When it comes to climate, timing is everything...

Three Years to Safeguard Our Climate

by Marilyn McNabb
Citizens Climate Lobby activist & former Lincoln Electric System Board Member

The “Three Years to Safeguard Our Climate” report came out in June to address the July G20 Summit. Its lead signer was Christiana Figueres, the UN’s climate change chief during the achievement of the Paris Agreement. The good news, it said, was that the temperature goals of the Paris agreement were still possible if global emissions begin to fall by 2020. But if emissions rise or remain level, then probably not. As Skeptical Science put it, the point of the report is that “the window of opportunity for meaningful action is fast closing and we have about three years left.” A second report titled “Well Under 2 Degrees Celsius” came out in September with exactly the same conclusion.

Some climate activists were reluctant to accept the “Three Years” report, fearing its requirements were so ambitious as to discourage people. The report set goals for renewable energy, energy efficiency, transportation, land use, finance, and energy use in heavy industry.

Then in July, a huge furor was raised among climate activists and scientists about an article in New York Magazine by journalist David Wallace-Wells [http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans-annotated.html]. You can get the gist of it from its title, “The Uninhabitable Earth,” and its subtitles: “Doomsday, Heat Death, The End of Food, Climate Plagues, Unbreathable Air, Perpetual War, Permanent Economic Collapse, Poisoned Oceans.” Wallace-Wells says his article “is a portrait of our best understanding of where the planet is heading absent aggressive action.” It’s a collection of worst-case scenarios.

No question, the article got a lot of people thinking. Google the title of the article to see the range of opinions. Wikipedia put up a balanced summary, noting correctly that “The major criticism is that David Wallace-Wells was trying to scare people. This theme was then explored by journalists and commentators with some saying they thought fear was necessary given the reality of the problem, while others thought scaring people was counter-productive.”

Meteorologist and journalist with Grist Erich Holthaus wrote, “My twitter feed has been filled with people who, after reading DWWs piece, have felt deep anxiety... People are losing sleep, reevaluating their lives.”

Climate scientist Michael Mann, who Nebraskans for Peace brought to Omaha last May for the Berkshire Hathaway Shareholder Meeting, was perhaps the most authoritative and forceful of those critical of scaring people because, he reasoned, it could lead to inaction. If the problem sounds unsolvable, he said, people will give up. “Fear does not motivate.” At the same time he stressed there is conclusion on page 2
3 Years, conclusion

“a great urgency” in addressing climate change. In his interview with Wallace-Wells for the article, Mann discussed many risks, including the danger of elevated CO2 causing a “very sharp decrease in productivity” in rice, sorghum, maize—all the major crops—“with even a couple of degrees of warming.”

In response to Holthaus and Mann, climate activist and clinical psychologist Margaret Kline Salamon wrote that it is the job of those trying to protect humanity and restore a safe climate “to tell the truth about the climate crisis and help people process and channel their own feelings—not to preemptively try to manage and constrain those feelings.” The feelings, she wrote, are fear, grief, anger, guilt and helplessness. Experiencing them and calling our situation what it is—an emergency—leads to action.

Climate journalist David Roberts observed: “The ranks of the under-alarmed outnumber the over-alarmed by many multiples.”

What do communications experts say? Science News reporter Erika Englehaup [https://www.sciencenews.org/blog/science-public/new-york-magazine-climate-change] quotes Dan Kahan, a Yale law and psychology professor who studies public perceptions of risk. In Kahan’s view, “The scientists should just tell us what they know: flat CO2 emissions for three years were followed in 2017 by an increase of about 2 percent. The Associated Press reported that the greatest increases were from China with 3.5 percent and India at 2.0 percent. However, “Carbon Tracker” (one of the authors of the “Three Years” report), noted that China and India actually led other nations in making progress by reducing their growth rates significantly.

Another set of observations comes from a guy I regard as one of the wisest people alive, Robert Jay Lifton, in his new book, The Climate Swerve: Reflections on Mind, Hope and Survival. Lifton imagines the climate swerve as “a matter of individual and collective awareness.” Like Gandhi, it is committed to the principle of truth telling and “life-enhancing activism.” The climate swerve “is partly a response to the fear of death individual and collective, associated with advanced global warming. Until recently this fear has been suppressed and denied... I believe that the death anxiety of climate change has moved more toward the surface as the swerve has taken hold... That death anxiety, no longer denied... I believe that the death anxiety of climate change has moved more toward the surface as the swerve has taken hold... That death anxiety, no longer avoided, becomes a stimulus for a continuous dynamic of awareness and potential action. In that way the swerve creates a state of mind appropriate to the threat.”

Lifton asks us to take on a sense of being prospective survivors who act to preserve our habitat and to assert “our larger human connectedness, our bond with our species.”
The remarks below are excerpted from Ponca Nation of Oklahoma Elder Casey Camp-Horinek’s keynote address at the October 7, 2017 Annual Peace Conference in Lincoln. Omaha Tribe member and NFP State Board member Renee Sans Souci provided the transcription as well as the following definition for Natural Law.

Natural Law, for Native people, is about following the spiritual laws set forth by the Creator, Mother Earth, the Plant Beings, the Animal Beings, and the Elements. We, the human beings, are only a small part of these sacred agreements that were put into place long before we arrived and we share in the responsibility for following these laws and taking care of Mother Earth.

— Renee Sans Souci, Umohoho

It’s always interesting to come to a place that is my homeland and to be greeted here as if I’m the guest. Ni Bthaska…Ni Bthaska…Nebraska for Peace. Ni is water. Bthaska is flat. But I couldn’t find the word for peace in my language. I wanted to say that word in your language, in the English language. And when I started discussing that in depth, we came up with many words but the bottom line of the word peace in our language means when the Earth, herself, is well.

We’re here today in Ni Bthaska discussing how we can bring that beauty back. That peace. How do we make the world well, again?

In 1858, the Ponca Nation made a peace treaty with the U.S. Government. We ceded hundreds of millions of acres, in order to stay in our small homeland. We called the federal government to task to uphold that treaty because it is the supreme law of the land when you make a treaty with the people. We have still not had reparation from this broken treaty as other foreign nations had. But we were asking them if we had ever abrogated that treaty?… The Ponca, the Yankton, and the Pawnee?… So how can you abrogate it by allowing Ni Bthaska to become victim to a TransCanada multinational oil company that is bringing bitumen through the sacred waters?

Sacred water, this water that gives us life, this water that sustains us, this water that blesses us, this water that allows life to continue all across the earth, is an entity to itself. She has her own life, her own ways, her own things that she brings to you. And this water is what we have to come together for to give peace back to the water. So I’m asking this water to bear witness to this day, to the fact that we’re here together, sharing our spirits, entwining our thoughts and joining our arms, and linking as peaceful warriors, on behalf of our Mother Earth, on behalf of all the silent ones who have no choices… The Silent Ones we call with four legs, those with wings, those creepy crawlers that live within the earth, those that give breath, those are the ones with roots that are green and grow, and share with us, breath for breath, those in the waters with fins, the water itself, the sacred breath of the Creator that travels on the winds, the Thunder Nation that came last night that carries everything within it. The power of Silent Nations are what gives human beings the very robe that we wear over our spirit. How connected are we through these robes called bodies that we wear over those individual spirits to all living things. We are all related.

Being dispossessed by a federal government who didn’t look at my family… My grandpa was 8 years old—my mother’s father—when he was forced to leave his home and walk 650 miles. One in three of us died on that Trail of Tears, one in three of us died once we got down there.

Nebraskans for Peace are here, and our people are in a place of killing fields of pollution… where again we’re in a place of genocide. This time it’s environmental genocide. And yet, we join forces with you to protect this portion of Mother Earth to not allow KXL to come through… To generate peace in your home, so your 8-year-old is not going to have to deal with this. Your 8-year-old’s descendants are not going to have the same stories as my people have.

And now we as Indigenous people are moving into a place of awakening within all of humanity from the atrocities that we have been afflicted to a place of understanding why it is necessary for us to come together as one.

On Monday I fly down to Brazil for a global indigenous gathering to follow up on the Paris Agreement that, for the very first time, we have the rights of indig-
enous people included in the preamble. It’s never been there before.

In 2007, on September 13th, the United Nations passed the “Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People” because we’ve had to go to the World Courts in order to have these rights uplifted because the Federal Government and the State Governments have failed in their trust responsibilities and in the treaties that they’ve made.

We are not doing this because it’s a comfortable thing that we do. We are doing this because your great great great great great great grandchildren and mine will live together, if we’re lucky, in this beautiful place called Mother Earth and they will have water to drink, and they will have air to breathe, and the rooted nation will be healthy and strong, and the four legs, and the fins, and the wings.

When I come to Ni Bthaska, it’s coming home. In a deep and cellular memory of being here, in these Sandhills, of the chalk bluffs of Ni Shude, the Missouri River, of the swift running waters of Niobrara, of the beautiful cranes flying overhead, and the swans, teaching us their dances. Of the coyote and the wolf telling us how to keep the rhythm as we moved. Of the war dances that were created not from war but from peaceful understanding of the natural cycle of life and how we had to interact with all things in order to live.

How are we going to live within the Natural Laws that have allowed human-kind to exist?

In our original ways, there were songs that greeted the day and that talked to the water and the animals, and the wings, and the earth, and the breath of the four winds, to just say look a new day has started, we’re here in this together.

How do we create that in ourselves in this modern day?

How do we coalesce our various movements that are us speaking for those without voice? That are us, seeking that indefinable thing called peace? That we knew, as the Ancestors knew, as wellness of the earth, herself.

Each and every one of us began to understand as my Ancestors did that they were responsible to see that seven generations in the future all things are in place for that generation to simply exist.

Since 2009 in Oklahoma, we’ve had over 2,553-plus earthquakes that are manmade. Manmade earthquakes. We have 10,000 injection wells. Each and every fracked well can use between 3 million and 8 million gallons of water. I can tell you a lot about Oklahoma… Where there are 39 federally recognized tribes, only 3 are indigenous and the rest are there from forced removals… But where we are continuing to exist, where we are continuing to survive, where we are continuing to reach back to our original teachings in order to bring ourselves into today and a future for our kids.

So what I can say for us as humans connected to one another? We begin with politics. We have to begin paying attention to who’s running for office. We have to put people in office who are responsible to our generations to come.

The other thing we need to do is to talk to our energy people and say we are ready for a ‘just transition.’ A just transition means, we have a beautiful Father Sun who can provide solar energy to all of the homes and all the places here. I saw that there are three solar installations going on in the place where KXL is trying to come through.

We’re trying everything, we’re utilizing our treaties. We’re asking for the just transition to take place in energy companies. What that means precisely is that they have invested so much money that they now feel they have to do it even though it’s not going to be economically, environmentally viable. We have to think in terms of how do we keep this natural biosphere going?

There was a time when I was young when the prophecies told us from almost every indigenous nation that I came across that there would come a time soon, when the seventh generation after the second coming of the white man, that the indigenous nations would have to rise and lead the way to live in harmony again.

Many of us feel as if we are living that prophecy.
2017 PEACEMAKERS OF THE YEAR

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

John K. Hansen

Nebraskans for Peace, from its beginnings, has been concerned about three things: about peace between nations, about justice among races and genders, and about securing economic justice for all people. The theme of justice between nations has included concerns about changes in the climate, the restraint of nuclear armaments, and the strengthening of the United Nations, but it has also included a concern about our treatment of Native American internal nations with whom we have brotherhood and sisterhood—among these the Ogallala Lakota at Pine Ridge.

Patty Pansing Brooks has consistently advocated for Native Americans in Nebraska. She with Sen. Tom Brewer—a Lakota senator from Gordon—sponsored the legislature’s interim study which created the “Whiteclay Public Health Emergency Task Force” that brought the Whiteclay issue from the reservation and the halls of Nebraskans for Peace to the halls of the State Legislature. The study and publicity surrounding it eventually contributed to the Whiteclay decision. Across the last two years she has spoken out eloquently about the need for change in Whiteclay, and she has visited there to see the situation firsthand. She now is advocating for follow-up to try to remedy the devastation that Whiteclay has created.

Sen. Pansing Brooks also sponsored legislation to replace “Columbus Day” with “Standing Bear and Indigenous Leaders Day” so that recognition of our first people can replace the celebration of the slave-making Columbus.

Pansing Brooks has been a leader in endeavoring to obtain the reform of our corrections institutions in Nebraska, especially the issues of mandatory sentencing, overcrowding and understaffing in Nebraska state correctional facilities—issues of racial and gender justice as well as of justice in general. No senator has worked harder to secure implementation of the recommendations of the “Legislative Council of the States” on prison and corrections reform. No one has worked harder for improved appropriations for the correctional system and for better relations between the correctional system and the families of prisoners. She has chaired the “Department of Correctional Services Special Investigative Committee” that has been the legislative arm of efforts at reform.

She has also sponsored a number of pieces of legislation having to do with the protection of women’s rights, including rights having to do with the prevention of domestic abuse and trafficking. Sen. Pansing Brooks has tried to defend and advocate for the rights of LGBT people in the legislature, and she has sponsored legislation designed to protect LGBT people against improper medical attacks. For her concern for justice and peace between our state and the Native American internal sovereignties within and adjacent to Nebraska; for her concern for the rights of prisoners and their families and for correctional reform in Nebraska; for her concern for fairness in the treatment of women and LGBT people, Nebraskans for Peace awards its Peacemaker of the Year Award to Senator Patty Pansing Brooks.

— Presented by Beatty Brasch

John K. Hansen who has served as President of Nebraska Farmers Union since 1989—longer than anyone else has served in the history of the organization. This in itself speaks for John’s tenacity and endurance and speaks to the respect that the membership of Farmers Union has for him as they have voted 14 times to trust his leadership.

I joined Nebraska Farmers Union in 1993 and what many others and I find remarkable about John is his memory of historical events in public policy debate along with the facts and numbers to back up his memory of the outcomes of these events. John also has the ability to build coalitions with groups and organizations that often are at odds on some issues, as he will discover where there is agreement to work on concerns of common interest.

John Hansen has been a strong voice calling attention to and advocating for public policy to address climate change, renewable energy, healthcare reform, adequate and equitable funding for public education and tax and trade policy that are equitable to all stakeholders. John is passionate about the agrarian model of family farm agriculture. He has been a strong advocate for cooperatives and for giving voice to those whom public policy has shortchanged.

It is with deep gratitude and honor we present the 2017 Peacemaker Award to John K. Hansen for his efforts and vision for a more sustainable planet.

— Presented by Ron Todd-Meyer
In 2009, four friends decided to do more where they lived, worked and raised families in North Omaha. With opportunities to leverage resources and connect to initiatives, they declared that whether learning to grow, prepare and preserve food, or develop skills systems to improve self-sufficiency, regional food security and economic resilience of urban and rural communities through advocacy, action, collaboration and adherence to our core values: education, stewardship and sustainability.

The first problem to tackle was the lack of access to fresh, local and affordable food to underserved communities. Out of this need, NMEP’s first program was born. The “Community Market Basket” program (CMB), introduced in 2011, connected NMEP with “Tomato Tomato”—an existing local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program—and through that partnership, was able to source fresh local produce, eggs, milk and cheese for those in the community who had limited access. Although the CMB Program created opportunities to access the food, affordability was a hurdle for some. Generous donors matched participant payments for “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program” (SNAP) recipients.

Fast forward to 2015. NMEP was awarded a three-year “Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive” (FINI) grant valued at over $40,000 to assist SNAP recipients in affording healthy, local food. A dollar for dollar match increased the quality and quantity of fresh produce in the community while supporting local farmers economically. In the fall of 2017, No More Empty Pots joined forces with “Omaha Farmers Market-Aksarben,” offering SNAP recipients an additional opportunity to get their incentive dollars matched for fresh produce.

The success of the Community Market Basket Program was just the beginning. NMEP has since added six more program areas collaborating to positively impact community.

Collaborative Community-Centered Food Hub

After three years of meeting with stakeholders, collaborating, mapping gaps and researching models that included urban agriculture and commercial kitchens, the ‘food hub’ concept was born. Based on a system of interdependent activities, the Food Hub is rooted in proven models that deliver positive outcomes in job training, workforce readiness, food waste reduction, healthy food access, income generation and business development. NMEP’s Food Hub includes a Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen, Culinary Workforce Training & Production Kitchen, Refrigerated/Dry Storage Space, Kid’s Kitchen, Business Incubator, Community Cafe and Rooftop Garden. Visit www.nmepomaha.org/foodhub to learn more.

Currently, the Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen and Production/Training Kitchen are fully operational and already making an impact in the community. The Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen is an opportunity for food entrepreneurs to use a fully-loaded professional commercial kitchen to scale their business while having access to entrepreneurship development and professionally trained chefs, with food and beverage value-added products ranging from sweet potato pies to Salvadorian quesadillas. The Production/Training Kitchen is home to the “Culinary Workforce Training Program” (CWTP). In this kitchen, participants like Dari engage in 15 weeks of workforce train-
ing that includes hands-on culinary skills where they begin to learn basic knife skills and progress to complete dining service to-order. Learning these skills will help them become more self-sufficient.

**Culinary Workforce Training Program**

The No More Empty Pots Culinary Workforce Training Program prepares participants to enter the workplace as well-rounded employees. Participants will learn job skills while supporting the local economy and combating food waste. Modeled after the successful programs of Washington, D.C.’s “DC Central Kitchen” and Los Angeles, California’s “L.A. Kitchen,” our 15-week program equips participants with skills to prepare for a career in the food and beverage industry through culinary skills training, career development and internship, and job search/placement assistance.

**Entrepreneurship Program**

The Entrepreneurship program activates and engages emerging food entrepreneurs by assessing their current needs then guiding them through a process moving from an idea to startup to successful business. No More Empty Pots provides support and account-ability with resources and technical assistance for continuous improvement. The program aspires to grow local food system advocates and promotes community investment in local businesses.

**Project Localize in Omaha**

“Project Localize” in Omaha, an education program featuring “The Lexicon of Sustainability,” helps classrooms identify and promote sustainable economic, cultural and social progress in their communities through local food. Piloted in Omaha Public Schools (OPS) and Omaha Street School, this project-based learning program allows students to explore and engage in the local food system while incorporating technology and art.

**No More Empty Cups**

“No More Empty Cups” is a not-for-profit coffee shop dedicated to connecting community through good food, great drinks and amazing people. We build community by connecting local artisans to the marketplace and eager customers. Our mentorship program connects entrepreneurs with resources to develop and test a viable business plan. The goal is to increase the number of small businesses that flourish. We serve locally roasted coffee, scratch-made local pastries and sandwiches, handmade chocolates and local hot sauce.

**Community & School Gardens**

Working collaboratively, No More Empty Pots supports community and school garden spaces to ensure access to fresh fruits and vegetables. These spaces provide fresh produce and training for youth, adults and senior neighbors in our community.

**Hands-on Nutrition Education**

No More Empty Pots hosts hands-on nutrition education and cooking demonstrations, incorporating “STEAM” (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) activities for students and families. Participants learn to use local and seasonal foods to make affordable healthy snacks and meals, incorporating elements of art.

No More Empty Pots expects to complete construction on Phase 2 of the Food Hub by the summer of 2018, implementing programs in all areas of the Food Hub. Our work is impossible without trusting participants, generous donors, engaged staff, passionate volunteers, and amazing community support. Together we create futures fueled by local food.
After Hurricane Maria wracked Puerto Rico during September of 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump employed mental gymnastics that were common in the nineteenth century for European colonists all over the world. Yes, he “loved” the people of the island, even if he seem to look at them as undeserving moochers. The shifting tone and content of Trump’s rhetoric defied analysis, consistency or reason. One could hear the refrain of “Gunga Din” (the white man’s burden), after the island, with its 3.4 million United States citizens, was raked by Category 5 Hurricane Maria, which left its people entirely without electric power and nearly without drinking water for an extended period of time.

One thing seemed evident: Trump talked to non-voting, Latino residents of Puerto Rico much differently than residents of Houston, Texas and southern Florida which also had suffered extensive damage from hurricanes. U.S. electorate who supported him avidly even as more than half the electorate detested him. Trump always was running for office (he was holding rallies openly branded as campaigning for 2020 by mid-2017. No one else could build a brand like the self-aggrandizing Trump.

“Americans have gotten into the uneasy habit of wondering how low President Trump might go each day in his multiple tirades against those he imagines as enemies, critics and easy targets,” the New York Times editorialized October 12, 2017, three weeks after Maria struck Puerto Rico. “But did he really have to pick on the storm-ravaged American citizens of Puerto Rico, of all defenseless people, and reveal such a cold-hearted lack of empathy for their plight?”

Trump had suggested the day before that Puerto Ricans were ingrates responsible for much of their suffering because of a debt crisis and ragged power and water infrastructure, even as he said that federal aid would not be available “forever.” The next day, he reversed his position, saying that disaster relief workers would remain on the island as long as they were needed, which could be several years.

Chris Riotta of Newsweek compared Trump’s reactions to storm damage and...
To Kneel or Not to Kneel…
That Is the Paradox

by A’Jamal-Rashad Byndon

The National Football League (NFL) is at a major crossroads in terms of how it addresses the Colin Kaepernick dilemma. For those who have not been following this controversial and polarizing situation, it all started last year when Kaepernick—the former San Francisco quarterback—decided to sit, and subsequently kneel, during the playing of The Star-Spangled Banner. Many fans, military supporters and law-enforcement officials felt it was disrespectful to those who served or gave their lives to defend this country for an athlete to insert politics into sports. These folks appear to suffer from a social and historical amnesia. Almost 50 years ago, Gold Medal runner John Carlos gave the Black Power fist salute during the national anthem at the summer Olympics in Mexico City in 1968. Muhammad Ali, who refused to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, is another example of athletes protesting social conditions and unjust wars.

But when Kaepernick, who led his team to the 2013 Super Bowl, became a free agent, even NFL teams like Houston, that had lost its star quarterback Deshaun Watson to a season-ending injury, refused to pick him up. The man had become a pariah, merely for attempting to bring attention to the many African Americans who have lost their lives in questionable circumstances to police officers and racist predation agents of the system. (And, no, the police, military and other government agents are not protecting any African Americans’ rights or freedom unless they afford us the same rights that they themselves enjoy in this system.)

This society has a 450-year-old debt that it has never paid to African Americans for slavery and Jim Crow behaviors. Nor should we forget the treatment of other Americans—from Native Americans to Asians and Latinos who have suffered brutal historical injustices. This country does not have the social capital to engage in an honest dialogue about racism unless it first acknowledges its oppressive and brainwashing history. There are many examples where African American GIs served this country, only to return home to the South and experience lynching at the hands of God-fearing whites. A flag never saved any of the thousands of Blacks from lynching in the United States.

The reaction to Kaepernick and other athletes who have protested (including some Nebraska Cornhusker players) has revealed just how sick with racism this country still is. From reading the comments made in countless sport articles and web pages that report on these protests, the hatred from fans ranges from profanity-laced tirades urging the firing of the protesting players to outright calls for Kaepernick’s lynching. To express their anger, some whites have stopped watching football games altogether, calling even for the boycott of the sponsors of the NFL. This is the same behavior that African Americans have experienced historically when they attempted to vote and participated in Civil Rights demonstrations from the 1940s through the 1970s.

But it’s not just the foul-mouthed racist fan who’s the problem. One business owner said he refused to hire an African American because his golf buddy told him something about that potential employee being likely to ‘assert his rights.’ Many people of color
are judged based upon how well they acquiesce to injustices or on hearsay comments without being given equal opportunities to prove themselves. This reminds me of a former supervisor who once told me that he should be able to hire individuals based upon who he can play golf with. How many women and people of color routinely play golf, or are allowed into the back rooms of those old-boy networks? It’s that old saying about it’s not what you know, but who you know—demonstrating once again the buddy-based double standard of hiring without regard to merit.

What the backlash of these ignorant, hateful comments and actions tells me is that we need even more protests—because way too many whites holding racist and hostile views want to prohibit people of color from peacefully and nonviolently exercising their democratic rights. Many pundits making similar comments in the white-controlled media fail to understand that throughout American history there have been those who protested the treatment of African Americans in this society and that nonviolent protests are part of this unjust nation’s legacy. In order for change to occur, someone must be willing to push back against these injustices.

Well before the Civil War, African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass asserted, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.” The California NAACP, interestingly enough, has called for the end of having the national anthem ritual played before each sport event. It offers no value to the game and may have well been cynically enacted simply as a way drum up recruits for the U.S. military.

Whites have always utilized institutional buffers to stop and impede equal opportunities for others. In a country that could easily afford healthcare for all, many continue to suffer premature deaths due to lack of access. Equally unfair is the expectation that that the larger public of the poor, working class and people of color should support with their taxes institutions and industries that do not allow them to work in those organizations. Under these circumstances, where elites control half of the nation’s wealth and run all the corporations, it is well-nigh impossible to create a society where there are Civil Rights for all.

These are all matters, though, that we must take up and address if this country is ever to realize its potential. And it must start now. For if as a nation we do not wake up and deal with the nonviolent ‘kneelers,’ we will soon be dealing with the increasing level of social and violent discontent of its residents. Because African Americans are not going back to the old days of the servility and docility of the plantation.

Don’t misunderstand me. I’m not calling for violence. However, if the power elites in this country don’t start addressing the burgeoning social disparity and make real progress to end racist actions and make everyone free… as Malcolm X once said, we will have our freedom “by any means necessary.” And Colin Kaepernick’s kneeling during The Star-Spangled Banner will be the least of our worries.
How do you engineer the creation of a Third World Country? You colonize a previously sustainable society, concentrate its resources and means of production into the hands of a few of your friends, and create the kind of chaos that keeps the mass of people taking their grief out on one another. Trump and his cohort are intent on breaking this country down, then parceling it out as further chaos ensues. This is the Great Truth, manifest to anyone paying attention. And as always, selling out a society begins with an official narrative based on Big Lies.

The GOP has a tremendous amount at stake on tax reform legislation. Republicans risk ending the year with nothing much accomplished but utter failure on health care reform. And just because Trump’s tax reform package is awful and unfair doesn’t mean it can’t pass. So far the right-wing hardliners who helped sink ACA repeal (because it did not go far enough) have not indicated they have any problem with letting the foxes party in the hen house.

I searched “Big Lie” and “Tax Reform” and my browser delivered a half dozen articles from the Washington Post, Slate, Forbes, USA Today, CNN, and Pulitzer Prize-winner PolitiFact. Here are the top five Big Lies the GOP and Trump are using to sell Americans on their “United Framework for Fixing the Broken Tax Code.”

**Big Lie #1: @realDonaldTrump**

…we are the highest taxed nation in the world.

The U.S. is by no means the highest taxed nation and certainly not among the 34 industrialized nations which make up the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. As of 2014, the U.S. actually ranks on the low end for tax revenue, with countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium on the high end, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product. The U.S. is 31st at about 76 percent of the OECD average. Only Korea, Chile and Mexico tax less by revenue as a percentage of GDP. In corporate tax revenue as a percentage of GDP, the U.S. ranks 17th, just points under the OECD average of 2.9 percent. Likewise, U.S. per capita tax revenue of $14,204 is just under the OECD average of $14,923.

While the U.S. has one of the highest top marginal tax rates in world in statute, deductions and exclusions mean companies pay less in practice. This top corporate tax is the tax Trump has in mind in his Tweet above. Only the wealthiest are touched by this tax. The facts in this case are more difficult to nail down, but in 2011, the Congressional Research Service concluded the effective U.S. rate was 27.1 percent, just under the OECD average of 27.7 percent. In 2014, the World Bank and the International Finance Commission ranked the U.S. second highest after New Zealand in the OECD and 15th among a total of 189 countries measured.

According to PolitiFact, “The World Bank’s data for 2012—the last year for which it has complete figures—also placed the United States near the bottom in tax revenue as a percentage of GDP. Nations with lower percentages were two OECD members (Japan and Spain), a couple of oil-rich countries (Oman and Kuwait) and few impoverished states (like Afghanistan and the Central African Republic).” In 2016 the World Bank and Price Waterhouse Cooper assessed the total tax burden for a case study company in various countries around the world. The total tax rate, including income taxes, labor taxes, property taxes, profit taxes, etc., is expressed as a percentage over the total profit. “By this metric, the company would have a total tax rate of 43.9 percent in the United States, placing it at No. 64 out of 189 countries.”

**Fact: The U.S. is not the highest taxed nation in the world.**

**Big Lie #2:**

It’s a middle class tax cut.

The non-partisan Tax Policy Center found that after the tax plan has taken full effect in 2027, 80 percent of the benefits will go to the top 1 percent. “When it comes to tax cuts, the top 1 percent will get an average cut of $1,022,120, while the middle 20 percent will get an average cut of $420,” Rebekah Entralgo reported on 10.27.17 at ThinkProgress.

The choir is singing just one note. Ivanka Trump Tweeted the tax plan would provide “much needed relief to middle-
Five Big Lies, conclusion

The Republican article of faith, that tax increases always crash the economy, is just wrong: Witness the aftermath when Clinton raised taxes in 1993 and Obama did likewise in 2013. In both cases, the economy prospered. As reported on Slate, September 29, 2017, the nonpartisan “Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget” predicts this tax reform plan would actually reduce revenue by $2.2 trillion over a decade. Slate noted, “The last round of major tax cuts, in 2001 and 2003 under President George W. Bush, were a key driver of public debt for the decade that followed.”

A study by the “Economic Policy Institute” found that cutting taxes for corporations does not boost wages, calling the claim “clearly wrong.” Even conservatives raise their eyebrows at that claim, a blogger on Quartz noted. “The right-wing National Review began a piece titled ‘An Anti Growth Tax Cut’ with the line: ‘Republicans want to cut taxes by $1.5 trillion—while the government already is running a deficit—and they propose to offset those cuts with wishful thinking.’”

The GOP never gives up on ‘trickle-down economics’ to con Americans into believing that giving tax cuts to businesses and the ultra-wealthy will benefit everyone else. Trump tax reform will help global and specialized corporations that do not need our help. “And trillions that are sitting off-shore will stay there and not create a single job in the Heartland,” wrote John Wasik in Forbes, September 29, 2017.

Fact: The cuts will not pay for themselves and will increase the deficit.

The Individual rate cuts, repeal of the Alternative Minimum Tax and the estate tax, and preservation of tax preferences for charitable giving, mortgage interest, and retirement savings all primarily benefit those with high-incomes,” said Howard Gleckman, also of the TPC.

More than two thirds of income earned by so-called ‘pass-through’ businesses goes to the top 1 percent of Americans who file taxes, including Trump; most of his, Ivanka’s and Jared Kushner’s businesses are organized as pass-throughs. Gleckman called this tax cut “an outright giveaway to the wealthy.” Trump plans to end taxes on estates of more than $5.5 million for individuals (and $11 million for couples), creating a huge windfall for Trump heirs. Likewise, Trump would end the Alternative Minimum Tax—the reason why, Bouie noted on Slate, in 2005, Trump paid a tax rate of 24 percent on $150 million of income, “instead of the 4 percent he would have paid based on his many deductions.”

Fact: Trump and his fellows of the 1 percent don’t just benefit from this tax reform package, they will positively thrive, burgeon, flourish—mushroom even—like the cancers they are.
Trump’s response to Irma in Florida: “With Irma and Harvey devastation, Tax Cuts and Tax Reform is needed more than ever before. Go Congress, go!”

Trump’s response to Maria in Puerto Rico: “Electric and all infrastructure was disaster before hurricanes. Congress to decide how much to spend. We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!....Now, I hate to tell you, Puerto Rico, but you’ve thrown our budget a little out of whack, because we’ve spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico,”

Instead of realizing the magnitude of an historic disaster, Trump accused Puerto Rico’s political leadership (most of them Democrats, including San Juan’s critical mayor, who had asked how Trump could stand by while people were dying) of mismanagement and incompetence. “A total lack of accountability say the Governor. Electric and all infrastructure was disaster before hurricanes. Congress to decide how much to spend. We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!”

Carmen Yulín Cruz, the mayor of San Juan, said that Trump once again was adding “insult to injury” as she called upon aid from international organizations to prevent “the genocide that will result from” Mr. Trump’s inaction. “Tweet away your hate to mask your administration’s mishandling of this humanitarian crisis,” she said, addressing the president. “While you are amusing yourself throwing paper towels at us, your compatriots and the world are sending love and help our way. Condemn us to a slow death of non-drinkable water, lack of food, lack of medicine while you keep others eager to help from reaching us.” (Baker and Dickerson, 2017).

“From the beginning, Donald Trump—who literally seems to think that he deserves praise for throwing a few rolls of paper towels into a crowd — has suggested that Puerto Rico is responsible for its own disaster, and he has systematically denigrated the efforts of its people to take care of one another” (Krugman, 2017).

Trump repeatedly stumbled over his own racial stereotypes of Puerto Ricans.

One official video actually edited out references to Puerto Ricans’ fortitude and self-reliance. “One segment showed Forest Service workers clearing a road, but it cut off just before the official being interviewed praised local efforts: ‘The citizens of Puerto Rico were doing an outstanding job coming out and clearing roads to help get the aid that’s needed.’” Puerto Ricans behaving well, it seems, doesn’t fit the official story line. “How can we be abandoning them in their time of need?” asked Krugman. “Much of the answer, no doubt, is the usual four-letter word: race. Puerto Ricans would doubtless be getting better treatment if they were all of, say, Norwegian descent” (Krugman, 2017).

FURTHER READING


Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor at the University of Nebraska–Omaha, is author of Climate Change: An Encyclopedia of Science, Society, and Solutions (2017).
Paul Olson, continued

to government authority, “political violence, militarization of the economy and political sphere, and fusion of state and party.” In addition, the ancient and glorious liturgical symbolism of the Orthodox Church has been recruited to endorse state violence.

And is not this also our story? Pseudo-nationalism, deference to authority, political violence, militarization, appointment of party hacks to positions of grand responsibility, and recruitment of evangelical religion to endorse it all?

There is an irony to our having an "America First“ president be also the first who sold his country’s elections to a foreign power. The process according to which that took place was a meandering one, and no party is exempt from blame.

Here is a portion of the story:

- Russia had legitimate concerns with receiving protection from European militarism after having suffered the Napoleonic invasions of the early 19th century, the Crimean war of the mid-19th century, the Russo-Japanese war of the early 20th century, World War I of the second decade of the 20th century (in which it lost 10 million persons), and World War II (in which it lost 20 million people while carrying the brunt of the burden of defeating Hitler).

Unfortunately, we did not recognize those concerns after the Iron Curtain came down. The definitive German news magazine, Die Spiegel, in an article from November 26, 2009 (“NATO’s Eastward Expansion: Did the West Break Its Promise to Moscow?”) shows that the George H. W. Bush administration gave the Russians to believe that if Eastern Germany could be reunified with West Germany, no further expansion of NATO would take place. Eastern Europe would remain neutral. Just a few years later, we broke those commitments and expanded NATO and its military might up to the borders of Russia.

- Again, in this decade, Hillary Clinton added the Ukraine to the mix. As Frontline recently demonstrated, Putin believed that the Ukrainian demonstrations that began during the Sochi Winter Olympics were sponsored by the United States and Hillary—specifically promoted by her close neoconservative ally in the State Department, Victoria Nuland.

Nuland, Clinton’s Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, supported the violent demonstrations in Kiev that drove out the duly elected president, an ally of Russia. She bragged that she had inserted $5 billion into Ukraine to destabilize it (some commentators dispute whether the amount was that large). In the Frontline program, one can see Nuland handing out sandwiches to the demonstrators endeavoring to drive out the elected pro-Russian government. Frontline also showed that Russian hacking of our government and political parties began during this Ukrainian Civil War and that Putin’s people first broke into Nuland’s communications when she was talking about who ought to be inserted into the Ukrainian government to replace the pro-Russian leader.

Russian hacking then extended to

Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President

As Congress considers tax reform, the treatment of donations to charities is uncertain at this time. Right now the only thing we know is that they are still safe for this year. So the tax advantage of donating to a charity with your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from an IRA still remains in effect for 2017.

Many who are faced with making a decision on their IRA’s RMD usually wait until near the end of the year to make that decision. So please consider donating to Nebraska Peace Foundation from your RMD.

You only need to let the administrator of your IRA know that you want to donate from your RMD to Nebraska Peace Foundation. They will take care of sending NPF a check in the amount you designate. The advantage is you will not be taxed on that withdrawal and that withdrawal will count toward your Required Minimum Distribution.

Even if you do not have to take an RMD, now is a good time before the end of the year to consider donating to NPF to reduce your taxes for 2017.

Questions, call me (402) 489-6662.

conclusion on next page
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Hillary Clinton’s emails, John Podesta’s, the Democratic National Committee’s, and God knows how many other forces involved in the elections. Clearly Putin was desperate to stop the advance of NATO militarism into Eastern Europe and possibly into Ukraine. Now Ukraine—especially those parts in the Western Ukraine that are oriented toward Europe—wishes to join NATO by 2020 (though NATO has been reticent because it does not wish to engage Ukraine’s struggles with Russia in the Crimea and in western Ukraine).

Putin had reason to be concerned about a possible election of Hillary Clinton. His country had lost all of Eastern Europe under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and then Ukraine to her forces. As a Mafia majordomo, he turned to another Mafioso in America to help him win the battle of cyberspace, one in which no lines are drawn and no ignorant armies clash by night. Electrons subvert other electrons and hollow out the life of the nation. Such war is part of the decline of nationalism that accompanies the internationalizing of communications in cyberspace, the movement of peoples from their ancient homes because of climate change, and the destruction of local cultures as advertising and mass-produced products swarm under everything precious and personal.

Amid these tides, we can still remain patriots of one kind. Nebraskans should remember Willa Cather’s understanding of what it is to be committed to a patria, a patriotic home: Jim Burden, the male narrator of the My Antonia, says “I propped my book open and stared listlessly at the page of the Georgics where tomorrow’s lesson began. It opened with the melancholy reflection that, in the lives of mortals, the best days are the first to flee. ‘Optima dies… prima fugit.’ I turned back to the beginning of the third book, which we had read in class that morning. ‘Primus ego in patriam mecum… deducam Musas’; ‘for I shall be the first, if I live, to bring the Muse into my country.’ Cleric had explained to us that ‘patria’ here meant, not a nation or even a province, but the little rural neighborhood on the Mincio where the poet was born. This was not a boast, but a hope, at once bold and devoutly humble, that he might bring the Muse (but lately come to Italy from her cloudy Grecian mountains), not to the capital, the palatia Romana, but to his own little ‘country’; to his father’s fields, ‘sloping down to the river and to the old beech trees with broken tops.’”

It is not patriotic gore and the bombast of Mafia moguls that we are to love. It is the old burr oak trees and the muse that we can bring to our flatwater land in the form of whatever sings. It is not guns and wars that make us patriots but love of our father’s fields, the sloping down to the river, and the old beech trees with the unbroken tops.
America, the Mafia State

This evening, I heard an analysis on National Public Radio of Donald Trump’s moorings in the New York Mafia: We wrote about that some months ago, and it is about time the matter receive national attention. More recently, television announcers have sounded surprised that prosecutor Robert Mueller assembled a team of lawyers skilled in prosecuting Mafia cases. We have become the world’s largest criminal enterprise. Almost two-thirds of the good people of Nebraska, full of faith, hope, and charity, voted for a criminal government that, in the name of “America First” and nationalism, sold this country to Russian criminal enterprises. The emergence of the United States as a Mafia state is not entirely unexpected. It has long had a Mafia underbelly, partly based on J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI’s suppressing of Black civil rights movements and ignoring the Mafia until Bobby Kennedy ordered him to do otherwise. But the selling of America to Vladimir Putin’s Mafia state is new. Why the sale?

First, we are alike in many ways. In Mafia State, journalist and author Luke Harding argues that Putin has “created a state peopled by ex-KGB and FSB officers, like himself, bent on making money above all”[21] and that the Russian government is, in essence, the Russian Mafia. Part of the Russian Mafioso myth is the resurrection of a Russian pseudo-nationalism—not the love of Mother Russia and her landscapes, fields, and peoples in Tolstoy or Chekhov but, as Russian-American journalist Masha Gessen has demonstrated, nationalism compounded of unquestioned deference

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