

Earth Manifesto



"My Country, Right or Wrong"

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
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Mark Twain made extraordinary observations about loyalty, unthinking patriotism and imperialistic nationalism in his essay *Glances at History*, in which he called the phrase *My Country, Right or Wrong* "an insult to the nation." He wrote this piece, quoted below in full, in 1906, about four years before he died.

The great philosophic author and celebrity had weighed in on these issues of loyalty and patriotism almost 20 years earlier in his 1889 novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, when he wrote, "You see my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions, or its office holders. The country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing; it is the thing to watch over, and care for, and be loyal to; institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body from winter, disease and death. To be loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to worship rags, to die for rags -- this is loyalty to unreason, it is pure animal; it belongs to monarchy, was invented by monarchy; let monarchy keep it."

Democracy in the USA today, in its turn, is what needs to be cared for, and loyalty should be given to inclusive fair-minded representation of all constituencies. This is particularly crucial at this moment in history because our democracy is under assault by demagogues, swindlers, con men and rogues. Carl Schultz, a German immigrant who served as a military general in the Civil War and then as a Republican U.S. Senator from Missouri, and later as Secretary of the Interior, expressed the truly patriotic sentiment back in 1872 that, "My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right."

Today, wealthy conservatives are strongly opposing efforts to right wrongs in their drive to push for ever more perks for themselves and their rich cronies, and for an ever-bigger monopoly on the total annual income and accumulated wealth in the United States. This is a bizarre and rash top priority due to the brilliantly simple understandings articulated by Nick Hanauer in *The Pitchforks Are Coming ... For Us Plutocrats*, which was published in a 2014 Memo "To: My Fellow Zillionaires". **Nick Hanauer** makes it clear that it's in the best interest of all Americans, rich and poor alike, to have a fairer society than we have today, so that justice and peaceful coexistence have a better chance of reigning in the land of the free.

The ruthless agenda of wealthy people is reckless due to the focus of Republican politicians on shredding the social safety net and making huge cuts in public funding for healthcare in order to finance more tax breaks for the rich. They are accomplishing this retrogressive goal by using two epic scams: First, by imposing harsher austerity and unnecessary hardships on the 99% of Americans who they are mercilessly cheating and lying to, and effectively stealing from -- at a terrible expense to the overall well-being of the populace. Along with this forced austerity comes a diminished democracy, a degraded environment, serious Tragedy of the Commons harms, and pathological assaults against Golden Rule fairness principles that are commendably championed by proponents of social justice, environmental justice and peaceable coexistence.

The second way that the super-rich are getting away with their uber-scam against the common good is by driving up the national debt every year. This is an insult to the nation because these folks have already gotten away with paying historically low tax rates since Ronald Reagan radically reduced the top tax rates in the 1980s from a long-standing 70% (or higher) to only 28%. They achieved this treachery by successfully pushing a "trickle-down" Big Lie,

claiming that low tax rates on the top 1% of taxpayers would be the best national plan. Fast forward 30 years, and this reckless strategy has been a main factor in unconscionably driving up the debt from less than \$1 trillion in 1981 to a staggeringly risk-laden \$21 trillion as the year 2018 unfolds.

It is colossally foolish to give more debt-financed tax breaks to rich people, heightening risks of a severe debt crisis. It would have been much smarter and fairer to refuse to add more debt, and to respect the sentiment "NOT ONE PENNY MORE" to be given to the top 1%. It is crazy to allow rich people to add any more to the national debt to increase the glaring disparities in after-tax income and wealth between them and all others.

Mark Twain also focused in his provocative essay *Glances at History* on the propensity for the U.S. to become involved in wars. This issue rings with a particularly poignant and important clarion call in the world today due to the findings of a National Security Poll conducted by NBC News in July 2017 that found a stunning 76% of Americans are worried that the United States will become engaged in a major war within the next four years. Since then, with all the saber-rattling and button-pushing threats between the Twitterer-in-Chief and Kim Jong-un, North Korea's "supreme leader", this concern was seriously increased, before the Singapore Summit that partially defused this danger. With so much turmoil and chaos in national politics this year, the likelihood is increasing of a *Wag the Dog*-like war to distract people from domestic shenanigans, glaring injustices and the wide-ranging investigations into various Republicans having worked with Russian operatives to throw the election to Donald Trump.

Mark Twain was upset at U.S. militaristic imperialism when he wrote *Glances at History*, and specifically at the terrible injustices perpetrated by our military in the Philippines. He was committed to speaking out as Vice President of the American Anti-Imperialism League against harsh injustices against peoples abroad, especially during and after the Philippine-American War from 1899 to 1902, so he penned this brilliantly satirical polemic to persuade readers of the reality of his way of understanding the situation. He was no doubt also irked at the time because of the bigger context of that era of profound economic inequities that prevailed due to the excessive power of giant corporate entities ("trusts") and latter day robber barons of his time. Listen in:

Glances at History

We, free citizens of the Great Republic, feel an honest pride in her greatness, her strength, her just and gentle government, her wide liberties, her unsmirched flag, her hands clean from oppression of the weak and of malicious conquest, her hospitable door that stands open to the hunted and the persecuted of all nations; we are proud of the judicious respect in which she is held by monarchies ... and proudest of all of that lofty patriotism which we inherited from our fathers, which we have kept pure, and which won our liberties in the beginning and has preserved them unto this day. While that patriotism endures, the Republic is safe, her greatness is secure, and against them the powers of the earth cannot prevail.

I pray you to pause and consider. Against our traditions we are now entering upon an unjust and trivial war, a war against a helpless people, and for a base object -- robbery. At first our citizens spoke out against this thing, by an impulse natural to their training. Today they have turned, and their voice is the other way. What caused the change? Merely a politician's trick -- a high-sounding phrase, a blood-stirring phrase which turned their uncritical heads: *Our Country, right or wrong!* An empty phrase, a silly phrase. It was shouted by every newspaper, it was thundered from the pulpit, the Superintendent of Public Instruction placarded it in every schoolhouse in the land, the War Department inscribed it upon the flag. And every man who failed to shout it or who was silent, was proclaimed a traitor -- none but those others were patriots. To be a patriot, one had to say, and keep on saying, "Our Country, right or wrong", and urge on the little war. Have you not perceived that that phrase is an insult to the nation?

For in a republic, who is "the Country"? Is it the Government which is for the moment in the saddle? Why, the Government is merely a servant -- merely a temporary servant; it cannot be its prerogative to determine what is right and what is wrong, and decide who is a patriot and who isn't. Its function is to obey orders, not originate them. Who, then, is "the Country"? Is it the newspaper? Is it the pulpit? Is it the school superintendent? Why, these are mere parts of the country, not the whole of it; they have not command, they have only their little share in the command. They are but one in the thousand; it is in the thousand that command is lodged; they must determine what is right and what is wrong; they must decide who is a patriot and who isn't.

Who are the thousand -- that is to say, who are "the Country"? In a monarchy, the king and his family are the country; in a republic it is the common voice of the people. Each of you, for himself, by himself and on his own responsibility, must speak. And it is a solemn and weighty responsibility, and not lightly to be flung aside at the bullying of pulpit, press, government, or the empty catch-phrases of politicians. Each must for himself alone decide what is right, and what is wrong, and which course is patriotic and which isn't. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide it against your convictions is to be an unqualified and inexcusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let men label you as they may. If you alone of all the nation shall decide one way, and that way be the right way according to your convictions of the right, you have done your duty by yourself and by your country -- hold up your head! You have nothing to be ashamed of.

Only when a republic's life is in danger should a man uphold his government when it is in the wrong. There is no other time. This Republic's life is not in peril. The nation has sold its honor for a phrase. It has swung itself loose from its safe anchorage and is drifting, its helm is in pirate hands. The stupid phrase needed help, and it got another one: "Even if the war be wrong, we are in it and must fight it out: *we cannot retire from it without dishonor.*" Why, not even a burglar could have said it better. We cannot withdraw from this sordid raid, because to grant peace to those little people on their terms -- independence -- would dishonor us. You have flung away Adam's phrase -- you should take it up and examine it again. He said, "*An inglorious peace is better than a dishonorable war.*"

You have planted a seed, and it will grow.

WOW!! That's a sly way of speaking real truth to power! These words reverberate off the interior walls of the echo chambers in which we are ensconced, suddenly competing to divert our attention from so many epic distractions, which notably include the Master-Manipulator-in-Chief's tweets and our online social feeds and the scandalous and scandal-obsessed daily news that features ranting-and-raving Rush Limbaugh and Fox & Friends and the ideological extremist Sean Hannity, for millions of people, and Rachel Maddox, Lawrence O'Donnell, Brian Williams, Washington Post's excellent Daily 202 and generally more honestly accurate progressive perspectives, for millions of others. As the author Michelle Alexander has put it: "The right to speak truth to power is the foundation of democracy and must be vigilantly protected and defended. Now more than ever."

The following perspicacious ideas explore and elaborate upon these understandings, and are brought to bear to help explain what is going on in our world today, and how and why we find ourselves in such dauntingly dilemma-filled straits.

Today, extreme partisanship is dominating our politics to such a degree that the vast majority of Americans are unable to get their representatives to act in their best interests. This is due to the fact that we have a "political duopoly" system of governance in which the wealthy few are able to sow acrimonious divisions amongst the many, thereby helping satisfy their narrowly selfish drives for a bigger monopoly on wealth and power.

Behind this apparent bitter divisiveness in our politics today lies a deeper bipartisan consensus in which Big Money donors have bought our democracy and staunchly oppose any real changes to the pathetic planks that are foundational to this fraud. This is why urgently needed reforms have not been enacted, and this is how the interests of the wealthy few are advanced while those of the majority are rashly undermined. This is why the worst provisions of the *Amazing Disgrace* Trump Tax Folly are in the process of being rammed down the throats of hundreds of millions of Americans whose voices are being arrogantly ignored, and whose personal security is being torpedoed. These times are definitely trying our souls.

Charles Ferguson writes about aspects of this situation with incisive understanding and persuasive insight in his book *Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America*. He makes this point that moneyed interests dominantly control our "political duopoly" system in the U.S., and consequently the government generally acts in matters related to Wall Street and both tax and environmental policy to primarily benefit the wealthy few. They do this in part by manipulating public opinion through the influence of people in deeply ideological "conservative" think tanks and media outlets like Fox News that cunningly affect public opinion in retrogressive ways, and pathologically in defense of the swampy corrupted status quo.

And there's no question about it: Money talks, and by hook or by crook -- and with ruthlessly brazen hands tipping the scales of justice -- people with Big Money have been allowed to have far greater influence than the vast majority of the people. Donald Trump has served as a treacherous Trojan horse for rich people to seize oppressive power and to facilitate abuses of influence by plutocrats, allowing them to dominate our national decision making in the USA.

The wise Athenian lawmaker Solon earned the reputation of being "the father of democracy" for having been effective in forging adequately fair compromises between the rich and the poor in classical Athens, saving the republic from revolutionary strife. We would be smart to see this lesson of history, and to emulate it! Let's convene and seek consensus solutions to all our big challenges!

Americans everywhere on the political spectrum love personal freedoms, from leftist radicals and hippies of the Sixties to Libertarians and the "Don't Tread on Me" loyalists to hyper-partisan anti-government Tea Party and Freedom Caucus factions. So it is ironic that manipulative politicians have managed to push policies that are contrary to individual liberties and the overall well-being of the people. It is truly bizarre how successful they are being at sabotaging live-and-let-live Golden Rule reciprocity principles, and at giving excessive wealth and power to the top 1%, at the expense of everyone else.

Let's open our eyes, and demand action to reduce the influence of Big Money in our elections with sensible campaign finance restrictions and lobbying reform. To start, let's adopt fairer, more steeply graduated national tax policies and act to ensure more inclusive live-and-let-live social attitudes, and rise up in solidarity to positively change the current retrograde state of affairs!

In a world still reeling from the exceedingly high costs of the severe credit crisis and subsequent recession of late 2008, and an on-going ominous explosion of public debt, I again consulted Charles Ferguson's red-jacketed book with the preposterously provocative title, *Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America*. Ferguson, after all, had directed the illuminating documentary film, *Inside Job*, which exposed some pretty ugly and damning culpabilities that contributed to the cathartic calamity of the financial crisis. On the very first page, Ferguson did not disappoint, providing food for thought with the understanding that the financial crisis that struck during those panicky days was caused by a variety of factors that included massive fraud, and yet not a single financial executive has gone to jail, "and that's wrong." ... "Nor has there been any serious attempt by the federal government to use civil suits, asset seizures, or restraining orders to extract fines or restitution from the people responsible for plunging the world economy into recession" -- and costing many trillions of dollars.

On Page 2, Charles Ferguson makes an intriguing statement that since the release of *Inside Job*, "a large amount of new material has emerged that reveals that many bankers, including senior management, knew exactly what was going on, and that it was highly fraudulent." ... "The evidence is now overwhelming that over the last thirty years, the U.S. financial sector has become a rogue industry." And Ferguson was only getting started. As he delved into the meat of the matter, the details were sensational. This state of affairs is facilitated by a political duopoly of Republicans and Democrats that allows such swindles and gives the preponderance of all benefits of economic activities to a small elite of influence-abusing rich people. We should take our cue from the great Declaration of Independence, in which our Founders bemoaned "a long train of abuses and usurpations" by the British monarchy and asserted the right of the people to institute a new system of governance "laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

Today, after Republican politicians used a scurrilous litany of basically illegitimate means to seize power, they are acting like "evil doers", sacrificing the environment to benefit polluters and profiteers in the short term, and reversing the consumer protections hammered out in the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. So the pendulum is swinging backwards, and this is very bad news for humanity!

Revealingly, Wall Street banks will be among the biggest beneficiaries of the Republican Tax Cuts boondoggle. "In fact, fresh off getting caught lying about millions of fake accounts and systematically ripping off its own customers, Wells Fargo got a \$3.35 billion windfall. The other Big Banks are expected to fare almost as well. It

takes an army of lobbyists to get these kinds of result from Washington. And the sad truth is that you may be paying for that army."

There's something happenin' here
What it is ain't exactly clear
I think it's time we stop
Children, what's that sound?
Everybody look at what's going down.

--- For *What It's Worth*, Buffalo Springfield, 1967

One of the main strategies of "conservatives" in Congress and the Administration is to reduce protections of the environment so that big corporations can treat our home planet like a business in liquidation, rather than as a healthy going concern. In the character Buzz Windrip's America in the brilliantly satirical 1935 novel *It Can't Happen Here*, there has been a demagogic authoritarian takeover of the U.S. government. The triumphant Buzz Windrip declared that there would thereafter be only one political party, the American Corporate State and Patriotic Party ("... no!", he added, "with something of his former good-humor, there are to be two parties, the Corporate and those who don't belong to any party at all, and so, to use a common phrase, are just out of luck!")

Revealingly, entrenched interest groups exploit resentments, confusion, apathy and despair to prevent common good reforms. They encourage modes of thinking that lead us to believe problems are insolvable, that nothing we do will matter, or that issues are too complex for there to be even an opportunity for change. Alex Steffen wrote in *The Politics of Optimism* that "it is a long-standing political art to sow the seeds of mistrust between those you would rule over." Nice going, guys!

Cynicism is often seen as a rebellious attitude in Western popular culture, but, in reality, cynicism is an attitude that often is complacent in conformity to the desires of those in power. In this regard, cynicism can be seen to be a form of inadvertent obedience. As for pessimistic attitudes, ponder these words from the great ecologist, environmentalist, aerial photographer and filmmaker Yann Arthus-Bertrand in his extraordinary film *Home*:

"In the past 200,000 years, humans have upset the balance of planet Earth, a balance established by nearly four billion years of evolution. We must act now. It is too late to be a pessimist. The price is too high. Humanity has little time to reverse the trend and change its patterns of consumption."

Alex Steffen also expresses the idea in *The Politics of Optimism*, that optimism is a political act; and that great movements for social change always begin with statements of great optimism. This is one reason why I, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain, so passionately propose providentially good solutions to problems throughout the Twelve Books of the *Earth Manifesto*.

"Optimism, by contrast, especially optimism that is neither foolish nor silent, can be revolutionary. Where no one believes in a better future, despair is a logical choice, and people in despair almost never change anything. Where no one believes a better solution is possible, those benefiting from the continuation of a problem are safe. Where no one believes in the possibility of action, apathy becomes an insurmountable obstacle to reform. But introduce intelligent reasons for believing that action is possible, that better solutions are available, and that a better future can be built, and you unleash the power of people to act out of their highest principles. Shared belief in a better future is the strongest glue there is: it creates the opportunity for us to love one another, and love is an explosive force in politics."

Hallelujah! Let us adopt a philosophic attitude -- I invite readers to exit their echo chambers and accompany me into a Big Picture arena informed by comprehensive understandings, and to make honest efforts to see how potentially positive these extensive understandings really are. Keep in mind that all the policy proposals made in these writings honor social justice and environmental justice, and therefore all these recommended plans are fair and workable, and are structured in highly progressive ways rather than in regressive ways.

Quite unfortunately for the American people, the Republican Party represents entrenched special privilege, and even more unfortunately, Republican politicians have allowed their extreme right-wing fringe to come in from the cold of their deserved obscurity, and to seize power with their Chaotic-Decider-in-Chief and his main strategists, the diabolically cunning Steve Bannon and the bigoted Stephen Miller. In this bizarre Republican regime, Bannon

had grabbed a seat as the most influential White House advisor for the first seven months of this Trumpian era of folly. Bannon had been the head of the emotion-exploiting, conspiracy theory-propagating Breitbart News, a far-right news, opinion and commentary website that he described in 2016 as "the platform of the alt-right". This is a group that rejects mainstream conservatism in favor of white nationalism and extreme right ideologies.

Steve Bannon had a tumultuous tenure as the Chief Strategist in the White House, and then was ousted from his rabble-rousing position of power on August 18, 2017. He immediately returned to Breitbart, feeling "jacked up" and ominously declaring war with the words, "Now I've got my hands back on my weapons." *Fire and Fury!*

These developments cause me to hear a refrain that keeps on coming like a reverberating voice from heaven, again echoing the extraordinarily prescient novel *It Can't Happen Here*, which was written by Sinclair Lewis in 1935. Lewis was America's first Nobel Prize winner for Literature, in recognition of the cogent stories he told about middle class folks and their struggles during the Roaring Twenties. The novel *It Can't Happen Here* concerns a shrewd demagogue named Buzz Windrip who runs against Franklin D. Roosevelt and others in the national elections of 1936 and triumphed by using demagogic rhetoric and actions to seize power. Not long after he takes office, Windrip imposed dictatorial rule, and enforced it with terrorizing paramilitary militia forces called the Minute Men. Some say that this couldn't happen in the USA today. The book's refrain echoes in the interstices of my mind, "The hell it can't!"

The man who seizes totalitarian power in *It Can't Happen Here* happens to be the Democratic candidate for the presidency, and that makes it a dramatic contrast to the Populist-Demagogue-in-Chief that has taken over the Republican Party. It is revealing that Donald Trump was a registered Democrat as recently as 2009, so indeed a demagogue could almost as easily have come from the fringes of the Democratic Party as from the fringes of the Republican Party. But it just happens that Trump managed to usurp power in the Republican Party, for that political institution in basic ways offers the most fertile soil for the sprouting of nefarious authoritarian impulses. According to Bob Altemeyer in his online *The Authoritarians*, conservatives tend to be most easily manipulated because they exhibit the psychological trait of tending to feel comfortable being authoritarian followers, as he defines in a dozen specific retrogressive tendencies.

Could the good old USA actually become a repressive authoritarian state? To quote and paraphrase and extrapolate on the words of the central character Doremus Jessup in *It Can't Happen Here*, "Why, there's no country in the world that can get more hysterical -- yes, or more obsequious -- than America. Listen to the divine oracles on the radio and in the media. Remember all the episodes of Tammany graft and Chicago gangs and crooked Wall Street bankers. Remember the million-dollar evangelists and the Ku Klux Klan and our Red scares and war hysteria and wartime censorship of honest newspapers. Bad as Russia! Remember when the hick legislators in certain states, in obedience to William Jennings Bryan, who learned his biology from his pious old grandma, set up shop as scientific experts and made the whole world laugh itself sick by forbidding the teaching of evolution? Remember how trainloads of people have gone to enjoy lynchings? Not happen here! Prohibition -- shooting down people just because they might be transporting liquor -- no, that couldn't happen in America! Why, where in all history has there ever been a people so ripe for a dictatorship as ours!"

Today, the world has become increasingly vulnerable to anti-democratic authoritarian rule, due to the ease with which anti-immigrant fervor is exploited, coupled with a rising tide of refugees, desperate asylum seekers, ethnic strife, political instability and spiking sentiments of nationalism and stoked sectarian religious fanaticism. And all of this is unfolding in a context of the hegemony of a system of what Naomi Klein calls *Shock Doctrine* "disaster capitalism". A sad feature of the undesirable rise to power of operatives promoting disaster capitalist outcomes is that there is a spike in extremes of inequality between super rich people, on the one hand, and poor people and those in declining and increasingly insecure middle classes, on the other.

The Deceiver-in-Chief frequently attacks journalists, saying that reporters often make up "fake news" using unnamed sources, and he has repeatedly described them as "the enemy of the American people". These ruses, and his many "alternative facts", are antithetical to our democratic values. Trump distorts the truth and tells more lies than any president in history, as evidenced by a long list of these untruths summarized for readers by the New York Times in *Trump's Lies, The Definitive List*. By June 1, 2018, the Washington Post "lie trackers" had counted

more than 3,250 false or misleading assertions made by Trump in his first 500 days in office. The NRDC commendably evaluates some of the most consequential of Trump's lies, revealing the reality.

"O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!"

--- Sir Walter Scott

Good investigative reporting is invaluable in a democracy, as can be seen with the unraveling of glaring omissions and apparent lies that Donald Trump Jr. and Attorney General Jeff Sessions and others in the Trump circle have told about their involvements with Russians interfering in our 2016 elections. Treacherously, Trump's allies on Capitol Hill have been escalating their efforts in recent months to undermine Robert Mueller's investigation and to impugn the integrity of career law enforcement professionals in the FBI and the Justice Department.

The succinct and ominous words of President Harry Truman warn us: "Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear."

Good citizens in a democratic republic support their leaders when they do the right things -- those consistent with the common good -- and they voice opposition to their leaders when they do the wrong things. It is true that understandings of right and wrong have been contested and convoluted ever since God supposedly banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden for having eaten the fruit from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". According to the astute psychologist Stephen Pinker, opinions have become "loyalty badges for one's tribe". In the confines of our echo chambers, we often don't see other viewpoints or big picture perspectives.

But truer understandings of right and wrong can be easily found. For instance, the perceptive Professor Robert Reich articulated the things that honestly constitute good citizen goals in his book *Supercapitalism*, contrasting them to narrower and more selfish goals of consumers wanting cheap prices and investors wanting higher returns on their money. I have conveniently summarized these things online in *The Common Good, Properly Understood*. I look forward to reading Robert Reich's new book *The Common Good*, for the excellent insights it likely contains. I also highly recommend my own *Common Sense Revival - Book One of the Earth Manifesto*.

In a bigger picture perspective, humanity should rightly be loyal to the future well-being and survival of our kind, rather than to the officeholders in our government and the priorities of their narrowly-focused corporate backers and wealthy campaign contributors. As the British philosopher Bertrand Russell once declared, "The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts."

Don't doubt that strategies to divide people are a sadly effective way to undermine their general welfare, and that blaming the wrong people or causative factors is a seditious ploy used by savvy propagandists to gain power.

The American people have been savagely divided by master manipulators into antagonistic camps residing in their own separate propaganda-informed echo chambers. Facts have become slickly fluid, and the leaders who have gained control of the government are demonstrating an arrogant disdain for rules of law and civil norms, and the president is telling brazen untruths. Social media has served to exacerbate these dangerous divisions by promoting selective spin on news stories and negative conspiracy theories, and journalists are being threatened for doing a good job of investigative reporting. The independence of the Justice Department is being undermined, and the Supreme Court has been waylaid by ideologically extreme appointees. This will likely get worse with the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy. Conservatives have refused to compromise, and political sycophants are loyally marching to the tune of a crazed alpha male wannabe whose demagogic actions have given him great power and influence despite the fact that his priorities are radically self-serving and his character seems to be in a state of egomaniacally narcissistic arrested development, and he cares much more for money and himself and his family than for the true greater good of the people, or for democratic fairness, or for the future well-being of the country and life on Earth.

The right thing to do would be to act in ways that are honestly most likely to put the top priorities of country and people over political party, and to choose the common good of the American people over loyalty to Trump and Pence and McConnell and Ryan and the Republican Party. Our representatives in the U.S. Senate and House should stop disgracing our nation with faithful claptrap loyalty to Trump, right or wrong. Our representatives should rightly

stop helping the administration cover-up the Trump campaign's involvement with Russia's meddling to get him elected. And our representatives should change course and stop enabling the rash ruses described in my essay *A Scathing Critique of Misguided and Misguiding American Leadership*.

Republican politicians today consistently demonstrate that they are driven by one overriding principle, and that is to gain and maintain power by pandering to rich people who want to perpetuate the system that gives them outsized benefits while skimping on more important national priorities. This is why they push to cut spending on social safety net programs and protections of the environment, and allow high costs to be foisted onto the masses and all folks in the future. To accomplish this, they unconscionably contribute to continuing to run up the national debt to finance tax cuts and poorly managed federal spending. These stalwart politicians in the D.C. swamp are stubbornly dedicated to this tax cutting Santa Claus strategy in political economics, despite its terribly tragic implications for the health, well-being and future security of the American people and all of humanity.

Adolf Hitler declared that absolutism was desirable to achieve totalitarian goals, uttering these words: "The greatness of every mighty organization embodying an idea in this world lies in the religious fanaticism and intolerance with which, fanatically convinced of its own right, it intolerantly imposes its will against all others."

One of the most serious ways that our Demagogue-in-Chief is trying to cling to power and perpetuate a long-term extreme influence over American society is by stacking federal courts with ideologues who he hopes will be reliably loyal to his corporate friendly, wealthy-people favoring, discriminatory and anti-egalitarian agenda, and his resource exploiting indulgences and environment harming plans. He is appointing judges who are relatively young, with an average age under 50 years old. "That is surely no accident. Like George W. Bush before him, Trump appears to favor younger nominees who will remain on the bench for decades -- and serve as a farm team of future Supreme Court picks. With a friendly Senate and a defanged filibuster, this strategy ... ensures that Trump's nominees will shape American law for generations to come, no matter how his own presidency ends." The payoff for proponents of the far right agenda is increasingly obvious in June 2018 as a string of 5-4 rulings was made by the Supreme Court, with Neil Gorsuch representing the deciding vote.

Extreme ideology should have no place on the Supreme Court or in federal district courts. After all, every judge or Justice of the United States is required to take an oath of office in which they solemnly swear that they will administer justice "without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich ... So help me God." Let's demand that Supreme Court Justices honestly do equal right to the poor and to the rich!

The Narcissist-in-Chief values loyalty over all other qualities -- loyalty to him, that is. In contrast, he seems to be quite willing to abandon anyone whenever it is convenient for him personally. He told the FBI Director James Comey privately, before firing him in an apparent act of trying to obstruct justice, "I need loyalty. I expect loyalty." He has expressed intense anger at his Attorney General Jeff Sessions for having recused himself from the investigation of the Trump campaign's coordination with Russia to help Trump and other Republican politicians get elected. It is exceedingly curious that a man so sensitive to the issue of loyalty would be so eager to betray the best interests of millions of struggling Americans who voted for him by giving huge tax breaks to the rich, and by jeopardizing millions of people's healthcare and shredding the social safety net and eliminating protections of consumers, a habitable environment, and women, children and people in racial minorities.

Today, with Donald Trump demanding loyalty from others, yet throwing anyone under the bus that displeases him, we can see clearly that it is profoundly misguided to be loyal to politicians who engage in self-serving conflicts of interest and broad abuses of power. We should rightly be loyal to the principles upon which our great democratic republic was founded, as spelled out in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution: "... to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity".

Those Americans who are part of the Resistance against power-abusing Republican politicians are the true patriots in America today, and those who proudly wear "Make America Great Again" caps are often manifesting a foolishly blind obedience to "conservative" politicians who are double-crossing them and betraying greater good goals, and in many instances undermining the moral good of human social groups.

To help win his campaign for the presidency, the Ruthless-Art-of-the-Deal-in-Chief enlisted the help of Steve Bannon because he was an expert at exploiting people's emotions through the resentment-filled "bile factory at Breitbart News". Steve Bannon had been able to cunningly mine the "deep Web" to dig up dirt on the Clinton Foundation for Peter Schweizer's 2015 gossip- and innuendo-filled book *Clinton Cash*. Trump and Bannon received lavish financial support from the nefarious billionaire Robert Mercer and his daughter Rebekah, and exploited information from the data-analytics firm, Cambridge Analytica, an offshoot of a British company "that advised foreign governments and militaries on influencing elections and public opinion using the tools of psychological warfare." According to information on Wikipedia, the role and impact of the company's data analysis activities on both the Trump campaign and the pro-Brexit campaign in Britain "has been disputed and is the subject of ongoing criminal investigations in both countries."

The dark figure of Steve Bannon is illuminated by Joshua Green in his book *Devil's Bargain - Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*. Green tells the story of Bannon acting as "the shadowy President of the United States" who utilized insights into people's involvements on the Internet for his political purposes and developed "an apocalyptic narrative of righteous warriors waging an end-of-days battle by all necessary means against assorted enemies: jihadists, progressives, Acela-corridor Republicans, the Clintons."

Among the shrewd strategies that demagogues utilize to seize power, one of the worst is making unrelenting efforts to create divisive wedges between people by blaming others and scapegoating them, and by promoting crude stereotypes. These ruses are contrary to unifying principles and the common good, and they can be better understood as a part of the twelve main tactics and manipulative schemes used by demagogues to stir up fanatical support, as examined in *Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy*.

Favorite targets of scapegoating throughout history have alternately been poor people, immigrants, communists, racial minorities, Jews, Gypsies, feminists, dissenters, journalists, investigative reporters, socialists, liberals, marijuana users, long haired hippies in the Sixties, heretical religious folks, Muslims and terrorists. Since 9/11, trillions of dollars have been devoted to destroying terrorists and assorted freedom fighters around the world, many of whom have been driven to their violent opposition by extreme injustices perpetrated by those who decide that one of our nation's top priorities should be to spend trillions of dollars waging this offensive.

Of the many villainous ploys demagogues use to grab power, the exploitation of people's racial and ethnic biases is one of the most ethically deplorable. In *It Can't Happen Here*, Senator Windrip sets forth his political platform during the very first week of his campaign for the presidency, issuing a proclamation, "The Fifteen Points of Victory for the Forgotten Men." Among his fifteen planks was one that prohibited all Negroes "from voting, holding public office, practicing law, medicine, or teaching in any class above the grade of grammar school, and they shall be taxed 100 per cent of all sums in excess of \$10,000 per family per year which they may earn or in any other manner receive." This preposterous proposal basically condemned black people "since nothing so elevates a dispossessed farmer or a factory worker on relief to have some race, any race, on which he can look down." That's downright Trumpian!

Ever since slaves were freed in the 1860s and black people were subsequently given more expansive civil rights in the 1960s, there has been a racial backlash against blacks and their rights to vote. This was the basis of the Southern Strategy developed by Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon to increase political support among white voters in the South by appealing to racism against African Americans. This strategy has stubbornly persisted to help Republican politicians gain a narrow majority in all the branches of government today.

Non-Hispanic whites are continuing a long-term demographic decline from about 90% of the population in 1950 to just over 60% today, and it is estimated that white people will slip below 50% of the population in maybe 25 years. It sure seems like it would be a good time to set a precedent for treating minorities more fairly, given that whites will become a minority as these demographic changes continue their long-term trends. Given that rates of childbearing are much higher for females in racial minorities, why don't Republicans strongly support contraception?!

Give close consideration to the underlying reasons that the U.S. has waged a harsh "War on Drugs" for the last 40 years. There is one overriding reason that this prosecution is pursued so ruthlessly and with almost missionary zeal. It is hinted at in a simple statistic -- only about 12 percent of the U.S. population is African-American, but

about 36 percent of the people in jails and prisons are black. Harsh drug laws are enacted by authority-abusing law-and-order conservatives in order to control and repress the masses. Such laws are also designed to keep desperate underclasses from developing an enthusiasm for revolutionary change. This is why reasonable folks want to make our society truly fairer by helping overturn the unjust status quo.

Seeing that Attorney General Jeff Sessions wants to ramp up the War on Drugs again with harsher penalties for the use of marijuana, the satirical *Onion* imagined a guy asking, "Shouldn't we at least fail at a couple more new ideas, before going back to something we already know doesn't work?"

A friend of mine from North Carolina relates the story of her time in the South in the 1960s, when anti-cohabitation laws between unmarried adults were used as a pretext to justify raids on the homes of long-haired young people to try to bust them on drug charges -- and this in turn was a pretext for oppressing hippies, student activists, liberal professors and people in racial minorities, especially including blacks and Latinos.

Almost half a million people are locked up in prisons and jails right now due to drug offenses, and many millions have been convicted over the years. Tellingly, individuals convicted of a felony are not eligible to vote while incarcerated or on parole, or on probation, or for two years after the completion of all supervised releases. Here is yet another coldly-calculated means of suppressing votes of those who oppose injustices.

To understand the scope of this ruse, Florida voters are going to decide in November 2018 whether to automatically restore voting rights to convicted felons who have served their time. "The qualification of this ballot initiative is a huge victory for the ACLU and other activists, potentially expanding voting rights to more than 1.5 million Floridians and possibly tipping the scales toward Democrats in the country's most significant swing state."

Demagogues also exploit people's nationalistic feelings to gain support. Trump manipulatively took advantage of people's feelings of nationalism by proclaiming "America First" during his campaign. When America First means being bad neighbors and mercilessly exploiting others and undermining social cohesion and using extreme divisive tactics, and pompously declaring "Mexico will pay for the Wall", and separating children from their parents who are seeking asylum, and insanely wreaking havoc on Nature, it is morally wrong. It is wrong to treat people in other countries shabbily, or to maintain an attitude of arrogant imperial hubris. It is also wrong to, in effect, wage a war on the poor to further enrich the rich. Empathy and compassion may be the key, and surely it is a terrible plan to act like an asshole toward "shithole countries". While it may be a convenient expediency to adopt asshole attitudes, such a stance is grotesquely antithetical to American values, and it is cartoonishly foolish to dangerously antagonize others instead of treating them in ways that are more just, inclusive, fair, egalitarian and mutually secure and peaceable for all concerned. More generous international assistance would be a smarter plan than oppressively pushing other countries toward being failed states.

In his capacity as Importer-in-Chief, Trump made a big deal out of Made-in-America week in July 2017, leaving many observers perplexed at the depth of his hypocrisy in using products manufactured abroad in all of his American hotels and golf resorts. They were stunned to hear he had requested more than 230 foreign workers for his Florida properties alone since the day he launched his presidential campaign. And it just doesn't square up for Ivanka Trump to have all the goods she sells made in Asian countries that have cheap labor and often dangerous working conditions. Come on, Ms. Ivanka, tell us real economic truths! And take bold, fair-minded and ethical steps to institute much stronger controls over the abusive labor practices and child labor in the factories that produce the goods you sell.

Clear understandings can inoculate us against "alternative facts" and deceptive spin and blatant lies in our "post-truth" world. Think about the sensational words of Eugene Robinson, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, who penned this stinging observation in *The Country Deserves Much Better than Trump* (July 17, 2017):

It's exhausting, I know, but don't let outrage fatigue numb you to the moral bankruptcy and gross incompetence of the Trump administration. This ugly departure from American norms and values must be opposed with sustained passion -- and with the knowledge that things will probably get worse before they get better.

Heaven help us, look where we are. We have a president -- commander in chief of the armed forces, ostensibly the leader of the free world -- whose every word is suspect. President Trump is an inveterate liar. He

dismisses provable facts as "fake news" and invents faux facts of his own that bear no relationship to the truth. He simply cannot be trusted.

We have a president whose North Star is naked self-interest, not the good of the country. Trump cares about his family, his company and little else. He dishonors the high office he holds, then reportedly spends hours each day railing against cable-news coverage that he finds insufficiently respectful. His ego is a kind of psychic black hole that devours all who come into its orbit.

Another of many quotes attributed, perhaps apocryphally, to Mark Twain was this: "It's easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled". This is a concept that rings true today, when so many Trump and Pence supporters are sticking with their hoped-for saviors, despite all evidence that they are being double-crossed. Maybe this quote was actually uttered by that wily phrase-smith Yogi Berra. He was, after all, known not only for his exploits on the baseball field, but was perhaps even more famous for his paradoxical and whimsical quotes about life in general. He once declared, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, baseball bat to the face." Ouch!

Mark Twain suffered many personal tragedies in his family and many financial setbacks, but he was still able to articulate this fine sentiment: "A healthy and wholesome cheerfulness is not necessarily impossible to any occupation." In light of this auspiciously holistic attitude, let's breathe deep, and let go, and honor the counsel in the Bible, "in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer."

One character in *It Can't Happen Here* observed that another did not seem to be so depressed by the election of a rogue authoritarian as president, and seemed instead to be quite cheerful about it. "Depressed? Why good Lord, Mr. Jessup, I thought you knew your revolutionary tactics better than that ... Depressed? Why, can't you see, if the Communists had paid for it they couldn't have had anything more elegant for our purposes than the election of a pro-plutocrat, itching militarist dictator like Buzz Windrip! Look! He'll get everybody plenty dissatisfied. But they can't do anything, barehanded against the armed troops. Then he'll whoop it up for a war, and so millions of people will have arms and food rations in their hands -- all ready for the revolution!"

Today, Republican politicians, in particular, cannot be trusted to support their country or the majority of the American people over their political party and the entrenched special privilege for which it stands. Walter Shaub, the head of the Office of Government Ethics until his resignation in July 2017, pointed out that actions by Donald Trump and other White House officials have created a "historic ethics crisis," and he called for major changes in federal law to combat this threat by expanding the power and reach of the oversight office. Shaub said that the Trump administration had flouted or directly challenged long-accepted norms in a way that threatened to undermine the United States' ethical standards, which used to be admired around the world.

"It's hard for the United States to pursue international anticorruption and ethics initiatives when we're not even keeping our own side of the street clean. It affects our credibility," Mr. Shaub stated. "I think we are pretty close to a laughingstock at this point." In his *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 2* (University of California Press, 2013), Mark Twain wrote: "The glory which is built upon a lie soon becomes a most unpleasant incumbrance. ... How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and how hard it is to undo that work again!"

Jonathan Swift wrote in *The Examiner* in 1710: "... as the vilest Writer has his Readers, so the greatest Liar has his Believers; and it often happens, that if a Lie be believ'd only for an Hour, it has done its Work, and there is no farther occasion for it. Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it; so that when Men come to be undeceiv'd, it is too late; the Jest is over, and the Tale has had its Effect ..."

The Internet and social media "data analytics" profiling have immeasurably magnified this malignant effect. "In our clickbait-driven, post-truth media environment, a lie can travel around the world several times before the truth has had a chance to check its Twitter feed."

Misunderstandings can have catastrophic consequences. So we need courageous patriots who are loyal to their country over their political party, and we cannot afford to have contemptible politicians fawning over and helping enable ruthlessly authoritarian leaders who do not respect norms and rules of law.

President Theodore Roosevelt advocated a Square Deal for the American people, saying, "We must treat each man on his worth and merits as a man. We must see that each is given a square deal, because he is entitled to no more and should receive no less." He honorably added, "Let the watchwords of all our people be the old familiar watchwords of honesty, decency, fair-dealing and commonsense." And he had pointed out in September 1903 that "The welfare of each of us is dependent fundamentally upon the welfare of all of us."

Let's demonstrate solidarity with the national motto of France and the Republic of Haiti: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité!*

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

P.S. *A Fusillade of Philosophy* sprang forth from an earlier Addendum to this essay *My Country, Right or Wrong*. Since it has not yet been added to the Home Page, here it is below in its entirety. It contains an elaboration on the perspectives of Charles Ferguson on the nature of deregulatory zeal and the power-abusing Wall Street financial sector, along with further ideas about the increasing concentration of economic power in corporate hands and the sad implications of these trends that constitute a Great Bargain for rich people and a Bad Deal for everyone else. "My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right."



A Fusillade of Philosophy

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
Initial version: July 4, 2018

This essay sprang into being at the end of a tumultuous June 2018 as a *Prelude to Core Values of Democracy*. It has been adapted from an Appendix to the prior versions of *My Country, Right or Wrong*.

Powerful images and sound recordings of terrified children and their anguished parents are coming to light at the border with Mexico, and in detention camps scattered around the country. Authority figures are trying to repressively suppress these affective images, knowing that outraged protests will intensify if the insidiously dire dimensions of these heartless actions become more viscerally clear.

This, of course, is only the tip of the iceberg of the nefarious things being perpetrated by Republicans in the Homeland today, things that unequivocally exacerbate social inequities, undermine the common good, erode the liberties of a freedom loving people, discriminate against everyone who is not a white male, and wreak tragically daunting damages on the providential commons upon we rely for sustenance and survival.

These issues are contentious, but please read on. Adopt a philosophic attitude, and visualize the great political cartoon by David Sipress that that has been broadly shared in this tumultuous Trump era: "My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane." Seeing things the way they really are, from well-informed and comprehensive perspectives, and supporting the right causes, are amongst our most important responsibilities as citizens. Breathe deep, and let go.

Passions are running high, and with propulsive reason. The naked immorality of the family separation actions and the absolutely intolerant Trump anti-immigrant policies are causing mass protests to break out, with almost 600 protesters being arrested on Capital Hill on June 28 — and then there were more than 700 protests on June 30,

which took place in all 50 states, against Trump's "zero tolerance" border policies. We rightly should not need to engage in such mass protests against authority-abusing men pushing a regressive and repressive agenda that is antithetical to the liberties, overall well-being and true security of the people.

In incredible contrast, the Trump base is in a protective crouch, pretending their Supreme Leader is as innocent as the driven snow in all matters being investigated, and besides he's too busy cozying up to authoritarians to be bothered by this "total fabrication" stuff. An astonishing 90% of these tribal loyalist Republicans tell pollsters that they support Trump, despite his wrongdoing, invective and sins.

The former self-proclaimed Party of the "Moral Majority" has, astonishingly, broadly abdicated its moral compass, apparently for the sake of expediency. They are triumphantly pleased to finally get some respect — POWER! Never mind that this power is being abused with such discriminatory disgrace and authoritarian zeal. And forget about that long litany of illegitimate means used to achieve this domineering end, as set forth in dastardly detail in *Demagoguery and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy: Is the Pen Mightier than Illegitimate Authority?*

We the People are losing faith in our dominant institutions -- governmental, corporate and religious, and for very good reasons. Firstly, the government is increasingly corrupted by wealthy super-elites, who are eager to impose a particularly harsh and inimical agenda on a freedom-loving and human rights respecting people, as can be understood in lurid detail throughout *See Clearly - Sanity During Insane Times*. Secondly, corporations are acting like psychopaths, as made clear by Joel Bakan in *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*, and as defined in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. And thirdly, authorities in established religions are far too often incestuously siding with reactionary authority-abusing politicians, and compounding this sin by acting in ways that serve to foment intolerance, conflict and violence.

The eminently respect-worthy Dalai Lama delivered a compelling observation during the 2009 Vancouver Peace Summit, asserting that, "The world will be saved by the western woman." And so it may happen. Let it be!

Mark Twain would have guffawed with wry and sardonic amusement at the onward trajectory from his astute observation that "we have the best government that money can buy." Charles Ferguson succinctly noted, "Unless America reverses course, things will end badly, at least for the bottom 90% of Americans, and possibly for the wealthy who consider themselves safe." The proverbial pitchforks will eventually come out if we fail to enact smart and far-reaching fair-minded reforms, and probably sooner rather than later. Or the bubble will burst first. Let's fix this!

Positive change must come. John Lennon and Paul McCartney sang their inspiring lyrics, recommending the idea, "Come together right now over me." - "One thing I can tell you is you got to be free."

Improved social cohesion is needed. Let's stop kowtowing to Dividers, and come together to propitiously promote the greater common good, and to actualize a vastly improved general welfare.

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution outlines the primary goals for which the Constitution was ordained and established. These noble purposes, informed by Enlightenment Era vision, include forming a more perfect union, establishing justice, insuring domestic tranquility, providing for the **common** defense, promoting the general welfare and securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

We should invest in what are in reality very reasonably priced social insurance policies like improved healthcare and more affordable medical insurance and prescription drugs, and better protections of farmlands, forests, wetlands, coral reef communities, the oceans and Earth's atmosphere.

In 1949, the English novelist and political philosopher George Orwell famously imagined a dystopian future where a ruthless, repulsive and pervasively controlling authority-abusing Big Brother government ruled by deluding, exploiting and repressing the people in London in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Fast forward to July 4, 2018, and who would have guessed that we would have a twenty-first century form of oppressive Big Brother governance in the USA today, and that it would be led by a self-serving con man Strict Father Bad Dad. Compounding this broadly affective indignity is the fact that this Demagogue-in-Chief is diabolical and a cunning Twitter mad master manipulator of people's emotions.

We the People find that this power-abusing narcissist has seized the reins of power through an astonishing litany

of illegitimate means, and that he is imposing his own selfish form of oppressive outrage-engendering Big Brother authoritarian governance. This self-dealing authority figure is being propped up by rich people and a cowardly phalanx of self-serving sycophantish lackeys who are collaborating with the hair-trigger emotion-exploiting despot to cunningly take advantage of the emotions of the people, stoking their fears, grievances and anger, and demonizing and scapegoating vulnerable asylum seekers, migrants, refugees, Muslims, women, children, powerless poor people and everyone in non-white racial minorities. In a pathologically grandiose irony, this Big Brother government is led by a narcissistic celebrity who is excessively impulsive and immoderately promiscuous, and who treats women shabbily, to boot.

Both despot-inclined demagogues and the authoritarian followers that abjectly kowtow to them are manifesting an excessive fervor for dictating an absolutist morality onto society, scapegoating immigrants, condemning gays and judging women harshly for wanting to have the right to get a legal and safe abortion during the first trimester of a pregnancy.

President Obama promised Young Dreamers who were brought to the U.S. as children that they would be protected, for they know no other home. But now Republicans are using these vulnerable young people as another good bargaining chip to help them impose their hard-right agenda on the populace.

What a fate! Let's laugh ruefully -- and come together to champion broadly fairer and better governance.

Look what's happening here. We are pumping more and more money into profit-propagating pursuits like the military, and into the police, the prison system, the FBI, the CIA, and now immigrant internment camps for families and children. We're running dangerously high and quickly mounting levels of national debt to pay for this, and stupidly borrowing even more money to give more than 80% of the Tax Cuts Act benefits to the richest 1% of Americans.

Great wealth is being generated in the world today by business activities that emphasize the maximum achievable exploitation of natural resources and working people. The spoils of these activities must be shared much more broadly, in the interests of promoting the common good and the general welfare. We simply must revolutionarily alter the rules and policy priorities that are the fundamental enabling characteristics of the Thirteen Main Methods Used to Increasingly Concentrate Wealth and Power.

Increasingly exacerbated social inequities are ultimately bad for everyone. Refer to the story about the wise lawgiver Solon back in the ancient city-state of Athens some 2,500 years ago, which is told throughout this manifesto. Solon succeeded in forging reasonable and responsible compromises between the elites and the masses during a particularly tumultuous time in ancient Greece, thereby saving the republic from violent revolution. Surely, it would be best even for rich people to stop pushing their luck so damn hard, because of the great risks of revolutionary unrest and the current unbelievable extreme of their unconscionable overreach and abuses of money influence and power.

Donald Trump is making increasingly desperate efforts to distract people from the unraveling details of the illegitimacy of his ascension to power, and of the far-reaching malfeasance of his self-dealing and the widespread corruption of his administration. This manipulative Twitter-crazed charlatan spins the news with preposterous propaganda and holds demagogic political rallies where he foments anger at reporters and journalists, blatantly trying to undermine a tremendous amount of factual reporting by repetitiously claiming that it's all "fake news" promoted by a media that is "the enemy of the people." Wrong!

An Aside on the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court failed to take a stand against the far-reaching structural corruption inherent in extreme gerrymandering when it in effect sided with hyper manipulative Trumpism as the 2018 midterm elections approach. The court system should rightly provide checks and balances to abuses of power by the executive and legislative branches of our government. Instead, the highest court in the land has ducked difficult issues on technical grounds and let the status quo rule and regional courts to make partisan decisions. In addition, the final rulings of the Supreme Court before the "swing vote" Justice Anthony Kennedy announced his retirement at the end of June 2018 served to uphold the Trump travel ban, and dealt major blows to labor unions and reproductive rights advocates. These were narrow 5-4 rulings that make it clear that there are serious implications for our civil

liberties to have a narrow majority of ideological conservatives on the Court.

The impact has been crucial of Mitch McConnell and his Republican co-conspirators' illegitimate and power-abusing tactic of denying President Obama's choice to replace Antonin Scalia with the eminently qualified Merrick Garland, and to instead have managed a year later to get the exceedingly far right Neil Gorsuch in a position of judicial power. The Trump administration, writes the honorable organization EarthJustice, "through its agenda of corporate greed, its divisive and hateful rhetoric, and its inhumane policies ... has made it crystal clear that it seeks to undo the very rights and liberties we've fought so hard to achieve and defend."

When it comes to replacing Anthony Kennedy on the Supreme Court, New Jersey Senator Cory Booker has set the tone for elected Democrats in saying outright that Mr. Trump is the subject of a criminal investigation and has conflicts of interest in choosing a new Supreme Court Justice. A new Justice should not be chosen until after the investigation is concluded, says Booker, for the high court will likely be involved in issues deciding the power of the Executive Branch with respect to subpoenas, presidential pardons and other aspects of suspected collaboration by members of the Trump campaign with Russian interference in our elections, and other matters of Russian intrigue and financial malfeasance and environmental treachery.

Anthony Kennedy was a conservative, but in some cases he sided with more liberal justices to check the zealotry of social conservatives. With his retirement, an already right-leaning Supreme Court "is now poised to become the most conservative institution in the entire history of America's government." The very legitimacy of the Supreme Court is now up in the air with Trump marching lockstep with zealously reactionary social conservatives to cement in place extreme right-wing judicial rulings for generations. A Trump nominee outside the mainstream "could lead to a Supreme Court that sacrifices the rights of the most marginalized people in favor of the wealthiest and most powerful Americans. Of the greatest concern are the implications for workers and consumers, a woman's right to choose, and the LGBTQ community's right to marry and live freely."

The Supreme Court will be in recess from the end of June until October 1st, just before the November elections. A Blue Wave is needed in these upcoming midterm elections to curb the despotic abuses of power that Trump's instincts tell him he can get away with, given an adequate number of cowardly loyalists and legislative and judicial collaborators with his authoritarian agenda.

Hearteningly, voters in three key Senate battleground states already indicate that they prefer the next Congress to be a check on Trump rather than a booster for his policy priorities, and only about a third say Trump deserves to be re-elected, according to new polls of Arizona, Florida and Ohio conducted by NBC News and Marist College. "In Arizona, 52 percent of registered voters say they'll use their vote to send a message that the country needs more Democrats to serve as a check on Trump, while 36 percent said the nation needs more Republicans to pass his agenda. In Florida, another key swing state ... 49 percent of voters favor a Congress that serves as a check on Trump ... And in Ohio, 51 percent want more Democrats in Congress in order to counter Trump's efforts." This is good cause for hope!

Opening a Modern Pandora's Box of Inequities

Ideas as old as the hills reverberate through the arcane interstices of my mind, buffeted by conceptions as young and vibrant as a gusty wind that heralds the coming of a tempestuous storm. Charles Ferguson's ideas come to mind from his book *Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America*. The images evoked by this in-your-face title might make one think that this is probably a book chock full of suspiciously partisan invective and conspiracy theories, and maybe even a heavy dose of "liberal pabulum." But no! It turns out to be a fascinatingly insightful perspective.

In a startling contrast to the sensible trust-busting era that President Theodore Roosevelt led in the early 1900s, corporatocratic proponents of laissez-faire ideologies gained traction when Ronald Reagan's tenure as president began. Charles Ferguson relates this story in *Predator Nation*:

"The era of deregulation pioneered by the Reagan and Clinton administrations removed virtually all restrictions on trading, mergers and industry consolidation; the few remaining restrictions were then quickly stripped away by the Bush administration, along with any threat of sanctions from either criminal prosecution or civil suits to recoup illicit gains." ... "And, in fact, bad things started to happen almost immediately. Beginning in the 1980s,

the United States began to experience financial crises and scandals in a scale not seen since the 1920s. But deregulation continued, culminating in major laws passed in 1999 and 2000. Once completely freed, the bankers very quickly ran their institutions off the cliff, taking much of the global economy with them. Not only did they create and sell a huge amount of junk, but they turned the financial system into a gigantic casino, one in which they played mainly with other people's money."

When Ronald Reagan became president, tax cuts and deregulation were the order of the day. "Even from the start, though, there was a big element of dishonesty in Reagan's strategy. He cut taxes, but not government spending, so America's economic recovery came in part from unsustainable deficits. Administration officials claimed that tax cuts would pay for themselves, which they knew was a lie. And what they called 'deregulation' was often simply political corruption. Lobbyists and industry executives were appointed to run government agencies, and several industries sharply increased their spending on political donations, lobbying, and revolving door hiring. Nowhere was this clearer than in finance. It was in financial services that Ronald Reagan initiated America's descent into criminality, financial crisis, political corruption, inequality and decline." Sensational -- Ludicrous lies, radically exacerbated inequalities and unscrupulously propagated harms!

Criminality, financial crisis, political corruption, inequality, and decline! These words sound like outrageous hyperbole, but when you read the actual details of the many financial scams perpetrated in the past three decades, this characterization suddenly doesn't seem like an exaggeration at all. Charles Ferguson continues: "It was in large measure the financial sector's political activities that gave us deregulation, abdication of white-collar law enforcement, tax cuts for the wealthy, huge budget deficits, and other toxic policies." These are the aspects of our econopolitical system that have allowed the U.S. financial sector to become a rogue industry".

The financial sector began a period of astounding consolidation when sensible regulations like the Glass-Steagall Act were repealed. The amorphous shark-like octopus of the oligopoly began a feeding frenzy. Every segment of the financial sector was affected, creating huge financial conglomerates. "And the main source of this broader consolidation was not the organic growth of the successful; rather it was mergers."

Economic power has become increasingly concentrated since 1980, due to the radical ramping up of deregulation efforts. This is true particularly in banking, energy, telecommunications, automobiles, media, agribusiness and retailing. This trend has been the result of abuses of influence as corporate money has neutered antitrust policy and corrupted our political system, and even swayed the supposedly objective expert opinions of a minority of people -- but all too many -- in academic institutions. Such concentrated power undermines the power of *We the People*, and it contributes to the sadly increasing and politically dangerous extremes between the top 1% and the other 99% in income and wealth inequality.

Rich people and top corporate managers together exert an unwarranted influence on our country by using wealth and solidarity of selfish purpose to wield political power that shelters themselves, their families, their personal assets and their businesses from competition, effective regulation, proper corporate governance, prosecution and taxes. This situation is unfair and will eventually prove to be disastrous for the vast majority of the people.

Beneath the intensely rancorous sound and fury of partisan strife, the nearly unassailable battlements of a political duopoly monopolize our national decision-making. The actors in this duopoly stand resolute in dictating rules that establish a *Great Bargain* for rich people and a *Bad Deal* for everyone else. The unified solidarity demonstrated by our representatives is astonishing when it comes to policies related to tax law that benefit wealthy people; and to initiatives that reduce regulations, prevent sensible reforms and facilitate an on-going consolidation of corporate power through mergers and acquisitions.

Perhaps this should be no surprise, because influence peddling is not only legal, but a fundamental facet of the way our political system operates in modern times. So, sadly, by a vote of 5 to 4, the Supreme Court might declare null and void the entire substance of these remarks. And they continue to wrongly reaffirm the terrible *Citizens United* ruling that has helped wealthy people to corrupt our elections and rashly pervert our national priorities and distort our decision-making. And they contemplate the merits, keeping foremost in mind their own political careers and personal power and future donor contributions, of overturning *Roe vs. Wade* abortion rights and forcing pregnant women to deliver, and championing teetotaler-like abstinence as the preferred method of family planning.

On the cover of the October 2, 2017 issue of Time Magazine, a bloated red, white and blue elephant is sucking a small donkey into its trunk, and the headline reads:

SHRUNK.

DEMOCRATS
ARE IN THEIR
WORST SHAPE
SINCE 1929.

CAN ANYTHING
SAVE THEM?

Sad story! We liberty-loving Americans need a healthier two-party system to ensure that more people are fairly represented. It is negative for society as a whole to have our politician representatives so outrageously beholden to the rich. We do not need -- OR WANT, damn them! -- authority-abusing demagogic control freaks who cheat us, lie to us, perpetrate various frauds, corrupt our politics and mislead us with untruths, bad management and shortsighted foolhardiness.

The fact that the Democratic Party is in its worst minority position of influence since 1929, right before the "Great Depression", is ominous. It is ominous for the future of the USA that the progressive party has been sidelined so effectively through many ruses that include structural ones of extreme gerrymandering, blatant vote suppression in states led by Republican politicians, and the brazen misuse of right-wing propaganda and the spin by often dishonest skills at Fox News and the head-nodding "dittoheads" of Rush Limbaugh, and crafty manipulators of people through negative ads and misinformation on social media websites.

Ralph Peters, who is a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and was a longtime strategic analyst for Fox News, announced in March 2018 that he was quitting his involvement with Fox, disgustingly denouncing the Fox News network and President Donald Trump. "Fox has degenerated from providing a legitimate and much-needed outlet for conservative voices to a mere propaganda machine for a destructive and ethically ruinous administration," he scathingly observed.

A mashup video of talking heads on Fox News has gone viral that shows "just how much Fox News has pivoted to state propaganda television, reminiscent of a news broadcast you might see in a country like, oh, say ... Russia. Or North Korea. Dear leader is propped up above all." Anyone who has paid critical attention to Fox News over the last two decades knows it has "a Republican bent — a heavy one, at that. They spent eight years bashing President Obama ...". This video is "the tale of two presidents and two distinctly different approaches to coverage of their international diplomacy efforts." Curiously, while we had much congressional obstruction and gridlock while Barack Obama was president, now we have brash political theater pervaded with deep moral crisis and an unfolding constitutional cataclysm.

Let's save ourselves! We know how. Throw the bums out of office! Indivisible groups are fighting Republican abuses of power and overreach by organizing together in every single congressional district in the USA, and they are using protest and pressure tactics to fight Republican corruption and malfeasance.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIVISIBLE GUIDE

"Donald Trump is the biggest popular-vote loser in history to ever call himself President. In spite of the fact that he has no mandate, he will attempt to use his congressional majority to reshape America in his own racist, authoritarian, and corrupt image. If progressives are going to stop this, we must stand indivisibly opposed to Trump and the Members of Congress who would do his bidding. Together, we have the power to resist — and we have the power to win."

"We know this because we've seen it before. The authors of this guide are former congressional staffers who witnessed the rise of the Tea Party. We saw these activists take on a popular president with a mandate for change and a supermajority in Congress. We saw them organize locally and convince their own Members of Congress to reject President Obama's agenda. Their ideas were wrong, cruel, and tinged with racism -- and they won."

"We believe that protecting our values, our neighbors, and ourselves will require mounting a similar resistance to the Trump agenda -- but a resistance built on the values of inclusion, tolerance, and fairness. Trump is not popular. He does not have a mandate. He does not have large congressional majorities. If a small minority in the Tea Party could stop President Obama, then we the majority can stop a petty tyrant named Trump."

Republican politicians are acting treacherously against the true best interests of our democratic republic, and definitively deserve to be relegated to minority status for generations to come for their arrogance, right-wing agenda, failure to rein in the exploding national debt, mindlessly unempathetic and in effect malicious malfeasance, and resource-wasting environment-damaging climate-altering ways. The price to be paid for putting our great American values at risk must be paid now, before accelerating harms excessively worsen.

Columnist Thomas Friedman, who often articulates Big Picture perspectives, wrote on June 26, 2018, "The U.S. Republican Party has blown up in all but name, going overnight from an internationalist, free-trade, deficit-hawk party to a protectionist, anti-immigrant, deficit-dove party -- all to accommodate the instincts of Donald Trump and his base. As the former House Speaker John Boehner noted: 'There is no Republican Party. There's a Trump party. The Republican Party is kind of taking a nap somewhere.'" (This was in Friedman's article *Why Are So Many Political Parties Blowing Up?*)

Democrats in Congress poignantly point out that Republicans are demanding documents from the Special Counsel investigation into wrongdoing for only one real main reason -- to promote their intensifying efforts to attack and discredit the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 national elections on behalf of Trump, who regularly attacks the probe on Twitter.

This ploy is "collaboration with the executive branch, masquerading as oversight," declared Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the ranking Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, in a speech on the House floor. Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, a far right member of the House Freedom Caucus, antagonistically grilled Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and FBI Director Christopher Wray during congressional hearings on June 28, 2018. "The early verdicts on social media to Jordan's questioning indicated he did not come off well, with conservative commentator Bill Kristol tweeting: 'Watching Rep. Jordan harass Deputy AG Rosenstein. I knew Jim Jordan before he was a reckless demagogue.' Steve Schmidt, a former Republican campaign strategist who recently renounced his membership in the Republican Party, called Jordan "a clown, albeit a dangerous one," and compared his theatrics to those of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, the discredited communist hunter from the 1950s.

It is as if Republicans are almost unanimously willing to obstruct justice to prop up their Supreme Leader and his corrupt administration -- and their own personal greedy self-interested drive for money, campaign contributions and the very legitimacy of their power. Progressives accurately saw Jordan's efforts as an attempt to squelch the Mueller investigation in a curious pretense of masquerading as oversight. Rosenstein pointed out how massive the volume of oversight requests he is dealing with by a Trump-championing Congress.

Republicans are demonstrating a protective fervor to end the Russia investigation, seeing their guy and their monopoly on power possibly coming to an end. Desperately trying to discredit the investigation, Trump called the Russia story a "total fabrication" in one of his rally speeches last year. That is a preposterous assertion, given what Robert Mueller and his team have uncovered in the course of the 22 indictments and 5 guilty pleas already made. And the criminal trial of Trump's former finance chairman Paul Manafort is about to begin, with serious criminal charges for fraud and witness tampering. So this isn't in any way a "total fabrication"!

Trump tweeted on June 28, "Russia continues to say they had nothing to do with Meddling in our Election". Really?! The President of the United States is taking sides with Vladimir Putin against the conclusion of all American Intelligence agencies. So it was ironically suspicious that Trump concluded that tweet with these words: "So many questions, so much corruption!"

The Titanic Struggle between Liberals and Conservatives

The insightful linguist George Lakoff explains, in *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, about how the competing influences of Strict Father worldviews contrast to the worldviews of Nurturing Parents (and good mothers). He points out that liberal and conservative politics are deeply influenced by different ideas of the

family, and that these two contrasting models of the family “give rise to different moral systems and different discourse forms, that is, different choices of words and different modes of reasoning.”

Whole constellations of propensities are associated with the conflicting political camps of Strict Father adherents and Nurturing Parent adherents. Sensible parents see that being too permissive can ruin a child, but that excessive discipline and harshness in Strict Father ideologies may be worse for the family and the child, and society as a whole.

One important thing to understand here is that conservative propensities happen to be favorable to authoritarians who like to assert domineering control, and to abuse the power of authority. Conservative worldviews lionize discipline, self-control and loyalty, so they tend to attract what Bob Altemeyer calls “authoritarian followers”. These folks tend to be loyal to tribal allegiances that can get in the way of freedom-cherishing Americans’ desires to properly balance individual liberties and the greater social good, and to thereby actualize true greater good goals.

Bob Altemeyer, an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, posed the question, *What is Authoritarianism?* His response:

“Authoritarianism is something authoritarian followers and authoritarian leaders cook up between themselves. It happens when the followers submit too much to the leaders, trust them too much, and give them too much leeway to do whatever they want -- which often is something undemocratic, tyrannical and brutal. In my day, authoritarian fascist and authoritarian communist dictatorships posed the biggest threats to democracies, and eventually lost to them in wars both hot and cold. But authoritarianism itself has not disappeared, and I’m going to present the case in this book that the greatest threat to American democracy today arises from a militant authoritarianism that has become a cancer upon the nation.”

“We know an awful lot about authoritarian followers. In one way or another, hundreds of social scientists have studied them since World War II. We have a pretty good idea of who they are, where they come from, and what makes them tick. By comparison, we know little about authoritarian leaders because we only recently started studying them. That may seem strange, but how hard is it to figure out why someone would like to have massive amounts of power? The psychological mystery has always been, why would someone prefer a dictatorship to freedom? So social scientists have focused on the followers, who are seen as the main, underlying problem.”

Republicans won many 2016 election contests and gained power not by proposing real effective plans to improve the greater good of the American people, but by stoking cultural resentments, hijacking people’s emotions, fostering division, scaring people, promoting deceptive ideological dogmas, using negative attack ads, exploiting hot-button wedge issues and red hot cultural biases, taking advantage of fake news on social media, and fund-raising huge sums of money from wealthy conservatives, Big Oil, Big Coal and giant corporations that seek lower taxes, fewer regulations and more opportunities to foist the costs of pollution, healthcare, natural disasters and environmental damages onto the public. The fact is that conservative politicians are currently ascendant in majority control of all branches of the federal government only because they have gained this domineering position by seizing power through this litany of illegitimate means. And they are critically abusing this power.

It is exceedingly odd how willing conservatives seem to be, despite being generally averse to change, to go along with extreme risk in national policies. This is the case with opposing democracy-enhancing reforms in order to gain extremely narrow partisan advantage as well as many other issues: denying the potentially apocalyptic risks of global warming, allowing building in flood plains, accepting wastefully depleting uses of natural resources, supporting policies that would sacrifice the greater good AND deprive tens of millions of people of healthcare in order to try to reduce taxes on investment income of rich people. And voting for a leader who is a duplicitous plutocrat, smug, privilege abusing, trust violating, dangerously self-centered and reactively vitriolic. And even risking revolutionary discord by accepting the predations of wealthy elites that keep driving inequality and inequities to worse extremes.

P.J. O’Rourke’s famous remark has always resonated with me about Republicans saying government doesn’t work and then managing to get elected and making sure that government doesn’t work very well for the vast majority of the people. But in 2017, a new desperate confirmation of this understanding has materialized. Yes, conservative

politicians have been excessively concerned with gaining power and domineering control, using illegitimate means, and they certainly do not seem to be showing much interest in governing fairly or honestly or inclusively or at all well. They have fallen for a very low type of man to win power who is masterfully exploiting divisions, but he is fragmenting the nation as if trying to push a fragile Humpty Dumpty off a great wall, and it is proving to be increasingly difficult to put America back together again. The man and his enabling cronies are serious threats to the security and well-being of the American people and to the liberty-loving republic for which we stand, due to their desperate deficiencies of fiscal responsibility, trustworthiness, self-discipline, honorable integrity, empathy, commitment to egalitarian inclusiveness, humility and visionary understanding. The man demonstrates egomaniacal narcissism and a lack of respect for norms and codes of conduct -- or for women, other than as sex objects! This makes him a terrible leader. And those waiting in the wings to assume power once he quits or is impeached, or otherwise is removed from the scene, are almost more dangerous for their blind obedience to a hard right agenda.

In *Strangers in Their Own Land*, sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild tells the story of years she spent in arch-conservative Louisiana bayou country listening to Tea Party folks to find out why they support national policies that seem to liberals to be so cantankerously contrary to the common good. She found that people in red states have been indoctrinated to feel that it is the government, not giant corporations, which has been primarily responsible for their woes because the government has helped people like immigrants, refugees, women, gay people and others to cut in line ahead of them in their hopes of achieving the American Dream.

We need a much healthier two-party system. Severe imbalances like those that have existed since Trump and Pence came to power are not only unhealthy, but exceedingly dangerous to the general welfare, the national security and peaceful coexistence. Trump has played *We the People* as suckers, and has played the role to a "T" of being a divisive emotion-manipulating deceiving demagogic dictator-wannabe male chauvinist who is plunging the world into unknown but not wholly uncharted new directions. Let's all stand up, and not go along!

Here's a better idea: Let's compromise on a whole raft of win-win solutions to problems. There are plenty to choose from. See *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Make America Great Again* for some of the best ones.

On Immigration

If we don't pay enough attention to where we're going, we will likely end up in a place we don't want to be. Look how the powers-that-be have diabolically used manufactured consent to give us a demagogue like the one in Sinclair Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here*, who reactionarily betrayed the best interests of the people.

Think again of the meaning of the poem written by German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoller, an outspoken public opponent of Adolf Hitler who spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. This viscerally compelling poem is about the cowardice of German intellectuals and the populace following the Nazi's rise to power and subsequent purges of their chosen targets, group after group. The poem deals with themes of persecution, guilt and responsibility.

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak for me.

We mortals are a little like the vulnerable frog in the fable that is put into a pot of tepid water slowly being brought to a boil, and we need to save ourselves by sharpening our focus and choosing to extricate ourselves from our endangering predicament. Let's do this while we still can, before we are all stewed screwed!

"Dehumanizing undocumented immigrants may be one of Mr. Trump's signature outrages, but it is hardly his only one. There is also his politicization of law enforcement, his attempts to undermine public faith in the democratic process, his attacks on the press, his family's suspect business dealings and his habitual lying ..." So says the New York Times Editorial Board in *How the G.O.P. Built Donald Trump's Cage*.

First Lady Melania visited immigration sites in Texas in late June, but the photo op was overshadowed by her

wearing a jacket en route that said in big capital letters on the back, "I REALLY DON'T CARE, DO U". That was an in-your-face attitude for the wife of the man who is responsible for the inhumane "zero tolerance" policies. Then the First Lady visited Arizona on June 28 and expressed great sympathy to border control agents who are doing the very difficult job of enforcing her rogue husband's harm engendering, counterproductive, draconian and immoral "zero tolerance" family separation policy.

We should instead shift gears and practice tolerance, fair-mindedness and Golden Rule ethics, and work together to demand that our representatives pass truly comprehensive immigrant legislation, and stop using Dreamers and other vulnerable persons as bargaining chips. Such smarter national priorities would help improve the crucially important quality of social cohesion!

"Patriotism is about improving the lives of one's fellow citizens and improving one's country's contribution to the world. In the conservative moral hierarchy, our country is taken as simply better than other countries. This is jingoism, not true patriotism, which rests on progressive values."

--- George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*

In a June 24 New York Times Editorial titled *The G.O.P. Built Donald Trump's Cages*: "We should rightly help address the root causes that are motivating migrant families to stream to the U.S. border."

"In 2016, more individuals sought affirmative asylum from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in the last three years than in the prior 15 years combined." This is due to rampant violence in that region. People are desperate to escape. "Helping these nations stabilize themselves is key to reducing the flow of asylum seekers. But Mr. Trump does not like complexity or long-term strategizing. He prefers casting blame and making threats. He has repeatedly vowed to cut off aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras unless they stem the flow of drugs and people into the United States."

Donald Trump wants to cut spending on foreign aid, but "removing a financial lifeline from nations already in chaos is hardly a recipe for progress." Trump seeks personal triumph and self-enrichment through emotion manipulation, deceit and diabolical scapegoating of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, women, children, poor people and folks in racial minorities. But it would be a better world if our representatives acted with less partisan rancor and advantage seeking.

At the same time, numerous protests are proliferating, with crowds good-naturedly revealing their simmering outrage, chanting "No Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA!" A swelling number of courageous resisters are standing up and declaring that the emperor has no clothes, that his rule is corrupt, that his emotion-exploiting blame-shifting tactics are immoral, that the wrongdoing of his debt-financed Tax Cuts scam is fiscally irresponsible, and that his anti-environmental policies are treachery to everyone in the future and to most forms of life on Earth.