

Earth Manifesto



Visionary Insights 2024

March 3, 2024

These writings in the Twelve Books of the Earth Manifesto contain some entertaining and illuminating stories, with a breadth and scope that explores an extraordinary range of ideas. The recipes contained in this manifesto are alone worth the time spent reflecting on the ideas herein, for I am an excellent cook with a good appreciation of delicious flavors and healthy eating. *See Clearly* is by far the most political of my writings -- of necessity, for it addresses issues that broadly affect all of our lives, and all humans in the future, and the fate of life on Earth.

The British writer H. G. Wells expressed a poignantly provocative perspective in 1920, stating: "Civilization is in a race between education and catastrophe. Let us learn the truth and spread it as far and wide as circumstances allow. For the truth is the greatest weapon we have." This is a call for good understanding -- and Right Action!

John Steinbeck and 'Doc' Ed Ricketts had discussed and debated valuably holistic worldviews during their famous voyage on the Sea of Cortez in 1940. One conclusion they reached was that seeing things clearly and with keen insight is a prerequisite to "breaking through" to fuller and more holistic understandings. John Steinbeck saw humankind as "a creature of earth, not a heaven-bound pilgrim", and he believed it was vitally important to see things whole, and to work purposefully to change the way things are, for the better.

I am a strong believer in the power of positive and compelling narratives, and reasonably accurate worldviews. The clarity of such conceptions could help inspire actions to champion causes that auspiciously advance Golden Rule fairness and the common good. True narratives are surely superior to false ones, so it is of serious concern that our beliefs are being profoundly skewed by manipulative propaganda, devious partisan spin, dishonesty, fear mongering, perversely distorted values, tribalism, extremist rhetoric, false conspiracies and misinformation in the news and on social media. Distorting disinformation can be tragically effective in manufacturing consent, and this gives undeserved power (and money) to wealthy interests and deceitful swindling politicians and other puppets of the ruling class. Such malicious propaganda derails our freedom-loving idealistic appreciation of truer fairness in our society -- and allows ruthless leaders to have an easier time imposing their policies and priorities on people.

Perceptive folks say that if you want to change someone's mind, give them facts -- but if you want to change someone's heart, tell them a story. Let me tell you dozens of stories -- and pardon me for including a plethora of facts and persuasive evidence, hoping to transcend their propensity to gum up "sticky" ways of communicating.

Sometimes an idea develops the quality known as "stickiness" by striking a resonant chord within us. Sticky ideas are ones that are generally better understood and more memorable than run-of-the-mill conceptions. They achieve this by relating a good story that generates interest and curiosity, and is simple, engaging, concrete, credible, unexpected, emotionally impactful and maybe even inspirational. The stickier an idea is, the more likely it will be to make people care, and thus to have a lasting impact by actually changing people's opinions or behaviors. Malcolm Gladwell coined the term "stickiness" in his book *The Tipping Point*, and Chip and Dan Heath adapted the idea in their illuminating book, *Made to Stick*, emphasizing the importance of clearly identifying core ideas in all attempts to be effective in setting forth transformative messages and positive plans.

A core understanding in *See Clearly* is that extreme foresight-deficient short-termism is a form of existential insanity. Foresight is our most important human capability, for it gives us an ability to improve the prospects for truly saving ourselves through redemptive clarity of understanding. I envision Prometheus, the pre-Olympian Titan god of forethought in Greek mythology, and imagine this deity looking down on us today in disapproval of our

profligacy, compulsive behaviors and the selfish treachery of irresponsibly scheming leaders and the rich.

My foresight-respecting essay *Intelligent Precautionary Principles Enunciated* contains wise understandings that are an important adjunct to the ideas expressed herein, so they are included by this reference. They can be found linked to the Home Page in the Earth Manifesto online, and are among the core ideas in *Common Sense Revival - Book One of the Earth Manifesto*.

John Fowles wrote in his thought-provoking book *The Aristos* that money in our capitalist materialistic world has become a towering idol in our minds. "Much more than we let philosophies guide our lives," he observed, "we allow obsessions to drive them; and there is no doubt which has been the great driving obsession of the last one hundred and fifty years. It is money. ... Money, not being, governs our time."

Religious folks reading the Bible might wonder why God got so angry at the worship of idols, and at irreligious behaviors people demonstrate -- and at rich people who were going to have a hell of a hard time getting into heaven because of the pathological way they generally treat poor people and neighbors and strangers.

Mark Twain decried "lies, damned lies and statistics", and certainly there is a potentiality for truths to be oddly obscured in our minds due to the agitated ascendance of cartoon-like beliefs and biases. Twain was a great writer and philosopher who concluded his thought-provoking essay *Corn Pone Opinions* with astute observations about Public Opinion: "It is held in reverence. It settles everything. Some think it the Voice of God."

Conservative ideologies like those promoted by the Russian writer and philosopher Ayn Rand -- and by Trump Republicans -- make one think of perspectives written in crayon, for they tend to be overly simplistic, lacking in empathy and one-dimensional -- and poisonously prejudicial against larger humanitarian understandings and social cohesion. Much more accurate and enlightened views of the world are related in this manifesto, though it has yet to have had even a small fraction of the impact of the deviously lying, law violating, bloviating, bullying boasting maniacally narcissistic Trump and his loyalist enablers. It is time for this imbalance to change.

A Titanic Issue

Climate scientists are prophetic seers of future conditions for life on Earth, and they confirm our worst suspicions. They tell us that human activities are irreversibly altering climate conditions everywhere around the globe, and they explain exactly how these outcomes are being caused by unconstrained burning of fossil fuels and rash efforts by timber and agricultural interests to chop down (or burn) large tracts of tropical and temperate forests. They further make it clear that this is causing temperatures and storm intensity to become more extreme, and destabilizing normal precipitation patterns, and causing both worse floods in many areas and more severe droughts in others. California, for instance, has suffered whiplash in recent years as extreme dry periods have been suddenly interrupted by veritable deluges of atmospheric river storms.

Climate scientists also tell us how these activities are making wildfires more frequent, widespread and terribly destructive, and causing glaciers and icecaps to melt, and changing the temperature and chemical composition of the oceans, and causing sea levels to slowly but inexorably rise. And they warn us about dire consequences associated with these changes -- for us and for life on Earth, right now and in the years to come.

In November 2017, fifteen thousand scientists from 184 countries issued a stark "warning to humanity" in which they predicted there will be "widespread misery and catastrophic biodiversity loss" if we fail to take serious steps to alter our heedless trajectory. Then in late 2019, more than 11,000 scientists issued a fresh warning that a climate emergency is taking place, declaring that dramatic remedial action is necessary. And the latest IPCC reports in March 2023 confirm that we are in a "code red" situation, on the verge of irreversible changes.

Faced with the daunting dilemmas about what to do with respect to the aggregate activities that are causing this destabilization of the global climate, the worst possible plan for the USA is to try "to squash action in every other country, too." Yet that is what Donald Trump did by pulling the U.S. out of the Paris climate accords. As Bill McKibben observed, "It was as shameless a moment as ever in our recent history: the country that produces more carbon than any other announcing that it was now the only country on Earth not willing to make even a modest international commitment to solving climate change."

Since the United States has spewed more climate-destabilizing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than any other nation, and done so almost every year for more than a century, it is morally wrong for business leaders and Republican politicians to arrogantly, unjustly and belligerently oppose taking responsible remedial steps to prevent or mitigate resulting harms. We should rightly be paying much larger sums of money into the UN Green Climate Fund to help compensate those in every country adversely affected by disastrous damages occurring as temperatures climb and extreme weather events proliferate, and sea levels accelerate their rate of rising.

The fact that these harms will prove to be irreversible in the timeframe of human history makes it especially wrong to allow profits made by polluters to be given higher priority than the future well-being of humanity. It is an ultimately wrong course of action to allow corporate entities to grab privileges to foist so many externalized costs and damages and liabilities onto everyone in the future.

In December 2009, 100 prominent business leaders put a full-page ad in the New York Times urging President Obama and Congress to pass effective laws and regulations to prevent anthropogenic climate change. The ad was insightful in its understandings: "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and the planet."

Catastrophic and irreversible consequences! Almost fifteen years later, we are in the ominously advancing stages of a global climate crisis, and here's why. We live in a world of cause and effect. Greenhouse gas warming in the northern latitudes of the Arctic is taking place more than twice as fast as warming elsewhere on Mother Earth. This causes reflective white sea ice to melt, an annual melting that is taking place earlier in the year than ever before in human history. This is ominously amplifying climate-disrupting feedback loops.

These feedback loops are releasing more heat energy into the climate system, speeding up global warming trends and amplifying El Niño and La Niña conditions. This is having the woeful effect of destabilizing the jet stream and causing disturbing perturbations in the Polar Vortex. These basic changes in ecological conditions rashly upset the benign balance of normal temperatures and precipitation around the globe, proving very costly.

As energetic rays of the sun impinge on the exposed wine dark sea, the waters absorb the sun's heat, causing them to warm. Early summer sea surface temperatures in 2019 were a stunning 9 degrees warmer than usual in the Arctic. This in turn caused the melting of vast regions of frozen permafrost -- which covers about one-fourth of all exposed land in the Northern Hemisphere. When frozen permafrost thaws, microbes are activated and flourish, converting organic matter into methane and carbon dioxide. Methane is a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere much more effectively than carbon dioxide, and both these gases are dangerously accumulating right now. The extent of this thaw is taking place 70 years earlier than climate scientists had been predicting. And enormous wildfires raged in the past few summers, drying out peat lands in Alaska and Siberia, and ravaging the Amazon, "the lungs of the planet." In early 2020, Australia suffered the worst wildfires ever in its history. And in the last few years, Canada and California and other places have suffered the most extensive wildfires ever in recorded history.

Stunningly, 4 of the 100 business leaders who signed the 2009 ad in the New York Times were Donald Trump and Ivanka, Don Junior and Eric Trump. It is unconscionable for these selfish schemers to know that failing to act will cause catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity, yet to have chosen to ally themselves with giant fossil fuel corporations and rich conservatives to get money and gain power. They parleyed this treacherous collaboration into profit, power and control, drastically contrary to the best interests of the people, and thereby committed outrages against true fairness, decency, integrity, ecological sanity and intelligent action. This is mercenary and self-serving, and reveals how irresponsible the Trump family has been in pushing its agenda. This is contemptuous greed-driven self-centered heedlessness and hubris, and a tragic lack of mindfulness. It sadly reflects a glaring lack of honesty and humility, and a sad nadir of sane being.

An African proverb cited at the bottom of the 2009 ad read, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." The Trump family has nefariously elected to go alone, with ignominiously base motives, on the backs of rich conservatives and politically complicit evangelical fundamentalists, with fervent support from a deluded, dominion demanding, narrow-minded and blindly loyal tribal cult-like political base. This is a Tragedy of the Commons outcome that prevents us from going far together, in unity, for the greater good.

Consequential ethics passes judgment that knowing how harmful the consequences of an action will be, and then doing it by usurping and abusing power to greedily gain advantages -- and artificially maximized profits -- is sinful, and all but evil. This makes mere con man hucksters seem veritably virtuous in contrast. It is practically unbelievable what depths of expediency and betrayal scheming politicians will go to, to get money and power.

We have a vital need for strong responsible leadership to address the unfolding climate crisis, and we must chart a new course to save ourselves from base motives. We need to take effective steps to stave off the worst scenarios of incalculably costly and deadly impacts that the chaotic "conservative" crony establishment promotes. Adaptive change must come, facilitated by powerful incentives to make sure that remedial action is guided by wisdom, inclusiveness and sustainability. We need breakthroughs in human perception, understanding and integrity, and concerted efforts in every arena of the economy, especially including transportation, clean energy, forestry, mining, agriculture, animal husbandry, construction, and the military-industrial complex.

As a creative gal, I have enjoyed specializing in good design. Like Elizabeth Warren says, "I've got a plan for that." See some such good ideas in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

Let's mobilize like our leaders did when they committed our country to fly to the moon with the Apollo Project in the 1960s. We need visionary inspiration similar to that exhibited by our leaders when the United States spent the equivalent of \$100 billion on the Marshall Plan in the aftermath of the Second World War in order to achieve the laudable goal of helping millions of people recover in war-devastated Western Europe. Right now we need a far-reaching Green New Deal that helps us cope sensibly with the climate crisis and rectify the great inequities and risks inherent in growing extremes of inequality and climate injustices. Let's think big!

One consequential outcome of intensifying climate instability is that it increases the likelihood of conflicts between people, causing spikes in numbers of desperate refugees from countries where economic despair reigns, and instability, and there are many disasters like floods, droughts, failed crops and depleted resources. Internecine strife accompanies this, along with wars and faltering states. Right-wing conservatives who deny that the climate is changing due to human activities are diabolically using hyped-up sentiments against immigrants and refugees to strengthen their grips on power -- and their ability to abuse it -- in many nations around the world. This is morally wrong.

The American people have despised despotism ever since colonial days, and though megaphones are blaring right now to rationalize profiteering and authority-abusing rule, a majority of people in our liberty-loving republic see through the hyper-manipulative deceptions, political corruption, swindles, cronyism and mind-numbing distractions, and recognize that we are all like frogs in a pot of water being brought to a poaching simmer, with too many fools cheering on the schemers. The outcome is an insidiously destructive form of Tragedy of the Commons.

Populism and White Nationalism

Democratic fairness is a common good. It promotes the general welfare, social cohesion and a more perfect union. Populist energies can be marvelous as grassroots movements to inspire and enable courageous efforts to rectify injustices, reject wrongful authority and prevent despotism. In stark contrast, rabble-rousing far-right populist leaders manifest a false-prophet patina of rectitude, while cunningly manipulating prejudices. And they exploit emotions and fears, and scapegoat immigrants. Despots and rich conservatives take advantage of such ruses to co-opt passions that should rightly be channeled into more widely beneficial common causes.

The Black Lives Matter movement demanded fairer treatment and an end to police brutality, so it is ironic that many poor white folks, betrayed and impoverished by their white supremacist overlords, seem to want to have someone to be superior to, to pay forward injustices to, "since nothing so elevates a dispossessed farmer or a factory worker on relief as to have some race, any race, on which he can look down", as Sinclair Lewis satirically expressed it in *It Can't Happen Here*. Poor whites resent the injustices they have been subjected to, like a dearth of fair educational and work opportunities, or unaffordably expensive health care, or being unnecessarily made to suffer the indignities of being victims of cruel fates. It is thus bizarre that many of them choose to support MAGA Republican politicians despite their villainous racially-exploitive tactics. It is bizarre that they continue to support the most dangerous criminal con man in U.S. history, a race-baiting betrayer of public trust and wrecker of

chaotic and misguided "leadership" -- who presents a grave and growing threat to our democracy, personal freedoms and prospects for reasonable democratic fairness, liberty and justice for all.

In unity, *We the People* would embrace neighborly attitudes of Golden Rule respect and cross-cultural tolerance, and enjoy a much more auspicious atmosphere of amity. And the 99% of Americans would come together behind fairness-championing leaders to rein in the predatory swindles of the top 1%. Together, we could soon put a halt to much of the kowtowing to wealthy capitalist masters, and end the unaffordable generosity of the public allowing them to get away with public debt swindles and their anti-egalitarian, harmful and repressive agenda.

Rabble-rousing demagoguery is effective because it is an easy way to provoke people's anger and prejudices by hijacking their emotions and scaring them. Authoritarian swagger appeals to blind followers of authority figures and their instincts toward tribal affiliation and obedience to alpha male posturing. Many people are overly susceptible to propaganda that claims the mantle of being patriotic, even when it betrays foundational principles of our democratic republic and ethical underpinnings of the values for which they stand. Patriotism isn't just the last refuge of scoundrels, but one of the first subterfuges of emotion-manipulating demagogues.

Right-wing populism achieves its goals by taking shrewd advantage of human nature. Since it is our evolutionary propensity to affiliate with tribal groups against others in "out-groups", this feature of human nature is today becoming an adaptation-hindering instinct that is proving to be contrary to the greater good.

America First nationalism embodies a cynical circular strategy that seeks to gain power by scaring people about amped up dangers posed by immigrants, and then reducing foreign assistance to unstable countries from which people are forced to flee because leaders in those places are failing to provide their people with security and opportunity. This strategy is absurdly myopic, creating new surges of desperate immigrants that strengthen increasingly strident calls by demagogues who scapegoat immigrants and demand that walls be built and public funds be appropriated to build harsh detention centers to staunch the migration of desperate people. This outcome is accompanied by an insistence that seekers of refuge and asylum be treated as criminals. And in early 2024, Trump and his enabling sycophants are refusing to address the problem, torpedoing remedial legislation and preferring to blame President Biden and Democrats for issues related to immigrants.

George Shultz, Secretary of State under Ronald Reagan, once said we should invest more foreign aid in Central America, rather than cutting it off, as Trump did in 2019. This would be a better way to reduce the number of people trying to cross our southern border. In a July 2019 Op-Ed in the *Wall Street Journal* titled *Make Central America Great Again*, Shultz wrote that illegal immigration from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras is understandable. "If you were there, you would leave too. Aliens often come for the economic opportunities in the U.S., and many times are fleeing crime and violence. President Trump has urged the three countries to stop this illegal migration, but it is doubtful that they have the capacity to do so on their own."

His sound advice was for our leaders to address the real causes of this humanitarian crisis, not just to rashly and uncompassionately exacerbate the problems by reducing aid to these countries and callously portraying desperate immigrants and refugees as threatening criminals -- and cruelly treating them like dirt.

A Big Picture serious problem with white nationalism is that it violates the Golden Rule, a great social cohesion-inducing fairness-oriented principle of reciprocal treatment. It does so pathetically when it succeeds by perpetuating discrimination against oppressed groups in order to cement in place a ruthless hegemony of wealthy puppet masters and their collaborators over the masses. White nationalists favor disadvantaging the majority of Americans, especially Blacks, Hispanics and poor people -- and women. This discrimination is notably focused against people who have already been given extremely short shrift in our society -- against folks who have suffered mightily at the hands of prejudice-exploiting, racist and sexist white male supremacists. Unfortunately, this form of fundamentalism gives excess influence to organizations like the profit-prepossessed National Rifle Association (the NRA), which opposes even sensible steps to address the lethal epidemic of gun violence that diminishes the personal safety of millions of people in the USA today.

Human survival is by definition the moral good for our species. We may not be likely to drive our species to eternal extinction in the next 100 years, but how will we survive a thousand years, or ten thousand? These spans of time are a mere instant in the incomprehensibly long eons of geologic time. We have been recklessly hacking away at the

branches and roots of the tree of life, and have already contributed to wiping out more than two-thirds of the populations of thousands of species of mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and amphibians -- since 1970!! See the details of this shocking information, as summarized in the latest World Wildlife Fund biennial Living Planet Reports released in October 2022.

The world is in a risky spot right now, partly because Republicans have thrown many obstacles in the path of necessary remedial measures. They are waging ruthless assaults on the environment for narrow purposes of maximizing short-term profits and funneling most of these profits to the few. While Trump was in office, he and his Cabinet appointees -- like disgraced former EPA Chief Scott Pruitt and his replacement, former coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler -- tried to roll back, delay and weaken protections of the environment that had been in effect for decades. These safeguards were designed to keep the air and water safe, and protect people and the health of ecosystems, and prevent destabilization of the global climate. These persons engaged in excessively heedless activities by facilitating damages to habitats, overfishing the seas, building in zones that are prone to flooding, and stoking tribal fights with others, obtusely opposing more generous funding for healthcare and family planning programs, and failing to take steps to ensure our home planet remains habitable.

Let us stop failing to see the forest for the trees. There is a powerfully determinative Population Connection between the global ecological challenges we face and the overwhelming needs and greed of a human population that has grown past an unsustainable total of 8 billion persons, having more than tripled since 1950.

The Great Four Freedoms

Think about the four freedoms that President Franklin D. Roosevelt set forth in January 1941, which he stated should be given to people "everywhere in the world" -- the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom of religious belief, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear. Fast forward just over 80 years, and it behooves us to assess how the USA is doing with these liberties in the era of MAGA Republicanism.

Look what Republicans gave us from 2017 through 2021. While we still have fairly good freedom of speech rights, whistleblowers and inspectors generals who exposed corporate and government misdeeds are not adequately protected, and protestors who courageously speak out against structural racism, police brutality and malfeasance by politicians are often treated badly. Also, conservatives have found new respect for a perverse facet of freedoms of speech, expanding it to mean the right of religious people to disregard rights of others, especially the rights of women and gay people. This is a grotesque violation of the Golden Rule principle. Conservatives act like it is an inviolable right for rich people and big corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money to dominate our political process, both in elections and in lobbying for laws that narrowly benefit themselves, despite this being harmful to the public. Status of the freedom of speech -- Grade = B, for the general populace, and an F relative to Blacks and Latinos having their voices heard and respected.

As for the freedom of religious belief, this is reasonably well assured, though Trump Republicans often villainize and scapegoat Muslims, and want to ban people from coming to the U.S. from Muslim-dominant countries. Also, right-wing Christian nationalists pose a grave danger to our democracy. Status of religious freedoms: Grade = C.

With regard to the freedom from want, inequalities have almost never been as extreme as they are in the USA today, with about 40 million Americans living in poverty. And things got worse during the global pandemic. Corporations have made things unnecessarily difficult for workers by opposing minimum wage increases and collective bargaining rights of wage earners. In addition, many partisan conservative judges are excessively championing the interests of Capital over Labor in this long-fought battle. The sound of the mantra, "jobs, jobs, jobs" rings in our ears, and an apparition floats into our collective consciousness of this as a cartoon-like distraction of working people from the fact that the top dogs in our society are monopolizing almost all the gains from increases in worker productivity in the past 40 years. Republican politicians have gone rogue by further mortgaging the future to make a series of debt-financed tax cuts that mainly benefit big shareholders and the top 1%. This is creating powerful pressure to slash spending on the social safety net that gives millions of people greater freedom from want. Status of the freedom from want -- Grade = C, with a D-minus relative to the bottom 50% of people.

As for the freedom from fear, since the pandemic virus has killed more than 1,200,000 Americans from March 2020 through March 2024, and gun violence is spiking, and duplicitous Republicans have politicized public health measures like wearing masks and getting vaccinated, this has caused angry resentments and heightened fears and deep discontent and destabilizing social unrest. These conditions have been exacerbated by schemers exploiting people's emotions, stoking insecurities, pushing big lies about election fraud, and promoting falsehoods, devious spin, propaganda and debunked conspiracy theories in order to grab unmerited power. Status of the freedom from fear -- Grade = C, with an F with respect to Blacks and Latinos, who are unsafe in many communities for all of their lives.

Rev. Al Sharpton gave a eulogy at the memorial service for George Floyd in Houston, and he used a provocative refrain that echoed with a visceral resonance for oppressed people everywhere: "Get your knee off our necks!"

Foreign Interference in Our Elections

Since our Founders loved liberty and hated despotic abuses of power, it is pathologically wrong for partisan politicians today to give higher priority to narrow Party advantages than to loyalty to democracy and the general welfare. We must clamor for real election integrity, and honestly fairer representation of the common good.

In Ayn Rand's monumental novel, *The Fountainhead*, Howard Roark defiantly bucked established precedents. This prompted the dean of the architecture school to say, "My dear fellow, who will let you?" In response, Roark declared, "That's not the point. The point is, who will stop me?" This question, according to climate activist Bill McKibben, "may turn out to be the crucial question of the human future." Who will stop the saboteurs of future well-being? How will we recover from the "conservative" corporate court capture scheme that has bought an illegitimate supermajority on the Supreme Court, and is now running roughshod over the people?

It is a vastly more rational, sensible and intelligent goal to seek to achieve the greatest good for the largest number of people over the longest period of time, rather than to allow schemers to maximize profits for the few in the short run. It should be our top objective to improve the overall quality of life. We surely should give greater respect to persons in future generations and those who see that it is ultimately wrong to push anti-choice policies that serve to maximize the quantity of babies to be born, regardless of their circumstances.

The job of president and leaders in Congress should be to represent all Americans. But Republicans succeed in gaining power only by dividing people, with help from rich persons and lavishly funded distorting propaganda broadcast by emotion-manipulating toxic media outlets like Fox News. They use deceitful rhetoric to hijack people's feelings and stoke their resentments and prejudices to grab power. Unity threatens their domineering influence, gained through a long litany of illegitimate means, so we must come together to diminish that control. We should reject efforts to undermine our democracy, and prevent MAGA Republicans from grabbing advantages by allowing Vladimir Putin or other foreign leaders ever again influence outcomes of our elections.

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

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

Trump got away with welcoming hacked information by WikiLeaks in the 2016 elections, which Russian operatives used to divide the American people by micro-targeting unsuspecting folks on social media, stoking their fears, amplifying their resentments, exploiting racial prejudices and spreading inflammatory conspiracy theories. Trump seems to relish nothing more than dividing our country along lines of political leanings, religion, gender, race,

"tribe", sexual orientation and immigration status. Co-conspiring officials in his administration were complicit in this effort, along with those in his campaigns and self-serving enablers in Congress, all of whom are acting as puppets to the ruling class and big corporations, often in collaboration with autocrats abroad.

South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg directed a statement to sitting Republican congressmen during a presidential debate in July 2019, saying: "... if you are watching this at home, and you are a Republican member of Congress, consider the fact that when the sun sets on your career, and they are writing your story -- of all the good and bad things you did -- the thing you will be remembered for is whether in *this* moment, with *this* president, you found the courage to stand up to him, or you continued to put party over country." Too many choose the later.

"Moscow Mitch" McConnell has blocked efforts to protect the United States from past and future cyber-attacks by pro-Trump Russian operatives, or by other foreign nations trying to interfere in our elections. His actions clearly demonstrate that he is not a true patriot, as he reveals in his fealty to an overarching goal of triumphing through skullduggery to give him and wealthy conservatives and Republicans the ability to continue abusing Congressional and judicial power over the people. He values this socially harmful ability much more than common good goals and honorable American values like honesty, integrity, democratic fairness and reasonably expansive concepts of liberty and justice for all. He even opposed creating a bipartisan commission to investigate the circumstances of the January 6 coup attempt, knowing it would make Republicans "look bad."

Let's throw these cunning cheating puppet politicians out of office, especially the worst of them -- Mitch McConnell, Mike Johnson, Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, Jim Jordan, Matt Gaetz, Marjorie Taylor Greene and their ilk in the Sedition Caucus that is still trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

"Not a puppet, not a puppet", Trump pathetically pouted in 2016, posturing in a comically threatening manner, though ever since then he has come across like an angry spoiled child with Malignant Narcissistic Character Disorder. The rude results of his deceitful, undemocratic and thuggish behaviors are wide-ranging and far-reaching, and are unacceptably detrimental to millions of Americans alive right now, and to countless numbers of people in the future who will be affected even more consequentially as the "long emergency" to come unfolds.

The Bottom Line

We Americans should rise up as one and throw Trumpian Republicans and MAGA maniacs out of power on account of their blatant violations of most of the primary purposes of the U.S. Constitution, which include promoting the general welfare and the blessings of liberty while preventing despotically-inclined and illegitimately unfair rulers from seizing power and abusing it. It is unacceptable to have conspiring self-serving manipulative leaders do the bidding of elite factions and wealthy people, thereby putting the health, safety and collective well-being of the people -- and our national security -- at unnecessarily serious risk. Trump wants to be dictator, and wreak vengeance on anyone who stands against him, and he represents a chaos choice in our national politics.

The whole litany of these violations of propriety is outrageous, as spelled out in detail throughout *See Clearly*. Curiously, these "injuries and usurpations" vastly exceed the relative pittance of complaints that our colonial ancestors bemoaned in the Declaration of Independence as reasons they gave for cutting ties with the British.

The devil is in the details, as they say, and the details of the abuses of power that took place between January 2017 and January 2021 in the USA are extraordinarily damning. Damning from the standpoint of considerations of ethics, morality, public health, the general welfare, legality, legitimacy, constitutionality, national security, and the health of the environmental commons. We should honestly examine a big picture summary of details of this extremely unfair assault on Right Action, and be motivated to seek common cause with all wronged people by demanding really big structural changes in our politics and how corporations are governed.

The influence of blaring megaphones, lavishly financed by Big Money, is overwhelming in our society today. Rich people have succeeded in getting large tax cuts for themselves as a top policy priority, and they are preventing higher tax rates from being assessed on levels of annual incomes over \$250,000 each year. The vote on this would be 98 to 2 in favor of those who would be helped by more progressive tax and spending plans, yet the top 2% of taxpayers continue to get away with imposing regressive Tax Cut scams on the populace, financed by public debt, as they have since Ronald Reagan reduced top tax rates by an incredible 60% in the 1980s.

When Republicans rammed through yet another massive debt-financed tax cut in December 2017, they designed it in ways virtually certain to make inequality much worse. A U.N. expert noted in an official report that the tax law was driven by a strategy that "seems to be tailor-made to maximize inequality. ... It seems driven by contempt, and sometimes even hatred, for the poor, along with a 'winner takes all' mentality."

People must fight for a fairer national agenda, because those who oppose a progressive restructuring of our economy and more inclusive politics are powerful, obstinate, uncompromising and overly committed to protecting advantages for themselves in our rigged political and economic systems. These abusers of power and influence work craftily to discredit or crush those who resist their domineering hegemony over the masses.

Big Ideas for Rebuilding American Democracy

Elections have far-reaching consequences, and it is crucial for fairness in a democracy to drive up voter turnout to defeat divide-and-conquer tactics and make elections about what kind of people we want to be, and what kind of future we want to create. We Americans share many values, and damnable damage is done and vulnerabilities are heightened when power abusers aren't held accountable for trampling on cherished values and civil rights.

Donald Trump, while complaining about the Mueller investigation, falsely told a room full of teenagers at a Turning Point USA Teen Student Action Summit that the Constitution gives him "the right to do whatever I want." Note -- IT DOES NOT. No one should be above the law. No one is above the law in a healthy democracy.

We need to save democracy itself. American democracy is under serious assault, and the majority of the people must win back power and make big reforms to save it. The first step was to take control of the Senate and Presidency in the 2020 elections, and "Step two is reforming American democracy -- but what does that mean?"

"Democracy" is a big issue. It was a good step, back in March 2019, when the House passed a *For the People Act* that included many common sense reforms like campaign finance limits, making improvements to election security, and expanding the right to vote and the ease to do it. Now similar legislation is before Congress, and the filibuster in the U.S. Senate should be eliminated for this issue to pass it, to counter the many voter suppression laws that Republicans are enacting in state legislatures in the wake of the 2020 elections.

Bill McKibben makes astute observations about "leverage" in his book *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out*. He makes it clear that humanity is seriously off kilter and may discover that it is terminally risky, in effect, to live too high on the hog. McKibben writes that the worst possible plan with respect to our impacts on altering the global climate would be to do two things: (1) to throw obstacles in the way of dealing rationally with the accelerating costs of the climate crisis by sowing doubt about the reality and causes and consequences of the crisis; and (2) to try to obstruct remedial action in every other country on Earth. Trump Republicans have been shamefully pursuing this course of action by allowing fossil fuel industries to exert a corrupting hegemony over our national policies and priorities.

James Hansen gave a startling clarion call in testimony to Congress in July 1988 about the risks of global warming. One month later, "Exxon's public affairs manager recommended in an internal memo that the company 'emphasize the uncertainty' in the scientific data about climate change. Thus began the most consequential lie in human history." So writes Bill McKibben in *Falter*. "Within a year, Exxon, Chevron, Shell, Amoco and others had joined together to form what they called the Global Climate Coalition, 'to coordinate business participation in the international policy debate' on climate change". This launched "conservatives" on a track of climate denial and opposition to a cost-internalizing tax on fossil fuels, thus weakening efforts to mitigate climate change. These *Merchants of Doubt* even hired some of the same lawyers who had propped up the tobacco industry against the health harms it has caused to countless numbers of people by "catapulting the propaganda".

Disinformation campaigns by fossil fuel industries about climate change are "predatory delays", according to the environmental writer Alex Steffens. He was referring to efforts to block or slow needed change "in order to make money off unsustainable, unjust systems in the meantime." These profit-prepossessed delays to taking necessary climate action will prove to be unconscionably costly.

Koch Industries continues to rake in huge profits from fossil fuels while foisting costs and harms on the public. The Koch network of wealthy people spends hundreds of millions of dollars on elections and funding for junk

science that seeks to spread doubt about the deleterious impacts and threats posed by the climate crisis. Such fossil fuel industry apologists and zealots for excessively irresponsible profiteering apparently believe in their own dogmatic ideology more strongly than they believe in scientific disciplines like physics, biology and ecology. Greed-driven corporate "libertarians" like the many billionaires in the Koch network push their anti-reform good governance-undermining propaganda with such zeal that it is creating severe climate risks that will contribute to causing incalculable and unacceptable damages to the future well-being of all of humanity and life on Earth.

Their top goal is to maximize private profits, and do so by engaging in a public debt swindle that is excessively irresponsible because it mortgages the future with a heavy burden of public debt, AND allows extensive harms and huge costs to be externalized onto people in the future. This stimulates wasteful exploitation of resources and stokes fires of depletionary consumerism. This gambit is perversely perpetuated to mainly benefit the few, who have no need for the wealth generated. As wealth is more and more narrowly concentrated, so is power -- and this power is reprehensibly abused to continue this über scam. This is an ultimately harsh form of inter-generational treachery that damages future prospects, and is thus morally wrong and ecologically insane.

It is crazy to give corporate entities domineering power, since these organizational tools are mainly designed to maximize profits by taking advantage of working people and exploiting natural resources, mindlessly depleting them. Corporate entities strive to externalize large amounts of costs and risks, and abuse the influence of the money they generate to corrupt our decision-making and skew our national priorities. Their strategies include hyper promoting the products they produce and services they offer, and bombarding everyone with a barrage of suggestively persuasive advertising and emotion-hijacking political spin and propaganda.

Environmental organizations are trying to hold big polluters accountable through strategic campaigns in the media, and in corporate shareholder meetings, and in the corrupted halls of government. In one instance of this, the organization Corporate Accountability publicizes a Corporate Hall of Shame to try to force big businesses to pursue more socially responsible courses of action. "More must be done."

In an surprising development in August 2019, 180 CEO members of the Business Roundtable declared that they intended to try to ensure a more inclusive prosperity in the U.S., setting forth a new modern standard for corporate responsibility. Instead of the long-standing main focus on maximizing profit for corporate CEOs and shareholders, these business leaders stated an intention to strengthen commitments to other stakeholders by dealing more fairly and ethically with customers, employees, suppliers and people in various communities, and they asserted they would give greater consideration to a healthy and sustainable environment.

The glaring light of extreme inequality and extensive harms resulting from the narrow focus by corporate entities on maximizing profits prompted this remarkable about-face by members of the Business Roundtable, a group of CEOs of big U.S. corporations that promotes pro-business public policies. "Each of our stakeholders is essential," they honorably say. "We commit to deliver value to all of them, for the future success of our companies, our communities and our country." There is, of course, compelling reason for skepticism about the real courses of actions corporate executives are pursuing, and will pursue -- including monopoly "greedflation" and "shrinkflation" - - but responsible action along these lines would be positive. Let's hold them accountable!

Racism and Sexism Persist in the Supposed Land of the Free

The brutal killing of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, by four white police officers in Minneapolis, caused a paroxysm of widespread peaceful street protests that were marred by many instances of violence, property damage and looting by bad actors. Public dialogue and discord proliferated around issues of racial injustices and police brutality, and Donald Trump used the protests and social unrest to threaten martial law. He inflamed divisions with rhetoric like a tweet describing protesters as "THUGS", and attacked the "very weak Radical Left" mayor of Minneapolis, and threateningly declared that when "the looting starts, the shooting starts."

A week later, as protests continued in more than 100 cities around the country and the world, Trump said, "As we speak, I am dispatching thousands and thousands of heavily armed soldiers, military personnel and law enforcement officers to stop the rioting, looting, vandalism, assaults and the wanton destruction of property." Soon thereafter, Attorney General Bill Barr tear-gassed peaceful protesters to clear the streets near the White House so that

Trump and an entourage of officials and military brass could walk across Lafayette Park to St. John's Episcopal Church to stage a photo op of Trump grimly holding a Bible aloft to demonstrate his support of strict law-and-order and threaten military action and "dominance". In this bizarre show, he was doubling down on his divide-to-conquer tactics, reactionary authoritarianism, white supremacy and toxic Christian nationalism.

Look what has been happening here! Republicans have been spending hundreds of millions of dollars to promote national policies like opposition to affordable healthcare that particularly disadvantage black people, brown people and women. Social conservatives who indignantly protest that they are not racist or sexist are being disingenuous when they act, in effect, to support politicians and figures in positions of authority who abuse the power of their influence to perpetuate a system that is unjust, oppressive and deeply discriminatory.

Getting votes by using emotion-hijacking demagogic tactics is wrong, because conservatives use this Divide and Conquer strategy to torpedo governance "of the people, by the people and for the people." It is sad to see these coldly calculating people striving to trump the common good, to replace it with an illegitimate hegemony of authority-abusing Trojan horse politicians and their puppeteers, like the crony capitalist billionaire Charles Koch and his right-wing cause championing ilk. Social conservatives, thou doth protest too much thy rectitude. You don't deserve respect when you support politicians who impose harmful policies on the people.

There is a deep level of deceit, corruption, fraud and anti-egalitarian intrigue in Republican gerrymandering, voter suppression, fear-mongering, scapegoating, cunning blame shifting, devious propaganda and hypocritical religious fundamentalism. Conservatives can't be trusted to rule equitably or reasonably or fiscally responsibly, for they don't seem to care or be cognizant of the pathological impacts that their intrigues are having against democracy, personal liberties and the common good.

Rule by plutocratic interests has increasingly become the Republican's modus operandi. Not only do they try to restrict voting and gerrymander, but they also engage in a long litany of unscrupulous tactics that show they are not trustworthy, and zealously use any means necessary to grab power and abuse it. We have seen what's possible when a con man like Trump takes advantage of these demagogic anti-democratic tactics. "Trump has not hesitated to embrace white nationalists and give racists power -- just look at Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller and Jeff Sessions -- which is exactly why it's prime time for *Roe v. Wade* to come up on the chopping block."

The editorial board of the Baltimore Sun newspaper, a city fixture since 1837, joined many Maryland residents and leaders condemning Trump tweets that called Rep. Elijah Cummings' district a "rat and rodent infested mess" where "no human" would want to live. The scathing editorial highlighted Baltimore's strengths, and accused Trump of deploying "the most emotional and bigoted of arguments" against a Democratic African American congressman who represented a district that happens to have a majority of Black people.

The Editorial staff at the Baltimore Sun took strong exception to inflammatory rhetorical attacks Trump made against Baltimore in July 2019, and they did not mince words. "Better to have a few rats than to be one," the editors declared in their headline. "It's not hard to see what's going on here. The congressman has been a thorn in this president's side, and Mr. Trump sees attacking African American members of Congress as good politics, as it both warms the cockles of the white supremacists who love him and causes so many of the thoughtful people who don't to scream. President Trump bad-mouthed Baltimore in order to make a point that his border camps are 'clean, efficient & well run,' which, of course, they are not -- unless you are fine with all the overcrowding, squalor, cages and deprivation to be found in what the Department of Homeland Security's own inspector-general once called 'a ticking time bomb' under the Trump administration."

Notably, Elijah Cummings served as Chair of the House Oversight Committee that led investigations into Trump's illicit activities, foreign intrigue and crooked finances. It is a vital Constitutional duty for House committees and the legislative branch to exercise good oversight and enforce accountability on egregious abuses of power in the executive branch. Trump always tries to defend himself from his manifest guilt by vindictively attacking others, employing many lawyers and co-conspirators, and in office refused to comply with Congressional subpoenas. In this, he enlisted brainwashed supporters and dutiful treachery-committing loyalists.

[Kudos to the Wise Theodore Roosevelt](#)

In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt declared in a speech that "malefactors of great wealth" had been responsible for causing much financial stress and widespread hardship around the world in the Panic of 1907. He decried rich persons who abused power by trying to "discredit the policy of the Government and thereby secure a reversal of that policy, so that they may enjoy unmolested the fruits of their own evil-doing." Roosevelt continued, "In the last six years we have shown that there is no individual and no corporation so powerful that he or it stands above the possibility of punishment under the law. Our aim is to try to do something effective; our purpose is to stamp out the evil; we shall seek to find the most effective device for this purpose; and we shall then use it, whether the device can be found in existing law or must be supplied by new legislation. Moreover, when we thus take action against the wealth which works iniquity, we are acting in the interest of every man of property who acts decently and fairly by his fellows."

"Experience has shown that it is necessary to exercise a far more efficient control than at present over the business use of those vast fortunes ... When the Constitution was created, none of the conditions of modern business existed. They are wholly new and we must create new agencies to deal effectively with them. There is no objection in the minds of this people to any man's earning any amount of money if he does it honestly and fairly, if he gets it as the result of special skill and enterprise, as a reward of ample service actually rendered. But there is a growing determination that no man shall amass a great fortune by special privilege, by chicanery and wrong-doing, so far as it is in the power of legislation to prevent; and that a fortune, however amassed, shall not have a business use that is antisocial."

Echoing with resonance down through the generations, the courageous "trust-busting" Theodore Roosevelt added the observation, "There is unfortunately a certain number of our fellow-countrymen who seem to accept the view that unless a man can be proved guilty of some particular crime he shall be counted a good citizen, no matter how infamous the life he has led, no matter how pernicious his doctrines or his practices." Wow. That perspective casts a light of infamy on the villainous Trump, his felonious actions and his malign administration.

"Many men of large wealth have been guilty of conduct which from the moral standpoint is criminal, and their misdeeds are to a peculiar degree reprehensible, because those committing them have no excuse of want, of poverty, of weakness and ignorance to offer as partial atonement." Heck, even the Bible says folks like this will never have a chance of getting into Christian heaven because of their decidedly unchristian behaviors.

Theodore Roosevelt also stated, "Men must be judged with reference to the age in which they dwell, and the work they have to do." Fast forward to today from Roosevelt's 1907 speech, and Trump Republicans should be judged harshly for their failure to honestly rein in corporate abuses of power, and for their disdain for taking responsible steps to address the costs and growing risks and threats of climate change. And they should be renounced for their profound failure to make our society healthier, fairer, safer, happier and more secure, and to protect ecosystems and public lands, and to ensure a more sustainable future. Having rendered this due judgment, and seeing that these politicians are refusing to stop pushing their backwards agenda, or to alter their illicit actions, voters must join together and throw them out of office.

A media genius named Sam McClure assembled a group of investigative journalists who electrified the country at the beginning of the 20th century by exposing the plundering of America. Theodore Roosevelt cracked down on those responsible, the "malefactors of great wealth", and progressives at the time promoted the middle-class dream -- what really helped make America great. Roosevelt needed, says historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, "a seismic shift in national consciousness" to succeed in making reforms, and he needed the media and clear-seeing outspoken journalists and muckraking writers to help achieve this. Today, let us see clearly, and come together in common cause to improve the general welfare by altering the wrong aspects of the status quo!

Truly,
Tiffany Twain
March 3, 2024