief in the Rose Garden and at mass political rallies, where he desperately stoked support from his political base by appealing to their fears, resentments and darkest instincts..

In an entertaining instance of megalomania on steroids, Trump emerged from spending three days under emergency medical care in Walter Reed hospital and returned to the White House gasping like a guppy, then hatched a conniving plan to milk the press attention and sympathy for personal political gain. He decided to make a TV appearance looking weak, and to then rip open his dress shirt and reveal a Superman shirt beneath.

SUPERMAN !!! This was actually pretty funny. Trump was so cunning, ebullient with grandiosity, and addled by drugs after his time in the hospital that he wanted to don a Superman t-shirt to strut and fret another hour upon the stage. Saner heads prevailed, FOR ONCE, when advisors suggested, perhaps, that the optics might look bad, especially if some sagaciously disloyal critic happened to bring up a sore point -- like instead of Trump being able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, and instead of his actually standing for truth and justice in any way -- in reality, by every objective evaluation, he stands for a long and pathological litany of serious wrongs. He stands as a compulsive liar, having told over 30,000 falsehoods in public in his four years in office, and has accelerated the

pace of his deceptions since his defeat in the 2020 election. How about justice? He is a staunch and stubborn defender of narrowly concentrated wealth, extreme economic inequities and systemic racial injustices. He stands for pandemic endangerment, unscrupulous public corruption, manipulative demagoguery, con man gamesmanship, and mob boss-like loyalty-demanding authority. He is a flagrant abuser of power, and a charlatan dog-whistling denier that he is in fact a champion of white male supremacy who is welcoming Q-Anon idiocies and even agitating dangerous far right groups and armed militias.

Trump is also a lifelong cheater in business and on his taxes, and an inveterate bully, an unprincipled divide-to-conquer cruelly inhumane anti-immigrant demagogue, a poisonous promoter of misinformation, a blame-shifting scapegoating vindictive gaslighting master manipulator, a sexist, a racist, a weenie macho pretender, a "bone spurs" military draft evader, and a Malignant Narcissist who is sadly deficient in empathy, honor, civility and integrity. And he is an election fraudster, vote suppressor, Post office saboteur and beneficiary of corrupt gerrymandering of congressional districts.

Optics?! He violated laws and the U.S. Constitution, evaded paying taxes, and pushed multi-trillion dollar public debt-financed Tax Cuts to enrich himself and the wealthiest 1%. He profited from self-dealing and illegal emoluments, defied subpoenas to cover up his wrongdoing, stacked federal courts with hundreds of political partisans, stood resolutely against sensible gun safety measures, and violated the public trust by serving as a twisted Trojan Horse tool for unleashing corporate influence and encouraging the externalizing of costs and giving billionaires determining control over our national policies and priorities in our assaulted democracy.

And for the spoiled frosting on the tainted cake, the Trumpster puts himself and the radicalized Republican Party over Country. He zealously betrayed our allies by collaborating with foreign autocrats, especially Russia's Vladimir Putin and Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman. In this, he waged a crusade against democracy and fair-minded governance in league with grifters, oppressors and leaders wielding opprobrious and murderous abuses of authority against their peoples.

The legitimacy of a government and the moral right to use state power is only justified and lawful when the people over which that political power is exercised freely give their informed consent. Ruling parties are illegitimate and unacceptable when they cheat in elections, suppress people's votes, gerrymander congressional districts, and stack courts with conservatives who can see no corrupting influence in allowing ungodly amounts of money to be spent by rich people and conspiring corporate entities to buy dominating influence on government policies and priorities.

Delusion, denial and deceit can be dangerous and deadly, especially in consequential matters like the rationalized failure to protect the public from the poorly controlled spread of the pandemic, and the failure to take responsible actions to prevent accelerating harms of environmental degradation, and an insidious destabilization of the global climate -- and the hubris of failing to protect countless species of life from eternal extinction.

Tragically, the top priority of profit-prepossessed Big Money interests is to increase the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few at the expense of the many. A main method of achieving this is by hyper stimulating the liquidation of natural resources, exploiting working people and mortgaging taxpayers to the hilt.

I urge every American to vote for a straight-line Democratic ticket to purge the country of the inimical influence of Trump Republicans, ejecting them from their positions of usurped and abused power. Do this for the simple reason that they are not honestly seeking unity and true justice, or promoting the general welfare of the people, or fostering a salubrious domestic tranquility, or offering the expansive blessing of liberty to more Americans, now or in posterity. Instead, Republicans are pitting their narrow political base against the majority, and deceiving them by claiming to be concerned for them while championing the interests of billionaires and the overarching power of corporate entities over the best interest of the people. Watch their actions, which broadly belie their devious words, rhetoric and spin, and you clearly see that they "win" only by dividing people, not by trying to serve and improve conditions, or to heal and unite.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a people to free themselves from the despotism of a long train of abuses and usurpations of power, it is the right of the people -- it is indeed their duty -- to throw off such rule, and to choose new leadership that will provide honorable plans and safeguards for their future safety,

security and general welfare. So said the signers of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The top Republican priority of pushing for tax cuts is wrongheaded, for it sacrifices the security and quality of life for the vast majority of people, now and tomorrow, to the goal of maximizing the quantity of money the rich can get away with amassing through their hubristic power-abusing rigging of our economic and political systems to their outrageously greedy advantages. They succeed at this by using incredibly dirty tricks to illegitimately "manufacture the consent of the governed" through election cheating, lying, corruption by Big Money interests, kowtowing to corporatocratic influence, and using divide-to-conquer tactics that exploit people's fears and hijack their emotions and take advantage of their tribal affiliation tendencies. They also hyper focus their priorities on stacking federal courts with political partisans and religious fundamentalists as an additional means for corruptly allowing the rich and corporate CEOs to exert determining influence in elections and lobbying and the gerrymandering of congressional districts and the suppressing of votes by poor people and those in racial minorities, and students, the disabled, former felons and others. A powerful way they accomplish this nefarious influence is through the use of contorted emotion-manipulating propaganda propagated on Fox News and through the "conservative media complex" and by twisted manipulation of public opinion on social media platforms, all of which help them with this master plan for usurping minority power and blatantly abusing it.

Trump endangered people not only by his egomaniacal efforts to dismantle the social safety net but also by his having politicized the pandemic, resulting in too many people refusing to get vaccinated. This and other failures to take sensible steps to control the spread of COVID-19 has now killed more than 900,000 Americans as of early February 2022.

In the sorry circumstances of our intentionally actuated House Divided in the USA today, we are in great need of good guidance. I propose doing as Thomas Paine proposed in *Common Sense*, and seek to see clearly from a higher prospect "in order to discover the line of our duty rightly", and to thus act responsibly by adopting a sensible Bill of Rights for Future Generations to providentially guide our decision making, priorities and actions.

Editorial Addendum

Michael Moore made a film just before the November 2016 elections titled *Michael Moore in Trumpland*. It was a clever, touching and persuasive film, and made a good case to those who live in areas with strong Trump support that they should do the right thing for their country and the future by voting for Hillary Clinton, even if they had been conditioned to be skeptical of her trustworthiness. A balanced perspective on the merits of voting for Trump was contained in an Op-Ed article by Ross Douthat in the New York Times one Sunday in late October 2016. In this article titled *The Dangers of Donald Trump*, Douthat provided a clear-eyed analysis of the far-reaching risks of allowing Trump to become our leader, and that has proved to be an unmitigated disaster for the USA.

Before the 2016 election, the American Civil Liberties Union declared that Donald Trump represents "a one man Constitutional crisis". The ACLU wrote that in the event of a Trump presidency, "we have undertaken a constitutional analysis of his most controversial policy proposals. These include his pledges to deport over 11 million undocumented immigrants, to ban Muslims from entering the United States, to surveil American Muslims and their houses of worship, to torture again, and to revise libel laws. We have found them all wanting, to say the least. According to our analysis, Trump's proposals taken together would violate the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Eighth Amendments to the Constitution." In many respects, Trump engaged in what looks like a devious plot against the best interests of the vast majority of the American people, and he and his far right Attorney Generals presented a clear and present danger to people's personal freedoms.

While Trump correctly declared during the campaign that our economic system is rigged against the people, his view of the world was bizarrely skewed by yugely simplistic perspectives and self-serving perverse goals and alt-right ideologies and a plethora of absurd conspiracy theories. As a result, his prognosis was dark and he prescribed poorly thought-out plans to fix problems, and he used extremely manipulative tactics in his bid to gain domineering power, and then to broadly abuse it. These tactics include fear mongering, immigrant blaming, race baiting, emotion hijacking, deception, and identity politics that exploit sexism, racism, xenophobia, and the tendencies and urges of authoritarian followers for the purpose of cementing white male supremacy in place.

A theatrical production titled *It Can't Happen Here* was produced before the election that was based on the sensational story told in a book of the same title published in 1935 by Sinclair Lewis, the first American writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In the book and play, a power-hungry man named Buzz Windrip exhibits authoritarian tendencies in a run for president in 1936 against Franklin D. Roosevelt. The times were exceedingly hard back in those days of the Depression, and the specter of widespread unrest stalked the land. Buzz Windrip used fear-mongering tactics that Donald Trump has ominously mimicked in his bid to gain and maintain power, and thereby managed to win the election by exploiting right-wing populism and fomenting people's fears and promoting strident views of patriotism and promising drastic reforms of economic and social policies. After he was elected, Windrip imposed totalitarian control over the government and created a ruthless paramilitary force to enforce this abrogation of democratic governance, much like Hitler was doing at the time with his SS troopers. President Windrip outlawed dissent and incarcerated political enemies, and curtailed the rights of women and minorities, and generally became a ruthless despot. In relatively short order, Windrip lost his hold on power due to the failure of his promised economic prosperity to materialize, and he was deposed and exiled to France, but destructive political instability ensued, leading to riots, rebellion and civil war.

When Trump and many conservatives in the Senate and the House won their contests in the November 2016 national elections, it was shocking. Trump, after all, used terribly divisive demagogic tactics, and his character, egomaniacal narcissism and self-admitted sex molester propensities made him a lousy person to be our national leader. His pathological lying, as confirmed by extensive fact checking by the media and PolitiFact, got more and more preposterous by the day, as seen from the vantage point of the scandal-ridden and tyrannical end of his time in office. It is becoming obvious that he used the tweeting politics of distraction to keep people from realizing what is really being done to our government and against the best interests of the people.

Bill Weld, the Libertarian Party candidate for vice president in 2016, courageously spoke out during the heated campaign in favor of Hillary Clinton, personally vouching for her and quoting passages from George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that was about totalitarian control of the populace. These passages revealed the toxic effects of hate speech that master manipulators of people's emotions use to promote the dominance of reactionary leaders over fear-deluded people.

We must step back from the chasm of incivility, intolerance, antagonistic biases, anti-democratic anti-egalitarian policies and dogmatic partisanship, and begin to communicate better and collaborate more sensibly for the greater good -- and proceed together to create a fairer and healthier country and world.

Thinking that Hillary Clinton would win back in 2016, incumbent U.S. Senators like John McCain and Ted Cruz proclaimed that Republicans would never consider any candidates that Hillary would nominate for the Supreme Court if she became president. Soon after Trump became president, Democrats felt that the addition of more ideologically hard-right Justices to the Supreme Court would give Republicans such a dominance over all three branches of government that our democratic republic could be threatened with authoritarian rule and the people's loss of many personal liberties. So some of them suggested that Democrats mimic the stubborn intransigence that Senate Republicans manifested when they abrogated their constitutional duty to consider the candidate Barack Obama had nominated almost a year before the election to fill Antonin Scalia's vacant position. Republicans, abusing their ill-gained power, then changed long-standing Senate rules to put Neil Gorsuch, an extreme ideological conservative, on the Court to once again give a 5 to 4 advantage to corporate friendly Justices who claim to see no corrupting influence of allowing huge amounts of money in our elections. The Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett confirmations followed, clearly revealing motives to stack the high court with partisan extreme anti-abortion conservatives.

Assessment

Trump asserted during the 2016 campaign that only he can fix things, and that he represented the true voice of those left behind in our rigged system. Let's assess these two assertions with realistic and honest intent. Trump Republicans enacted regressively structured debt-financed Tax Cuts in 2017 that gave big corporations and the richest 1% of Americans some of the biggest tax cuts in history, contributing to a deeply irresponsible spike in the already record high national debt. This positioned the country very poorly for the pandemic, and the national debt

skyrocketed by almost \$8 trillion during Trump's time in office, and the fortunes of the fortunate are invested in a booming stock market at the same time that tens of millions of Americans are experiencing terrible hardships.

Shortfalls in federal revenues resulting from the tax cuts are making it more difficult to adequately fund education and infrastructure and social safety net programs, and increasing pressure for austerity and budget cuts and rationalizations to prevent us from Building Back Better. These developments are harmful for the majority of Americans, so they are ramping up discontent and revolutionary fervor, and they are also negatively impacting billions more people worldwide.

Review the list of the *Top Ten Ways Our System Is Unfairly Rigged*. It is hard to see any way Trump worked to properly remedy any of them. He was an extremely unlikely candidate to help create a more truthful and independent media, or heal the dangerous divisiveness that is making the USA so vulnerable to abuses of power, for he demeaned and insulted Latinos, Muslims, disabled people, PTSD-suffering troops, Gold Star veterans, Hollywood celebrities, Miss Universe and indeed all females with his male chauvinist and advantage-taking sexual behaviors. Trump is a climate action saboteur who revoked our national commitment to people in 200 other countries to make sensible efforts to reduce the growth in climate-destabilizing greenhouse gas emissions. He ramped up spending on the military and police forces, and created Homeland Security "deportation forces" to try to stop immigration and get rid of millions of undocumented immigrants.

On the female front, candidate Trump outlandishly said there should be some form of punishment for women who get an abortion, and his bragging about taking sexual advantage of attractive women make him the wrong person to treat women fairly and value them and champion their rights. And his federal court appointments have almost exclusively been partisans who are opposed to sensible family planning and reproductive rights guaranteed by the sensible Roe vs. Wade decision.

An Aside on NAFTA

Trump curiously blamed Hillary Clinton for just about everything, including the North American Free Trade Agreement. It is true that Bill Clinton signed this trade agreement when he was president, but surprisingly to many, NAFTA was supported by 75% of Republicans in Congress in 1993 when it was passed, and it was opposed by 60% of Democrats, so it was primarily a Republican deal. The results of this trade agreement were largely the opposite of what its boosters had promised. The non-profit advocacy group Public Citizen reported on the legacy of this trade agreement on the 20th anniversary of NAFTA in 2013, and its findings included the fact that the trade agreement contributed to a \$181 billion trade deficit with Mexico and Canada, a net loss of 1 million U.S. jobs, larger agricultural trade deficits with Mexico and Canada, and more than \$360 million paid to corporations through "investor-state" lawsuits that attacked domestic policies such as bans on toxics, land-use rules, water and forestry policies, and other regulations geared toward environmental protections and the public interest. The report also highlighted how U.S. companies like Chrysler and Caterpillar, who promised to create specific numbers of jobs upon NAFTA's approval, quickly fired U.S. workers and relocated to Mexico. NAFTA trade and investment trends, particularly the displacement of manufacturing jobs, contributed to downward pressure on wages and growing trends toward extreme inequality. A flood of U.S. corn imports, combined with subsidies that favor agribusiness, caused the loss of 2 million farm jobs in Mexico -- and this severely exacerbated illegal migration to the U.S., particularly from poor areas where small farmers were barely able to eke out a living.

Trade should be designed to lift all boats, not to facilitate a race to the bottom on labor and environmental issues.

Conclusion

Remember that when Bill Clinton left office, the economy was booming and there was a budget surplus. Then George W. Bush was president for eight years and he left America in the middle of a severe economic crisis and with 10% unemployment. When Barack Obama left office, there had been a net gain of 15 million jobs and a moderately growing economy, and wages were finally starting to increase after the Bush financial crisis and subsequent recession. We would be much better off with a leader that is more in the Clinton and Obama mold, and NOT the Bush and Trump mold. The huge tax cuts enacted by Republicans since 1981 when Ronald Reagan became president are extremely regressive and anti-egalitarian, and they have contributed to a big risk-laden spike in the

national debt. Sensible Americans should strongly express their disapproval of such actions.

Trump's import tariffs resulted in reactive trade wars and consequentially negative economic outcomes. For these reasons, it is a big risk for "conservative" representatives in Congress to have gone along with his edicts.

I felt strongly before the 2016 election that we should rightly protect President Obama's laudable legacy and NOT elect the manipulative charlatan Donald Trump, for he seemed intent on undermining all the progress that was made under Obama in the previous eight years. Remember, Obama faced reprehensibly staunch opposition by Republicans in Congress to his efforts to create a better country. I have consistently urged all Americans not to vote for representatives in House and Senate who are so self-serving and without an honorable sense of conscience as to support Trump and his divisive hate-mongering attitudes toward others and the wide-ranging risks he posed, and poses, to our democracy and the American people and environmental sanity and world peace.

Most of the British people regretted the fact that a narrow majority of their countrymen allowed right-wing anti-immigrant voices of isolationism to convince them to vote for a Brexit severance of their ties to the European Union. It seemed likely that most Americans and increasing numbers of Trump voters will see that an "America-exit" from the world of nations was likewise an exceedingly bad plan. What we need is a powerful and peaceful progressive revolution, not a dangerous, dark, uncompromising and reactionary revolution led by racist, sexist, nationalist, ethnocentric alt-right white supremacists who ramp up discord and economic disruptions, and exacerbate inequality, and incite violence.

Let's exit our echo chambers, my fellow Americans, and ignore the dividers and media manipulators and exploiters of hot button "wedge" social issues. Let's immunize ourselves against those who stoke fears and hostilities toward others. Let's resoundingly reject those who propagate wild conspiracy theories and engage in character assassination and intimidation and insinuation and innuendo. Open your eyes to what trickles down under the guise of trickle-down ideologies, which are so repetitiously peddled by rich conservatives -- and recognize the far-reaching risks of allowing such propaganda to facilitate the gushing up of private profits into the hands of the few. And let's support leaders who will not let reactionary elements of our society continue to take excessive advantage of the profound sexism embedded in our male-dominated cultures.