

Where I'm Coming From

by Michael E. Arth



Easter Sunday, 1961. Five of the original six lined up with our Easter baskets before heading off to church. I'm the serious one on the left, with the slightly exasperated expression, which sums up where I'm coming from.

Politics in the United States has devolved into a scheme where the rich get more, everywhere, all the time, and by deceptive means. The politicians and media outlets that profit from the spectacle, along with the plutocrats who can afford to buy influence at all levels, keep us distracted, divided, and confused in order to exploit us. The three branches of government are now like a three-ring circus, led by the biggest clown in the land. It's my duty as a concerned citizen to do everything within my power to help fix it.

As of this writing, in 2018, I'm aware that most people have never heard of me. While not a media hound, I recognize the need to be known in order to take a leadership role in transforming our flawed democracy. In a properly representative system, an informed electorate would need to know a person's background, their political evolution, and why they are running for office in order to make an intelligent choice. So here it is:



Family portrait in Tennessee around 1906. My mother's father, Zeb Gupton, is the barefoot boy on the banjo. My great uncle is on the fiddle. The patriarch with the long beard—originally from North Carolina—is my great-grandfather who fought for the Confederacy and surrendered with Robert E. Lee at Appomattox. (On the other side of the family, my paternal great-grandfather fought for the Union).

My early politics were molded by nature and nurture as represented by geography, parents, teachers, culture, and religion. My mother's traditional ways were planted in the Deep South, with roots reaching even deeper into Colonial history. My father, by contrast, was from Minnesota, and is descended from stern, mid-19th century German and Austrian immigrants. Essentially, I'm a product of the American melting pot including—according to family lore—a soupçon of Native American. My great-grandfathers fought on opposing sides of the Civil War, and before that, my mother's ancestors fought the British in the Revolutionary War. Before that, they *were* British....which brings up why the British circumstances of my birth does not disqualify me from being president.

My younger sister Michele and I were born on a United States Air Force Base in England, where my father, Harry J. Arth, was a meteorologist. In the “memoir of the future” portion of my forthcoming book, *The Time Traveler: An Artist’s Quest Through the Past and Future*, I describe my two-term presidency and a very different sort of America than we have today. I also describe how various opponents file unsuccessful ballot challenges and lawsuits in 2020, claiming I’m ineligible to be president because I was born abroad, and am therefore not a “natural born Citizen” as required by Section 1 of Article II of the United States Constitution. The challenges and lawsuits will be dismissed in lower courts because both of my parents’ citizenship automatically made me a natural-born Citizen, according to use of the phrase in British and Colonial law. (If the Constitution had said “native-born Citizen” it might be a different matter). Similar challenges were taken up against Ted Cruz, a presidential candidate in 2016, who was born in Calgary, Canada to a Cuban father and a mother who was a US



September 1961. After a glorious summer as free-range children, my sister Michele and I pose on the front steps of St. Ann’s Catholic School. Mother Superior “Bonfire” Bonfilia—with her veil, scapular, tunic, underskirt, rope belt, rosary beads, and Missionary-Sisters-of-the-Immaculate-Conception-medallion swinging—is blazing a trail toward us. She is holding a note that, in all probability, meant a knuckle-whacking for some hapless student (like the one I got later for saying the word “pregnant.”)

Citizen. He prevailed even though he was on shakier (and somewhat colder) ground than me, since I was born in an American base hospital to two American citizens, one of whom was performing his duties as an enlisted, noncommissioned officer during the Korean War. After my sister and I had entered this world as natural-born Citizens, and my father’s stint was over, we moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Dad went back to college on the G.I. Bill and became a geophysicist, which resulted in me and my siblings growing up in oil towns all over Texas.

As a condition of marriage, my mother had converted to Catholicism, and both of them followed the Church's strict edict to be fruitful and multiply. By the time I was seven, there were six. There would have been more, but what my father swore was a merciful "act of God" (a hysterectomy due to cancer) finally shut down my mother's assembly line. However, after I left home, Dad remarried and had a seventh child.

There are benefits to being the oldest child from a large family. One learns detachment. When I wasn't engaged with my next-in-age brother Greg in a fort-building projects, war games, or exploring the desert that bordered our neighborhood, I was the family documentarian—drawing, photographing, and filming. Beginning in my teens, I also began keeping journals and wrote about all that I saw with reasonable equanimity. This objectivity helped me to avoid getting drawn into the swirling maelstrom of drama that enveloped my younger siblings and our poor, harried mother. This ability to stand apart as an observer would eventually serve me in my careers in art, filmmaking, architecture, urban design, and policy analysis.

As a young true believer in a conservative Abrahamic religion, I also had my eye on Heaven. Therefore, I understand too well why certain Islamists strap on suicide vests for God. I too would have gladly become a martyr, singing and marching to "Onward Christian Soldiers," if it would have allowed me to avoid a lifetime filled with temptations of the flesh and Our-Father-Who-art-in-Heaven's constant scrutiny. I longed to reach the Pearly Gates, as promised to those who kept the faith and hewed to the narrow, tortuous path.

Our family dressed up every Sunday in well-starched garments that chafed the nipples of boys and girls alike, and we attended Mass at St. Ann's Catholic Church in Midland. The liturgy was in Latin, and everything was cloaked in ritual. But some things were made very clear. If you didn't make it to Heaven on the first round, weekly church attendance—including prayers, hymns, and the Holy Sacraments—was said to be an effective way to reduce your time in Purgatory. This was also assuming that your life was bookended with the sacraments of Baptism, and "extreme unction," the unguent for the most extreme situation: death. As a devout student at St. Ann's School, I would often go to church during my lunch hour to help keep my eye on the prize. I also prayed constantly, and bought indulgences in the form of anointed medals and a devotional yoke (called a scapular) at the St. Ann's Gift Shop. I was a good kid, and rarely had any new sins to confess, so I would just retell the same ones in the confessional every week: "I stole a nickel from my brother, took the Lord's name in vain, and had impure thoughts (about Sister Claire Marie)."

The nuns, the priests, my parents, and the little old lady who ran the gift shop, were all in agreement about the Truth. The universe was the creation of the Supreme Being. The Prime-

Mover in the chain of causality, occasionally interrupted with a miracle, somehow gave us free will, but still scrutinized our every thought and action, and became wrathful every time we veered off course. If we didn't obey the Ten Commandments—and the never-ending list of bewildering addenda—we would burn for a while in Purgatory, or for eternity in Hell. Furthermore, baptized Catholics, as members of the One True Church, were the only people who could enter Heaven. All mortally sinful people, no matter their faith, would be sent to Hell where they would dance forever on the end of the Devil's pitchfork, over a roasting spit. The best any well-behaved non-Catholic, or pagan, could hope for was to spend an eternity in Purgatory. Unbaptized babies went to Limbo, where, as a kid, I imagined they would endlessly crawl back and forth under the limbo stick.

My father used to say that he was to the right of Attila the Hun, and that God was a Republican. Dwight D. Eisenhower was a Republican, so I assume Dad liked Ike, even though he never said anything about him one way or another. Ike was the invisible president in a time of increasing prosperity following the hardships of the Great Depression and the Second World War. The old saying goes: Roosevelt proved we can love the president, Truman proved anyone could be president, and Eisenhower proved we didn't need a president.

Well, as turned out, Ike did have one important thing to say to all of us, and as a five-star general and former Supreme Allied Commander he was uniquely qualified to say it. Ike was sworn in just after my birth, and he gave his televised farewell speech just before I turned eight. His ghostly image in black and white saying something incomprehensible is the only thing I remember about his presidency. Only later in life, did I understand Eisenhower's prescient and dire warnings about how what he called the "Military-Industrial Complex" was slipping beyond democratic control.

Eisenhower had his own vast experience as a guide, but he would surely have known about the 1933 "Business Plot" by wealthy industrialists, led by the J.P. Morgan banking firm, to stage a military coup to overthrow Franklin D. Roosevelt and form a fascist dictatorship. The plot was exposed before the House of Representatives in 1934 by Major General Smedley Butler, a self-professed Republican (who voted for the beloved FDR) and the most decorated Marine in US history up until that time. Butler testified that conspirators tried to enlist him to help form an army of 500,000 men consisting largely of disgruntled World War I vets who would march on Washington. No action was taken by Congress, but the Congressional Committee wrote in their final report: "There is no question that these attempts were discussed, were planned, and might have been placed in execution when and if the financial backers deemed it expedient."

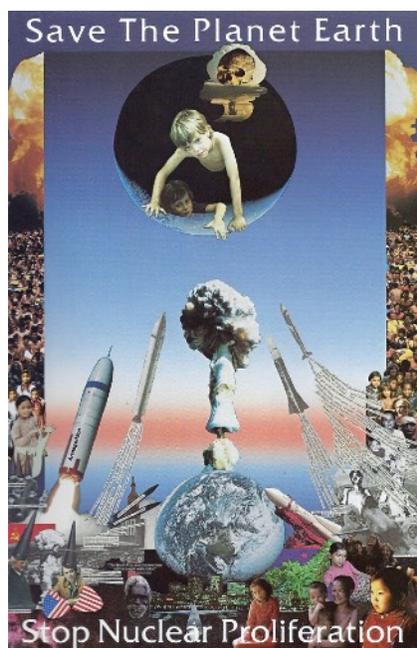
Eisenhower must have also known about Smedley Butler's 1935 book, *War is a Racket*, based on the Marine's experiences with the business community, and his fighting in the Philippines, China, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and in World War I. Butler warned of domestic fascism and explained in his book how Wall Street bankers and business interests manipulate policy in order to profit from war. Butler summed it up in the November 1935 issue of the magazine *Common Sense*:

I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902–1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.

Of course, unlike President Eisenhower and Major General Butler, I knew none of this in 1961, and I don't think my dad was much concerned about it either. With six kids, a tumultuous marriage, a full-time job, and side businesses that included a "family billiards center" and two firework stands, Dad was under a lot of pressure. He liked to blow off steam by having everyone light up whatever fireworks were left over after New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July. He also liked to drive on dirt service roads through grasshopper pump jacks, in the dead-flat desert of the Permian Basin, to shoot jackrabbits and cottontails from the family station wagon. I know this because he took us along once, but never again, because my siblings spoiled the fun by crying over all the switching, bleeding bunnies.

My father had no sympathy for animals or heathens, especially of the communist variety. "God put the soulless creatures here on Earth for our own purposes and to eat," he would say, "They have no feelings and they only act on instinct, like robots." As a result, there was a lot of animal cruelty back then, involving guns, firecrackers, stomping, stabbing, or drowning. I remember shooting birds and polliwogs with my BB gun. I felt bad about it, even if they were soulless, and finally stopped killing for fun. I preferred to play soldier with my toy rifles, but for a while I played cowboy with my BB pistol, and made other boys dance by firing at their shoes.

The world was on edge during the Cold War. After two world wars within the living memory of my parents and grandmothers, World War III seemed inevitable. It was assumed that hundreds of millions of people (again, mostly heathens) would either be incinerated or die a slow, horrible death in an irradiated, post-apocalyptic world. While many adults were digging bomb shelters and stocking up, my brother Greg and I secretly dug two bomb shelters of our own—one in the dirt alley behind the fence and another out in the desert. The first secret was literally uncovered when one of the wheels of a Caterpillar grader crushed the tunnel in the alley, and the incensed driver charged through our back yard up to the kitchen door to inform my father. Dad was plenty mad about that. Later, he was really burned up after I came home covered with soot, and he found out about the desert lair. I confessed to the having gotten a small taste of Armageddon when a wildfire, which Dad blamed me for, swept over the tunnel with me inside and the fire truck passing close by. My brother witnessed Dad giving me a beating and threatening to haul me down to the police station—which explains why he didn't confess that he started the fire until we had grown to middle age. At the time, Dad told me he had not prepared at all for the coming apocalypse: "It's not a war you'd want to survive." While in the Air Force, assigned to special projects related to studying wind patterns, he had been at Dugway Proving Ground in Utah from 1950 to late 1951 when "radiological bombs" (now known as "dirty bombs") were being readied for testing. After my father died at age 56 from multiple myeloma, a cancer often associated with radioactive fallout, his second wife told me Dad had also witnessed an atom bomb explosion.



Save the Planet Earth: Stop Nuclear Proliferation poster. Acrylic and collage, 1982.

His comment, possibly related to his personal experiences, haunted me for decades, and the more I learned about the dangers, the more concerned I became. The number of global nuclear weapons reached a peak of 70,000 around 1986, more than 98% of which were stocked by the US and the Soviet Union. In that year, the Soviet Union had almost twice as many nuclear weapons as the US, presided over by the young, liberal reformer, Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev had replaced the old guard, a succession of senescent cold warriors, and introduced *glasnost* ("openness") and *perestroika* ("restructuring"). With the fate of humankind in the balance, most were hopeful he could somehow make a deal with Reagan. At the Reykjavík, Iceland Summit, on October 12, 1986, Gorbachev proposed to join with the US and others to eliminate all nuclear weapons as long as Reagan agreed to slow-walk development of his impractical Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) for ten years. Reagan would have given away nothing, since the scheme to kill incoming ICBMs is

unreliable and inadequate even 30 years later. More to the point, SDI would have been incredibly wasteful and useless if there were no nukes to intercept. In a tragic turn of events, our own senescent cold warrior walked away from the best chance we ever had to have complete, verifiable denuclearization. I was bitterly disappointed, and assumed that Reagan's military advisors and minders had kiboshed the deal on behalf of the Military Industrial Complex. We could have used a dose of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* ourselves before both countries devolved into the more autocratic states they are today.

Despite significant mutual arms reduction, mostly of redundant, aging missiles, there are still about 14,500 global nuclear weapons in nine countries—and these upgraded weapons are still powerful enough to destroy human civilization many times over. Throwing fuel on the fire, in 2018 Trump threatened North Korea with “fire and fury like the world has never seen,” and



I took this photo of an ICBM heading straight for Los Angeles just after it exploded on the evening of October 28, 1987. Perhaps the greatest lost opportunity in history occurred the year before when President Reagan walked away from a proposal by Mikhail Gorbachev to put the genie back in the bottle and eliminate all nuclear weapons. Several years before the summit, Reagan had wondered aloud if we were the generation that would see Armageddon as prophesied in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. Polls show a majority of white evangelical Christians still believe in the end times and that Jesus will return soon. The vast majority of Muslims polled on the subject also believe the end times are near. Denuclearization is presumably not a concern for those who long for Armageddon and the final reckoning of humanity.

called for the US to build more and better nukes, including tactical nuclear weapons for battlefield use, virtually guaranteeing that other countries will follow suit. Raising the ante on Reagan's "Star Wars" fantasy, Trump also called for a military "Space Force."

During the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, when the US and the Soviet Union were at the brink of global thermonuclear war, I stood outside watching a blood red sky, left behind by the setting sun. I thought it might be the last sunset I would ever see. On October 28, 1987, Exactly twenty-five years after the Cuban Missile Crisis was settled, and only a year after the failed Reykjavík Summit, I had a similar, but much more terrifying experience.

This time the setting sun illuminated an actual intercontinental ballistic missile coming up over the horizon. I was standing on the balcony of a house I was building in the Hollywood Hills and managed to snap a picture immediately after it exploded. I sold the photo to Associated Press and it was front page news across the western United States, along with the claim by the Air Force that it was a successful test launch of a Minuteman II missile from Vandenberg Air Force Base. It was hard to deny what I saw, and there was no contrail after the explosion, which was seen as far away as Salt Lake City. The LA Weekly later said that it was indeed heading for Los Angeles and had to be destroyed. Two weeks later, the LA Times reported that another ICBM went rogue immediately after launch from the facility, and also had to be destroyed. This experience took me back to 1962.

In that year, it seemed to me that Dad wished the US would launch a first strike on the Soviet Union in order to eliminate the threat. He loathed Kennedy, even though they were fellow Catholics, and considered him soft on communism. Not long after the crisis had passed, I remember him blowing up over a tiny article in the Midland-Reporter Telegram that reported Kennedy had approved \$2 million in foreign aid for Tito's Yugoslavia, to help prevent that country from being drawn deeper into Russia's orbit. Decades later, I found out from Mom that Dad was so angry about the aid to Yugoslavia and Kennedy's peace overtures that he wrote a letter to Congress, in October 1963, saying "Kennedy ought to be shot!"

The following month Kennedy actually *was* shot, along with our governor. The elderly Irish pastor of our church, Father Kennedy, delivered the news about his namesake to us during a school play around noon on that fateful day. Father Kennedy was crying, and soon all of us were crying. After we were back in our classrooms, several of us speculated that President Kennedy would be a vegetable if he somehow survived a shot to the head, which led to some levity as we reimagined Kennedy as a carrot in a suit with good hair.

The day Kennedy was shot, NBC anchorman Chet Huntley talked about “pockets of hatred in our country, and places where the disease is encouraged. You have heard,” he said bitterly, “those who say, ‘Those Kennedys ought to be shot!’... It seems evident that hatred moved the person who fired these shots. . .”



Apparently, one of those pockets of hatred was in our very own house. As my mother and I mourned with the rest of the nation at the foot of her bed, watching the proceedings on TV throughout the weekend, as well as the funeral on Monday, my father was mostly absent. We also watched Oswald being shot on Sunday. Mom said later that at first they were wondering when the FBI was going to show up to question him, but Oswald and Ruby tied up those questions in a nice neat bundle just in time for the funeral. On Sunday, I took a break

from the non-stop television coverage to ride my bicycle around our deserted neighborhood. I found a paper stand with Saturday's Dallas Morning News and its huge three-tiered headline **“KENNEDY SLAIN ON DALLAS STREET, JOHNSON BECOMES PRESIDENT, Pro-Communist Charged with Act.”**

I raced home to tell Dad, and he immediately drove us back to get a copy. On the way to the kiosk, he chuckled to himself, and then while pretending to be a reporter, he said, “Well, other than that, Mrs. Kennedy, how did you like Dallas?”

So, naturally he voted for Barry Goldwater in 1964, the same year that Texaco transferred us to Houston, and the year I got beaten up by a girl. During the week leading up to the election, I turned my earnest 11-year-old self into a walking Goldwater signboard. I did this by removing a few staples and replacing the wooden stick that separated the front and back of the cardboard placard with my scrawny torso.

I got on my bike and rode around like that for a few blocks. Suddenly, out of nowhere, pedaled a sturdy creature not much older than me, sporting a ratty, strawberry-blonde pageboy. She tilted a Johnson for President yard sign toward me like a cross between a banner and a jousting lance. After the initial blow, she went “all the way with LBJ,” smashing away until I had been knocked to the ground and both of our signs were in tatters. Then she came at me with her fists, yelling

that she was going to beat the hell out of me for being a stupid, idiotic Republican. She got the better of me, but my belief in both Hell and the Grand Old Party remained.

Until high school.

Those years were spent in Euless, a small hick town on the edge of a prairie where the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport would eventually be built. In June 1965, my dad commuted to his new job with Mobil Oil at the Magnolia Petroleum Building in Dallas. The back of the skyscraper, with its red, rotating, neon Pegasus on top, overlooked Main Street where Kennedy's open-top motorcade had passed below, only 18 months earlier.



“Hey, Hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?”

Nineteen Sixty-Eight was a chaotic year filled with news of bombings, demonstrations, and assassinations, with talk of conspiracy and revolution. In 1968, when I was 15, my mother was crying as we watched on TV the police beating up and tear-gassing protesters outside of the Democratic National Convention. The protesters were against the Vietnam War and chanting “Hey, Hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?,” “Hell no, we won’t go!” and “The whole world is watching! The whole world is watching!”

At that point, politically speaking, I was still my father’s son, but cracks were beginning to appear. Unlike my father, I had mourned the deaths of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Bobby Kennedy as if they were members of our family. However, in regards communism, I still believed in tumbling dominoes and what journalist Michael Herr wrote sarcastically a decade later about “maintaining the equilibrium of the Dingdong by containing the ever encroaching Doodah.”

In my own form of counter protest, I cut off the bells of my bell bottom pants. I wanted nothing to do with pinkos and the hippie era, and I was willing to fight for my country right or wrong. I even went to see Richard Nixon at a rally and cheered, even though I would have favored Bobby Kennedy if he had lived, because of his desire to end poverty and discrimination, and his endearing resemblance to Bugs Bunny.

Part of my reaction to communism or talk of socialism was that it seemed the free-loaders who didn’t have to do chores or work after school were the most inclined toward long hair, bell-bottoms, and socialism. I had done chores as far back as I can remember, working after school

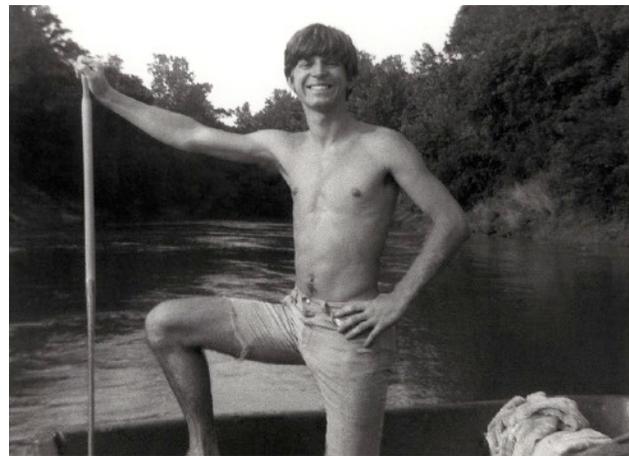
and on weekends throughout my junior high and high school years. There were Kool-Aid stands at age seven and up, recycling soda bottles at 12, a newspaper route, door-to-door sales at 13, and then yard mowing and house painting beginning at 14. I worked as a janitor, cleaned nasty apartments, swept parking lots, and worked at Pizza Hut in my sophomore year. I taught swimming classes and was a lifeguard at 16 and 17, and worked as a portrait artist at Six Flags over Texas. If the revolution did come, I figured my sunburns and callouses would keep me from being sent to a socialist re-education camp.



My first political cartoon concerned pollution and the planned canalization of the Trinity River. 1969. That boondoggle was stopped.

My love of nature was threatening to turn me into a hippie. One year made a big difference. By 16 I was willing to wear bell bottoms, and grow my hair out as long as parents and teachers would permit. I bought a small styrofoam boat and paddled down the rather polluted Trinity River several times with friends. My first political cartoon showed a boy like me and my father, in Dallas, next to the Trinity River, which LBJ, the Corps of Engineers, and the business establishment wanted to turn into a 400-mile-long barge canal to the

As a budding artist and someone who appreciates beauty and nature, I was concerned about the environment. At 16, I read transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, about his simple life on Walden Pond where the naturalist focused on self-sufficiency and personal growth. It inspired me to write and illustrate a novel (in an extremely limited edition of one) about a young man named Jockey Tramshire Heddge who grows a beard and longs to transcend the blight of the industrialized world. Finally he and his girlfriend run away to live on a tropical island that has good surfing beaches.



Age 16, in 1969, just before paddling down the Trinity River.

Gulf. The bridges were already being raised in the late 1960s to allow ships to pass below. “Well son,” says father to son, “standing here on the banks of this future canal—boyhood swimming hole of your father—let me congratulate you on being able to grow up in this great industrial age.”

To my relief, the canal project was defeated in 1973 by critics who said it was “welfare for the rich” that would cause “wholesale devastation” to the environment. Instead of being tamed with concrete, channelization, locks, and dams, most of the Trinity River was cleaned up and left in a natural state.

In 1970, I published an off-campus newspaper called “Hello,” where I wrote about an anthology of “Conservative Poets” I was planning to edit, and how I had queried Vice-President Spiro Agnew to get his support. (In 1973 Agnew would resign in disgrace after it came out that he had accepted kickbacks and been under investigation for conspiracy, bribery, extortion and tax fraud.)

Other than that, and stirrings of environmentalism, my newspaper was somewhat apolitical, but I got into trouble over caricatures and cartoons of some of the high school teachers and coaches who were fond of corporal punishment. The coaches drilled holes in their paddles for better aerodynamics, and I got paddled when I got into fights with bullies I didn’t start. (“Takes two to tango, pardner, bend over!) The principal called me into his office and threatened me with suspension if a single one of my papers, even if distributed off campus, found its way onto school grounds.

I told him I would invite the ACLU to sue him and his school on the grounds of the First Amendment if he followed through. He backed down, and I graduated mid-term of my senior year without further incident.



My first op-ed in a big town newspaper was published in January 1971 in the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram, just after I had left home at 17. It was in response to the “America: Love or Leave It” bumper sticker.

As a senior in high school I finally began questioning the status quo on all fronts, and wrote my first published op-ed. It was in reaction to the widespread sentiment “my country right or wrong” and the popular bumper sticker “America: Love It or Leave It.” My conclusion then, and now, is that to truly love our country we must do the hard work of making it better. Instead of having an infantile, familial relationship where we support Uncle Sam and cover up embarrassing family secrets, we need an adult relationship based on self-examination, and a willingness to evolve with the changing times. There’s always room for improvement, both individually and as a nation.

In my junior year of high school I tried marijuana a number of times, undeterred by the 1936 American propaganda film *Reefer Madness*, seen at a midnight theater with schoolmates. The film depicted a boy, high on marijuana, who gets in a hit-and-run accident that kills someone. A girl is nearly raped and then killed when a gun goes off while two young men are fighting. Another man is murdered. Another young woman jumps out of the window, followed by a man’s descent into madness. In other words, the characters were exhibiting behavior commonly associated with alcohol.

I hated smoking, and marijuana was stupefying compared to LSD, which I tried for the first time at 17, on an empty stomach, alone on a cold night, in my dark bedroom. Before tripping, I had devoured any literature on the subject I could find, including *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*, by R.E.L. Masters and Jean Houston, billed as “the comprehensive guide to the effects of LSD on human personality.” I knew psychedelics heightened the senses, were non-addictive, and would be nothing like the risible propaganda film we were shown at school titled, *LSD: Insight or Insanity*. Instead, LSD and other psychedelics really are about insight, even while being challenging and frightening. LSD forced me to confront my fears and assumptions unlike anything I had ever experienced. It broke down the part of my brain that controls the ego—which did not go down without a terrifying fight—and put me in direct contact with religious feeling, which bore no resemblance to cartoonish Bible stories. It was the beginning of my connection with the Other, which is the life beyond the ego that connects with everything and everyone. It took every ounce of gumption to kill an ego as big as mine, and explore the great mystery of being, untethered from ordinary reality, so I undertook such explorations rarely and with great caution. My last psychedelic experience was in 1996. Part of the reason I stopped was because I wanted to publicly discuss drug policy without fear of persecution or prosecution.

Beginning in my teens, I noticed the hypocrisy regarding psychoactive substances. The authorities violently suppressed non-toxic, non-addictive substances that encouraged self-reflection and alternative modes of perception, including feelings of love for others, yet

supported and even allowed advertising of the most lethal of the addictive “escape drugs”—alcohol and nicotine. I have always disliked the addictive drugs that are socially acceptable, including coffee, as well as the forbidden “hard drugs.” In the 70’s, powder cocaine was ubiquitous, and expensive because it was illegal. Because prohibition causes the most concentrated forms of an illegal substance to be developed quicker, cocaine’s most pernicious, and cheaper, form—crack—soon became widely available through criminal distribution networks. Even as dangerous as it is, less than 11,000 people died from cocaine in all forms from 2000 to 2016 in the US, while legal substances killed more than eight million during the same period. According to the Center of Disease Control and the Health, in 2013, tobacco and alcohol killed 120 times more Americans than all other drugs combined. Throughout all those years psychedelics and cannabis killed no one. Casting the net even wider, there is not a single, unambiguously documented case of overdose death from marijuana or LSD in the entire recorded history of the world.

It was disturbing to learn that both the Church and State lie as a form of social control. I wanted to know the truth about everything, and did not want to accept common assumptions out of fear or wishful thinking. Science, which forms falsifiable theories deduced from repeatable observations of the senses, constitutes what we call “reality” and is the only reliable source of factual information. This all seemed so obvious, fair, and reasonable. Even so, I began to notice how propagandists sow doubt through in-house research, cherry-picking of data, statistical analyses, and by soliciting opinions from hired experts in order to manipulate public opinion (e.g., oil and tobacco companies). Knowing that people respect science and its proven results, science-sounding words and pseudo-science is used by Christian Science, Scientology, Science of Mind, creation scientists, astrologists, climate change deniers, marketers, mediums, and other assorted schemers and scammers. With all this in mind, I sought a wide range of expert opinions and source material on every subject, with the assumption that all knowledge is to some extent provisional, at least until refined or overturned by additional observations. One can never be absolutely certain of the wisdom behind any policy decision, but reasonable people can act in good faith on a preponderance of evidence—especially on important things that would be hard to fix later if we get it wrong now. The special interests, along with their bought politicians, were gaming the system by sowing confusion while introducing self-serving, alternative scenarios.

I would soon turn 18, and be eligible for the draft. The biggest governmental lie at the time was telling young men they would serve their country by going off to Vietnam. How could we be serving our country when the war was a *disservice* to humanity? Instead, the war served the Military Industrial Complex and the politicians it bought. Vietnam was only the latest in a sordid and brutal history of misguided military actions that began with the mistreatment of Native Americans. I resolved not to go, and to resist, if necessary. Fortunately, the issue was settled by a

newly initiated lottery method based on one's birthday that let me off the hook. At the same time, a number of boys from my high school graduation class were duped into signing up, didn't know what else to do with their lives, or had the bad luck of being born on the wrong day.

In 2002, the Bush administration lied about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction to convince Congress to pass a resolution authorizing the Iraq war, despite the public's preference for diplomacy over an invasion, and preemptive war being a violation of international law. It turned out that while Iraq had enormous oil reserves lusted over by oil companies seeking new markets to exploit, Saddam did not have WMDs—not even the ones that the US had sold him during the Iran-Iraq War. It was only the latest example in a long history of military and business interests profiting from deception, greed, and public bamboozlement. After the Iraq invasion, we also finally learned that LBJ had exaggerated and lied to Congress and the American public about attacks on the USS Maddox in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964 in order to commence open warfare against North Vietnam.

We did not know about the Gulf of Tonkin deception back then, but the massacre of unarmed Vietnamese villagers by US soldiers at My Lai was slowly brought into public consciousness beginning in November 1969. Gradually, it became clear that My Lai was only the tip of the iceberg. Hundreds of non-combatants had been murdered by US soldiers, including old people, and women, who were often gang-raped and mutilated. Clinging babies were killed along with their mothers. There were organized attempts by the military and the government to cover it up or excuse it, but the big picture was much worse. All together, over the course of the nearly twenty-year-long Vietnam War, as many as four million civilians and soldiers were killed, including 58,000 Americans. Over 300,000 young American men were wounded or maimed for life, and another 270,000 *still* suffer from full-on, post-traumatic stress disorder. The Pentagon Papers, a top-secret historical analysis of the war by the Rand Corporation was leaked in 1971. It exposed the clandestine American bombing of Cambodia, its complicity in the assassination of South Vietnamese president Ngô Đình Diệm, and the fact our government continued fighting the war, despite knowing it could not be won.

The war could not have been “won” anyway, in any meaningful sense of the term. The war was misguided, immoral, and genocidal and, in 1975, the US was defeated. South Vietnam was taken over by the communist north. Today a united Vietnam is a fast-growing, modern, capitalist state, not much different from China and its one-party government, which is almost certainly what it would have been anyway if the US had never gotten involved. Vietnam was a huge mistake, pursued for nefarious ends, and the lessons had not yet been learned when the US invaded Iraq and Afghanistan. Which brings us to the kind of egoistic thinking that got us into those wars to begin with.

There are two novels that can change a bookish fourteen-year old's life: *The Lord of the Rings* and *Atlas Shrugged*. One is a childish fantasy that often engenders a lifelong obsession with its unbelievable heroes, leading to an emotionally stunted, socially crippled adulthood, unable to deal with the real world. The other, of course, involves orcs.

—Canadian writer John Rogers

In late 1969 or early 1970, as a bookish kid trying to find answers, I became a kind of right-wing libertarian, influenced by Ayn Rand. Part of the reason for this was that my father confiscated all the books he didn't like, leaving me Rand's novels *Anthem* and *Atlas Shrugged*; and her collection of essays, *The Virtue of Selfishness*. The theme of *Selfishness* presaged the *Wall Street* film character Gordon Gecko's "Greed is Good" speech, the Tea Party, and our current president. Donald Trump, who is famous for not reading, is said to be a fan of Ayn Rand despite him being authoritarian and not libertarian. He also reportedly identifies with Howard Roark, the sociopathic, architect in Rand's novel *The Fountainhead* who blows up a building when he doesn't get his way. Rand's philosophy is that everyone acting in their own self interest under laissez-faire capitalism is the most efficient way to run a society, even if there are only a few winners in a nation full of losers. In *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand contrasts "creators and innovators" with "moochers and looters." She also extols egoism as a code of ethics and believes altruism to be destructive. Robert Ringer, the self-help author who wrote *Winning Through Intimidation* (1973) and *Looking Out for #1* (1977), called *Atlas Shrugged* Rand's "masterpiece." Rand also inspired Trump's CIA chief Mike Pompeo, Trump's former Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, Andy Puzder (Trump's pick for secretary of labor), and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan. Ryan was raised Catholic, yet in 2005 Ryan credited atheist Ayn Rand with the reason he got involved in public service. He also said he gave out *Atlas Shrugged* for Christmas presents, and to his staff to read. In 2009, he said, "Ayn Rand did the best job anybody to build a moral case of capitalism..."

Presumably, Ryan wised up to the fact it is considered political suicide for Republicans to be associated with atheism. When he was asked about Ayn Rand by *National Review* in a 2012 interview, he said, "I reject her philosophy. It's an atheist philosophy....give me [Saint] Thomas Aquinas, who believed that man needs divine help in the pursuit of knowledge. Don't give me Ayn Rand."

Ayn Rand was right to say there is no proof for the existence of God, and that you do not have to prove there are no supernatural deities because you cannot prove a negative. At the time I also thought she was right about capitalism and selfishness. Everyone is selfish, and even if you do something that helps others, you receive personal gratification, the approval of others, or the

hope of a pleasant reward after death. At 16, I told my mother I didn't want to have kids, and she called me selfish. "Do you mean to say that you didn't want to have children, and that you only had us to please God," I asked, "or was it only because the Church forbids contraception?"

She couldn't come up with an acceptable answer, but admitted she really did want us, even though we drove her nuts. It got me thinking because we obviously have something in mind when we say someone is selfish or unselfish. Eventually, I came to this conclusion: There is the lesser, childish self that thinks only of what it wants—the ego. This is like pure, dog-eat-dog capitalism, which doesn't exist anywhere because of rules and regulations. Its ubiquitous cousin, crony capitalism, however, makes the rules to benefit the cronies.

In a healthy person, there is the greater self that connects to everyone through our common humanity. I got a taste of this when I had my first ego-dissolving experience on LSD. The greater self derives pleasure from helping others and improving society. It is the sort of thinking that influence the social democracies of Scandinavia, which regulate capitalism for the greater good.

We need both competition and cooperation in society, and evolution has designed us in such a way that we generally want positive things for both ourselves and others. Society would sink into brutish barbarism if we were childish all the time, and it also might not work so well if there was no striving to define personal boundaries and make something of oneself. Monotheistic religions confuse the issue even more, by claiming society is better when we do good to gain favor with a higher power. Instead, I resolved to be good for goodness sake, and try to leave the world a better place than I found it.

It was not only the lingering, bitter taste of my Catholic upbringing that turned me against religion. I would have eventually arrived at the same conclusions from my own reasoning, combined with reading the books I got from raids on my father's sock drawer. You see, I had discovered where Dad hid the books he had confiscated from me, so I was able to withdraw and replace one volume at a time without him being the wiser. One of the books on the forbidden list of the secret lending library was Robert Heilbroner's *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times, and Idea of the Great Economic Thinkers*. It introduced me to the notion that while hugely complicated but mutually interpenetrating unseen forces (Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand") determine how the market operates, economies should be regulated and engineered to prevent hardship and conflict. Another book was Philosopher Bertrand Russell's, *Religion and Science*, which helped teach me how to dissect irrational views. It angered me to see religions making unprovable, outlandish claims for a Supreme Being they claimed to represent, and using these lies to manipulate people for profit and power.

Today the oppressive Church I grew up in is struggling to stay relevant in an increasingly secular world. The liturgy is no longer in a dead language, musicians play Jesus songs at guitar masses, and they have reluctantly begun purging the clergy of pedophiles. Science was finally given some grudging respect. In 1633, the Catholic Inquisition threatened to burn Galileo at the stake unless he recanted his observation that the Sun revolves around the Earth. Only in 1992, after a 13-year-long deliberation, did the Church finally conclude that Galileo was right, even though they qualified their statement by saying the Inquisition was “acting in good faith” because Galileo could not prove “beyond all doubt that the Earth moved.” Religious indoctrination is still largely to blame for the fact recent polls show about one in four American adults still think the sun revolves around the Earth, and a third do not believe the unassailable facts proving evolution.

Some years ago, I visited my old Catholic grade school in Midland. The building was still in operation, but the nuns who taught me were all gone. The few sisters remaining had traded the “Catholic hijab” for plain skirts and sturdy, sensible shoes. The principal was an open-minded, lay woman in her 30s, with an ecumenical attitude. She was a living example of how, as the culture evolves and people wise up, cultures tend to become less dogmatic, while on the way to becoming less religious. Truth and justice will win out eventually, even for the churches. Aside from the preachers and priests who cynically use religion for debauchery or other personal gain, unknown numbers of clergy do not believe the dogma they profess, but may stay on because they don’t want to lose job security, and/or rationalize they are doing some good by comforting others. There are also groups of clergy and ex-clergy who reject authoritarianism and any literal interpretation of religious myths. The Sea of Faith network, for example, explores and promotes religion as a human creation. According to a 2014 YouGov poll, as many as 16% of Anglican clergy in the United Kingdom are agnostic or atheist, with the doubters rising as high as 28% among those who became priests in the 1960s. Nevertheless, the impulse to gather and share with others is so strong that there are now even “atheist churches” where people are bound together by fellowship instead of religion. In my neighborhood, the First United Methodist Church easily filled a large auditorium with a gray-haired crowd on recent Friday night to listen and sing along with gospel singers. Rock concerts serve the same function for the young.

Politics is about who gets what, where, when, and how. This could just as well be said about religion, which is why it can be problematic to discuss religion or politics in polite company. It is also why politicians and priests make so many false promises—telling the truth can put them out of office. Religion and politics are often mentioned in the same breath because religion is a form of politics, with a major difference being that religion also often purports to allocate resources in the hereafter. Both religion and politics have naturalistic origins in our prehistory and genetics, and they both have evolved into the institutions we have today. I believe that the fairy tales

inherent in religious dogma will continue to lose relevance, but the primordial instincts that begat religion—ineffable feelings of the numinous and transcendent—will endure. Religious feeling naturally evokes a reverence for life and inspires compassion toward others. Even though religions may fade away, humans will continue to experience feelings that include the awe and fascination with the mysteries of nature regarding our place in an unfathomable cosmos.

Even though religion has political elements, the Founding Fathers were right to separate church and state in the First Amendment. Politics in the real world should remain secular, since it is the only practical way to unite and govern people with a myriad of conflicting, personal beliefs and superstitions. It has been said that humans can be rallied around one of three things: their religion, their tribe, or their ideals. There are thousands of religions with competing dogmas, none of which are factual. (Christianity alone has over 40 major divisions including more than 33,000 denominations). There are also millions of rival tribes that demand loyalty to their own. All this contrasts with ideals, which can be universally applied to all humans, and which are based on our shared humanity and the commonality of our desire for justice.

My strict upbringing and indoctrination inside the dominant Christian sect allowed me a detailed look at anti-scientific authoritarianism from the perspective of a true believer. Today, the fact-challenged Trump presidency affords a similar opportunity to scrutinize the actions of a sociopathic, pathologically dishonest, autocratic leader, and the flawed electoral system that produced him. Right-wing politics and fundamentalist Judeo-Christian religions are usually paired because both foster tribal loyalty and blind faith, while denigrating critical thinking and science. Trump, and the most loyal of his followers who come out of this pairing, personify some of the gravest threats facing democracy because they choose dogma over science, while sacrificing the common good for individual or partisan gain.

I had a rough couple of years while questioning my own ingrained beliefs. I studied philosophy, desperate to find reasons to believe, but reason eventually forced me to conclude that faith is not a valid epistemology—either in religion or politics. Evidence won me over, not dogma or ideology. Even so, I was curious about religion from an evolutionary, psychological, and historical perspective. Because of the unifying religious experience I had on LSD, I became even more interested in its origins and practices. I took a world religion class in my first semester at the University of Texas at Arlington, taught by two professors. I found the course interesting, and asked a lot of pointed questions. At the end of the semester, the professors subjected me to a private inquisition and said they could not in good conscience give me an A grade in the class unless I professed to believe in God. I told them I had sympathy for the god of Einstein and Spinoza (“god” as a synonym for nature) but no respect or belief in the autocratic god of

Abraham. They acted personally insulted that I didn't share their beliefs or give an oath of loyalty. I accepted the B grade as a badge of honor.

Those in power tend to demonize people who question their authority. This is why Trump attacks the media. This also helps explain the origin of the war on drugs, and why the law would come down so hard on a physically harmless drug that caused people to question everything. By 1967, the possession or distribution of LSD was highly illegal throughout the US, with penalties for use comparable to murder. In that year, LSD guru Timothy Leary famously said to the Establishment: "The kids who take LSD aren't going to fight your wars."

President Richard Nixon declared the official War on Drugs on July 17, 1971, calling drugs "public enemy number one." Soon after he called Leary "the most dangerous man in America." This was ironic because Nixon's War on Drugs and his Vietnam War easily made *Nixon* the most dangerous man in America—especially considering that he would later say of his crimes, as a prequel to Donald J. Trump, "If a president does it, that means it's not illegal."

Nixon was a mendacious hypocrite with a drug abuse problem that was tolerated, regulated, and taxed—alcoholism. The War on Drugs was a revival of Prohibition—without the cover of a constitutional amendment—including all the same problems that alcohol prohibition had caused from 1920 to 1933. The 18th Amendment forbade the sale of alcoholic beverages in the US and 21st Amendment repealed the same law only 13 years later. The "noble experiment," driven by religious fervor, turned out to be horrifically ignoble because it spawned smuggling, mass murder, organized crime, police corruption, reduced tax collections, criminalization of vast swaths of the population, and increased incarceration—while also heightening the potency, danger, and lure of the forbidden substances. Some of the reasons why Nixon, and many others since, have pursued irrational and ineffective drug policies were further enumerated in 1994. In an interview with writer Dan Baum, Watergate co-conspirator, and Nixon's counsel and assistant John Ehrlichman admitted:

We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.

To arrest and jail people for using psychedelics or cannabis is so misguided as to seem diabolical. Psychedelics are of low toxicity, non-addictive, and have been used therapeutically with great success to treat addiction and depression. They can also induce full-blown, crying-with-joy, mystical experiences and life-changing metanoia even in the most locked down, upright

person, which is also considered by many people to be a good thing. So why is it illegal? As Timothy Leary used to say, “LSD is a psychedelic drug which occasionally causes psychotic behavior in people who have NOT taken it.”

Marijuana, an immensely useful weed that thrives just about anywhere it is planted, has never killed anyone from overdose, but thousands have died indirectly as a result of its illegality. As former Fernandina Beach, Florida Chief of Police Jerry Cameron, and a member of LEEP (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition), told me, “To overdose on marijuana you’d have to have a bale of it dropped on you.”

Its wide-ranging medical benefits are well-known and feared by Big Pharma. Various studies have shown that states with medical marijuana laws report vastly reduced opioid prescriptions and overdoses. Cameron also said the cops always knew who was drinking and who was smoking pot. “The drunks would be speeding, swerving all over the road, and blowing through stop signs. Someone high on pot would be driving under the speed limit, have his hands at ten and two, and be stopping ten feet before the stop sign.”

Legalizing cannabis and psychedelics is a no-brainer. Even legalization of the addictive drugs, combined with health care, regulation, education, taxation, and lack of advertising, would greatly reduce the harm they doing now, and remove the criminal element from the equation. There are no compelling arguments for continuing drug prohibition, and decriminalization does not go far enough. As Chief Cameron explained in a filled-to-capacity auditorium at Stetson University in 2008:

Let’s say I put some pure pharmaceutical heroin on the table and give you a nurse practitioner to inject it. We’ll dose you perfectly. You have no risk dying and I’ll give it to you for as long as you want it for free. How many want to come up and get started?...No hands.”

Seeing no takers, he asked rhetorically, “If the absence of the law and the ability to even get it for free doesn’t affect your decision not to use it, and the existence of the law and it being hard to get doesn’t deter the drug dealer, then what is the purpose of the law?” He looked around for a few seconds and continued, “The effect of the law is only to create an environment where the black market can thrive. I put this guy in jail and he comes out. What’s he going to do? There was only one thing he knew how to do when I put him in, and he’s learned how to do it better while he was in there.”

In the 1970s, I was heartened to find agreement on the futility of prohibition with my father, whose idol, William F. Buckley, had also come out for legalization. Other than drug war

profiteers, authoritarians, and the religious people who often see drug usage as evil and deserving of punishment, legalization is an issue that unites disparate thinkers across the political spectrum.

From ages 16 to 18, while learning about psychoactive substances, I read everything I could get my hands on, especially philosophy, psychology, science, politics, religion, and Zap Comix. One by one, the assumptions of my youth fell away. As I was evolving in my thinking, I learned the dictionary definitions of the terms “conservative” and “liberal.” A conservative is defined as someone holding onto traditional attitudes and values, who is cautious about change or innovation, typically in relation to religion or politics. Synonyms include peevish, tight, buttoned-down, orthodox, old-fashioned, dyed-in-the-wool, hidebound, unadventurous, set in one’s ways, stuck-in-the-mud, narrow-minded, bigoted, selfish, and reactionary. Conservatives are known as right-wingers, and diehards.

Conservatives are usually either traditionalists, wanting to preserve the status quo and existing institutions, or reactionaries wanting to return to the good old days “when America was great.” The reactionaries talk about a mythical golden age based on old-time religion, conformity, and rigidly defined gender roles that kept women in the kitchen, with a bun in their oven. The past is re-imagined as some version of the TV sitcoms many of us grew up with, like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1966), *Father Knows Best* (1954-1960), *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1963), and *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968). What is rarely acknowledged by reactionaries about this period of idealized American history is that the prosperity and upward mobility of the middle class was due to economic factors conservatives disapprove of, including:

1. Strong unions, and plentiful, well-paying jobs for the semi-skilled, largely due to the fact that prior to Reagan’s 1982 rule changes that benefited the rich, corporations were accountable to stakeholders (workers and their communities) as well as shareholders.
2. Wage and wealth equality as a result of the destruction of capital during World War II.
3. Educational and home purchasing benefits given to returning veterans.
4. Lower wages for CEOs. In the post-war era, CEOs earned around 20 times the average worker, and they generally considered their companies to be public trusts for the good of the community, the employees, the customers, and the stockholders. In 2017, the top 350 American CEOs earned 312 times what their company’s average worker earned, and their overriding concern is for stockholders, short-term profits, and their personal gain.
5. More equitable Taxation: Progressive taxation with a marginal federal income tax rate was 94% in 1945 and 91% as late as 1963. It didn’t drop below 70% until the 1980s. Corporate tax receipts averaged around 4% of collections during the 1950s and 1960s. They were 1.3% in 2018.

6. Shared wealth: In the three post-war decades middle class income doubled. In the last three decades middle class income has stagnated while the rich have taken all the gains.

For extreme reactionary Roy Moore, Republican politician and former Alabama Chief Justice, America's golden age came before the Civil War, when human beings were considered property to be beaten, raped, or killed, who could be sold with or without other family members. In response to a question by an African American at a 2017 rally, about when America was last great, Senate candidate Moore said, "I think it was great at the time when families were united—even though we had slavery—they cared for one another. Our families were strong, our country had a direction."

In stark contrast to conservative values and beliefs, liberal is defined as being open to new behavior or opinions, and being willing to discard traditional values. Liberals are favorable to or respectful of individual rights and freedoms. They regard traditional religious beliefs as dispensable, invalidated by modern thought, or liable to change. A liberal believes that government should be active in supporting political change. Synonyms include: openness, tolerance, unprejudiced, broad-minded, open-minded, enlightened, flexible, free, easy-going, liberated, and progressive. A liberal education means broadening one's general knowledge and experience. The word liberal also means generous, openhanded, unstinting, unsparing, ungrudging, lavish, free, munificent, bountiful, bounteous, beneficent, benevolent, big-hearted, philanthropic, charitable, altruistic, and unselfish.

Seeing the definitions made me realize I did not want to be *that other guy*. I wanted to be a *liberal*, not the self-centered, tight-ass traditionalist, or the reactionary trying to recreate an America that never existed. I also wanted to be a libertarian, not the person telling adults what they cannot ingest or do with their own body, or what sex acts they cannot enjoy consensually with others. Why would *any* informed, decent person want to be a *conservative*? It became increasingly clear that it was the privileged few, along with those the religious and business interests could bamboozle, who wanted to preserve the status quo or change laws to suit them. One Orwellian tactic used by conservatives was to redefine liberalism, a great and decent force for good, into a bad word. As Orwell himself once said, "The English language becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts."

Rightist, illiberal, authoritarian conservatives want us to forget that a millennium of liberal progress has improved lives through a vast number of reforms, which include liberation movements, labor laws, free speech, environmental protections, voting rights, ending slavery, desegregation, women's rights, rule of law, free trade, regulated markets, and improving

standards of living. They want us to forget that liberalism ended religious persecution, allowed for individual property rights, created economic opportunities, and reduced inequality. Liberalism also brought us public education, Social Security, and Medicare, which conservatives are now chipping away at. The attack on liberalism and the word “liberal” has continued for decades, with the alt-right creating new synonyms for liberals like “blue-pill” and “snowflake,” or the portmanteau “lib-tard.”

How did this happen?

One thread of this trend can be traced to a specific date and person. On August 23, 1971, Lewis F. Powell Jr., a corporate lawyer, board member to eleven corporations, and champion of the tobacco industry, sent a confidential memo to the director of the US Chamber of Commerce, two months prior to his nomination by Nixon to the US Supreme Court. It was titled “Confidential Memorandum: Attack of American Free Enterprise System.” What subsequently became known to the public as the “Powell Memo” was leaked to syndicated columnist Jack Anderson after Powell’s confirmation. Powell, while framing his message with the words, “freedom, fairness, and truth,” defended the rich while attacking the colleges, the media, activist Ralph Nader, and liberalism in general. Powell, who was a conservative Democrat, advocated using the resources of the United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC) to study and analyze possible courses of action and activities. He suggested they create a staff of business friendly scholars and, “...a speaker’s Bureau which should include the ablest and most effective advocates from the top echelons of American business.” He called for authors, publishers, and users of textbooks to be subjected to review and critique by these scholars, and he wanted the schools to give equal time to corporatists. He wanted to buy or influence the media through “constant surveillance,” vastly increase lobbying, and establish new institutions that would serve business interests. Indeed, the memo can be said to have inspired the creation of the Business Roundtable, the Cato Institute, the Federalist Society, the Reason Foundation, the Adolph Coors Foundation, the Castle Rock Foundation, the Manhattan Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the American Legislative Exchange Council, and the Chamber of Commerce National Litigation Center. More recently, in 2004, the Koch brothers founded Americans for Prosperity, to replace their Citizens for a Sound Economy. Since the 1970s, Supreme Court decisions (including ones that Powell joined in) have strongly favored the Chamber’s positions, and vastly increased the ability of corporations to legally bribe politicians through campaign contributions. The Chamber is now by far the country’s largest conservative lobbying group, with the majority of corporate contributions going to support fact-challenged, climate-change-denying conservatives who, for nearly forty years, have been blocking efforts to limit global warming. Even now, as we inch toward disaster, they remain obstinate because they think that prevention of the destruction of conditions necessary for our survival is incapable with making money.

Due to the influence of these right-wing groups, a conservative Supreme Court has reinterpreted the First Amendment to allow the powerful to defeat the powerless in decisions regarding hate speech, abortion providers, labor unions, tobacco addiction, gender rights, animal rights and, worst of all, to defeat campaign finance reforms that would allow the people equal representation.

Powell's plan worked fiendishly well for corporate America. Our country moved so far to the right that television talk show host Rachel Maddow could say without exaggeration, "I'm undoubtedly a liberal, which means that I'm in almost total agreement with the Eisenhower-era Republican party platform."

Even Richard Nixon's administration, abetted at the time by a Democratic Congress, would be considered liberal by today's standards. Aside from his moral turpitude, which included Vietnam, Watergate, and the obscene War on Drugs, the Nixon administration's liberal accomplishments arguably surpass Obama's. Some argue that Obama would have done more, but he only had control of Congress for four months. Despite preposterous, right-wing propaganda that Obama was a left-wing socialist, he was actually a center-right conservative and dyed-in-the-wool capitalist, only slightly more liberal than traditional Republicans.

As to President Nixon's liberal bonafides: He proposed ending welfare with a negative income tax. He opened China to the West. He initiated détente and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and ended the military draft. He enforced desegregation in the South. Nixon also signed bills for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Safe Drinking Act. Nixon was also a Keynesian in economics, and he took the country off the international gold standard. (In 1934, FDR took us off the domestic gold standard and reserved it for foreign trade, helping to end the Great Depression. No country is on the gold standard today). The Nixon administration also allowed large increases in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. It was during Nixon's administration that I became acutely aware of politics, and despite his liberal advancements, I strongly opposed him for his deplorable character, the War on Drugs, and Vietnam. My first eligible vote cast in a presidential election, in 1972, was for George McGovern.

A conservative media company, Capital Cities, which had taken over the much bigger American Broadcasting Company, lobbied Reagan to do away with the FCC's fairness doctrine, which required media companies that licensed our public airways to give equal time to opposing viewpoints. This allowed conservatives to take over AM radio with a formula that combined sports reporting with right-wing talk shows, pairing passion with propaganda. Even worse,

conservative media mogul Rupert Murdoch’s companies bought up media outlets in Australia, the UK and the US. He created Fox News, and bought *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Geographic Magazine* and a slew of newspapers. Time Inc., which owns *Fortune*, *People*, and a slate of other magazines was bought up by Meredith, a corporation backed by the Koch brothers, mega-donors to the Republican party and conservative causes. All of this belies claims of a liberal media bias, which is a propagandistic red herring to begin with, since the media *should* represent liberal values by definition, because reporting the facts is an inherently liberal undertaking, and as we all should know by now, “Reality has a well-known liberal bias.”

In an October 17, 2004 *New York Times Magazine* article, journalist Ron Suskind quoted an “unnamed Bush administration official,” widely assumed to be Karl Rove:

People like you are still living in what we call the reality-based community. You believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality. That's not the way the world really works anymore. We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you are studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors, and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.

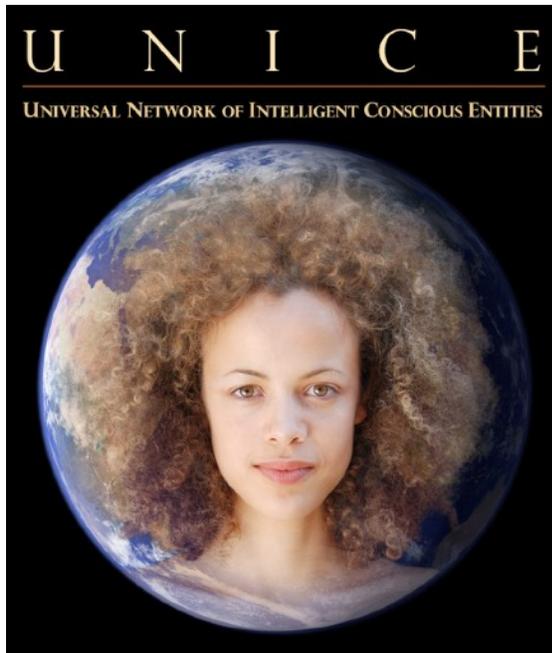
This was the sort of thinking that created the “reality” there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as a basis for the US invasion, and has ushered in our post-truth era, in which journalists are broadly accused of fake news, while “alternative facts” are cooked up with contemptuous disregard for the evidence. With the election of Trump, the Republican break with reality is nearly complete, and it is worsening. According to the *Washington Post*, by the end of Trump’s first 601 days in office, the President had made false or misleading claims 5,001 times, more than 7.5 lies per day. When he was at his most mendacious, it seemed that his core supporters liked him even more. At one point in June 2018, when he was averaging 16 lies per day, he garnered a 90% approval rating among Republicans. These are apparently the same Republicans who agree with one of Trump’s rare true statements that he could get away with shooting someone in the middle of Fifth Avenue and it wouldn’t shake off his base.

Ever since I was little, people have been telling me lies: Santa Claus brings me gifts; a fairy brings me money for my baby teeth; the world was created in six days; and tax cuts for the rich will trickle down to the rest of us. As Voltaire wrote in 1765, “Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.” Partly as a result of the fallout from Trump’s atrocious lies, I believe that a majority of voters in 2020 will conclude that honesty is the best policy, and that the reality-based community is better than the faith-based, self-serving, make-it-up-as-you-go community. Coming to terms with reality in a way that helps everyone is the only policy that makes sense.

Another reality is that we all make mistakes in the learning process. I'm no exception. Having been indoctrinated in a patriarchal religion and culture, with double standards for men and women, I understand too well where many people in the faith-based community are coming from. As a result, I had to unlearn residual biases related to politics, including gender politics. I apologize in advance for any sexist things I have said and done, or might say, in relation to women, who are justifiably angry about thousands of years of patriarchy. I'm angry too, for my own reasons. There were years where I struggled to man up, squash my feelings, be a player, and avoid emotional involvements, with the goal of being a lot more like James Bond than any man actually is. Along the way, I also chafed at the rigidly defined roles for my gender—including the expectation of being a stoic breadwinner with the highly competitive, alpha male held up as the ideal. After I told my father, beginning at age six, that I wanted to be an artist, he said they didn't make any money. Later he let me know he also thought of artists as lazy, self-indulgent sissies, and that I wasn't a man unless I played sports.

In the early 1970s, I began reading feminist literature and began to be more sensitive to the feelings of women, who have always fascinated and mystified me. As someone with a mother and three sisters, I was somewhat grounded in reality about their nature, while still holding them in awe. In the early 70s, I read *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. I could see that women were also having issues with some of society's expectations, but I also had arguments with women who claimed people are all the same, regardless of gender, except for society's conditioning. They were wrong about that, but over the years I learned to understand, respect, and accept the inherent biological differences among individuals, and realized that feminine and masculine traits can be found in all of us. In the late 1980s I was a card carrying member of NOW, the National Organization for Women. In the 1990s I made a study of mythology, including feminine mythology. *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myth and Secrets*, a weighty tome by Barbara Walker, was my bible, along with the writings of mythologist Joseph Campbell, archeologist Marija Gumbutas, and cultural historian Riane Eisler. Regardless of the facts surrounding Gumbutas' theory that the female-centered Neolithic culture of Old Europe was overrun by the male-dominated Kurgans of the Russian Steppes during the Bronze Age, I favor a partnership-oriented society over the patriarchal domination model.

At the same time, I oppose religious, authoritarian, or patriarchal attitudes toward everyone, including women. Thus, I support gender equality and have always been pro-choice. In my book *The Labors of Hercules*, I wrote a chapter on sexism and consider it one of the Herculean struggles to overcome. I have great respect for the stereotypically feminine values of empathy, sensitivity, gentleness, compassion, tolerance, and nurturance—qualities that can be found and/or



taught in people regardless of their gender. The so-called feminine qualities are more conducive to a representative democracy than traditional masculine traits like stoicism, competition, combat, aggression, and dominance, which are more commonly associated with fascism and authoritarianism. As a result, I used a woman as a model for [UNICE](#), my public policy wiki, and for [LOGOS](#), a wiki for global governance. Efficient government should favor legislation over litigation, so gender equality (including non-heterosexuals) should be enshrined in a new civil rights amendment to the Constitution, instead of being litigated for decades in the courts all over the country.

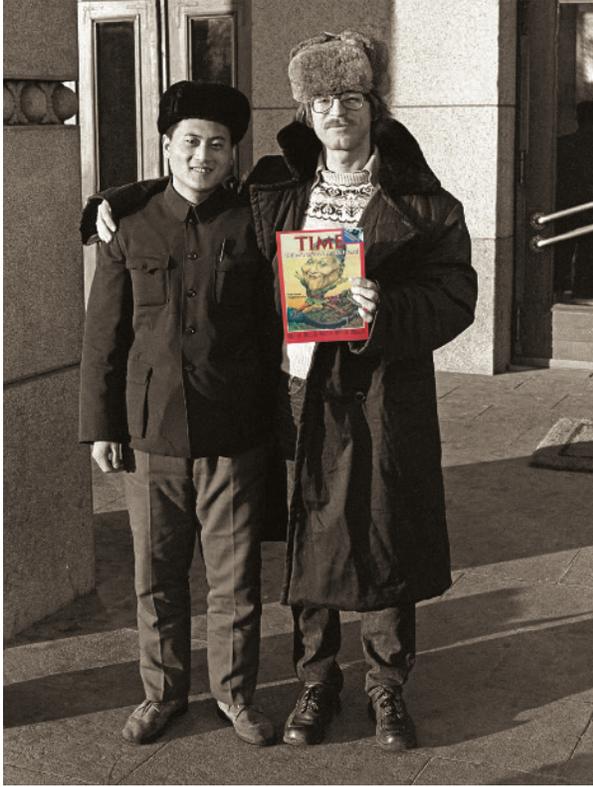
Soon after I turned 18, I got permission from the draft board to leave the country, and spent four months hitchhiking and visiting different cities across Europe. I traveled overseas again the



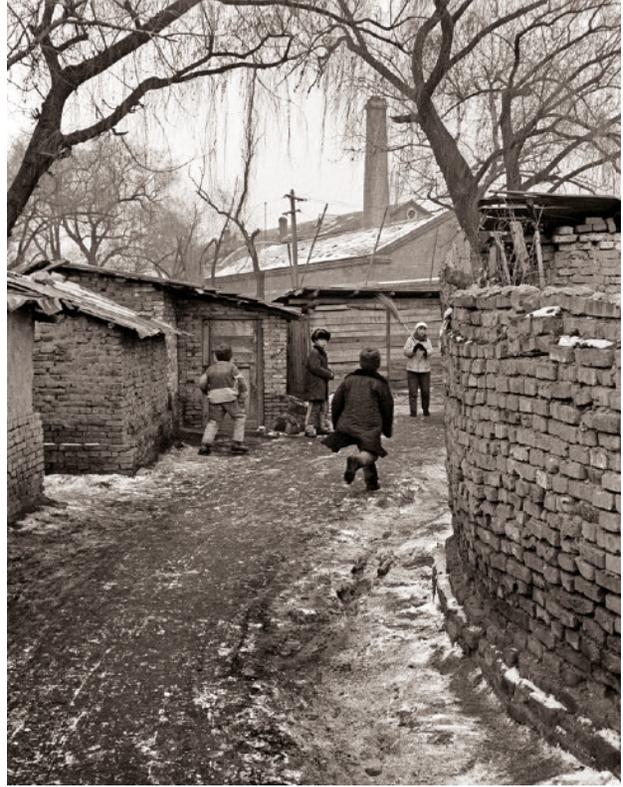
Doing pastel portraits on the street, in Copenhagen, September 1972.

following two years, soaking up the culture, and doing portraits on the street to help finance my travels. From 1978 to 1981, I went around the world twice, and worked as an artist in Paris. One of my most memorable experiences was in China, where people either ran away in terror, or stopped dead in their tracks to stare at me with dumbfounded curiosity. At that time, most Chinese lived in mud brick houses, and rode bicycles and donkey carts on dirt streets, swept with stick brooms. As a stranger traveling in an insular land, marooned in the past, I got to see China before the one-child policy, gender equality, and economic reforms transformed it into the modern juggernaut it is today.

Living and traveling abroad gave me a different perspective on my own country. I could see how America is viewed by others by absorbing the local culture and making friends. It brought into focus that almost 96% of the world's people are not American, but certainly no less important. I had learned a little German while living in Vienna and Munich, and became semi-fluent in French during my two years in Paris. Later I would also learn basic Spanish while building houses in Los Angeles. Living among other people, understanding some of their language, and immersing myself in their culture, broke down my



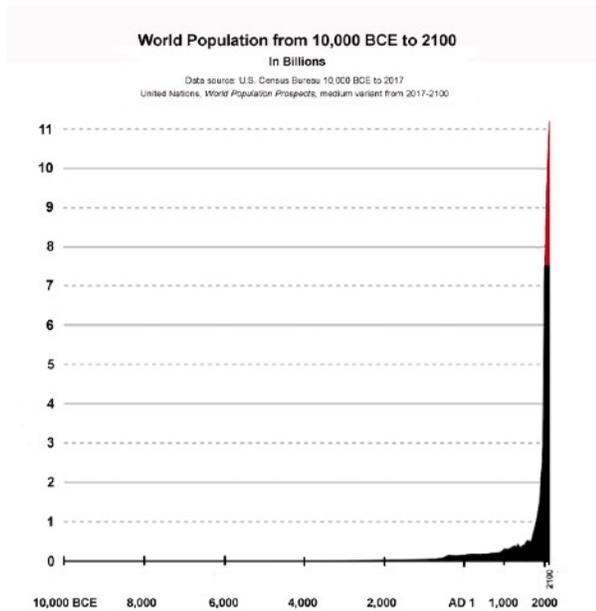
In Communist China, with one of our study tour's minders, Mr. Wu. The suspiciously regarded Asian edition of Time Magazine that I brought from Japan, was titled "China's Great Leap Outward." It featured a caricature of soon-to-be paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, leaping over the Great Wall. December 1978.



Above: People fleeing from me, a "foreign devil," on a frozen, dirt street in Jilin, Manchuria, China. December 1978.

Below: A few blocks away, in the main street. At first, every single person ran away, but after a while, all of them, along with many more, returned to have a closer look.





A preventable tragedy is being ignored by our leaders: We are projected by the UN to increase our numbers by four billion in this century, thus multiplying most of the world's problems.

again to Asia and [Africa](#). The effects of global overpopulation—most apparent in developing countries—alarmed me greatly. We complain about climate change, de-speciation, pollution, dwindling resources, overfishing, civil strife, wars, immigration, the refugee crisis, increasing regulation, and dozens of other issues, while rarely acknowledging that all of these problems are exacerbated by overpopulation, being constantly made worse by the huge global imbalance between births and deaths. Every day, 380,000 babies are born, but only 160,000 people die, increasing the population by 220,000 every single day. Several factors contribute to complacency: 1. Overpopulation is relatively slow-moving compared to daily news cycles. 2. Business interests encourage growing markets; 3. Those of us in developed countries see population growth nearly reaching zero at home, and we tend to ignore how trends in the poor countries will affect all of us. 4. Many people ignore automation, increasingly longevity, and the fact that older populations correlate to greater prosperity, and conclude we need high levels of young people to take care of the old. 5. Misunderstanding cause and effect: For example, Trump wants to build a wall to keep the world out, while cutting funding for family planning both here and abroad that will increase migration.

Politicians seem completely oblivious to the UN projection that Asia will add another billion people, and that Africa will add another three billion in this century. Huge waves of migrants will

own cultural barriers and helped me to see people in other countries as they see themselves.

On Earth Day, 1994, I began a project to condense all the world's major problems and solutions into one volume, *The Labors of Hercules: Modern Solutions to 12 Herculean Problems*. While still deep into the study of mythology, I thought it might be easy to compare the mythological struggles of Hercules with our modern problems. It turned out to be a Sisyphean project, but other careers emerged as a result of *The Labors of Hercules*, which I began researching and writing while working as a designer and builder in Los Angeles, after a productive career in fine art. In 1996, I proposed a choice-based marketable birth plan to the Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian governments, and met with various demographers on my third global circumnavigation in 1997 and 1998 that took me

World Population Growth by Development from 1960 to 2100

Source: United Nations Population Division, *Population Prospects, the 2017 revision, medium variant*

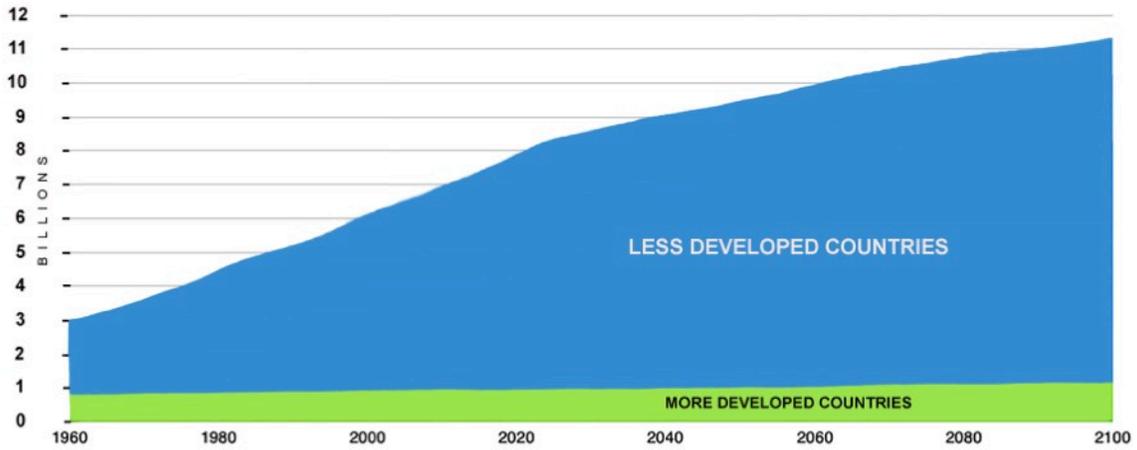
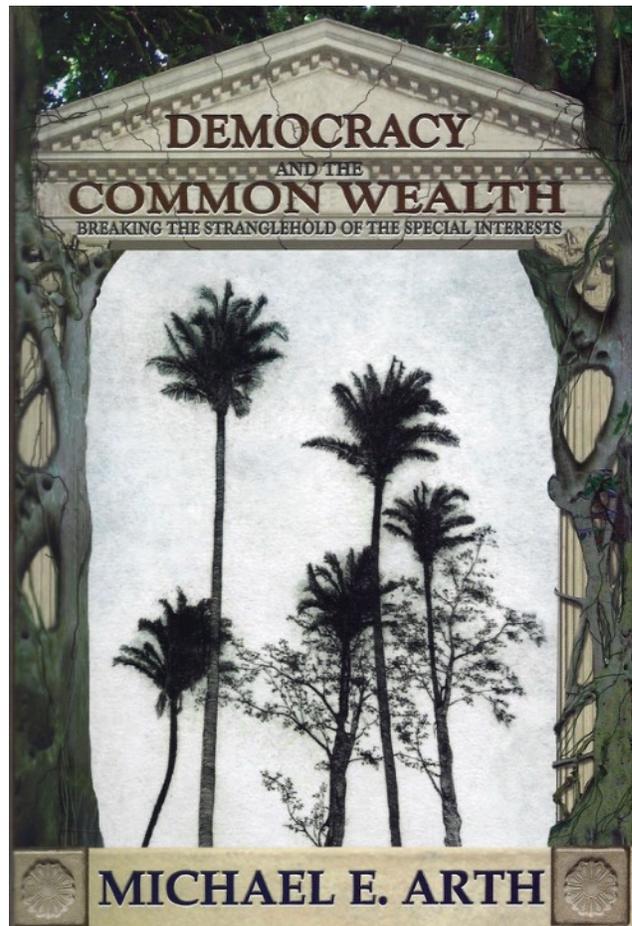
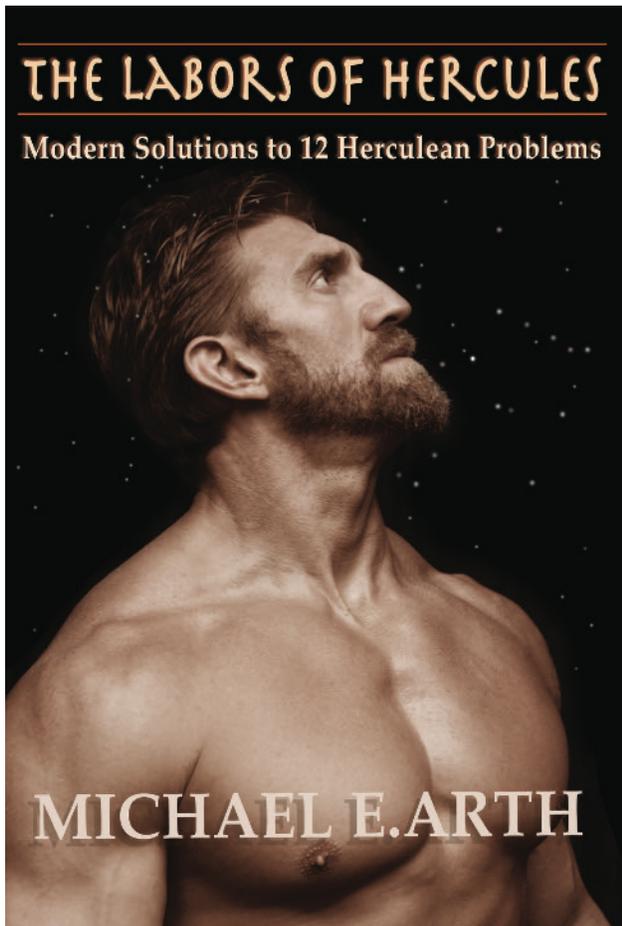


CHART BY MICHAEL E. ARTH



probably overwhelm democratic institutions thus increasing militarism and neo-fascist movements—one set of effects we can expect among a cascade of frightening consequences for every living thing on Earth. The worst effects will fall upon those living in the developing countries where gender inequality and poverty correlate to high birth rates. There are reasonable solutions that could be enacted now before it's too late, but the world is not paying attention.

Overpopulation severely impacts climate change. In this case, the [world has been well aware](#) of the problem of increasing carbon dioxide emissions due to burning fossil fuels for four decades, but American politicians have preferred to let their corporate masters in the oil-and-gas industry dictate policy. Like President Reagan, and all Republican presidents since, Trump has disregarded the scientific consensus on the dangers of increasing carbon dioxide levels, promoted the worst carbon-emitting energy sources, and denigrated alternative energy. Republicans, often with Democratic acquiescence, have wreaked havoc on laws and institutions protecting the environment. President Reagan literally and symbolically had the 32 solar thermal panels installed by his predecessor, Jimmy Carter, removed from the roof of the White House. At the behest of fossil fuel companies, and despite hollow promises, President George H.W. Bush blocked an agreement at the Noordwijk conference in the Netherlands in November 1989 to set a hard, binding target of emissions reductions. Horrifically, and perhaps irrevocably, as much greenhouse gas has been emitted since that date, as in all of previous recorded human history. The oil-and-gas industry, which was well-versed on the dangers of climate change since the 1950s, also went all out in a disinformation campaign to influence Congress to quash the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 during the Clinton administration.

My concern for the effect of overpopulation on the environment grew out of my lifelong interest in nature, architecture and urban design, which, in turn, led to founding [New Pedestrianism](#) in 1999, a more ecological and pedestrian-oriented version of [New Urbanism](#). The desire to build a new town led me to searching across the country for a project. In 2001, I began rebuilding a crime-ridden, drug-infested slum neighborhood in downtown DeLand, Florida. With two dozen, private loans which required 20% interest in the first year, I bought 33 homes and businesses in an area formerly known as “Cracktown,” “Dead-Land,” and “The End,” and rechristened it “The Garden District.” Other people bought into the neighborhood and we quickly turned the slum into a charming, walkable community. More recently, I acquired land that had been sadly cleared of historic homes before my arrival, and designed Craftsman-style homes that will face a car-free pedestrian lane and linear park. In 2007 and 2008, Blake Wiers and I made a documentary, [New Urban Cowboy: Toward a New Pedestrianism](#), that tells the tale.

Rebuilding an inner city slum brought me into contact with a large number of homeless people, some of whom I hired to help. Unfortunately, most were useless as workers because of co-

Pardon me for gushing, but every town in this county needs a Michael Arth.

— Mike Lafferty, Orlando Sentinel

Arth's a visionary. His dedicated efforts... represent a triumph of will over adversity.

— Daytona News Journal



Before

After

On a sweltering day in August 2001, a stranger appeared in a crime-ridden Florida neighborhood known as "Cracktown." Armed only with big ideas and determination, artist/urban designer/developer Michael E. Arth saved this slum from a date with the wrecking ball. Reborn as The Garden District, it is now a living laboratory demonstrating Michael's New Pedestrianism, an ecological and pedestrian-friendly vision for new towns and neighborhoods.

Take a trip into the wild frontier of real estate in this inspiring and educational documentary that answers the question, "What can one person do about the world's problems?"

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www.NewUrbanCowboy.com

GOLDEN APPLES MEDIA PRESENTS NEW URBAN COWBOY: TOWARD A NEW PEDESTRIANISM

PRODUCED BY GOLDEN APPLES MEDIA. Directed/Edited by Blake Wiers. MUSIC EDITOR: HELENA LEA. SHOT ON LOCATION IN DELAND, FLORIDA. DVD VIDEO / COLOR / ENGLISH / 85 MINUTES / NOT RATED / SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, SPANISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, JAPANESE & CHINESE / ASPECT RATIO 16:9 / NTSC / AVAILABLE IN BLUE-RAY.

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GOLDEN APPLES MEDIA
New Urban Cowboy: TOWARD A NEW PEDESTRIANISM

New Urban Cowboy

TOWARD A NEW PEDESTRIANISM



"★★★★½!"
— Jeff Farance, Daytona News Journal

"A MIRACLE!"
— Film Critic Jason Wiener

"★★★★★!"
— Roger Moore, Orlando Sentinel

"GRIPPING... ASTOUNDING!"
— Robert Arth, SE360

Michael E. Arth is fixin' the Earth one town at a time!

A REAL-LIFE HORROR STORY WITH A REALIZABLE SOLUTION



"Dirty Dave" Grimsley is a pint-sized blend of Randle McMurphy in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and George Clooney's Ulysses Everett McGill in "O Brother Where Art Thou." Also known as "Dammit Man" and "Tom Sawyer" because of his profane hecksterism, Dave is a hard-drinking leprechaun with the gift of gab, a heart of gold and not a pot to piss in. He runs a homeless camp while waiting for local authorities in Volusia County, FL to donate public land for Tiger Bay Village, a community of services for adults who fall through the cracks.

"I'm a small potato but I'm hard to peel," Dave brags after being set upon by machete-wielding thugs suspected of killing transients. His girlfriend Allyson is a former beauty queen who was a nurse before substance abuse and outdoor living took its toll. With grim humor, laughter and tears, Vodka Scott, Two-Bear Billy, Dino the Dinosaur, Hopalong and their friends will take you to a place you have never been, even though it already exists in the woods nearby.



FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

ISBN: 978-0-912467-15-3



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www.VillagesForTheHomeless.org

GOLDEN APPLES MEDIA PRESENTS *OUT OF THE WOODS: LIFE AND DEATH IN DIRTY DAVE'S HOMELESS CAMP* (33 minutes) PRODUCED BY GOLDEN APPLES MEDIA. DIRECTED, FILMED, NARRATED AND EDITED BY MICHAEL E. ARTH. DVD VIDEO / ENGLISH / NOT RATED / ASPECT RATIO 16:9 / FILMED FROM 2008 TO 2012 ON LOCATION IN DELAND & DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA. © COPYRIGHT 2012 GOLDEN APPLES MEDIA INC.

GOLDEN APPLES MEDIA
OUT OF THE WOODS LIFE AND DEATH IN DIRTY DAVE'S HOMELESS CAMP

OUT OF THE WOODS

LIFE AND DEATH IN DIRTY DAVE'S HOMELESS CAMP



A MICHAEL E. ARTH FILM

FROM THE "NEW URBAN COWBOY" WHO TURNED "CRACKTOWN" INTO THE HISTORIC GARDEN DISTRICT



occurring mental illness and substance disorders. This experience led to a decade long quest to resolve local issues with the homeless, and address the problem nationally. There is a three-part solution that costs no more, and possibly less, than dealing with the fallout and expense to the public from people living on the street. The first part involves [Housing First](#) solutions for those who, along with access to supportive health and rehabilitative services, are able to integrate back into the community. The second solution involves the creation of a local [holistic, transformational campus of services](#), which could be a model elsewhere. Such villages would provide the full range of services in a beautiful setting for non-violent persons, who for whatever reason, are either temporarily or permanently not able to live in the inner city where their mental illness and addictive behavior may be exploited by others. The villages could also serve as jail diversion and rehab centers for drug offenders. While trying to get what I called [Tiger Bay Village](#) built in Volusia County, a similar 33-acre campus of services called [Haven for Hope](#) was actually built in San Antonio, Texas. Based on their success, the city of Daytona Beach finally approved and agreed to fund a much scaled down version of my plan, called [First Step Shelter](#), in the location I had proposed, just outside of town that has potential of expanding into a more comprehensive campus of services. During this process, I made a documentary called [Out of the Woods: Life and Death in Dirty Dave's Homeless Camp](#), which documents life in a homeless camp in DeLand, and my nascent effort to build the village.

A [Universal Basic Income](#) (UBI) is the third and most important part of solving homelessness, as well as a vast range of other problems—including the fact that automation is beginning to replace jobs, especially those requiring simple skill sets. A UBI would reduce inequality, restore dignity, and break the cycle of generational poverty. It would also reduce crime, increase personal freedom and security, improve education, promote gender equality, raise the status of unpaid caregivers, and advance society as a whole. [Evidence](#) shows that cash transfer programs don't make people lazy, and the [research](#) on UBI is highly supportive of the concept. With a basic income, and universal health care, people without homes could either afford to pay rent, or pay to live in a village where shared housing and other costs would be minimal. If they are capable of working, they could also have access to re-training and education.

No force is as powerful as an idea whose time has come. Universal Basic Income is such an idea. We are all stakeholders in our society. Thomas Paine, one of our founding fathers, promoted a UBI as our “natural inheritance,” and it has already been successfully tested in various locales. With all this in mind, I propose that every person 18 and over automatically receive an inflation-adjusted monthly income that begins at \$1,000 per month, along with universal health care, and free higher education or job training in public colleges. This could perhaps be coupled with a term of public service for young people fresh out of high school or college. Qualified service would include AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, military service, or local community programs.

Republican and Democratic politicians beholden to their corporate sponsors will tell you that universal health care, UBI, universal postsecondary education, and resolving the student debt crisis are not financially possible, so it is important to confront them with the simple math.

There are 250 million adults in the US. If every citizen 18 or older got a UBI of \$1,000 per month, it would cost \$3 trillion per year. Providing \$25,000 vouchers to each of the 20 million postsecondary education students would cost \$500 billion. (Public colleges would be required to accept the voucher for full tuition.)

National health expenditure is \$3.6 trillion, or about 18% of GDP, which is more than double what the rest of the developed world pays. Medicare and Medicaid together comprise 37% of health care costs. Once we institute price controls, reference pricing, cost effectiveness thresholds, and regulations that limit the profitability of drugs, we should be able to save enough to drop health care costs for Medicare and Medicaid to 33% of health care costs (\$1.18 trillion). Switching to Medicare for everyone else—which includes younger and healthier people—should not add more than \$1.1 trillion. This would be \$2.28 trillion, or 11.4% of GDP, which is what Canadians, who live two years longer than Americans in a country much like ours, pay to cover everyone. Thus, Medicare for All should save the public at least \$1.32 trillion per year, which would help finance the UBI through taxes. Because the issue of taxes is dealt with separately, we won't include this health care savings in our calculations here. **The total cost for UBI, universal postsecondary education, and Medicare for All would be \$4.6 trillion.**

In 2018, the size of our economy is roughly \$20 trillion. Federal tax revenue of \$3.34 trillion plus state and local revenues of \$2.87 trillion equals total government revenue of **\$6.12 trillion**. Tax collections, now about 30.6% of the GDP, would increase to 49.5% of GDP (\$9.9 trillion). Taxation would become more progressive and inheritance taxes on large estates would increase. There would also be a wealth tax that ranges from 0.1% to 1% on fortunes over \$5 million, as much for purposes of transparency in order to help prevent tax evasion as for collection purposes. Increased collections add **\$3.780.5 trillion**, including a Value-Added Tax (VAT).

Keep in mind that taxpayers would be able to apply \$1.32 trillion in health care savings to their taxes, and the rich would bear the brunt of the additional tax burden. Private health care would still be available for those who want it, and it would be much less expensive than it is now because of regulated drug costs, and the health care industry would be in competition with Medicare.

Eliminating bureaucratic waste and spending associated with means-tested welfare, food stamps, disability and other such programs would save **\$600 billion**. Ending the War on Drugs with legalization, regulation, taxation, and Medicare-covered treatment would probably save at least **\$100 billion** in law enforcement and incarceration alone (savings estimates range up several times higher). A small financial transaction tax, combined with a globally adopted, flat-rate automated payment system would add about **\$50 billion** to collections and also help prevent excessive speculation and volatility in the market—especially that caused by high-frequency “black box” traders using sophisticated algorithms on supercomputers.

The part of the 2018 US military budget that includes the Department of Defense and the overseas contingency operations budget totals \$639.1 billion. This would be rolled back to the fixed amount of the 2011 Budget and Control Act cap of \$587.1 billion. Inflation and the growth of the economy would allow this fixed amount to drop as a percentage of GDP until it reaches 2.5% (\$500 billion in 2018 dollars.) From that point on it could be pegged at about 2.5% of budget until global peace initiatives allow it to drift lower. Initially this would be a savings in the defense budget of **\$52 billion** but the savings would grow until the goal was reached. At that point, the defense budget would grow with the economy. At the same time, foreign aid, especially family planning aid, would increase until it reaches at least 1% of GDP. Social Security payments would only be made in excess of the UBI. There are currently 67,494,000 beneficiaries receiving an average of \$1,297. Thus **\$67.5 billion** in Social Security benefits can be subtracted from the UBI budget.

How to Save Capitalism and Create a More Equitable America

(In Billions)

\$1,000 Universal Basic Income to every adult citizen.....	3,000.0
Medicare for All.....	1,100.0
Universal post-secondary education.....	500.0
<hr/>	
Total Cost	4,600.0

How to Pay for it

Progressive tax, including inheritance and global wealth tax.....	2,890.5
VAT of 20%, (less average 5% sales tax already being collected).....	(1,120.0 x .75) = 840.0
Financial Transactions Tax.....	50.0
<hr/>	
New Taxes	3,780.5

Direct Savings

Ending Means-Tested Welfare, Food Stamps, Disability.....	600.0
Ending Drug Prohibition.....	100.0
Military Budget reduction.....	52.0
Social Security savings from UBI.....	67.5
<hr/>	
Direct Savings	819.5
<hr/>	
Total of New Taxes and Direct Savings	4,600.0

Indirect Savings

Health Care Savings from Medicare for All over existing private system.....	1320.0
Social cost of inequality.....	unknown or unquantifiable but enormous

Since the UBI would be completely taxed away for those earning substantially more than the median income, the primary benefit will fall on those people most likely to spend it all every month, thus being a reliable boost to the economy. Those earning income less than the median would pay little or no federal income tax, but everyone would pay an all-inclusive VAT on taxable goods and services. The VAT would replace state sales taxes that now average about 5% across the states. A VAT is already being used by more than 160 countries, including all developed countries, as a highly efficient consumption tax. A European-style VAT of 20% would collect about 5.6% of the GDP, or \$1.12 trillion, some of which would be redistributed to the states to make up for the loss of sales tax revenue.

The citizen dividend would appear on a weekly basis as an electronic entry on individual accounts in a newly created National Bank of the United States. Every citizen would have a debit card for expenditures and they could use their account like any other bank account. Creation of the National Bank, either under a hybrid system that preserves the fractional reserve system, or under the proposed full-reserve system, would solve the \$1.5 trillion student debt crisis. Anyone with an existing student loan could get immediate refinancing with a zero-interest, principal-only government-sponsored loan with payments to be automatically deducted from their UBI account.

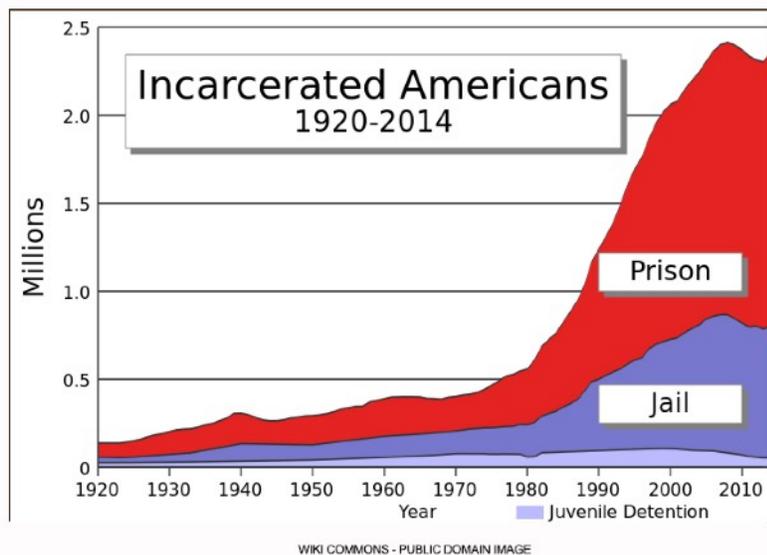
Switching from [fractional reserve banking](#) to [full-reserve banking](#) may be the best way to help finance government programs, increase prosperity, and ensure economic stability in our monetary system. Currently, only bank notes and coins are issued by the Treasury (about 9% of money) while the vast majority of money is created by private banks on electronic ledgers out of thin air and lent out at interest. With full-reserve banking, both specie and electronic money, would be created by the government under rigorous guidelines, as many economists believe it should be. Instead of banks only holding about 10% of their deposits in reserve, with the government having to provide deposit insurance to prevent runs on the banks, banks would be required to hold 100% of deposits. Taxpayers would no longer pay seigniorage on money to private banks for taking over the job of the treasury. Sovereign money would stabilize the banks, vastly reduce boom and bust cycles, help reduce public and private debt, and provide a bonus that could be used to lower taxes and finance government programs. We should think of both sovereign money and the UBI as a citizens' dividend which allows everyone to share in the common wealth, while also eliminating the stigma, inefficiency, and unfairness of means-tested welfare. Those who profit from the public and its collectively owned resources and infrastructure should be required to share the wealth more equitably. Money is an important part of that commonly held wealth.

The banking and financial sector would lobby vigorously against sovereign money to protect their profits, while predicting disaster. They will also point to the fact that no country currently has a full reserve system, even though polls show that most people already think that's how money is created. After experiencing grave hardships during previous recessions, one country is seriously flirting with the idea of adopting a full reserve system. Iceland is a small but progressive, and highly developed country of only 350,000 people, with an economy that is one-thousandth the size of the US. I propose that the US and other countries offer them an incentive of—say \$2 billion—that would give each of its three major banks money for the transition, and each of its citizens \$500 in cash.

Iceland's economy collapsed and all three of the major, privately owned commercial banks defaulted during the Great Recession from 2008 to 2011 due to a run on their foreign deposits which could not be guaranteed by their central bank, so they know well the dangers lurking in fractional reserve banking. This experiment would give Iceland all the economic benefits of a full-reserve banking while also calling more attention to its magnificent scenery and its burgeoning tourist industry. Once reform is shown to work, we can move quickly toward our own reform. The next serious downturn—especially one precipitated by the failure of politicians to implement banking reforms—might even facilitate it.

In 2001, while I was going through my personal own ups and downs, my daughter Sophie was born in a renovated, former crack house, and subsequently grew up in the Garden District. By the time she was in fifth grade, our neighborhood was so safe she could ride her bicycle to school. Today I still live on the same quiet, tree-lined cul-de-sac, along with my partner, Shasta Solis, and her two children. As for the drug dealers and their associates, they either moved to another neighborhood, or they moved into jail.

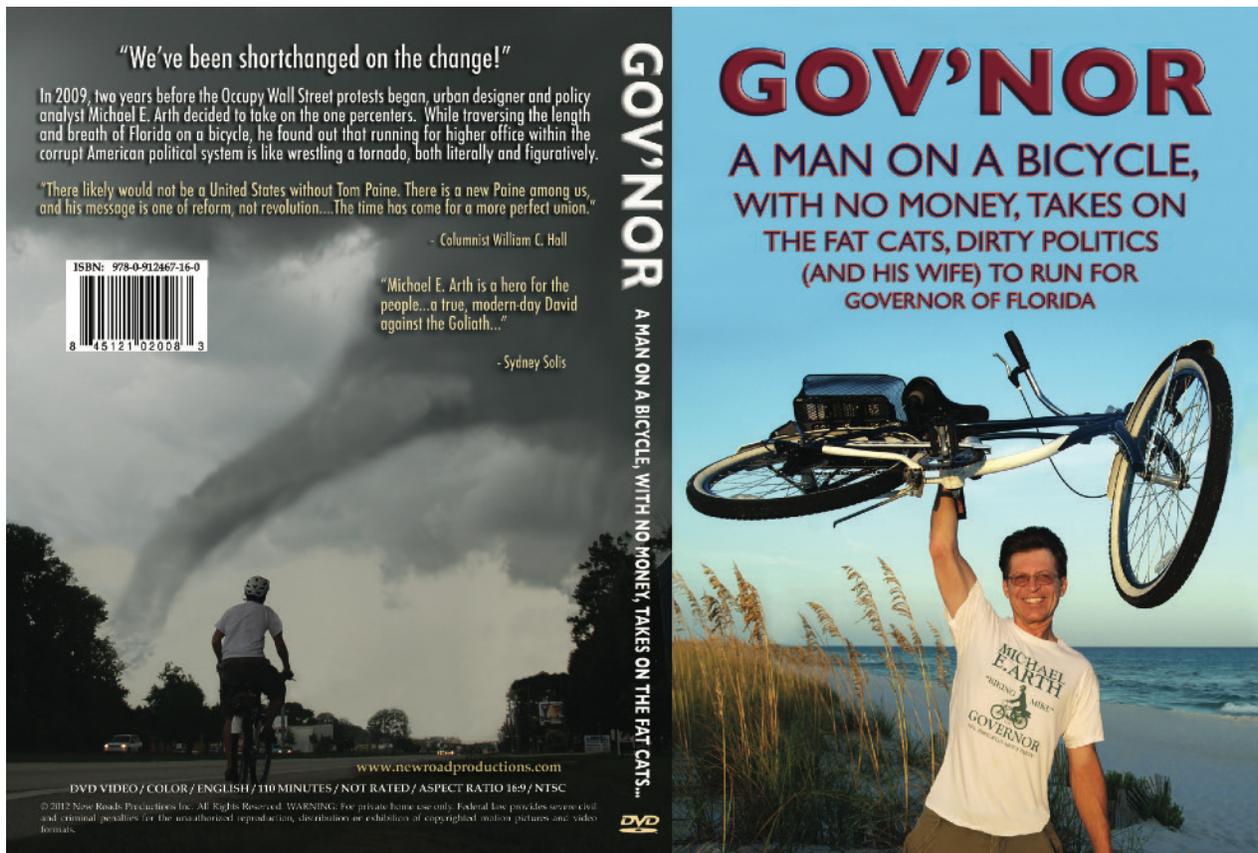
This brings us back to the subject of the drug war. Rebuilding Cracktown demonstrated to me that a little bit of enlightened public policy could have prevented decades of misery. If not for the [War on Drugs](#), abetted by the decline of public transportation and the rise of automobile-facilitated flight to the suburbs, drug slums all over our country would never have come into existence. In 2011, the FBI estimated there were 1.4 million gang members in some 33,000 gangs in the United States. Gang members are the primary distributors of illegal drugs on the street, and they are responsible for nearly half of all violent crime. The US has also spread the drug-war-related misery throughout Latin America, with Mexico being its biggest victim. Gang formation, the destruction of the inner cities, and a 700% increase in the incarceration rate since 1971, is largely attributable to drug prohibition, which gives immense wealth and power to drug cartels and the violent, male-dominated, gangster culture. Meanwhile, the established patriarchy keeps claiming that by increasing the violence and repression, they can “win” the drug war. President Trump’s latest iteration of failed law enforcement solutions is to call for executions of



Since the War on Drugs began in 1971, the US incarceration rate has grown 700%, falling disproportionately on minorities and women. The rate of increase has even surpassed the Prohibition era. The US has only 4% of the world’s population, but 22% of its prisoners.

drug dealers. His inspiration is the macho Philippine strongman, Rodrigo Duterte, who Trump called up to congratulate on how he was doing an “unbelievable job on the drug problem.”

After years of grappling with a wide range of policy issues in obscurity, I decided it was time to take my concerns into the political arena. In 2009 and 2010, I ran for governor of Florida and got an inside look at dirty politics, and our archaic, winner-take-all electoral process, including those problems related to private



DVD cover of the documentary, *Gov'nor: a man on a bicycle, with no money, takes on the fat cats, dirty politics (and his wife) to run for Governor of Florida.*

campaign financing. The chairman of the Florida Democratic Party (FDP), Karen Thurman, and some of her underlings, harassed and suppressed my campaign because they had already picked Alex Sink as their candidate, and they didn't want to have a real primary. After the state party headquarters ignored my announcement about running, I managed to get communications director Eric Jotkoff on the phone. He was annoyed that I would have the audacity to run, even though it was the beginning of the race, 17 months before the election. He pulled up my web page and said, "You focus too much on the issues, It's not about the issues, it's about the money. Unless you have \$3 million to start, and spend \$1.4 million a week thereafter, you have no chance of winning. Anyway, the media will not write a single word about you unless you have the money."

I wrote to various newspapers across the state and challenged them over Jotkoff's statements. The response was not overwhelming, but there were several front page articles, including titles like, "Can a renaissance man with no money be governor?" and "He turned '**Cracktown**' into a

gem. Now, he wants to remake **Florida.**” There was also an endorsement from the Orlando Weekly, which also ran a cover story. A PBS affiliate began re-running a half-hour interview with me that had first aired nearly two years before. A FOX TV affiliate ran a news feature, and despite my liberal views, a surprising number of Republicans sympathetic with my reform-minded agenda, libertarianism, and criticism of our two-party system endorsed me. At one point, very early in the campaign, despite being frozen out by the party leaders, and having no mailers, or paid advertising of any consequence, one poll showed that 45% of Democrats would have voted for me if the primary had been held that day. Considering that my name recognition was about 6% at that point, it showed me that a lot of Democrats were ready for change, even if it meant going with an unknown.

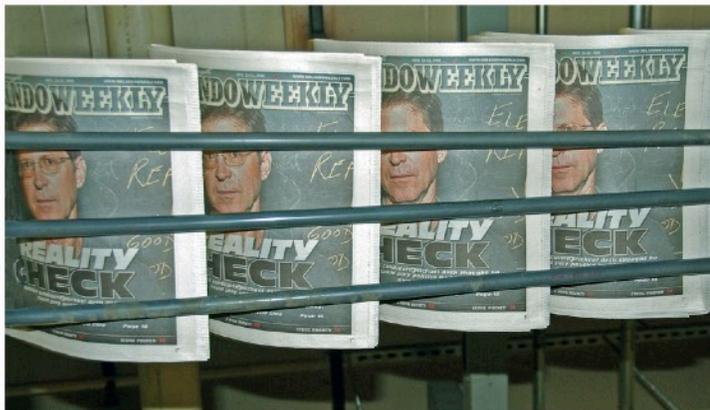
The Daytona Beach
News-Journal
THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF VOLUSIA & FLAGLER COUNTIES

FINAL EDITION

He turned **'Cracktown'** into a gem.
Now, he wants to remake **Florida.**

ART OF THE GARDEN
ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

News-Journal/PETER BAUER



Can a Renaissance man with no money be governor?

Amid successes here, Arth sets sights on governor run

By KARI COBHAM
STAFF WRITER

DELAND — Michael Arth is an enigma — at once driven and intellectual, hands-on, somewhat eccentric, a nomadic jack of all trades.

You might know him as the cocky yet earnest man who moved from California's Santa Barbara hills in 2001 to transform a decrepit DeLand neighborhood into the Garden District — picturesque blocks of restored turn-of-the-century homes, quaint shops and pastel facades.

Or you might remember Arth two years ago as the vocal proponent of a pedestrian village for the mentally ill and homeless out near the Volusia County Branch Jail.

He's also an artist, self-taught green urban planner, author and futurist.

Now meet Arth the gubernatorial candidate.

His campaign strategy?
"To tell the truth, to speak up openly and honestly about what



Michael Arth photos

BEFORE: What is now DeLand's Garden District was a haven for drug dealers and buyers as recently as 2001.



DeLand's Urban Cowboy runs for governor

By PAT McFELDO
pat@seasources.com

He doesn't have the money, he doesn't have the political machinery or the support of leaders in the party. Arth is looking for his chance to become governor.

Arth is running on Democrat, with six weeks more campaign outside of Volusia County. He started his campaign from the city of DeLand, Fla., where he has a home and a business. He is looking for his chance to become governor.

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Photo by ARTH, USA

The Fourth Estate (mainstream media) and the Fifth Estate (bloggers, social media, and journalists out of the mainstream) broker a critical role in electing our leaders. With the election of Trump, a media-savvy, reality-show star, I could see that reporting lurid and sensationalistic stories to garner viewers, thus selling advertising for an entire range of products and services, is even more important to the media outlets than lucrative paid-political advertising. It's no secret that the media is making a fortune off Trump's antics while air time devoted to important issues is dwindling away. As Leslie Moonves, the Democratic CEO of CBS said of Trump's "bomb-throwing circus" in 2016: "It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS. Who would have expected the ride we're all having right now? This is petty amazing...Who would

MICHAEL E. ARTH - YOUR INDEPENDENT CHOICE FOR GOVERNOR

**FINISH:
PENSACOLA**

**THE
STATUS
QUO
HAS GOT TO GO!**

**BRING
SOLAR
ENERGY
TO THE
SUNSHINE
STATE**

**START:
KEY WEST**

**BIKING MIKE
CLEANING UP FLORIDA**

**1000 MILES BY BICYCLE
FROM JUNE TO AUGUST**

MICHAEL WILL ALSO TRAVEL TO OTHER CITIES FROM AUGUST TO ELECTION DAY, NOVEMBER 2.

have thought that this circus would come to town?...The money's rolling in and this is fun...I've never seen anything like this, and this is going to be a very good year for us. Sorry. It's a terrible thing to say. But, bring it on, Donald. Keep going."

I got a smidgeon of earned media, but I couldn't get quality, affordable advertising because the party bosses in Tallahassee denied me access to any of the services they usually provide to Democratic candidates. This included mailing lists crucial to fundraising, and any mention of my candidacy on their website. The FDP even put out the false claim, repeated by some media outlets, that their anointed candidate, Alex Sink, was running unopposed in the primary. They also ran ads exclusively for her, in violation of their own neutrality clause. I filed a grievance on this and other issues, but the FDP lawyer informed me that the bosses had written the neutrality laws to apply to the Democratic party members, exclusive of themselves. Even worse, to attend the party conference, I had to pay a large fee, and my delegates and I had to sign loyalty oaths promising to vote for Democrats in all non-judicial races, no matter how despicable the person or how the person came to be nominated.

The same issue about party neutrality in the primary arose on the national level in the 2016 presidential campaign when Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz and her staff at the Democratic National Committee violated the DNC's neutrality clause and colluded against Bernie Sanders in favor of their anointed one, Hillary Clinton. Wasserman Schulz lost her job over the public outcry, but the DNC's lawyers (who were also Hillary's lawyers) argued against a class action lawsuit by Bernie Sanders' supporters, saying that any pledge of a fair and balanced Democratic primary is just like the empty campaign promises that people don't expect to be kept. This of course subverts the democratic process, and is another reason to bust up the two-party duopoly through electoral reform including direct voting, public campaign financing, and ranked choice voting (RCV).

RCV, also known as preference voting, is as easy as 1, 2, 3, because candidate preferences are simply ranked. This eliminates spoilers in single member elections and always results in a majority winner. If there's not a majority on the first rounds, the least popular choices are dropped and the votes are transferred to one's other choices. RCV is used by American Idol and the Academy Awards, although it is said that the Academy previously used plurality voting just to flummox those trying to guess the winners. Republican party leaders also use a form of RCV to elect their chair. Presumably, leaders in both parties don't want it for the rest of us because they know it would end the two-party system, vastly improve representation in our elections, and improve our selection of candidates.

After my delegates and I left at the end of the first day at the Florida Democratic Party Conference in October 2009, my table at the Walt Disney resort was assigned to someone else,



At the Florida Democratic Conference, after being exiled to political Siberia by the party apparatchiki—symbolic of where we all are when it comes to fair representation.

and my campaign materials were locked away. It took a good part of the next day to get my stuff back and find out my new table was assigned to an empty room away from everyone else. I wasn't allowed to speak to the assembly, and our delegates were falsely told by the communications director himself that we couldn't hang our banner because we didn't have the "official Disney tape" sanctioned by the resort.

After being frozen out of the party, I changed to No Party Affiliation, which meant I had next to zero chance of winning. This is because our plurality voting system forces any serious candidate to be a Democrat or a Republican, and subject to the whims of party leaders. At this point, my campaign continued only for the purpose of publicizing the flaws in our dysfunctional electoral system. I took my film crew and volunteer staff to the streets, riding my bicycle from Key West to Pensacola, talking with thousands of people along the way. We documented much of this, while also describing the various ways democracy is compromised, on both the state and national level, in our film, *Gov'nor: a man on a bicycle, with no money, takes on the fat cats, dirty politics (and his wife) to run for Governor of Florida*. I also wrote about the campaign in my book, *Democracy and the Common Wealth: Breaking the Stranglehold of the Special Interests*.

Alex Sink, the Democrat hand-picked by the Florida Democratic Party chairman and staff was outspent and defeated by Rick Scott, the founder and former CEO of Columbia/HCA, a for-profit health care company that defrauded Medicare and Medicaid and other federal programs. After

Scott's company was caught and pleaded guilty to 14 felonies, they had to pay \$1.7 billion in fines, damages, and civil penalties, then the largest healthcare fraud settlement of its kind in US history. Scott was forced out of the company, but still got nearly \$10 million in severance and over \$350 million in stock. With \$75 million of this tainted money, Scott essentially bought himself the governorship of our nation's third most populous state by vastly outspending his opponents in the primary and general elections. And he paid-to-play again in 2014, with \$22 million of his own money, and about \$61 million from Republicans. Scott is low key, but otherwise he and Trump are cut from the same cloth. Scott chaired a pro-Trump super PAC, Trump endorsed Scott for Senate in 2016, and Scott is said to have his eye on eventually taking Trump's place in the White House.

During the campaign I learned first-hand that the main activity of our political leaders is soliciting private campaign funds. This is a highly corrupting activity and should be abolished because contributions buy unequal influence. Our democracy is now essentially being sold off to the highest bidders. The top one percent of one percent (0.1%) of Americans are now worth more than the bottom 90% due to their increasing ability to game the system. From one in a thousand Americans comes a quarter of all campaign contributions. These are the corporate executives, bankers, ideological donors, financiers, lobbyists, and lawyers who live in places like Donald Trump's neighborhood on Manhattan's Upper East Side or on Millionaire's Row in Naples, FL, where Rick Scott owns a \$15 million getaway on the beach. At the same time, the latest tax cuts and other economic policies are increasing the gap between rich and poor. If this isn't bad enough, according to the judgment of conservative Supreme Court justices, corporations are also now considered persons in terms of campaign contributions, and they can spend unlimited amounts in Political Action Committees, while still shielding their owners from personal liability.

It is corrosive to justice and demeaning to candidates to beg for money. It is also annoying to voters to be constantly bombarded with solicitations and paid political advertising spent on brutally effective attack ads and propaganda. It has gotten worse as the First Amendment has been repurposed by a conservative Supreme Court into a tool for the elite to control elections. The biggest weakness in our system is due to an electoral system that is imperfectly and incompletely formulated in the Constitution. If elected, I will make it one of my highest priorities to pass a [Voting Rights Bill](#) that reforms the electoral process and turns the US into a representative democracy. Here are 13-steps toward better serving the voters:

1. Make private campaign financing illegal.
2. Curb influence peddling: No person or other entity may offer any politician a bribe, perks, meals, travel, donation, or any other personal incentive. Payments to lobbyists, who now feast like fleas on the body politic, should be so minimal and regulated that it would

effectively end the corrupting influence of paid lobbyists and the revolving door in politics. In accordance with the First Amendment, the right to petition the government for redress of grievances, there should be created a freely accessible and petition process (like [UNICE](#) and [LOGOS](#)) for citizens and corporations to make their wishes known.

3. Ensure transparency, fairness, and efficiency by providing websites where qualified candidates must list qualifications, personal information, policy statements on all issues, and conflicts of interest, including previous three years of tax returns. Voters can indicate their preferences on issues and qualifications to see how candidates rank on their voter profile. Public debates would be held after a winnowing process that involves voters distributing points to their favored candidates.
4. One person, one vote. Implement [direct voting](#) and abolish the Electoral College, which was a racist compromise to begin with. Our highly mobile, interconnected, better-informed electorate does not compare to 1789 where only land-owning white men could vote in most of the (widely disparate) states.
5. Change single member elections (e.g. president, governor, senator) from winner-take-all to ranked choice voting.
6. Implement proportional representation, known as single transferable vote or choice voting, in multi-member districts (e.g. the House of Representatives). This will end gerrymandering and redistricting fights, vastly increase representation, and will begin to improve voter approval of Congress, which was 10% in August 2017. This can be easily done by creating larger, multi-member districts where House members are elected through proportional representation.
7. We should also have proportional representation in the Senate. John Adams in his 1776 pamphlet, *Thoughts on Government*, wrote that Congress “should be in miniature, an exact portrait of the people at large.” However, to appease the small states, it was decided at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 that each state would have two senators. Today this means that someone living in Vermont or Wyoming has 67 times more influence in the Senate than a Californian. It’s outrageously unfair, but it’s also highly unlikely that enough of the smaller states would agree to true proportional representation. However, a reasonable compromise is in order. The House allocates by population and grants at least one representative per state. We should do the same for the Senate. In single member states, the voting should be by ranked choice voting. In states with multiple senators, the voting should be by choice voting, which is also a ranked system.
8. Educate the voters. Democracy depends on an involved and informed citizenry. Higher education and job training should be free in state schools. Civic lessons should be required at all levels.
9. End voter suppression efforts. Voter registration should be automatic. The right to vote should not be denied to any citizen of voting age for any reason. Even convicts in prison

should have the vote, and be able to participate in the political system as part of their rehabilitation process.

10. Make Election Day a national holiday so people can think about their civic duty and make it to conveniently located polls.
11. Lower the voting age to 16, so that young people in high school can participate in the system, and get in the habit of studying the issues and the candidates. Research also shows that it helps get their parents to vote. Even though 16 year olds are often impulsive and hotheaded, their calm “cold cognition” is already in place, and this is precisely the type of cognition needed for deliberative decisions like voting.
12. Supreme Court Justices could be limited to staggered 18-year terms so that each president would get two nominees for each four-year term. No other democracy has life terms for their versions of the Supreme Court, and our own system was devised at a time when people did not live as long. Even healthy people tend to lose some of their mental acuity as they age. Shorter terms would increase democratic accountability, lower the political stakes for each nomination, and help keep justices from getting out of touch with the people.
13. End the two-party system where viable candidates have to align themselves with one of two camps, polarized into the blue team and the red team. When we withdraw into tribal affiliations or political factions, we set ourselves up for conflict instead of consensus. When George Washington was elected there were no parties, and he warned against their formation because of the “continual mischiefs of the spirit of party” that would lead to “the alternate domination” of each party taking revenge on one another. Studies show that people will support policies they think originate from their own party, or reject them if they think they don’t, even if it’s not true. (The [phenomenon](#) is more pronounced with Republicans). Plurality voting (“winner-take-all”) is a flawed, antiquated relic we inherited from the British. Combined with our presidential system, plurality voting forces voters to choose between two factions of a ruling elite, doesn’t require a majority winner, and makes spoilers out of all who dare to challenge it—whether by running as an independent or in a “third party.” Adopting the 13 proposals listed above will end plurality voting and the two-party system. In the future people may organize into parties, but funding should be limited and regulated. The issues and their relation to the health of our republic is paramount, not party affiliation.

There is a good chance I would just now be ending my second term as governor of Florida if we had had fair elections in 2010 and 2014. If Bernie Sanders had been treated fairly by the DNC in 2016, poll data analysis shows that if he had won the primary, he almost certainly would have defeated Trump in the general election. This was confirmed by the massive Cooperative Congressional Election Study, involving 50,000 people, which showed that 12% of Trump voters would have voted for Bernie in the general election because his honest and inclusive

progressivism aligned better with the majority than the politics of hate, division, and inequality. Fair elections with a properly representative voting system would permanently open the gate to decent candidates who could focus on the issues instead of the money. At the same time, getting accurate information to an informed electorate is critical to restoring our democracy.

As an interactive and collaborative tool for governance and education, I have already established two public policy wikis as a proof of concept at www.UNICEwiki.org and www.LOGOSwiki.org. Interactive answer engines, combined with the wikis, will eventually be able to speak to anyone in the world at their own level and in their own language. All the world's data, and the tools to interpret it, will be available to everyone at all times so we can make informed decisions about how to govern ourselves. Our elected leaders could then be held accountable by an objective standard everyone can understand. Measures might also be taken—preferably through treaties—to ensure that no government can block internet access to these tools.

These wikis, especially LOGOS, may allow us to restructure the United Nations (UN) so that it can better represent all of us across national borders. The veto power of the Security Council members often prevents the UN from implementing beneficial policies. As a potential solution, I have proposed a detailed plan at [LOGOS](#) which would improve the UN's fact gathering and deliberative processes. If the UN does not adopt more representative methods to address transnational policies, then LOGOS can formulate policies and organize treaties independently much more efficiently and at a fraction of the cost.

I had many opportunities during my life to study, travel, and work in various fields. This has given me an advantage in policy analysis and problem solving. In return for acquiring this knowledge and experience, I owe it to others to do whatever I can to improve and protect our democracy. Unfortunately, many disparate forces—individual, corporate, and institutional—have used their privilege to exploit the common good, whether through design, indifference, or ignorance. It is our duty as citizens to step up, and do our part against those who would weaken our society in pursuit of selfish goals.

Visits during the 1970s to East Germany, Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, and Red China, as well as visits to numerous other repressive regimes over the decades, has given me memorable and enduring lessons in how autocracies and theocracies, whether communist or capitalist, fail to bring the greatest good to the greatest number. But capitalism in the United States is also failing us. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit, *even before Trump took office*, the US was listed as a “flawed democracy,” coming in at 21st among nations, with the same ranking as Italy. To even call the United States a democracy may be generous. A Princeton University study

(Gilens, M., & Page, B. 2014), based on survey data from 1981 to 2002, concluded what we all should know: our system fits the Economic-Elite Domination model (plutocracy) as a result of being “dominated by powerful business organizations and a small number of affluent Americans.”

Our country’s democracy has deteriorated even more since the 2002 study, because the few who already own so much seek to acquire and control even more. Instead of being number one in democracy, the United States now leads the world in crime, incarceration, military spending, arms dealing, public mass shootings, street gangs, cumulative air pollution, drug addiction, national debt, private debt, divorce, gun ownership, car thefts, reported rapes and murders, police officers, student loan debt, women on anti-depressants, obesity, health care expenses, and the cost of prescription drugs. Instead of allowing ourselves to be distracted with lies, lame excuses, gun advocacy, Bible thumping, flag waving, xenophobic fear-mongering, sensationalism, partisanship, vote-buying, and demagoguery, we should resolve our dubious distinctions, and strive to be number one in the things that really matter.

Instead of itching to start wars with our vast war machine, we should use more carrot and less stick to make us all safer and better off. Diplomacy should replace saber rattling. Soft power is preferable to hard power. Development aid, including family planning to reduce overpopulation, should be at least 1% of GDP instead of the current 0.15%. (By comparison, Sweden gives 1.4%). The vast Military Industrial Complex should be reined in, while cybersecurity should be increased. Trump was right about one thing, our allies can spend 2% of their GDP on their own defense, but he is wrong about the need for US to grow the Military Industrial Complex. With our allies spending more in most cases, we can gradually lower our own defense spending to 2.5% of GDP, instead of the current 3.2%. Even at 2.5%, we would still be spending more than China, Russia, India, the United Kingdom, France, and Israel combined spend today. The “disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist,” Eisenhower warned in 1961. “Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

Misplaced power has not only persisted, it has grown so pervasive that elections, industry, congress, the presidency, the judiciary, and the military no longer represent the best interests of the American people. The social democracies of northern Europe are proof that industry and capitalism can be regulated for the good of all, and that the military can serve the peace. We already have the knowledge to govern ourselves properly. We know our electoral system is rigged, inequality is increasing, the infrastructure is crumbling, and social mobility is stalled. We can see the rich getting richer while the middle class is stagnating and the lower class is

experiencing generational poverty. It can all be fixed—capitalism can work for everyone—but it requires systemic reform followed by diligence and vigilance on the part of an informed electorate. The Progressive Era replaced the Gilded Age with the election of Teddy Roosevelt in 1901—a Republican leader more liberal, conservation-minded, and honest than almost any national politician we see today in either party.

Trump's presidency may inadvertently help us make America great, even though it will not happen on his dismal watch. Trump, who lost the popular vote, was elected with Russian help by only one-quarter of the eligible voters—who were forced to choose between two widely disliked candidates. These facts, coupled with Trump's outrageous behavior, have caused him to be the least popular president since modern polling began. Historians were *already* ranking Trump as our worst president ever, even before his befuddled and treasonous performance in Helsinki where he accepted the denial of election interference by Russian tyrant and former KGB officer Vladimir Putin over the voluminous evidence and indictments produced by seven of our own intelligence organizations. A handful of Republican leaders dared to criticize Trump for that performance—at least before a poll showed that 79% of Republicans were fine with Helsinki, just as they also seem okay with the reprehensible notion that a grossly dishonest president with multiple conflicts of interest is above the law.

I believe historians will someday remark about the silver lining that will long outshine the shadow cast by Trump's cloud on our democracy. They will write about how the current band of robber barons, represented by the president's vulgar and pompous, gold-plated hubris, were humbled by the New Progressive Era. They will say that disgust with Trump's macho narcissism, and bumbling, authoritarian disdain for the people was the catalyst that ushered in reality-based politics, which allowed darkness and hate to be replaced with reason, honesty, and compassion. Especially in these dark times, most of us believe we should have a society where, if you work hard and play by the rules, even the poorest among us can prosper. Unfortunately, many of those who approve of our arrogant, self-serving, plutocrat-in-chief believe—against all evidence to the contrary—that we already live in such a society, and that the poor should only blame themselves for their predicament.

Because of the inherent flaws in our system, we don't need a crystal ball to conclude it was not entirely surprising that someone so incompetent and harmful to the common good could get elected, and continue in office. Looking ahead, I believe it is only a matter of time before we will make the reforms necessary to allow us to rationally follow the facts to the truth, thus banishing foolish ideas and elevating the good. This means being progressive where progress is needed, and conservative in things that need to be conserved, such as national resources, wildlife, population growth, and the environment. Political science is not an exact science, or even science

for that matter, so idealistic goals must sometimes be adjusted to accommodate reality—let’s call it pragmatic idealism. By definition, pragmatism works. The ideological approach might seem to serve a purpose at times for some, but eventually blind faith and the stubbornness of belief in the face of contradictory facts will become an impediment to justice.

As James Madison wrote in 1788, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” (Federalist No. 51) The purpose of government is to encourage our better angels and to make rules that help society function smoothly, while tending the common good. Government is necessary, but it must also be restrained, which why our founding fathers established built-in checks and balances, and separation of powers, in order to protect the weak from the strong. Our president is not a dictator because he is only one-third of a government guided by a constitution. Finding the right balance is a process. The Constitution is not set in stone, and laws must be refined and interpreted in keeping with changing circumstances. The balance and separation of powers was designed to prevent one branch from overthrowing the others and tipping the balance of power toward tyranny. Unfortunately, over the last four decades, the three branches of government have been undermined by special interests slowly chipping away at its foundational roots, exploiting its weaknesses with devious tactics and propaganda. As a result, the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial branches have increasingly allowed plutocrats to rewrite or reinterpret the rules through the lawyers they hire, and the lobbyists, judges, and politicians they buy, in order to lawfully steal from good citizens.

It is easy to know what goodness is, since there is, in nearly all cultures, an all-purpose rule of thumb. It’s called the Law of Reciprocity—do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This can be expanded upon with a Golden Rule of Politics: The goal of politics should be to bring the greatest good to the greatest number, in the most efficient manner possible, to this and future generations. This sums up the ideal we should strive for, not only as a nation, but as all the people of the Earth.