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How We Got into Our Current Crisis

I wrote this in 2017 and updated it only slightly for this book. This chapter remains valid and current. Trump is an existential crisis for U.S. democracy and freedom – and, indeed, for Planet Earth’s survival – but Trump is a symptom of underlying problems that have been worsening over several decades.

Whatever happens to Trump and the Republican Party before or after the November 2020 election, this chapter of the book and the rest of the book remain valid. We must recognize how the U.S.’s current crisis came into being. Subsequent chapters of the book will flesh out some aspects of these problems and will explain how to solve the problems.

Introduction

Thoughtful people know that the U.S. is now suffering our nation’s most serious crisis since the Civil War. This might even be more serious than the Civil War, since Trump is imposing upon us perhaps the **most extremely corrupt, mean-spirited and nihilistic** regime – with dangerously **fascist** features – beyond anything in our nation’s history. He shows utter contempt for the rule of law, for the constitutional authority of Congress, for human rights, and for truth and reality. Beyond the Civil War’s damage, Trumpism is threatening human survival in **more existential ways** because he is **threatening the survival of everyone on earth** with nuclear weapons and escalating climate chaos.

Americans – and people worldwide – are worrying about how to get out of this mess. Worrying can be debilitating and disempowering unless we develop strategic insights and plans to solve the problems. This book seeks to empower people to understand and take strategically useful actions. The first two chapters get us underway.

This chapter provides insights into the problems:

- Recognizing some underlying problems and a confluence of trends that led to this crisis
- Recognizing that the contemporary U.S. and the U.S. Empire were not sustainable and were deteriorating anyway

The next chapter proposes solutions, such as:

- Affirming that to solve the problems we need our best values, profound nonviolence, and savvy grassroots organizing
- Removing Trump by using the constitutional provisions for impeachment and/or the 25th Amendment

We must remove Trump from power. But this alone is not enough. We must also solve the long-standing underlying and systemic problems that allowed him to gain power.

The next few pages summarize six of the underlying problems and trends led to our current crisis.

Since June 16, 2015, when Trump announced his presidential campaign, everything has always been about him. Throughout the next 17 months of his campaign he used one extreme, inflammatory step after another to capture headlines and be the top news story nearly every day.

Although he fooled nearly 63 million voters in 2016, many other millions of people recognized him as a psychiatically disabled flimflam con artist who spent decades lying to people and defrauding people. He mismanaged his businesses into repeated bankruptcies.

Now he's in the White House with enormous power. Despite his campaign promise to "drain the swamp," he has made the federal government swampier than ever. He filled his administration with people who are incompetent, unethical, mean-spirited, and extremely corrupt with serious conflicts of interest.

But – despite his own personal dysfunctions – **Trump is really a symptom of deeper problems. A healthy democracy with a healthy opposition party and healthy news media would NOT have allowed this tragic farce to occur. Therefore, the problem is not just Trump himself, but the political, economic, and social powers that led to Trumpism and still support it.**

We must see the big picture(s). Then we must identify some strategically pivotal goals and strategies to undermine and remove those specific problems.

I've been writing articles and posting them on the "Non-violence" part of my blog, www.parallaxperspectives.org. **I recommend a few articles similar to the thorough document you are reading now:**

- **"How We Got into Our Nation's Political Crisis -- And How to Get Out"** – This 4-page summary lays it out clearly and succinctly. Click either the Word format or the .pdf format.
- **"Organizing to Stop Trumpism AND the Underlying Problem"** – This 4-page document is somewhat similar to the one above.
- **"Our Nation's Crisis: How We Got into It – And How to Get Out"** – This is a much more thorough (19-page) version of the 4-page article above. It examines the causes and recommends nonviolent grassroots organizing solutions. The book chapter you are reading now is a more thorough analysis of the problems, and

this book's next chapter explores solutions more thoroughly than the 19-page article on my blog.

Our current crisis resulted from a number of long-term problems. These include (but are not limited to) the SIX systemic problems I'll summarize on the next few pages.

Trump's first few weeks in office confirmed millions of people's worst fears. But we must recognize also that he is also a symptom of underlying problems and systems that have been getting worse for a long time. So – while **we absolutely must remove Trump from office** – this is **not enough**. **We must also fix the underlying systemic problems.**

For decades the U.S. has suffered from underlying problems including racism, sexism, anti-gay bias, anti-immigrant bias, ignorance of foreign policy, American Exceptionalism, big business's greed and corruption, abuse of our environment and climate, economic inequality between the richest persons and everyone else, dysfunctional political parties, and mainstream media's simplistic reporting. **These long-term problems have been getting worse and worse over the years – and in 2016 these problems finally produced a U.S. president.** We should not have been surprised.

Trumpism has captured the U.S. government. In order to stop **Trumpism**, we must recognize the underlying systemic problems that have resulted in this blatant presidential symptom and fix those underlying systemic problems. Demoning one person can distract us from addressing the serious underlying problems that led to this crisis.

Also, besides organizing vigorously to solve **long-term, underlying** problems (such as the six I discuss next), we must also take **immediate** actions to stop Trump's **current** abuses and prevent **immediate** dangers, such as starting a nuclear war and permanently weakening the Constitution's functioning.

Overall, we must immediately organize effective non-violent grassroots movements to accomplish all of these:

- **Prevent immediate dangers.**
- **Remove Trump from office.**
- **Solve long-term underlying problems.**

See the next chapter for information about how to solve the problems.

Underlying problem #1: Economics:

Big American oil companies have always powerfully influenced U.S. foreign policy. When Trump nominated the former CEO of ExxonMobil to be Secretary of State – the cabinet official in charge of U.S. foreign policy – this made the corruption blatantly obvious. Oil companies have had too much power for too long. Both political parties have been yielding to oil companies.

When Trump appoints big business insiders to positions of power, this is nothing new. President Bill Clinton and President Barack Obama appointed many big business insiders – and took other actions to support big business and weaken labor. But liberals who allowed Democrats to take such actions are only now aroused by such abuse because

now a Republican is doing it. The problems are underlying, systemic, and bi-partisan. (A few pages from now I'll discuss **two big, corrupt and dysfunctional political parties**.)

For decades, extremely rich people and giant corporations have become excessively wealthy, while the middle and lower classes have fallen behind. Since the mid-1970s the gap in income and also the gap in wealth (assets) have widened enormously because of laws and policies supported by both political parties. Economic inequality is well documented and is a major factor in the public's sense of **loss, fear, and anger** (which I'll mention now).

Underlying problem #2: Loss, fear, and anger:

The 2016 election season exposed much of the fear, anger and divisiveness that were already existing in American society. Over the years – long before 2016 – some politicians have exploited and manipulated people's pain, fear and anger toward scapegoating other vulnerable people. Nixon's 1968 "Southern Strategy" is an example. People who were already hurting in various ways were further antagonized, polarized, and traumatized.

Politicians who try to make people afraid and angry – and exploit people's feelings of loss and vulnerability – distract people from solving the real underlying problems. This cynical exploitation and manipulation escalates the already serious problems with even more dangers for human rights, social and economic justice, the environment and climate, escalating militarism, governmental corruption – and for democracy itself. Many serious problems that had already existed are getting much worse. We are in for very hard times!

In order to resist and roll back the problems, we need to better understand the actual sources of those problems. Very often the emotions people express are actually rooted in quite different (sometimes unconscious) experiences and emotions.

Some politicians cleverly manipulate people's emotions in order to serve their own political purposes.

For example, Lyndon Johnson once said, "If you can convince the lowest white man that he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice that you're picking his pocket."

The vast majority of Americans – from the middle class on down – have been suffering economically for several decades, and they know it. Economic elites and politicians of both big parties have been skewing the economy to make the rich even richer at everyone else's expense.

But instead of admitting this, some politicians have been blaming scapegoats (*e.g.*, immigrants, racial minorities and women taking white American men's jobs).

Many Americans feel economically vulnerable. Giant corporations gobble up locally owned businesses, close our factories, and export our jobs. Giant corporations raise prices and reduce quality and service. In many ways, people experience far less control over their lives than before. This causes anxieties and feelings of **loss, fear, and anger**.

Ordinary Americans have been disempowered in other ways too, which worsen our feelings of loss fear and anger. Services that Americans used to control through democracy (electing public school boards, electing local governments to operate public water utilities, etc.) have been **privatized**, so we can't even control many of our basic services.

When extremely rich people and giant corporations fund politicians' electoral campaigns and initiative campaigns, they are actually privatizing democracy itself as a strategy toward letting them privatize more of American society.

Our environment and climate are in severe danger. Our polluted air and water have become health hazards. This makes us feel even more insecure.

Our fears are triggered and we are humiliated as we go about our daily lives, such as waiting in long lines at airports for screening passengers.

Among the world's nations, the U.S. **used to** rank at the top in terms of economic well-being, health, education, and so forth. **But now** the U.S. is far down the list in these rankings. Americans know from our own experience that we have sunk low. **We are feeling loss, fear, and anger.**

Americans have been abused in many ways, so we have perfectly legitimate reasons to be afraid and angry.

We have valid reasons to feel afraid about our environmental safety, economic survival, civil rights, and so forth. However, clever politicians have tapped into those underlying fears and deceived the public by scapegoating people who are even more vulnerable. (Remember Lyndon Johnson's insight, "If you can convince the lowest white man that he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice that you're picking his pocket.")

During the long 2016 campaign season, some politicians exploited people's fears about other demographic groups, and many politicians tried to make us feel afraid about their political opponents. **None** of that fear-mongering was actually proposing constructive solutions for public policy. It simply smacked of nasty campaigning. And it displaced and

projected people's justifiable fears into anger against vulnerable scapegoats.

We must understand these underlying dynamics in order to understand our current political crisis. Also, we must publicize these insights in order to help the public devise and push for smart strategies to turn things around.

In order to solve these underlying problems and turn our nation around, we must **explain the problems** in ways that ordinary Americans – **especially people who are feeling angry, afraid, and vulnerable** – can hear and understand. We must welcome these ordinary Americans into our movements. Otherwise, the right wing will continue to exploit them and recruit them away from us.

Underlying problem #3: Despite having the world's biggest, most violent military, Americans still feel afraid in the world:

Just now I discussed how Americans are feeling **loss and fear** regarding a variety of economic and social realities. In addition, people also feel **loss** about the U.S.'s declining status in the world – and **fear** about our national security.

For more than a quarter of a century since the Soviet Union collapsed, the U.S. has been the world's only superpower. Under presidents and Congresses of **both** big political parties, we have kept thousands of nuclear weapons, a gigantic military force, the world's most modern and deadly weapons, and 700 or 800 military bases in other nations. In 2016 – under Democratic President Obama – the U.S. made military attacks (including drone attacks) on many nations, deployed elite "special forces" to 138 nations, and persisted as the world's #1 seller of military weapons to other countries. **But despite all of this extreme militarism, Americans still do not feel safe.**

Despite all of this, Trump's campaign further provoked and exploited people's feelings of insecurity, and he is significantly increasing the U.S. military budget and military violence around the world.

Why do people feel afraid?

It's because ultimately **the whole notion of military defense is a sham!**

All of the U.S.'s nuclear weapons and gigantic military failed to protect the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The official government story is that a few guys with box cutters hijacked airliners and attacked the U.S. – indeed, the very headquarters of the U.S. military (the Pentagon) and the symbolic headquarters of global capitalism (the "World Trade Center"). The world's

biggest military and thousands of nuclear weapons did not protect us from a few guys with box-cutters.

Credible evidence debunks the official story. If so, shadowy elements within our national government are even worse than incompetent. But whether you believe the official story or the other credible evidence, it is clear that the U.S.'s gigantic military did not protect us on 9-11-2001.

Indeed, nuclear weapons themselves threaten to kill us all. But clever politicians exploit our fear for their own electoral advantage. So in 1960 when Democratic candidate John Kennedy was campaigning against Richard Nixon (who had been Dwight Eisenhower's Vice President), Kennedy falsely claimed that Eisenhower/Nixon had failed to build enough nuclear weapons to challenge the Soviet Union and promised to build more to fill this (non-existent) "missile gap."

During the 1980 campaign Ronald Reagan lied about an alleged U.S. shortage of weapons. Now Trump has done this too. This recurring theme fools voters because – although many Americans are afraid – the real reasons are the exact **opposite** of what the candidates claim!

Nuclear weapons and other U.S. military power cannot protect us from acts of terrorism or "Deep State" sabotage. The 9-11 attacks proved that. The U.S.'s endless wars in Afghanistan and other "War on Terror" nations prove it too.

Indeed, the U.S.'s "war on terror" has only provoked **more** terrorism and spread it into **more** nations. The U.S.'s militarism is like a dog chasing its tail, only worse, because instead of merely circular, the dynamic is escalating. Every time a U.S. soldier attacked an Iraqi family's home – and every time a U.S. drone killed someone in any of the many countries the U.S. drones are attacking – we radicalized

many of their neighbors and extended family members and recruited many more people who want to hurt the U.S.

Indeed, Osama bin Laden – who had been funded by the U.S. government to fight the Soviets Union in Afghanistan during that era suckered the U.S. into an endless, unwinnable “war on terror” in September 2001.

Also, ISIS cheered Trump’s election and his rhetoric and policies calling for a war on Islam, because Trump is directly serving ISIS’ strategy and propaganda. ISIS proclaims that the world is waging a global war against Islam, so ISIS recruits people worldwide to fight back. Under **both** Obama and Trump, the U.S. military did exactly what ISIS’s propaganda claimed, thereby giving credibility to ISIS. Trump and his appointees are helping ISIS even further.

Actually, the American people’s sense of loss and fear stem from the fact that the world no longer allows the U.S. to boss the world around! The U.S. Empire has lost respect and credibility! The U.S. still acts like the world’s only real superpower – the world’s biggest bully – but that violence does not work!

After World War II the U.S. promoted itself as the beacon of liberty and democracy and human rights. But for many decades – under presidents and Congresses of both political parties – the U.S.’s actual foreign policy and business exploitation have taught the world not to trust the U.S.

Although the U.S. prevailed only in small military actions in Panama and Grenada, World War II was the last real war the U.S. actually won. Korea was a stalemate. The U.S. has lost the Vietnam War and all of the other wars for the past 70+ years. The inherent weakness and failure of militarism weakened the USA, so this was partly behind Trump’s campaign to “make America great again.” But that’s impossible even with the U.S. having thousands of nuclear weapons and the world’s most violent military. Military “victory” and “security” and “greatness” are all shams. Military overkill cannot “make America great.”

The U.S. Empire is not sustainable, as I’ll explain below. The American peace movement can help our nation get out of our current crisis by helping the American people understand and accept the reality that the U.S. Empire never has been sustainable.

See much more information about this in the .pdf document titled “**De-Militarize U.S. Foreign Policy Workshop Handouts**” in the “Peace” category of www.parallaxperspectives.org

Even after the Berlin Wall fell, people still assumed that the U.S./USSR Cold War would continue. Almost nobody foresaw the quick collapse of the Soviet Union itself.

Likewise, despite mounting evidence that the bloated U.S. Empire is finished, almost nobody in the U.S. is actually predicting the collapse of the U.S. as the world’s superpower, but this too can happen quickly when Americans and people elsewhere lose confidence in the U.S. This collapse of U.S.’s unrealistic superpower status could collapse as quickly as the bloated stock market crashed in 1929 and led to the Great Depression.

Trump is rejecting international agreements and treaties (e.g., the Paris climate agreement, the Iran peace deal, the INF treaty with Russia, and many more). Trump keeps rebuffing the U.S.’s allies and other nations. The nations of the world are learning to distrust the U.S., which keeps breaking its word and violating treaties. Trump is hastening the decline of U.S. empire and global dominance.

The American public’s anxiety about the U.S.’s likely collapse exists at an unconscious level – and it gets expressed as futile “wishful thinking” that a “strong man” leader can “make America great again.” Trump kept campaigning with promises that only he can solve the problems. People’s feelings of powerlessness lead them to support a “strong man” such as Trump.

In the Bible, this is what Proverbs 16:18 refers to as **the pride that goes before a fall**. The myth of American “greatness” is a long-standing scam, since our nation has failed to deliver on our self-praising rhetoric.

This self-serving myth is part of what led to electing Trump, who is a notorious con-man and huckster. He repeatedly promised greatness in his business dealings, but he repeatedly cheated his employees and customers, failed to deliver on his promises, and went bankrupt many times. Millions of people voted for what they wanted to hear – that a “strong man” will “make America great again.”

So instead of demonizing this one person, let’s recognize that this “America great” scam is a long-standing myth that American politicians, schools, media, and the general public have been telling ourselves for two centuries. **Trump is the logical result of a nation that has deceived itself about many things for many decades.** He is a symptom of corrupt, deceptive, egocentric problems we must fix in our national psychology and in our American culture.

So besides removing Trump through impeachment or the Constitution’s 25th Amendment (see the relevant part of this book’s next chapter), we must also make our nation and our politicians, schools and media start telling us the truth about the rest of the world and our nation’s place in it.

Underlying problem #4: Corporate-owned news media and the dumbing-down of America:

You would think that journalism would help Americans understand what's going on. But mainstream news media are actually giant capitalist businesses that seek profit, not truth.

They failed us during the run-up to the 2003 Iraq war, when they accepted at face value – and obediently repeated – the Bush Administration's lies that Saddam Hussein was building “weapons of mass destruction” (WMDs), even though much more credible sources debunked those claims as not true.

Likewise, during the long 2016 campaign season, mainstream news media failed to expose the lies and seek the truth. Instead they focused on trivia instead of reality.

Corporate-owned news media – newspapers, broadcasters, internet companies – are **not** committed to informing the public or supporting democracy. **Nor** are they committed to promoting the truth and exposing lies. Instead of supporting whistleblowers such as Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning – who actually did expose lies and promote truth – mainstream media join the government in abusing whistleblowers.

Corporate-owned news media exist in order to sell advertising and generate profits. Les Moonves, the CEO of CBS, emphasized that political advertising produces big profits. *The Intercept's* Lee Fang reported on Feb. 29, 2016, that Moonves had just a few days before told the Morgan Stanley Technology, Media and Telecom Conference, “Man, who would have expected the ride we're all having right now? This is pretty amazing.... Who would have thought that this circus would come to town? But, you know – it may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS. That's all I got to say. So what can I say? It's your know, the money's rolling in, and this is fun.”

Although some mainstream media are calling out the lies, many others are “normalizing” the bizarre and cruel policies without calling them out. Even now in mid-2019 Trump's rantings and ravings are generating viewers, readers, and profits for the commercial mass media. They will **not** kill the goose that is laying golden eggs. Mainstream media will **not** save us.

Nearly all Americans – in both big political parties and swing voters alike – are so thoroughly enmeshed and trapped in cultural and political myths and misconceptions that they cannot clearly see what is really happening.

Throughout the 2016 campaign season, Trump spewed lies and hatred. His track record in business showed that for

decades he routinely cheated people. Mainstream news media could – and should – have exposed these, but they chose not to expose them. There is no reason to think they mainstream media will hold Trump accountable now or in the future. Mainstream news media exist in order to earn profits by selling ads to businesses. Truth is not really important.

We people who do value the truth must take responsibility to publicize the truth ourselves in a variety of ways, including:

- **Mainstream media:** Let's do various things to pressure mainstream media to expose the lies and report the truth, rather than yield to Trump's pressure to “normalize” the corrupt, mean-spirited, and extremist behavior that he and his appointees produce. Writing frequent, bold letters to editors is a small but important first step, and we must devise other strategies to move mainstream media to act responsibly.
- **Conservative and right-wing media:** Let's devise a variety of smart strategies and activities to counter conservative media's biases and outright lies.
- **Alternative and progressive media:** Let's read, watch, share, and financially support the very good media sources. See a list near the very end of this essay. Create additional alternative and creative ways to inform the public.
- **Non-profit organizations provide accurate, useful information about issues and organizing:** Their newsletters and e-mails can inform you and help you take effective actions. They deserve our financial support too, in order to help turn things around. Look especially for non-profit organizations that work to change systems rather than merely apply band-aids. See a list near the end of this book's next chapter.

An excellent non-profit organization that monitors and critiques mainstream media is Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) at www.fair.org. FAIR publishes a magazine that provides this smart information too.

Let's pay attention to what is really happening, apart from Trump's simplistic, snarky tweets and other quotations. Trump has been saying outrageous things that the media promote and people react to. That puts Trump in charge and puts us in a reactive, defensive position. **Please do not let outrageous communications distract us from working on the real political issues.** This is like magicians who distract people's attention so they don't see what they are actually doing or pickpockets who brush against one of your shoulders to distract you while they steal your wallet from

the opposite back pocket. Instead, we need to become much more proactive in generating media ourselves.

For example, starting impeachment hearings would create news every day, so the truth about Trump's evil-doings

will be the top new item every day. We need impeachment hearings to be the news instead of his tweets and other daily assaults upon us.

Underlying problem #5: Two big, corrupt, dysfunctional political parties:

The actual track record of recent decades has shown that **BOTH** of the U.S.'s two big political parties represent special interests, **NOT** the American people's best interests. **BOTH** of the big political parties have been deceiving us. The American people know this – and voters are angry about it! Indeed, Trump won in 2016 partly by campaigning against **BOTH** parties!

In 1992 and again in 2008 voters elected candidates who campaigned explicitly for “hope” and “change.” Bill Clinton and Barack Obama campaigned as economic populists. But when they got elected they **actually governed** in support of Wall Street and the military-industrial complex. **Obama's support for the status quo caused people to distrust the Democratic Party and turned off voters in 2016.**

In 1992 Democrat Bill Clinton was elected largely by showing how Republicans Reagan and the older Bush had hurt the economy. Clinton campaigned as an economic populist with their main talking point, “It's the economy, stupid.” But when Bill Clinton was elected he **continued** hurting the working class and transferring our money to the **capitalist** class, especially by taking many actions to deregulate big businesses to enrich them and reduce public protection from their abuses.

Although Barack Obama campaigned against NAFTA in 2008 and **said** he supported ordinary people, he **continued** the “free trade” mania of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Obama's push for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and other “free trade” scams caused voters to react against him and opt for Trump, who opposed those, even though Trump actually is absolutely loyal to Wall Street and against the working class. Hillary Clinton vigorously supported “free trade” and the TPP until the TPP became politically toxic so she turned against it only very late in her 2016 campaign.

A few pages earlier I discussed people's feelings of loss and anger. An important factor in the losses and angers people felt during the 2016 campaign was the fact that Obama – who had campaigned in 2008 as a populist progressive for “hope” and “change” – governed for the benefit of powerful business and military interests instead of the public well-being. That betrayal of the 99% turned off the voters.

In 2016 Hillary Clinton was the candidate **of** the status quo – Wall Street, big business, global “free trade,” more wars – while Trump said he opposed all of those! Trump recognized and expressed the public's **anger at the status**

quo. (Of course Trump lied, but at least – unlike Clinton – he did resonate with the voters' feelings, while Clinton was utterly insensitive and clueless about what the voters were feeling.)

Hillary Clinton had a long track record of subservience to Wall Street. When she served on Walmart's board of directors and served as one of Walmart's top lawyers, there is no evidence that she did anything to help Walmart's low-wage workers, despite trying to make her electoral campaign seem like she cared about women and minorities, who comprise a large portion of Walmart's employees.

She did not campaign on economic populist issues until mid-2016 when she adopted a few – and only in response to Bernie Sanders' leadership on those issues. Washington State's two Democratic U.S. Senators supported the TPP. American workers saw clearly that Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party were not on their side. **Trump positioned his campaign to the left of Hillary's economic policies.**

Obama and Clinton bragged about the “jobs” created during Obama's eight years, even though many of those jobs were at wages much lower than the jobs that were lost during the Obama administration. Obama and Clinton kept bragging about how good the economy was now, even though everybody knew the economy was terrible. Such is the self-deception and public deception of the big political parties' elite class. Voters knew that the Democratic Party was not on our side.

President Obama received good publicity for saying nice things in public about the climate and taking some climate-friendly actions, but much more of his effort – especially in low-key, behind-the-scenes ways – has supported Big Oil, but mainstream media failed to report that. Obama's “all-of-the-above” energy policy (supporting fracking, oil exports, nuclear power, etc.) was really an expanded version of Sarah Palin's contemptible “drill, baby, drill” policy.

Obama took many actions to serve Big Oil. He signed a new law that – for the first time in four decades – allows the export of crude oil from the U.S. He quietly supported and even fast-tracked several nasty pipelines. He permitted more offshore drilling and vigorously promoted fracking. He kept the Keystone XL pipeline alive for several years before finally yielding to massive sustained public pressure to stop it.

Both of the big parties have been promoting deregulation and “free trade” policies. Bill Clinton vigorously supported the WTO, pushed NAFTA through to passage, led efforts to repeal the Glass-Steagall law (thereby leading to the 2007-2008 economic crash), led efforts to deregulate giant telecommunications companies and concentrate ownership through the 1996 Telecommunications Act, and so forth.

Barack Obama continued promoting George W. Bush’s “free trade” deals with several nations and giant “free trade” scams equally horrible as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The public hates those, but in 2016 Trump was the only politician to really lambaste NAFTA and other job-killing “free trade” policies that Hillary Clinton had long supported.

Democrats who are criticizing Trump’s appointees now were silent when Obama appointed Big Business insiders to powerful positions. Obama appointed a great many officials from Goldman Sachs to top positions in his administration after Goldman Sachs had been the biggest donor to his 2008 campaign.

Obama appointed one of Comcast’s top lobbyist to the Federal Communications Commission, and he appointed agribusiness and Big Pharma officials to positions regulating their industries. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is supposed to serve the interests of the public and investors, but Obama appointed to the SEC someone who had gained prominence in protecting giant corporations from transparency and oversight. The list goes on and on.

For many years the institutional Democratic Party has asked its base of working class voters to vote for them, but – when elected – the Democrats betray the working class and serve big business.

In contrast, when Republicans win, they actually do deliver to their base what the Republicans’ base has asked for.

In 2016 the Republicans won by listening to their voters and nominating the candidate (Trump) who was generating popular support. In contrast, in 2016 the institutional Democratic Party rebuffed its populist candidate, Bernie Sanders. Bernie Sanders was generating huge public support and would have won in a landslide with long coattails that would have elected many Democrats to Congress and state and local governments.

Underlying problem #6: Right-wing Christianity merged with the Republican Party. This corrupted both and hurt our nation:

In the 1970s several right-wing Christian TV preachers and junk mail organizers mobilized millions of right-wing people around “culture war” issues. They worked to prevent passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, prevent equal rights for LGBTQ people, roll back abortion rights, and wage other “culture war” issues.

Because the Religious Right was reacting against Democrats’ support for those “culture war” issues, they effectively merged with the Republican Party for mutual gains. The Religious Right needed a political vehicle to advance their agenda against modern social justice movements (women, gays, and so forth). The Republican Party needed a political base.

Similar to Nixon’s 1968 “Southern Strategy, the modern Republican Party moved farther toward the extremist right wing. When Republicans got elected, they “delivered” to their electoral base. This further empowered these right-wing extremists.

Together they attacked the separation of Church and State, which the Constitution’s First Amendment had established. Their attacks on the separation of Church and State have continued in many ways. Since 1947 the excellent

non-profit organization Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (www.au.org) has fought valiantly to protect politics and religion from hurting each other.

Now – although Trump can’t get the Republican Congress to pass his legislative agenda – Trump actually is delivering powerfully to his political base by appointing extremists who support the Religious Right to a number of executive branch positions and to the federal judiciary.

For years, Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell violated the U.S. Constitution’s intent by refusing to consider Obama’s appointees for many, many vacant positions in federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. Senate Democrats let McConnell do this without raising the stink they should have raised. Now the Senate is rapidly confirming Trump’s nominees for a gigantic number of extremely right-wing nominees. Trump is appointing right-wing extremists who are young, so they will dictate federal judicial decisions for many decades. Many of these judges tilt toward the Religious Right as well as tilting toward big business, against workers, against human rights, against the environment, etc.

Actually, the Religious Right (especially after merging with the Republican Party) has abandoned honest spirituality and has removed itself from God. It has

merged also with the dominant worldview of corrupt capitalism, worship of wealth (look at the multi-millionaire TV evangelists who flaunt their jewelry and lavish lifestyles!), sucking up to rich and powerful people instead of

practicing the humility that Jesus taught, and lack of empathy for LGBTQ people and other people whom Republicans despise.

**How Can We Get OUT of this Crisis?
See the next chapter for insightful strategies.**

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