

The Toto-Truths That Trump Taught Us

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Donald Trump and his gang-boss, Mitch McConnell, have been an eye-opening revelation to the American people, and we're still struggling culturally to understand their impact on us, even as they continue to do to us what they have been doing surprisingly well since first breaking through the cockpit door of our collective American enterprise and taking control of our "aircraft of state."

From them we have learned jaw-dropping lessons. They have given us—especially us on the Left—lessons that we can hardly tolerate to face head-on, no less to respond to effectively.

I'm not going to catalog here the usual—and growing, day by day—number of offenses against human dignity and true loyalty to "American values" and common decency and conformity to law which the Trump Gang is and has been perpetrating against us. Instead, I want to take a step back and reflect for a while on the larger view—the mountain-vista view—as Trump and his outlaws steadily redirect our "plane of state" toward the skyscraper coming into view on the horizon.

So, come with me now—fearless of the collision with the building we're approaching because after all, there's no way we can stop the collision nor avoid it—and no need to forecast the indescribable, unimaginable horrors that will occur when the "plane of state" broadsides the tower of democracy. Let's take these last moments left to us to see in reality what positive contributions the Trump Gang has made to our understanding of our participatory form of government.

Reality is our first thought: What is it? What is *real*?

Let me suggest that *reality* is what exists in our sense perceptions—both in our five usual senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and vision, and in our less clearly defined senses, namely our feelings, our intuition, our split-second understanding, our prescience, and so on.

Reality always stands clearly revealed before us as the existing presence—the things, and events, and the conditions and qualities of these things and events, which we perceive and experience. Reality is the *facts* as we perceive and experience them. That word, *fact*, comes from the Latin word *factum*, which means “what has been done.” Facts are what is happening within our senses—“before our eyes,” as we say. And facts are also what we remember of what happened within our senses in the past, before the present of that moment glided into the next present moment and disappeared, to endure after that only in our memories.

Facts never exist in the future. Facts exist only in the current present experience, or in our memory of previous present experience. And in truth, the longer our memory holds onto these previous experiences, researchers tell us, the less our memories retain the real experience of what had happened, and the more the memories corrode and become expressions of our current preferences and attitudes rather than the facts of what was experienced as actually occurring. In other words, over time and with repetition, our memories become embellished by our own personalities or they become conflated with memories of other events, or they simply deteriorate into half-remembered or forgotten events.

So, in brief, reality is what exists in our perception of things and events. Facts are always ***experienced*** as events which are either happening or are remembered as happening.

Are facts “reality”? The answer is Yes. Whatever you as an individual experience is *real*—to you. For the reasons I mentioned above—altered or embellished memories, or confused memories, or conflated memories, or made-up memories, or memories which are constructed with the intent to deceive—the experiences of individual witnesses to reality are not often accepted as true by the other members of society. For this reason, self-testimony is usually received by others with a grain of skepticism. But when many people of good repute testify to experiencing similar facts at the same moment in time, such experiences are more easily accepted as factual, and therefore, as “real.”

These concepts are the foundation of how the validity is established not only of testimony in court trials, but also of scientific experimental results and predictions (that is, by repeatability in other settings.)

The next and crucial point in this train of thought: Facts ***must be experienced*** to be taken as true. If you know me personally, then you know for a fact that I am 5’8” tall. On the other hand, if you do

not know me personally, and I tell you here that I am 5'8" tall and shrinking because of aging—that information is not a fact. It is incorrect of you to say in this case, "Skulicz is 5'8" tall." The best you can do is to say something like, "Skulicz says that he is 5'8" tall," or "I believe that Skulicz is 5'8" tall."

If you have not experienced it for yourself, you cannot claim that it is true.

What we have here is the difference between *fact* and *belief*—or to put it in more common terms, the difference between *knowing* and *believing*. Only a math-inept person who has tried to pass an accounting course knows what that experience is really like. No one else can possibly know. A math-adept person cannot know the feeling of complete incomprehension that the math-inept person feels, and the person who has never confronted accounting isn't even in the same ball park.

All that a person who hasn't had a certain experience can do is to listen and to imagine. And if that person has confidence in the truthfulness of the experiencer, then the person *believes* what the experiencer is saying about the experience. The *truth* can be told only by the experiencer. If a listener has had an equivalent experience, they can verify the truth which is being told. But everyone else—everyone who has not had the experience—can only either *believe* the experiencer or not believe.

Most of what we say we "know" has not actually been experienced by us. For example, if we say that Columbus discovered America in 1492, we are not stating something that we know from experience, but only something that we believe, because we trust our teachers who have indoctrinated us. (Is that trust well-placed in this case? No. It seems that the Vikings were the first Europeans to "discover" North America, and they did that about 800 years earlier than Columbus did. Moreover, it appears that the indigenous people whom Europeans called "Indians" settled North America about 8,000 years before that. At least, that's what the scholars whom I believe tell us.

(The whole issue here hangs on the word *discover*. We use that word in our Eurocentric haughtiness, as though Columbus were a titanic hero who somehow lifted the wolf-skin off the North American continent and found there beneath it a peaceful and profitable—and previously non-existent place. It's better that we tone down our sense of superiority and favored status, and simply say that Columbus was the first European Christian to *realize* that the North American continent existed, although he can't honestly claim that honor either, since he believed that he was standing on the Indian subcontinent—which is in fact some 8600 miles farther to the west of where he stood. In reality, all that

Columbus did was to lift the veil (“dis-cover”) of ignorance from his mind and learn a new piece of information, to carry back to Portugal with him. – Oh, and he also demonstrated that the earth has no edges to that infestation of nay-sayers in Europe at the time, led by a Visigoth potentate named Trumpius the Ignorant, who believed that the earth was a flat disc, in spite of the proofs which had existed since the Egyptian and Greek eras that the earth was essentially spherical.)

So, in brief, we have the option of believing what people tell us, or not, because neither we, nor they (in all likelihood), have actually experienced what they’re telling us. Rather, most of the time, people are simply passing on the beliefs of the people they were talking to or listening to earlier.

Here’s the truth of my experience: Almost all the time, we pretend to *know* what we merely *believe*. We don’t want to admit that, though, because in our scientific age, we think it’s important to *know* things. And so, we pretend to know—and we say to others, often authoritatively—things which we have not experienced but which we only believe because others whom we trust have told these things to us. (And have we ever asked ourselves whether they’re really trustworthy? Then think about who first told you the lie about Santa Claus.)

These thoughts lead us to recognize the first truth that Trump haws taught the American people. By asserting his Big Lie—that only trickery by his opponents caused Biden to be declared President in 2020; if the election had not been “rigged,” Trump would have won—Trump taught us that Americans are, in large part, incorrectly called *homo sapiens* (meaning, in Latin, “thinking humans,” or more precisely, “humans possessing wisdom”) and should be called instead, *homo credens* (meaning “believing humans.”)

What I’m trying to get at is that in these times, we learn from the media—from the commentators, and the panels of experts and reporters, and the interviews—**what we should think** (as Bradbury predicted in his 1953 novel, *Fahrenheit 451*.) With so many “experts” to tell us what to think, we don’t need to go through the bother of doing it for ourselves.

The old school journalism was better in this respect. The readers were simply given the facts as these facts were witnessed by first-hand experiencers, and then the readers were expected to draw their own conclusions from what they read in print.

I have watched the Fox News evening programs only in scattered bits. But as a person who has lived my whole life on the political left, it is clear to me from my limited experience that the Fox News network is a propaganda organ for the Trump-extreme right-wing interpretation of government pronouncements and actions.

Similarly, I have watched the CNN evening programs quite frequently, for I have found political viewpoints there which are consonant with my own left-wing views. Nonetheless, after a time of such watching of CNN, it has become clear to me that the CNN network is a propaganda organ of the moderate liberal interpretation of government pronouncements and actions. CNN is entirely hostile to Trump and emphasizes the negative fallout of his every action, both upon the citizenry and upon his own public life—apparently in retaliation for Trump’s having ejected the CNN White House reporter from a press conference early in Trump’s presidency, for asking a “hostile” question.

Each network is promoting its own interpretation of the facts, rather than presenting the facts to us in a way (the “way it used to be”) which gives impartial heed to both sides of the story. I am not going to guess for you how this change came about or what the answer is to the chicken or the egg questions. Is it that the slither of the cable news networks into the opposing corners of the political boxing-ring was a publisher’s decision which caused people to go ignorant and to lap up the networks’ propaganda? Or was it the dramatic failure of American public education to provide our people with the skills of literacy, knowledge of current events, and critical thinking, which public education’s founder, Benjamin Franklin, apparently believed was its duty to provide in order to ensure an informed and thoughtful citizenry, that caused our people to flock to these organs in order to feel that by digesting the one-sided drivel on each of them, they actually understand what is going on in our government?

No matter which caused which, the prevailing belief is that a substantial number of voters (say, 45%, according to the political sources) have sworn an increasingly hardening allegiance to Donald Trump and believe every word that issues from (in my view) his used-car salesman’s mouth. These folks, our fellow citizens, neighbors, friends, and family members, are apparently in large numbers prepared to defy the supposed “traditional American values” of justice for all and of respect for freedom and constitutional rights, and to support legislation which reduces the ability of some people, and people of color in particular, who tend to vote Democrat, to exercise their constitutional right to vote, and at the

most extreme, are prepared to take up arms against our constitutional democracy and surrender it to the autocratic Donald Trump.

The first of Trump's lessons to us Americans, then, is that we are no wiser or better than the German Nazis were in World War II. We are fools just as gullible to Trump's Big Lie as the German people were to Hitler's "große Lüge" ("big lie") in the 1930s and 40s. We have learned nothing either from Hitler's explanation of the power of the Big Lie, nor from the deaths of the 214,000 American military personnel who gave their lives to defeat Hitler's Big Lie in Europe.

Here's Hitler's explanation of the power of the Big Lie, as it appeared as early as 1925 in his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*:

All this was inspired by the principle – which is quite true within itself – that in the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility; because the broad masses of a nation are always more easily corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily; and thus in the primitive simplicity of their minds they more readily fall victim to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods.

It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously. Even though the facts which prove this to be so may be brought clearly to their minds, they will still doubt and waver and will continue to think there may be some other explanation. For the grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it, even after it has been nailed down, a fact which is known to all expert liars in this world and to all who conspire together in the art of lying.

—*Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, vol. I, ch. X. (Translated by James Murphy.)*

Legend has conveniently boiled down Hitler's ideas here into a simple, memorable sentence, attributed to the Nazi propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels:

If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.

There you have it. What Hitler forecast in 1925 became true ten years later when he began to reign over his Thousand Year Reich. It also became true in Ceaușescu's Romania, in Bolsonaro's Brazil, and in Berlusconi's Italy. And now it hovers over the United States, waiting for its moment to

descend like some immense hawk or eagle to disembowel our government and to gorge itself on our people—on you and yours, as well as on me and mine—crushing and tearing to shreds those who resist it, terrifying the cowardly, and luring the ignorant into moral silence.

Trump's first contribution to American society is to boldly re-route American expectations, hopes, and beliefs from acceptance of valid scientific research and independence of thought to enthrallment to his Big Lies, crushing those who oppose him and causing—with his words as his first weapon—the people to believe that they are prospering and receiving what they need and want, despite all evidence that they are not. The most stunning example of this are the half-million-plus American lives lost to COVID-19 in the United States, the size of that number due directly to Trump's failure to respond effectively in the initial stages of the spread of the disease.

He has shown us that even here, in our showcase democracy, the Big Lie can overwhelm the people and take power from them. It does this by destroying public confidence in the hard, factual truth and by offering in its place an appealing structure of lies.

(Do you remember when he started his trade war against China that he proclaimed, "It's easy to win a trade war"? He has never admitted that he lost that war although his actions shut down markets to American products and destroyed the supply chains of American businesses and farmers, whom he had to appease with American dollars. That episode reminds me of his campaign promise that Mexico would pay for his border wall. No one complained much when he used our tax dollars to finally build parts of it. Why didn't we? Because he had bored us to sleep with the self-preening emptiness of his lies and distractions.)

A guy walks into a tavern and puts a twenty dollar bill on the bar and says, "Gimme a double Clorox and a beer chaser. I'm gonna get rid of this COVID thing once and for all." And he did. Good work, American believers.

The second truth that Trump taught to American society was what I call the "Toto Truths." Do you remember in the film version of *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her friends enter the Wizard's chamber and tremble at the fearsome smoke-and-mirrors displays of the Wizard's power? While Dorothy and her friends stand immobilized by their fear, little Toto, Dorothy's dog, noses around and

finally pulls back the curtain, to reveal that in fact, the fearsome Wizard is simply an ordinary man who could effectively operate a set of hand levers.

Trump has been for us something of a Toto, too. He has pulled back the curtain which had been preventing us from realizing the basic realities of how our “democracy” actually works. Here’s what I mean:

Our high school history and civics classes just never get around to revealing to us the foundational truths about the actual purpose and structure of our government. We are taught to regard “our Founding Fathers” with a respect bordering on veneration. But although many of us have come across in some way or another the information we are about to discuss, the social dynamics which it reveals has had little impact on us.

Here are the facts, as historians have related them to us. The Founders were, with two exceptions, wealthy landed gentlemen who if they had resided back in England rather than in the colonies, might have been titled knights or barons. In the new United States federation, they played the same parts in the making of government policy which in our time, the wealthiest and most politically influential billionaires play—people like the Koch brothers (Charles and the late David), who were/are the money behind the Republican Party, and George Soros, the billionaire philanthropist, who is the money behind the Democratic party.

The Founders were rich men, whose interest in government, then as now, was twofold: to protect and secure their wealth and the way of life which their wealth bought for them, and to create and maintain a shield for themselves to isolate them from the common people, who, as a mass of rioters, could easily overwhelm and destroy them if the commoners knew the extent of their wealth, compared with the relative destitution of the commoners, and the power which their wealth brought them over the daily lives of the commoners.

This “shield” of protections of the wealthy has taken many different forms in history. Traditionally in European history, it has taken the form of kingship, by which the rulers of nations exercised a “divine right” to choose to do whatever they wished to do. Some ruled by earning the respect of the people for the king’s skill at defending the people from their enemies. Some ruled by

appearing publicly in settings of grandeur and majesty, awing the people. Others ruled by fear and mercilessness.

All of the kings kept a council of advisors. At first, these were just the strongest warriors and wisest minds in the the king's posse. But as time went on, armies and military equipment became increasingly expensive, and kings had to rely on financiers in order to defend their kingdoms. Thus, the wealthy families in each kingdom gained increasing power over the king's political and military maneuverings.

This bilateral relationship between the wealthy and the power of the state was first formalized in 1215 with the signing of the English *Magna Carta*, an agreement between the king and the wealthy barons which recognized the right and liberties of the nobility and limited the absolute authority of the king, in exchange for the nobility's loyalty to and financial support of the king. This document was the foundation of the British House of Lords and subsequently of British parliamentary democracy, from which the representative democracy of the United States sprang.

In the federal government of the United States, the wealthy themselves, whom we know as the Founders, were the initial legislators and judges and executives. The wealthiest among them, George Washington, a Virginia plantationer whose wealth has been estimated at half a billion current US dollars and came from the produce of some 58,000 acres of inherited land and from the driven labors of 123 Africans slaves, was not only the successful major general in the Revolutionary War against England, but also the new nation's first president.

Of course, the Revolution was primarily a resistance by the wealthy to the imposition of taxes on them by the British king in the king's attempt to finance his army in his war with France (the Seven-Years' War, 1756-1763, known in the British colonies as the French and Indian War.) The wealthy British colonists resisted the taxes because they had no legal way to make their case against the taxes to the king, giving rise to the well-known revolutionary slogan, "No taxation without representation!"

In an ironic twist, shortly after the Constitution of the United States was ratified in 1789, and after Washington was inaugurated as president, the new president found it necessary to create a new tax on distilled spirits—a tax which he himself paid on the output of his own distillery in Virginia (the tax on him amounted to 34 cents at the time)—in order to repay the nation's war debt to France. To that tax

the farmers of western Pennsylvania, who distilled their own whiskey from the grains they grew, rebelled, crying, “No taxation without [local] representation!”

This was the first citizens’ challenge (but as we know, not the last) to the authority of the federal government. In response to it, Washington sent an army general to the region as the federal tax collector, and he himself followed behind, leading a militia of 13,000 armed soldiers. The farmers were daunted by this show of force and retired from the fight without confrontation. Twenty leading conspirators were peacefully arrested and later acquitted or pardoned.

Washington had made clear that his federal government would not be subjected to the tempers of discontent citizens. He was commended for his bloodless but effective quelling of the “Whiskey Rebellion of 1791.” But I pause to reflect on the irony that just sixteen years earlier, he himself with his army of farmers was fighting for the same slogan, “No taxation without representation.”

The second thought that arises from reflecting on the Whiskey Rebellion is more somber. During the Revolution, Washington led an army of the people against an occupying military force. In contrast, during the Whiskey Rebellion, he led armed soldiers against their own fellow citizens. He was apparently prepared to threaten—and actually to take—the lives of citizens of the United States.

That decision, however effective it was in quelling the rebellion of the moment, is fraught with moral uncertainties. Is it righteous for a democratic government to threaten, and to take, the lives of its own citizens, whom it vastly overpowers? The symbolic answer to this question seems to me to be embodied in the famous and much admired film clip of the lone Chinese citizen, clad in white, standing off against a column of Chinese army tanks in Tiananmen Square during the citizens’ revolt for democracy in 1989. The Chinese military at that moment and before the eyes of the world faced the question I asked just above. And they refused to harm the man—the humane and democratic response.

And then I recall my own experience as a graduate student, driving through Durham, North Carolina, at the time of the Watts Riots in 1965. The riots themselves took place in Los Angeles, 2800 miles west of Durham. And yet, Durham and many other municipalities across the country had requested National Guard protection in the event that the disdained African American community would similarly rebel in their own cities. I drove with some friends through the “five points” intersection in downtown Durham and was dismayed to see that on one corner of the intersection, the Guard had set up

a heavy machine gun emplacement, manned by a dozen or more citizen-soldiers, secured behind sandbag defenses. It was apparent to me that those soldiers were prepared to shoot and kill their fellow citizens.

The government, of course, as all the citizens know and expect it will, will have its way. But when we consider exactly who it was who founded our government, we must recognize that it was not ordinary people like you (most likely) and I, ordinary people who have labored in their lives to make a decent way of life for themselves and their families, who wrote our Constitution. The men who founded our government were, with only two exceptions that I could find among the signers of the Declaration of Independence, wealthy men—rich men—whose “investments” in land, manufacturing, and commerce earned them the lion’s share of the profits gained from the labors of the people who worked for them—both free and enslaved.

Have a look at the situations of the most well-known of them in Table 1 following:

Table 1. The Wealth of the Founders

Founder	Peak Wealth in Current Dollars	Source of Wealth	Number of Slaves Owned
George Washington	\$500 million	inherited plantation & farmland	123
Benjamin Franklin	left \$6 million inheritance	business	0
James Madison	\$114 million	inherited plantations	slave owner, number unreported
John Adams	\$21 million	land owner	0
Thomas Jefferson	\$239 million	inherited plantations	150 – 200
John Jay	“wealthy,” amount unreported	family owned 18 ships &	154 slaves. John Jay was abolitionist.
John Hancock	\$9 million	inherited	unreported
James Monroe	\$30 million	inherited plantations	250
Richard Henry Lee	“wealthy,” amount unreported	inherited tobacco farms	slave owner, number unreported
Alexander Hamilton	commoner, not wealthy	mother was from wealth	0
Paul Revere	commoner, “well-to-do”	craftsman	0

The image of Washington leading a 13,000 soldier militia to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion, which we discussed just above, captures the relationship in our nation, I believe, even now between the wealthy, who set policy—sometimes for the “common good” and always to their own benefit—and the common people, who accept that policy (or not—it doesn’t really matter, as the Whiskey Rebellion showed, and set the precedent) and put that policy into effect, sometimes at the cost of the lives of others and of their own. A prime example here are those police officers and first responders who die in the performance of their duties for the well-being of the community.

That is the second lesson which Donald Trump made clear to all the citizens, whether we like it or not: Government is primarily about enriching and protecting the rich guys, by whatever means are necessary. This is the case today as it was in the time of the Founders, and before that, in the time of the Holy Roman Empire, when the Roman Catholic prelates hoarded the wealth and power of Europe, and before that, in the time of the flaccid, corrupt, vicious, and self-serving Roman Senate.

To demonstrate this point, I’ve compiled a list of the current United States senators, along with the estimated net worth in current dollars of each of them. This is found in Table 2, appended below to the final page of this essay.

I was moved to do this by Sen. Cory Booker’s claims that the Senate is “dominated by millionaires,” that he is “not one of them,” and that that’s why the needs of the poor and voiceless people of this country are not being addressed in that chamber. The results of my research show that 43 of the 100 senators, according to the data, which includes both estimated wealth and self-declared wealth, are indeed millionaires, and that this group includes many, perhaps most, of the most powerful and most loud-mouthed members of the Senate. The table also shows that Booker himself, though not quite a millionaire (he’s 70% of the way there), has a net worth substantially greater than that of the average folks he claims (somewhat convincingly, in my skeptical view) to represent.

Also of interest is the number of senators who claim to have no net worth or who are in debt, sometimes in substantial debt. Indebtedness, it is easy to see, renders a person vulnerable to monied interests suggesting those infamous *quid pro quos*.

Given the endless crowds of cash-and-gift-laden lobbyists flooding the halls of the Capitol—in my humble view, more dangerous than the crowd of thugs who appeared there on January 6th—and the costs of campaigning and getting into office (again, by hook or by crook), the main take-away from this table is the unsurprising conclusion that money, in its many manners of being acquired and hoarded, must be viewed as a fundamental consideration in every transaction that occurs within the Senate. Money buys acceptance. Money buys agreement. Money buys advocacy. Money buys silent consent. Money buys the spin put on the facts. Money buys the planned clarity or confusion with which government pronouncements are made. Money buys scapegoats and fall-guys, and what happens to them. Money buys that shield around the wealthy bosses which ordinarily offers the 10% of the profits to the public to allow them to buy into the system and take positive ownership of their beguilement, thus creating a “middle class” way of life.

What all this money cannot buy is personal protection from the errors and stupidities of a person’s—a politician’s, in this case—flaws of character and incompetences in humane behavior—in heart, in values, in honesty. Trump’s “Toto Truths” revealed to us the bitter ugliness of the scheming and manipulation which occurs in the Oval Office and behind the closed oak doors of the Senate office buildings. And the reason Trump revealed all this to us was not in the playbook. It is found in the first sentence of this paragraph. Every person, no matter how guarded they are, always reveals in their words and in their actions to the observant skeptic who they are. Money cannot cloak forever the sort of human being a person is. For, as the sage wrote, “The truth will out.”

The truth that comes ultimately from the “Toto Truths” is that the common people are being called by our current political situation to assess what *democracy* is, what actual democracy would look like in practice, how we might get from our current situation to establishing that way of life (if we recognize that we do not truly have it yet), and what we are willing to do and to sacrifice to attempt to achieve it.

Those are the ideal questions. Of course, not many will ask them or even be interested in them because they already think that they have something real in the American Way of Supporting the Lives of the Bosses.

In brief then, Donald Trump’s second lesson to us came when he pulled back the curtain, as Toto did, and showed who the real bosses are—in our time, the bosses are the unscrupulous wealthy, which is

to say simply, “the wealthy.” For, no one with a genuinely charitable, compassionate heart spends their life amassing a fortune.

Getting a high rate of return on one’s investments always requires human suffering of one sort or another. The rich people are rich because many other people are suffering or being taken advantage of.

For example, making a “beachhead for democracy” means in reality taking someone else’s resources or capturing an indecently paid labor pool or opening a fresh market to the rich who make those decisions, at the cost of the lives of soldiers who enlist idealistically, to fight in the cause of democracy and freedom, when in truth these common people-turned soldiers are fighting for the profit of the American bosses against the canon-fodder of the enemy bosses who are seeking the same profits which the American bosses are seeking.

Our “democratic” bosses have learned the important lesson which earlier bosses, such as kings, and our current oligarchs, did not learn. The lesson is this. Cut the common people in on a small percentage of the profits. This means that the bosses accumulate, say, 10% less profit. But that 10%, which is sacrificed by the bosses to the common people allows the commoners to “buy in” to the system. As a result, they feel that the system is working in their favor, to provide them the “luxuries” of the affluent middle-class lifestyle. This gives the commoners a sense of engagement and commitment, which prevents uprising and rebellion against the system.

In this way, the status quo remains secure, the system functions well according to the strategies and actions of the wealthy, and profiting can proceed as usual.

Our wealthy bosses generally keep themselves anonymous, cloaking their influence on government policy by buying or otherwise keeping the allegiance of politicians and judges. (Was the John Kennedy assassination such a move, to convince future presidents to cooperate with the bosses?) And when a wealthy person actually decides to assume the presidency themselves, as Franklin Roosevelt did, they do not advertise or show off their wealth and power to the public.

Trump, however, is the exception. His enormous ego could not allow any public occasion to pass without his mentioning some talent or ability he thought he possessed as a result of his wealth or heritage or experience as a “successful businessman and deal-maker.” Thus, he could not help but pull the curtain back to reveal the many dubious aspects of the way of wealthy life and the cast of mutant

characters who numbered among his companions in the life of the rich. Through him we saw the degraded, sometimes heinous, life of the pleasure-seeking, indolent rich, and their secret perversions, and their compulsive play-life. We saw the kind of people who pull our strings, and that vision disgusted many of us.

These are the “Toto Truths.” And this is Trump’s second important lesson to us.

Trump has taught us one more lesson: The wealthy are invulnerable. They rarely come to suffer the consequences of their crimes or their perversions or their deceptions. The wealth of the richest families, as well as their reputations as the American patrician class, deflects any damage that might otherwise come to them. (Reflect for a moment on the veneration which many Americans have for the Kennedy family though Papa Joe Kennedy made his fortune from bootlegging Cuban rum.)

Their money buys them the most skilled legal counsel, and if necessary, the silence or the cooperation of witnesses, the favor of judges and jailers, and the production of agreeable police and auditor reports. And, as we know from those magnetic moments in our televised police and lawyer dramas, if sufficient cooperation cannot be bought, the rich know a guy who knows a guy who can arrange for something unpleasant to happen to a beloved family member of an uncooperative person. And for the protection of their public reputations, the wealthy are able to hire public relations and media relations experts, spin doctors, fixers, and no end of staff to generate and publicize the desired story of the day.

One such “Breaking News” story involves the first Proud Boy to be convicted for his participation in the January 6 insurgency. A CNN reporter pointed out that though the federal sentencing guidelines for the crime(s) he was convicted of recommend a sentence of 15 to 24 months in prison, and though the defendant admitted to committing the acts he was charged with, the judge sentenced him to just eight months in prison. The reporter commented that such a light sentence for attempting to bring down our democracy simply invites others to risk a short jail term in order to disrupt the democratic process.

If this example stinks to you of graft and corruption, the stench is also in my nose. While it’s true that judges have often ended up in the hip pockets of syndicate bosses—right next to the wallet,

where it's warm and comfortable—I raise the question, Who's wallet is this guy sitting next to? Who benefits from leniency to a rebel against our democracy—a traitor—more than *il capo di tutti i capi*, Donald Trump?

Suspecting all of this, with our imaginations to lead us and Trump's antics to model for us, let us meditate together on the circumstances surrounding the death of Jeffrey Epstein, one of the rich and twisted with whom Trump is allegedly associated.

Epstein appears to have made his money, a billion dollars worth of it, as a financier and real estate investor. Where the original wealth behind his financial enterprises came from, I do not know. At any rate, Epstein's story begins for us in 2008. At that time, Epstein was arrested in Florida for sex trafficking. He pled guilty to two felony charges, made restitution to 36 victims, and registered as a sex offender in Florida and also in New York.

Then, on July 6, 2019, Epstein was again arrested for sex trafficking, this time in New York City. He pled Not Guilty and was denied bail as a flight risk. He went to jail, living in a two-man cell in the Special Housing Unit of the Manhattan Correctional Center with another prisoner.

As the story was reported, at 1:27 a.m. on July 23, 2019, Epstein was found semi-conscious in his cell with neck injuries. His cellmate, N. Tartaglione, denied hurting him. An internal jail investigation cleared Tartaglione of involvement with Epstein's condition. In addition, an "unnamed source" is reported to have claimed that Epstein staged the incident in order to be transferred out of his cell. A lawyer for Epstein's victims, S. Kuvier, claimed that Epstein's condition was the result of a murder attempt.

Epstein was placed on suicide watch in the infirmary. After a psychological evaluation, he was taken off suicide watch and returned to the Special Housing Unit, with a cellmate. He was to be observed every 30 minutes.

On August 8, 2019, in the evening, Epstein signed his will, which was witnessed by two of his lawyers. He placed all his assets in a trust. His lawyers described him as "upbeat."

On August 9, Epstein's cellmate was transferred out of the cell. No replacement was sent into the cell, leaving Epstein alone in it.

At 7:49 p.m., Epstein was escorted back to his cell by guard T. Noel, after the meeting with his lawyers. Thereafter, CCTV shows that his two guards did not look in on Epstein at 10 p.m., and that Noel glanced in at 10:30. That was the last time that either guard looked in on Epstein or came near his cell. No one checked his cell thereafter. Both guards then fell asleep at their desk for 3 hours. (Later, the two guards lied in their reports about sleeping.) During that same time, two video cameras aimed at the cell failed, and a third camera was said to have recorded “unstable” video.

At 6:30 a.m., after an 8-hour period of unobserved isolation, the same two guards, while distributing breakfast, found Epstein in his cell, unresponsive. They reported finding him kneeling on the floor, with a strip of bedsheet around his neck and tied to the top of the *lower* bunk. The guards performed CPR on him.

At 6:33, the guards called their supervisor and T. Noel told him that Epstein had hung himself. An ambulance was called, against protocol, and the victim was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead of cardiac arrest at 6:39 a.m. Then the body was taken to the Medical Examiner, who ruled that the death was a suicide by hanging.

A note, written with a illicit ball-point pen, was later found in Epstein’s cell. It complained of large bugs crawling on Epstein as he slept, of burnt food given to him by one of the two guards, and of a guard intentionally locking him naked in a shower for an hour.

Questions immediately arose, following the suicide discovery. The guards were charged with two violations of Bureau of Prisons protocol: failure to photograph the body as it was found, and removal of the body from the “crime scene” in the cell.

Later research revealed that Epstein’s alleged death was the first suicide at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in 14 years.

Other problems with the official explanation surfaced. Epstein was 6 feet tall and weighed 175 pounds. In that case, would he have been able to hang himself from the top of a lower bunk? Relevant to this question is the fact that later photos of the death scene show medicine bottles standing upright on the top bunk. Moreover, the question was raised as to why Epstein allegedly used a sheet to hang himself when longer and stronger cords were available to him in the cell, especially the electric cord of the CPAP machine that he used at night.

Thus passed August 10, the morning on which Epstein's alleged body was discovered.

On the next day, August 11, the Chief Medical Examiner performed a 4-hour autopsy on the body. He ruled that the death was suicide by hanging with the sheet.

After the autopsy, the body was claimed by an "unidentified associate," who, it was later learned, was Epstein's brother, Mark. On September 5, 2019, the body was buried in a family tomb with Epstein's parents, in Palm Beach, Florida. The tomb is unmarked. All names have been removed, to prevent desecration by vandals and enemies.

During this time period, the public clamor continued. On August 14, "unofficial sources" reported that broken bones, in particular, the hyoid bone, were found in the neck of the body. Such breaks, according to the reports, can occur in the suicides of elderly people but are more common in murders by strangulation.

When the U.S. Attorney General, William Barr, first learned of the death in Epstein's cell, he expressed suspicion, according to news media reports. Afterward, he revised his assessment, calling the situation "a perfect storm of screw-ups."

A clamor of political controversy blew up. Both the FBI and the Inspector General of the Department of Justice began investigations. The guards were charged with multiple counts of falsifying their reports. Other public figures accused the Bureau of Prisons of negligence and called for reform of the Bureau.

It was the usual storm and fury that follows a notorious public event, which creates a whirlwind of confusion and mixed messages in the public mind, and which later results in very little concrete improvement of the conditions under which the event occurred and no clearer insight into what actually occurred.

Speculative theories abounded because of the altogether too convenient failure of the two CCTV cameras which oversaw Epstein's cell. Moreover, Epstein had claimed publicly to have compromising information on "powerful people." As a result, the most obvious of the theories was that Epstein was murdered, either as an act of vengeance for his crimes or as a way of protecting those "powerful people."

The Epstein family retained a forensic pathologist, who attacked the Medical Examiner's conclusion that the cause of the death of the body said to be Epstein's was suicide, saying that a triple break of the hyoid bone never occurs in suicides. The Medical Examiner refused to agree, but defended her written statement. Other experts sided with her.

The defense pathologist then asserted that the neck wound on the body was thinner than the sheet which had been wrapped around the neck. He said that the wound was more likely inflicted by a cord or wire. (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/death-of-jeffrey-epstein/.)

I cannot argue with the claim that murder is the most likely cause of Epstein's alleged death, clearly more probable than suicide, and probably more likely than the other possible cause: feigned suicide and escape. In other words, the other possible explanation is that Epstein and a group of co-conspirators created a fictional story of Epstein's death, in which a body (or perhaps no body) was found in Epstein's cell and taken to the hospital and later autopsied, while in fact, Jeffrey Epstein escaped from the Correctional Center and is alive and well in a location unknown to the public.

To me, the murder explanation is too clear-cut and too boring. It transpires like a TV sit-com. We have bumbling guards, perhaps paid off to allow the murderer(s) into Epstein's cell. The Medical Examiner either takes a bribe to record the least investigation-worthy cause of death or is brought a body which is alleged to be Epstein's for autopsy.

The primary reason I reject the murder theory is that I cannot imagine a healthy 66-year-old man whose net worth is over a billion dollars allowing himself to be killed in a dingy New York City jail. People with that kind of wealth and influence just don't get into those kinds of situations.

So, to me, the feigned suicide—made to look like an execution—is the more interesting path to follow. I say that as long as we're inventing stories, the stories may as well be imaginative. So here we go.

You're Epstein, and you're in trouble again. Just as in Florida eleven years ago, you've gotten yourself arrested for supplying your rich friends with pretty, innocent young girls for their pleasure. It's all for the fun of it.

Now the law has its hands on you. You hate the confinement of jail and the idiocy of the people you encounter there. So you devise an escape plan and transmit it to the necessary people on the outside through your lawyers. Your people are looking for a look-alike double of you among the street people of New York City. When they identify him, they “arrest” him and take him to a safe house, where they clean him up and make him presentably groomed, to impersonate you.

Meanwhile, others of your associates bribe the Medical Examiners and the warden and guards at the Correctional Center. You pay Tartaglione to mess you up superficially in the “first suicide attempt.” You buy his attention and cooperation with a few tens of thousands, but mainly with threats against those whom he loves. – And still others make the transportation arrangements.

When the night of August 9, 2019, arrives, you meet with your lawyers to assure that everything is in place. Then the play begins. Tartaglione is transferred out. The cameras are “fixed” after the guard looks in on you at 10:30 p.m. Everything is quiet. Lights out at the usual time.

Then, the victim is brought in, sedated. He is hung in the cell by the two toughs who had abducted him. You change your clothes and leave with the two henchmen, waving as you pass the two guards who are “asleep” at their desks. You slip into a waiting vehicle and are whisked off to your private jet, awaiting you at a nearby airfield. Your plane heads for your private island in the U.S. Virgin Islands, where you land safely a few hours later.

Back in New York, after he reads your death certificate, a judge, following protocol, dismisses all charges against you, and you are now free to move where you will when you will. But of course, to avoid further trouble, you remain hidden, secretly traveling from one residence to another, as your whim moves you.

It’s as easy as that. What did it cost you? Five or ten million dollars—a small price to pay to disappear behind a cover-up death and live your life as you choose.

That is the kind of service your wealth is there to provide you.

Whatever your opinion of my conspiracy theory here, my little story is an example of the real-life types of corrupt activities that the wealthy engage in to protect themselves from prosecution and

public shame, though perhaps in not so fanciful and “novel-ish” a way as my story here. As we have come to see on the evening news, the wealthy have employees who do their bidding and fix their problems, whatever the nature of those problems.

And all of this power of extrication derives from the loyalty of those employees to their wealthy patrons, regardless whether that loyalty springs from appreciation for the benefits that come to the employees from their patrons or from fear of the consequences to them and theirs of disloyalty.

Our governmental structure operates on the same principles of loyalty. Americans remain faithful to our brand of “democracy” either from appreciation (which we call *patriotism* or *the American way*) or from fear of prosecution and punishment for violating the laws. Likewise, our economy functions on something akin to loyalty, something perhaps closer to religious belief, in that, for example, a US \$50 bill has value only if both the giver of it and the receiver of it believe that it has value. There are parts of the world, of course, where a US \$50 bill is completely meaningless, as among the rarely-encountered indigenous tribes of the Amazon rain forest or of Papua-New Guinea. Those folks do not see such a thing as valuable because they do not see the labor that it represents, as we do. Their disbelief in its value renders it useless to them, and hence to us when we interact with them, for to them it is simply a swatch of linen with green paint on it.

This leads us to a large-scale take-away that arises from our discussion of Donald Trump’s contributions to our understanding of our government and our society. He has clearly taught us three lessons. First, we have learned from him that our social and governmental structures function only when the people who participate in them believe in their value—and by “the people” I do not mean individuals; rather, I mean the collective group in the context of which we live our lives, no matter whether we are gregarious or solitary. Each of us must accept the system (that is, believe in it) for it to function. It does not matter whether this belief is founded in truth and represents the actual reality of our situations and lives, or whether it is built on the lies of our leaders. What is necessary is that we accept the social systems and operate in the context of them, as a people.

Individuals who do not accept and believe in the system are soon removed by the faithful citizens from the social context and sent to prison. However, when a large number of citizens come to doubt the governmental system, its ability to hold the citizenry together as a united nation—a peacefully

interacting population—fails, for, this uniting force is simply the force of the belief in the shared governmental structure which the citizens had previously had.

For example, the Civil War was an expression of the Southern agrarian wealthy class's withdrawal of belief in the unitive power of the federal government, in the same way as the American Revolution was the colonial wealthy class's withdrawal of belief in the benefits of British colonialism to themselves.

The two other examples of the threatening effects of withdrawal of faith in the governmental structure that come to mind are the anti-Vietnam War street rebellions throughout the United States in the 1960s, and the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021, during which even many of the legislators themselves, who had taken their seats in Congress as the result of unchallenged elections, expressed their loss of faith in the electoral system of this nation.

The one surprising historical phenomenon related to this issue of belief in the American governmental structure is the counter-intuitive Americanism of the descendants of the American slaves, partially liberated by the Civil War. In all that this group of people have suffered, both during the slave times and then, as “freed people” during the Jim Crow era of segregation and of intense and open White Supremacist racial bigotry, they have never lost faith in the promise of the American governmental structure and the ideals embedded in it. Rather, using a common psychological technique for enduring and surviving oppression, they as a group turned their pain and skepticism inward, hating themselves and trusting for their survival in their God.

And so, throughout the post-Civil-War era, they despised the n-word epithets which their white antagonists hurled at them, but used those same derogations toward themselves in conversation with their peers. Likewise, when their rage and frustration finally erupted in 1968 in Los Angeles in what are known as the Watts Riots, it was *their own* neighborhoods that they burnt down—an act incomprehensible to most of the White observers of their actions, but completely intelligible from the viewpoint we are now taking. The Watts Riots were self-flagellation of a singularly public sort.

Now, in the continuing era of Civil Rights, Black Americans, the door into the promise of full participation in the benefits of the American social structure having been opened to them by the dogged resistance to their oppression exemplified by their courageous leaders (W.E.B. du Bois, Martin Luther

King Junior, . . . , John Lewis) and by the fearless and brilliant mastery of political craftsmanship of President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s, are taking widespread advantage of the opportunities for real participation in the benefits of the American social structure. This embrace of the American social structure and its institutions by Black America has, of course, drawn a combative reaction from traditional White Supremacist racists and xenophobes, as we are now witnessing in the voter suppression legislation originating in Republican-dominated state legislatures across the nation.

This extension of the promise of belief in the American social structure owes its success to the “great leap forward” of American capitalism, as we discussed above. This is that as an economic system, its adherents—that is, American citizens—are able to buy into it, to accept it not with resignation but with expectation of benefit for themselves. This is a great advance over all previous systems for two reasons. First, the social systems do not use fear as their fundamental driving force. Rather, they use the faithful tenacity and hope which moves the common people to embrace the economic system.

This embrace is important, for it renders rebellion against the wealthy bosses, who have the most to gain from the smooth operation of the economy, rare and containable. Resentment toward the economic system is aberrant within the profit-system. And when it exists, it is usually aimed not at the bosses but at competing with other commoners for their share of the available wealth. That is the economic propulsion that drives White Supremacy and white xenophobia.

This leads us to a second general take-away from this discussion. We have already established that governmental and other social structures exist in productive economies primarily for the benefit of the wealthy class. Government, including American government, is “of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich.” It has been that way since the founding of our nation, as we have seen. And that’s because it has always been that way.

Government has two fundamental functions in societies which allow poverty, such as our own. The first is to organize and maintain a laboring force, for all economic value comes initially from work. You may have a large vein of pure iron buried beneath the soil of your property. But it is worthless to you unless you can get it out of the ground and into the production process. To do that, you need workers—miners. You hire these at the lowest wage you can get away with, with little or no concern for their economic well-being since paying them more leaves you less profit. – At this point, you never consider that all you have done in this process of producing wealth so far is to have owned the land in

which the iron ore happens to be located. You are simply a nominal (and negligible) participant in the process. The miners do all the heavy lifting. So you justify your participation in the process and its profits by saying that you provide the miners with the tools they need to do their jobs, and indeed, that you provide them with those jobs, so they can feed their families. That is, you cover your uselessness in the process of ore extraction by inventing a justifiable place for yourself in the process. Once you hire and pay the miners, you are again useless, though you have reaped most of the profits.

That's called Capitalism.

The second function of government is to act as a barrier separating the profiting class from the workers who earn the profit for them. There is a natural tension between the workers, who recognize that their bosses have no concern for them as human beings, and the bosses, who see the workers simply as means to an end: the production of profit for themselves, with minimal labor on their part.

To perform its role of separating the two groups, government invents myths and heart-warming songs about the glories of living in and “contributing to” these societies. And government provides the services (utilities, health care, and so on) to keep the workers healthy enough to perform their profit-producing jobs. And as the bread-and-circus entertainment for the masses of workers, government provides political parties and all the intrigue and calls for loyalty that these entail. As I say, it's all invention, to keep attention focused on the day-to-day and away from the fleecing which the workers are receiving from the bosses.

How do I know this is so? The reasoning is simple. Since, according to the “Net Worth of the Senators” table appended to this essay, Senator Rick Scott (R, FL) has a net worth of over a quarter billion dollars, the question arises, Where did all those dollars come from? Right: investments. That is to say, like all investors, Rick Scott is a professional gambler. He buys an item of value, let's say, a doughnut shop, which is the result of someone else's labor. He cleans up the shop and causes it to thrive by adding new aspects to it. In Scott's case, he had the idea (or read the idea) to add a business delivery service for his doughnuts, and as a result, the business thrived. He sold it for a large profit—not because he himself made or delivered any doughnuts, but because he had the idea.

That is the apparently true story of Rick Scott's first venture into business. (Source: [https://heavy.com/news/2018/10/rick-scott-net-worth.](https://heavy.com/news/2018/10/rick-scott-net-worth))

From Scott's story, the question arises, Is it just that business people are able to reap huge profits from such ideas, when the profits are actually acquired from the labor of ordinary working people? In our Capitalist society, which permits you (within legal boundaries) to take and use on yourself as much money as other people will give you, the answer is, in Trump's words, "Do whatever you can get away with, without getting caught." This is called *entrepreneurism*. That means, Take as much as the market will give you, even by hook or by crook. In practice, this often means paying employees what you know is an unlivable wage, or demanding off-book work from them or the use of their private vehicles for company business, or allowing them too little time or resources to accomplish what you ask of them, or creating other difficulties and tensions in the workplace. The bosses are dedicated not to the people who perform the work which generates the value, called *profit*, but to the growth of the generated value itself. In Capitalism, profit is first; people are somewhat lower in priority.

When the workers for any company see this, they become dissatisfied and tend to rebel. They turn to striking and to work slowdowns. They cluster into labor unions. Sometimes they take more drastic measures. Such actions create an air of instability within the company, and it may quickly spread to other similar businesses. Instability is the poison of profit. As a result, as we saw above, in extreme cases, the bosses are willing to kill people outright, rather than to submit to threats against what brings them profit.

This is the slimy underbelly of capitalism. In a word, it is called *greed*. The unquenchable love of success and of the acquisition of profit, as Paul of Tarsus wrote 2000 years ago, is the root of heartlessness. ("The love of money is the root of evil." 1Tim 6:10.) The bosses take their unfair share from the people's labors, and the people, when they realize this, follow suit and seek to cut into the bosses' share of the wealth. This is the purpose of labor unions, which thrived until the 1980's, when they had become filled with the same greed and unjust expectations ("give me more, give me more...") that the bosses displayed, and Republican president Ronald Reagan effectively castrated the unions.

Since then the laboring people, and particularly, the economically depressed populations, have in general lived at the mercy of the bosses. This is currently most evident in the inability of working people to find adequate housing. During the first wave of the COVID pandemic, while even with government assistance lower-wage workers were losing their homes and apartments by the millions, the

earnings of the top executives of the corporations which such workers had been working for were increasing by millions of dollars.

In addition, the available housing stock in many of the larger cities in the United States is being bought up by investment tycoons, who have one of two purposes in mind. First, whole neighborhoods are bought up for the purpose of “gentrification,” which in effect means kicking the poor people out of their impoverished homes, leaving them nowhere to live, and then converting those homes or the land they stand on into upper middle class housing, which is offered to the affluent at prices well beyond the ability of the original occupants to afford. Or second, the homes are kept in their impoverished state and rented as slum dwellings to the poor residents who live in them by the tycoons, acting as slum-lords. They mercilessly evict tenants for the slightest violations and with no consideration for the effects of the current economic downturn on the tenants.

And as they continue to buy up old housing stock, the value of these properties to the resident population as a whole increases. And so, the rents increase, and the residents increasingly find themselves homeless. This puts pressure on those state and federal governments which are trying to relieve the economic burdens of the poor to provide rent-assistance programs. In essence, then, the Wall Street robber barons who buy up these properties as slum-lords have created a welfare scam of huge proportions, with their profits coming directly from the immense breast of Mother Federal Government.

And meanwhile, on the evening news every night, the front-men for these conniving thieves, that is, the Republican politicians, like Mitch McConnell, attack the Democratic politicians, who are fronting for a different set of profiteers, for spending too many of the citizenry’s tax dollars to give money to “indigent welfare cheats,” whom they know are not the poor folks in colorless grey clothing who are sleeping beneath overpasses in the dead of winter but are in fact the wealthy, merciless bastards who are submitting the destitute and voiceless populations, including homeless veterans, to these cruel indignities. May the bastards be damned.

This is the capitalist America which Trump’s “Toto Truths” has manifested to us and which so many of us are so proud to believe in, because we—I as well as you—, like the bosses, have bought into it because it is the source of our own affluence. Or perhaps I prefer to say that I have accommodated myself to it—I live in its context even while I object to it. And I, and so many others, do so because there is no realistic alternative in a nation whose population has invested themselves so thoroughly and

so robotically in their own well-being, without giving attention to any productive extent to the well-being of the people on the fringes of our way of life.

There is an alternative, of course. But it is a daydream. The daydream is this. All that is required to right the cruelties of capitalism is a change of heart among the American population. The change of heart that is required is the change in the first and fundamental principle of our social institutions: a change from the motto of “Me first” to the old soup-kitchen motto of “No one gets a second helping until everyone who shows up gets their first helping.”

In this motto is the principle of the Common Good, which we have to interpret carefully because it can be subject to much abuse. Essential to the principle of the Common Good is respect for the human dignity of each person. Human beings are free beings but also socially dependent beings. Each person is born not only with “certain inalienable rights” but also with a spectrum of needs and desires, which, each in its own way, must be fulfilled. Though a democratic society should strive to fulfill those needs and desires of each person which that person depends of society to fulfill, the fulfillment of any individual person’s dependent needs and desires has to be balanced against the needs of all others in the society.

The result of this principle is that no one has a right to fulfillment of an *inessential* desire if fulfillment of that desire leaves another person deprived of fulfillment of an *essential* need. The issue here is not one of depriving someone of their opportunity for “self-fulfillment,” for I am one who hopes (for what that’s worth) that everyone might find self-fulfillment, even the egotists such as Trump, as long as his (inessential) self-fulfillment (for example, his desire to be supreme autocrat of the United States) does not interfere with the fulfillment of the essential needs of other people.

Who decides what are essential needs and what are inessential desires? The people do, *after* their hearts have changed to recognize genuinely the human dignity of every person and to respect it.

Until that change of heart occurs universally among our people, liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, all the whole bunch of us can waste our time squabbling over who has power over whom. It doesn’t matter. For, as long as claims to power and wealth are important to us, the bosses will continue to rule our lives and we will continue to live in the culture of disrespect which Donald Trump has made clear to us that we currently live in.

We have Donald to thank for showing us the latrine that we now live in. Whether we have the desire and the energy to climb ourselves out of it and wash ourselves off and live in dignified respect for each other and for ourselves depends not on him but on us. If we do not have the desire and the energy, we are demonstrating to ourselves that, despite all the negatives, we like it in here.

[The Appendix containing Table 2 begins on the next page.]

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Table 2.

July 9, 2021

CURRENT UNITED STATES SENATORS BY WEALTH

SENATOR		AFFIL	STATE	NET WORTH	YEAR	Source	YEARS IN
<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>						<u>SENATE</u>
Scott	Rick	R	FL	259 MIL	2019	OS	2
Warner	Mark	D	VA	214.1 MIL	2018,19	Ww, OS	12
Warner-2		D	VA	90.2 MIL	2019,18	USA, RC	12
Romney	Mitt	R	UT	174.5 MIL	2019	OS	2
Braun	Mike	R	IN	136.8 MIL	2019	OS	3
Blumenthal	Richard	D	CT	70 MIL	2019	USA	10
Feinstein	Diane	D	CA	58.5 MIL	2018	Ww,USA,RC	29
Feinstein-2		D	CA	87.9 MIL	2019	OS	29
Hoeven	John	R	ND	46.7 MIL	2018	Ww	10
Hoeven-2		R	ND	83.4 MIL	2019	OS	10
Hoeven-3		R	ND	17.9 MIL	2019	USA	10
Risch	Jim	R	ID	41.8 MIL	2018,19	Ww,OS	12
Risch-2		R	ID	15.6 MIL	2019,18	USA,RC	12
Johnson	Ron	R	WI	39.2 MIL	2018	Ww	10
Johnson-2		R	WI	78.5 MIL	2019	OS	10
Johnson-3		R	WI	10.4 MIL	2018	RC	10
Daines	Steve	R	MT	32.9 MIL	2018	Ww	6
Daines-2		R	MT	34.9 MIL	2019	OS	6
Daines-3		R	MT	8.9 MIL	2019	USA	6
Blunt	Roy	R	MO	21.0 MIL	2019	RC	10
Shelby	Richard	R	AL	19.1 MIL	2018	Ww	34
Shelby-2		R	AL	3.2 MIL	2018,19	RC, USA	34
Bennet	Michael	D	CO	15.7 MIL	2018	Ww	12
Bennet-2		D	CO	6.6 MIL	2019	USA	12
Tillis	Thom	R	NC	11.0 MIL	2018	Ww	6
Tillis-2		R	NC	3.5 MIL	2018,19	RC,USA	6

Portman	Rob	R	OH	10.8 MIL	2018	Ww	11
Portman-2		R	OH	8.6 MIL	2018,19	RC,USA	11
Kennedy	John	R	LA	6.4 MIL	2018,19	RC,USA	5
Rosen	Jackie	D	NV	5.2 MIL	2019	USA	2
Coons	Chris	D	DE	4.8 MIL	2018	USA	11
Warren	Elizabeth	D	MA	4.7 MIL	2018,19	RC, USA	8
Inhofe	Jim	R	OK	4.5 MIL	2018,19	RC, USA	27
Wyden	Ron	D	OR	4.2 MIL	2019	USA	5
Wyden-2		D	OR	4.7 MIL	2018	RC	5
Rounds	Mike	R	SD	3.7 MIL	2018,19	RC, USA	6
Manchin	Joe	D	WV	3.3 MIL	2018,19	RC, USA	11
Whitehouse	Sheldon	D	RI	3.1 MIL	2018,19	RC, USA	14
McConnell	Mitch	R	KY	2.9 MIL	2005	Ww	36
McConnell-2		R	KY	26.9 MIL	2015	Ww	36
McConnell-3		R	KY	10.4 MIL	2018	USA, RC	36
McConnell-4		R	KY	34.1 MIL	2018,19	Ww,OS	36
King	Angus	IND	ME	2.8 MIL	2018,19	RC, USA	7
Carper	Tom	D	DE	2.7 MIL	2018	RC	< 1
Barrasso	John	R	WY	2.7 MIL	2018	RC	14
Shaheen	Jeanne	D	NH	2.5 MIL	2018	RC	12
Merkley	Jeff	D	OR	2.0 MIL	2018	RC	12
Grassley	Chuck	R	IA	1.9 MIL	2018	RC	40
Collins	Susan	R	ME	1.7 MIL	2018	RC	24
Peters	Gary	D	MI	1.7 MIL	2018	RC	6
Burr	Richard	R	NC	1.7 MIL	2018	RC	16
Hassan	Maggie	D	NH	1.7 MIL	2018	RC	4
Cardin	Ben	D	MD	1.5 MIL	2018	RC	7
Sullivan	Dan	R	AK	1.4 MIL	2018	RC	6
Hirono	Mazie	D	HI	1.4 MIL	2018	RC	8
Tester	Jon	D	MT	1.3 MIL	2018	RC	14
Durban	Dick	D	IL	1.2 MIL	2018	RC	24
Fischer	Deb	R	NE	1.1 MIL	2018	RC	8

Toomey	Pat	R	PA	1.1 MIL	2018	RC	11
Cortez Masto	Catherine	D	NV	1.0 MIL	2018	RC	4
Murkowski	Lisa	R	AK	900 K	2018	RC	19
Moran	Jerry	R	KS	900 K	2018	RC	11
Markey	Ed	D	MA	900 K	2018	RC	8
Booker	Cory	D	NJ	807.5 K	2020	INQ	8
Booker-2		D	NJ	700 K	2018	RC	8
Klobuchar	Amy	D	MN	800 K	2018	RC	14
Warnock	Raphael	D	GA	800 K	2021	his website	<1
Cantwell	Maria	D	WA	800 K	2018	RC	20
Murphy	Chris	D	CT	700 K	2018	RC	8
Sasse	Ben	R	NE	700 K	2018	RC	6
Kaine	Tim	D	VA	700 K	2018	RC	8
Murray	Patty	D	WA	700 K	2018	RC	28
Boozman	John	R	AR	600 K	2018	RC	10
Scott	Tim	R	SC	600 K	2018	RC	8
Paul	Rand	R	KY	500 K	2018	RC	10
Schumer	Chuck	D	NY	500 K	2018	RC	22
Crapo	Mike	R	ID	400 K	2018	RC	22
Moore Capito	Shelley	R	WV	400 K	2018	RC	6
Menendez	Bob	D	NJ	300 K	2018	RC	15
Leahy	Patrick	D	VT	300 K	2018	RC	46
Cotton	Tom	R	AR	200 K	2018	RC	6
Cassidy	Bill	R	LA	200 K	2018	RC	6
Brown	Sherrod	D	OH	200 K	2018	RC	14
Cruz	Ted	R	TX	200 K	2018	RC	8
Baldwin	Tammy	D	WI	200 K	2018	RC	8
Duckworth	Tammy	D	IL	100 K	2018	RC	5
Wicker	Roger	R	MS	100 K	2018	RC	14
Casey	Bob	D	PA	100 K	2018	RC	14
Graham	Lindsey	R	SC	100 K	2018	RC	18
Thune	John	R	SD	100K	2018	RC	8
Lee	Mike	R	UT	100 K	2018	RC	10
Gillibrand	Kirsten	D	NY	300 K	2018	RC	12
Lankford	James	R	OK	- 0.0	2018	RC	6

Cornyn	John	R	TX	0.00	2018	RC	19
Sanders	Bernie	IND	VT	- 0.0	2018	RC	14
Van Hollen	Chris	D	MD	- 100 K	2018	RC	5
Heinrich	Martin	D	NM	- 200 K	2018	RC	8
Reed	Jackie	D	RI	- 200 K	2018	RC	24
Ernst	Joni	R	IA	-300 K	2018	RC	6
Rubio	Marco	R	FL	-400 K	2018	RC	10
Schatz	Brian	D	HI	-500 K	2018	RC	9
Stabenow	Debbie	D	MI	- 600 K	2018	RC	20
Young	Todd	R	IN	-800 K	2018	RC	5
Smith	Tim	D	MN	unk			4
Hyde-Smith	Cindy	R	MS	unk			4
Sinema	Kyrsten	D	AZ	unk			3
Hawley	Josh	R	MO	unk			2
Blackburn	Marsha	R	TN	unk			2
Tuberville	Tommy	R	AL	unk			< 1
Kelley	Mark	D	AZ	unk			< 1
Padilla	Alex	D	CA	unk			< 1
Hickenlooper	John	D	CO	unk			< 1
Ossoff	Jon	D	GA	unk			< 1
Marshall	Roger	R	KS	unk			< 1
Cramer	Kevin	R	ND	unk			< 1
Luján	Ben Ray	D	NM	unk			< 1
Hagerty	Bill	R	TN	unk			< 1
Lummis	Cynthia	R	WY	unk			< 1

SOURCES

Source of columns A, B, D, E, L : [en.wikipedia.org/wiki.list-of-current-United-States-senators/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list-of-current-United-States-senators/)

Go to the individual source websites for explanation of how the cited amounts were arrived at.

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