

The Nasty Origins of American Exceptionalism

By Marc Sapir

*Tom Jefferson's vision would not let him rest,
An Empire he saw in the Pacific Northwest,
Sent Lewis and Clark and they did the rest,
Well it's roll on Columbia roll on.*

("Roll on Columbia", by Woody Guthrie, under commission by the Tennessee Valley Authority, to the tune of "Goodnight Irene" by Huddie Ledbetter)

On November 8, 2016, Donald Trump beat the odds makers to become U.S. president. Shortly thereafter, the Editor of the New Yorker Magazine, David Remnick put up an on line essay, *An American Tragedy*, which I read avidly. The focus of this somber essay was a call to not allow the commentators, pundits, the main stream corporate media and politicians to "normalize" what will now happen to these United States of America. This is not merely the flow of our American life—if I may paraphrase Remnick--here was the beginning of fascist rule.

I thought Remnick's essay important enough that I photocopied it and passed it out to friends and acquaintances. I too began to talk about the danger of "normalization" of the hate-filled Trump ethos. Since then I've attended many protests against the Muslim Ban, the xenophobic Wall, the Dakota Access Pipeline, for women' rights, science, health care, civil and human rights. Yes, I'm going to keep on doing what I can to be visible against these indecent presidential edicts and actions and to continue, as a physician, the fight for Medicare for All. But by early March, 2017, I was re-thinking what I had thought on November 9. Maybe I had somehow misconstrued the historical position of the Trump ascendancy to power when I, with Remnick, cried out, "don't normalize" his fascist beliefs and actions.

A few weeks after the Inauguration, I spent a couple of hours watching (on-line) monologist and comedian Mike Daisy's, *The Trump Card*, a show he performed in the weeks before the election. Daisy now has a new show called, *This is Not Normal*. Normal again. What, I wondered, is our normal? Maybe we have to reckon with what already was "normal" from our nation's past. *The Trump Card* culminates in Daisy asserting that he knows where and when this all started. He takes us back to a floundering Republican Party with a boring John McCain as it's nominee and an impressive romantic Black hero, the almost undefeatable Barack Obama as its opposition. In a panic, looking for star power to galvanize the Right, the white, and the disaffected common man, someone came up with Sarah Palin as the answer; and the GOP, desperate to get some blood running—which McCain was not going to manage to do—just went with the idea and they didn't even vet Palin as a candidate. The day after her selection a reporter asked the question: why is it that her pronouncements at the Convention were the opposite of her positions on many issues that she held as Governor. And like Trump's puppets Spicer et al, the PR guys just

blew it off. But the reporter had it all documented from public newspapers and official documents and such. And according to Mike Daisy this was the beginning of the GOP saying about politics and governance, well, just “Fuck it.” “We’ll go for it and do whatever we damn please and forget about any accountability. Period! Ignore or ridicule anyone who questions us. Because all that matters is winning.”

Well, that makes a good story, of course. And every tall tale (and ideology) is constructed around one or another kernel of truth, which is what makes myths and narratives interesting and the world go around. But as mythical layers around a kernel of truth are piled up and grow outward they often become ever more convoluted and distorted until what may have begun as a kernel of sweet corn turns into a bitter lemon. We all know that the Palin tale isn’t the seed of the normalization of deceit or treachery. Political lying is as old as the hills. Does any thinking person not realize that when Kellyanne Conway came up with her infamous “alternative facts” to explain Trump’s faked millions of illegal voters, she was selling snake oil. Isn’t that approach--peddling lies to discredit truth--really an approach that Socrates had to be aware of? We deserve a deeper look at American history and how it has been muddied—back, way back.

*Stealin, I’m stealin,
Pretty mamma don’t you tell on me,
Cause I’m steal back, to the same old use to be.
(American folk song circa 1920, author unknown)*

Today, when we scan the political spectrum of the United States we find almost everyone with a political opinion extolling the U.S. Constitution and the Founding Fathers for having established the first long lasting durable democracy on the face of the earth—protecting our rights. Moreover, this idea of America has been well sold around the world over the years. There is no better way to describe the importance of what Barack Obama, without any trace of irony or deprecation, called American Exceptionalism than to say our righteousness has become the great American credo and mystique—built upon the slogan “with liberty and justice for all.” Remnick is one of those who believes in that slogan. Unfortunately, however, it isn’t the founding American ethos, culture or reality. The greatest strengths and protection of rights--the Bill of Rights—was an afterthought written 5 years after the Constitution was ratified.

American Exceptionalism they like to say derives from the Constitution and the Founders, as the trademark and signpost of America—its greatness, its supremacy, its “freedom.” We strive to the ideal of fairness and unalienable human rights, the magnificent words of Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. Unhappily, that narrative—and Jefferson’s words--are based upon “alternative facts” and there is history to prove that. The lie was not invented by CIA propagandists in the Cold War era although they’ve used it effectively. Nor was it created by Sarah Palin or Kellyanne Conway or the modern Media. Since each culture has its own origin myth--and its unique sense of heroic origins-- we’re

responsible for tracing back the origin of our own narrative myth: the wonders of American Exceptionalism.

Remarkably, our greatest cultural icons have been pointing out the duplicity in our origin myth for more than a century: from James Baldwin to Don DeLillo, Tony Morrison to Leslie Marmon Silko, from Diego Rivera to street artists, from Arthur Miller to the SF Mime Troupe, from Pablo Neruda to Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Ariel Dorfman, from Langston Hughes to Samuel Clemens. And yet our collective national memory never adds up to the truth. Most well educated liberals still claim that the Founding Fathers and the U.S. Constitution reign supreme as reference points from which they extol this country's self-righteous place in the world.

Origins

Going back to the 1700s—the Age of Reason—we find a time of great transition throughout the European world. Colonialism was evolving into something more complex than the simple conquest and plunder of the wealth and resources of indigenous peoples and nations. Capitalism, bolstered by science and technology, was slowly moving onto the stage to become an urban-based political-economic system that would design and create the future. But today's capitalist structures and relations of large manufacture and banking, investment and political dominance, globalization, speculation and Ponzi schemes, drug cartels and vast political bureaucracies, one person one vote, to say nothing of Trumps, Blairs, Bushes, Clintons and Obamas, these were still far off on a distant horizon and inconceivable. When, as Tom Hartman's research revealed¹, Thomas Jefferson, the third president, opposed the formation of the Federal Reserve Bank and called for corporations to only be allowed to exist for 10 years, then to be dissolved, he could only do so because Capitalism was not yet dominant in the Founders' world. And to the extent they saw it coming, that wasn't a happy thought for a landed gentry who extolled the "country gentleman" image. How could they even imagine concepts like "diversification" of their wealth through investment capital, stock market speculation, leveraged buyouts, bundled securities, nor any benefit to living an urban high life in some Trumpian Tower?

These were wealthy landholders centered in Virginia whose ideas of property and power were simple, more akin to older principles in Europe than to those of modern capitalists. The concept of rights they employed to foment a revolution was founded upon the rights of property not of persons and they unabashedly considered their slaves property. Though they opted to evolve a form of governance more egalitarian than monarchy and to end heritable rule when they drafted the Constitution, they had very particular self-interested motives in stirring up the American Revolution that had less to do with tea and taxes than with protecting their property. They manipulated popular anger at Britain's arrogant rule to cover for their agenda. Our Founders sought nothing more or less than an agrarian based

¹ What Would Jefferson Do?: A Return to Democracy. Crown Publishing (Harmony Books): 2004.

Republic that would protect slavery, with power in the landowning class. They knew how to use spirited moral egalitarian language, but they were not thinking of democracy. This documented assertion is one fact that American Rightist/Conservative ideology has right.

Truths: Self-evident and Painful

If native born we've all studied the American Revolution in our grade school upbringing—in the case of immigrants, for tests for citizenship. I remember proudly my 5th grade mic'd performance of "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country" (Nathan Hale); then discovering Thomas Paine, one of the most colorful figures in the history of our Revolution. A recent, energetic and intelligent immigrant from England, Paine was different-- not one of the important landholders who would draft the Constitution and run the nation. But Paine's impassioned essay, *Common Sense*, agitated for armed insurrection and separation from the British empire and was widely circulated-- 400,000 copies of *Common Sense* were printed, distributed and discussed. Some historians have claimed that *Common Sense* played a major role in spurring the Northern populous to rebel.

Nevertheless, Tom Paine was not present in 1786 as a representative to the Constitutional Convention.² He had no standing to be there; no basis to join the propertied class lawyers in their deliberations which were dominated by the Virginia elite. Meanwhile, Paine, the democrat, had become a champion of Revolution in France and England. Paine, with his egalitarian views, typifies the heroic myth of our American Exceptionalism. He believed in the fundamental equality and rights of all men and women. He was a product of the Age of reason and the Enlightenment, a guy who thought that once the colonies broke free, ingenuity, hard work, money and good plans and governance would solve every problem and create a true democracy here. But that story doesn't quite add up, as we'll see.

Most of Thomas Paine's friends were opponents of slavery. Not a few were surprised at Paine's absolute silence on the blight of slavery to the new nation. He didn't even discuss slavery with his close associates let alone write about it. His comrades worried. It made no sense that he did not speak out against this evil institution. Even slave owners like Jefferson and Madison were doing so. Wikipedia reports that there is only one documented exchange on this subject that exists in the Thomas Paine library collection at Iona College in New York. A friend asked him why he was not speaking out against slavery. His response implied that there was nothing to be gained in doing so. Other documents (see later) reveal that there was a struggle and delicate balance going on behind the scenes over slavery. Speaking up forcefully against slavery could do no more than weaken the possibility of forming a single united 13 colonies that might form an independent nation. The slavery issue might cause fractious disunity between New England and Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia—as well it should have. But in the give and take, the Founders (that is, mostly the Virginia elite) agreed to leave it to the States

²See Howard Fast's play: *Citizen Tom Paine*.

and then achieved peace with Northern dissenters, many of them poverty stricken veterans of the Revolutionary War, with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The Virginian leadership agreed that to protect slavery in the new nation, they would limit it to the South, thus allowing its expansion Westward but not Northward. Apparently, Paine too thought nothing was more important than breaking free of England.

Paine's silence on slavery is strange for the man many say espoused democracy and equality, but not for one who had already imagined, like Jefferson, the future new order—of a vast expanding American empire. In this revelation about Paine's silence we can foresee the beginnings of an honest tale of American Exceptionalism. Freedom and rights for the common man...well, that would come later...but when for slaves, Indians, Mexicans or their descendents? That would not even be discussed. Indeed, the element that most fundamentally contradicts the notion that the U.S. was founded with the intention of forming a democratic society was the hard wiring of slavery—its legalization and **normalization**—into the U.S. Constitution itself. There were a few words of regret—"that all men are created equal.. and had unalienable rights" written by an erudite Southern Slave owner lawyer.³ But that was no accident as the rest of this essay will detail.

The grand "compromise" by the Thom's--Paine and Jefferson--and other "liberals" of the propertied class, was crowned when the Constitution provided for extra seats in Congress' House of Representatives to Slave States on the grounds that every 5 slaves could be counted as representing 3 free people in that State for purposes of Congressional apportionment.⁴ The South had risen, led by Virginia, the wealthiest and most populous state, as the most powerful unified block within the U.S. polity. Slavery was "normalized", institutionalized, and legally ensconced within the structures of our sovereignty for reasons I shall detail. Seventy five years later the productive engine of a dynamic Capitalism and the Northern Abolitionist movement together grew too strong to tolerate an expanding agrarian economic system based on enslavement of human labor. Resistance to the expansion of slavery westward grew stronger and the South rebelled.

³The fact that the Greeks enslaved people they conquered is sometimes thrown up by "originalists" to cloud the reality of American slavery. The transition of rural farming into an engine of Capitalist wealth accumulation was based largely upon the tyrannies and brutality of U.S. slavery—working slaves to death at an early age, destroying families, beating and lynching them for disobedience or escape. There is no parallel to the Greeks at all. That there were "better" slavers and "worse" also cannot be allowed to obscure what this institution was—the worst of cruel and criminal behavior, a culture of pure brutality and usury. This is well portrayed in the 2016 film: *Birth of a Nation*, where an ostensibly "beneficent" slaver owner of Nat Turner, is portrayed as turning into a tyrant-- as vicious and sadistic as the worst of the others--forced to it by being part of that social system.

⁴This was a particularly bizarre idea given that the Slaveholders asserted that slaves were property and not people and had no rights as human beings. Nevertheless, the South swallowed hard and ignored that the so called "compromise" damaged their claim.

Though the South eventually failed in their effort to preempt and overcome the rising power of Northern Capital and the attendant necessary abolition of slavery (attacking Fort Sumter to start the Civil War in 1862) that cost the young nation a million dead even beyond the torture and abominable denial of the human rights of slaves for all those years. And then, in spite of their being defeated, the slavers were granted back great political power they have yet to relinquish. The landholding, slaveholding class was allowed to restore their dominance in the realm of class/race relationships, economics, culture and politics despite losing the Civil War. The Federal government simply allowed the overthrow of the brief but very real freedoms that Reconstruction brought to the South.

And so there followed the return of extreme race oppression in the form of Black Codes and lynchings to the South just a few short years after 1865. Except for accepting penal servitude, the presumably fateful 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments would be largely ignored^{5, 6, 7} by the U.S. Governments. This dereliction is central to the extolled American Exceptionalism myth that sits at the heart of national pride and identity. The process set in play by the Founders—self-proclaimed “good and progressive men”, many of whom just happened to grow their wealth on the backs, lives and deaths of those they enslaved—produced the Dixiecrats. The Dixiecrats control of the South meant an unbreakable veto power over all policies within the Democratic Party nationally that lasted right up until 1968 when they walked out of the Democratic Party Convention in opposition to ending segregation. The dominance of the Slaveholders’ mentality was then simply transferred to the Republicans’ no less oppressive or racist “Southern Strategy.” And that Southern Strategy (used alternatively by the two parties) has remained a fundamental strategy for political dominance of the nation right into Mr. Trump’s racist cabinet. Besides suppressing the Black vote, that Southern strategy is based upon exploiting race divisions and legally enforcing social backwardness--the type of class oppression seen worldwide in

⁵ Just as the noble language of equality in the Constitution’s preamble stands in contradiction to the Constitutional reification of slaver rights and slavery as an American institution so too does the 13th Amendment contradict itself by outlawing slavery and involuntary servitude **except in the case of prisoners convicted of a crime**. (which can apply to anyone who is thrown in prison for any reason, most often applied to Blacks and other people of color).

⁶ The 14th Amendment of 1868 includes that no state “may deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Of course with the overthrow of Reconstruction the Southern States implemented the Black Codes, various legal restrictions that, like today’s voter ID laws and other tactics aimed at preventing Blacks and other minorities from voting. These and all segregation laws violate the 14th but were ignored by the Federal Government and Judiciary for about the next 100 years. In practice, the Amendment wasn’t worth the paper it was printed on.

⁷The 15th Amendment of 1870 is a more specific protection of the right to vote “which shall not be abridged..by any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.” And it gives the power of enforcement directly to Congress as well. But poll taxes and other restrictions on voting were, of course, ignored by the Federal Government despite their being in clear violation, just as now, where the impact of documented efforts by States to prevent Blacks from voting in the last 16 years of Federal elections in particular were systematically ignored until recently.

rural life born from the old-time relations of serfs under feudalism. Rural poverty, stunted educational and economic opportunity, and landowner dominance are core themes to maintaining cultural and political backwardness and remain key themes of our exceptional nation, despite the fact that we do not even have an actual feudal past.

In the Beginning there wasn't Light

But to fully understand how and why these events came to pass as they did, the actual details in the 1770s leading up to the Constitutional legalization of slavery have to be clarified. In 1772 in *Somerset vs. Stewart* (the case represented in the wonderful film, "Belle") the Lord Chief Justice, First Earl of Mansfield, highest judge in England ruled there was no legal basis in British common or written case law for slavery within the British isles. This ruling shook the foundations of slavery in racist-classist-monarchist England. It outlawed slavery within Britain and ultimately led to the outlawing of the British slave trade in 1807. The *Somerset* decision was also earthshaking in its implications for the Colonies. Articles on the decision were published in 44 major newspapers in the American colonies and 4 or 5 times over the ensuing months in many.⁸ Every politician, patrician and slaveholder knew of it and it was being discussed by slave owners in parlors and social events from that day on.

What to do? The British, even if they did not move quickly to outlaw slavery in the colonies might well put major taxes on slaveholders and/or their products. The Virginia slave owners, most of whose leaders were well trained British lawyers, evolved a plan to break the colonies free of England—i.e. the American Revolution. A very well documented history of that period and how they achieved their goals up through the Constitutional Convention and later is found in the remarkable 2005 book, *Slave Nation, How Slavery United the Colonies and Sparked the American Revolution* by Alfred and Ruth Blumrosen (deceased, both were faculty at Rutgers College of Law in New Jersey into the 21st Century). Their book documents how the US Constitution was written to assure unity of the 13 colonies within the framework of the perpetuation of slavery in the U.S.

Thus, instead of outlawing slavery here in 1786 in the Constitution or as of 1807 when England ended the slave trade, the U.S. Constitution assured that slaves could be bred in the U.S., like cattle on a feedlot, in the most brutal of all conditions even when the slave trade was stopped. That was the fundamental purpose and meaning of Independence from England. Later, in 1833, Britain ended slavery in all the colonies of the British empire. **Without the Revolution and the Constitution, slavery would have been ended here quicker, in 1833 at the very latest, but probably long before that.**

⁸The fascinating details and much of the material in this section of my essay are found in and can be further explored in *Slave Nation, How Slavery United the Colonies and Sparked the American Revolution*. By Alfred Blumrosen and Ruth Blumrosen, 2005 Sourcebooks, Inc.

But in 1833, despite the end of the slave trade 26 years previous, and despite the decades of savage slave breeding and working slaves to death, the U.S. elites were still not willing or able to end slavery when Britain ended its colonial slavery. In a telling exchange of letters between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson around 1820 long after both had left politics, Jefferson—despite his antipathy to the institution—was still unable to respond positively to Adams call for him to speak out and call for abolition. Thus, we would, **exceptionally**, continue the breeding and use of slaves and their hard labor to build up America's pre-imperial wealth right up to the Civil War.

Perhaps this atrocious history points inexorably to the U.S.' governments' more recent support for the Apartheid system used against the people of South Africa (1948-1990) and against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories by Israel still (1948-today).⁹ The Apartheid thinking and behavior underpins both "American (phony) innocence" about our nation's brutal criminal history and the glorious phony "American Exceptionalism." In essence, we can sponsor Israel's oppression as merely another case of our own exceptional duplicity because slavery in America was also not an aberration at all, but an intended consequence of the Revolution.

Was Duplicity a Rare Occurrence?

Back in 1823 (before England ended slavery in her colonies) in the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. had declared itself to be the controller of the destiny of all Latin America, warning the European colonialist powers to stay out of our dominion. Manifest Destiny (from the dreams of Jefferson and enunciated by editor-journalist John O'Sullivan in 1845)--to control the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific at the expense of indigenous peoples and Mexico had become part of our national purpose. Mike Daisy entertains us with his Sarah Palin moment but our nation's normalization of atrocities can be traced back at least to 1772, 1786, 1807, 1808, 1823, 1833, 1845—and to Wounded Knee and the entire Indian genocide, to Dred Scott and so much more. All these dates qualify as fitting the Trump themes. And that history led us to Civil War in 1862 (as it may well again).

One hundred and eight years beyond 1845, in 1953, Arthur Miller wrote a play, "The Crucible", about the Salem Witch Trials (of 1692-3 in New England). The Crucible is about

⁹Despite the US sponsoring the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the UN was founded upon, despite the world of nations' commitment to end colonialism for good after World War II, the US is today the one nation that overtly provides Israel with vast military equipment, supplies and collaboration to maintain that apartheid, its torture and perversion of justice. American leaders heap praise on Israel constantly—despite an occasional wink and nod of criticism--and vote unending dollar commitments in support of Israel no matter how ruthless and anti-democratic its behavior. By the way, the State of Israel hasn't bothered to write and ratify a Constitution. The U.S. support for Israeli apartheid is only possible because those who extol the U.S. Constitution, the Founding Fathers and the democratic history of America, are either wearing convenient blinders with respect to our actual history of the United States', the Constitution's defense of inequality and subjugation or they don't believe in the Bill of Rights and subsequent Amendments except when convenient.

a culture of paranoid accusation against women encouraged by protestant leaders (men of course) even enlisting inventive compliant children in order to keep women subservient through terror. Miller's brilliant play served two separate purposes: it exposed the ruthless, anti-democratic nature and absurdity of the McCarthy era anti-communist witch-hunt trials that destroyed many American lives and the power of the trade union movement; but at the same time it reflected upon the distant U.S. historical legacy of extreme prejudice and hysteria, revealing how naively susceptible those New Englanders were (and apparently we still remained in the 1950s) to nonsense conjured up by people with power and authority among them. Those were leaders like Trump and his backers who cast their violence and domination positively in a religious, patriotic and heroic light. Arthur Miller drew on deeply embedded very undemocratic elements in U.S. culture from the early days of the colonies, recreating that aspect of American reality that is central to American Exceptionalism—a mixture of righteous individualism, mob mentality populism and hypocrisy paraded as an heroic narrative, while it's little more than a screen for ruthlessness, domination and brutality.

Unity Among the Founders

Although politics requires compromise under any system of governance, there are compromises and there are compromises. When we talk about slavery who can accept slavery as a cornerstone of their national independence? There is no principled room for that compromise. Moreover, it's impossible to claim a belief in democracy and to not resist human chattel slavery. Just plain impossible.

What America and her Founding figures, hypocrites all, did was shed crocodile tears and eloquent words about how terrible the Institution was and that it ought to be abolished; then the key leaders purposefully formed a government with the specific intent of legalizing slavery forever, thus making, after so many thousands of deaths and torture, a Civil War inevitable. The Founders and liberal Thomas Paine's behavior are, indeed exceptional, as they represent the worst in human cunning and weakness and cowardice. And yet we extol that history. And, what's more, if you Google the Founders and slavery today you will still find Rightist web sites claiming that the Founders were mostly opponents of slavery and fought such a valiant fight against it and contributed to its end (by agreeing to the Northwest Ordinance that restricted new slave states only throughout the South I suppose).

Perhaps our trained obeisance to the faked "pure" origin myth helps explain how, ever since then, so many Americans "go along" with phony stories invented by the CIA and US imperialism--like the invented Vietnamese Gulf of Tonkin attack of 1964, the Sinking of the Maine in Cuba in 1898, the evil empires of Iran and China today, the Soviet menace back to 1918, the dangers of Sandinistas in the 1980s, of Cuban Communists in the 1960s on, Saddam's non-existent weapons of mass destruction in 2004, the faked story of Iraqis throwing preemies out of incubators on Papa Bush's watch, the threat of Muslims and Arabs and turbans today, and how the US was duty bound to replace Ghadafi and Saddam (as declared by both Clintons in the 1990s) and Assad now, the turning a blind eye toward feudal backwardness of our vicious allies like the Saudi regime which cuts off

more hands and heads than even ISIS and has created starvation and a cholera epidemic in Yemen, the legitimacy of our funding of Bin Laden, the necessity of backing our Egyptian surrogates who hand out life sentences and death sentences like speeding tickets, our century long emplacement of ruthless dictatorships in Latin America and all the dead, tortured, assassinated of, by and for the CIA in dirty wars there, people thrown drugged from planes into the sea, the slaughter of a million in Indonesia approved by Kissinger and Ford beforehand. We laugh at the almost endless list of clever brutal ruthless plots to assassinate leaders (over 600 against Fidel Castro alone) and topple governments, yet what a picture it paints of our culture. The U.S.A. is a militarist powerhouse. Our history makes clear that in general we are not fairer, freer, more moral and certainly not more deserving than other nations and peoples. And, although selfish intent is not alone the province of the U.S. power elite, they've used that myth of exceptionalism to even cancel out the undeniable history that this is the only nation to have used atomic bombs on civilians, that repeatedly targeted major civilian populations for annihilation with the oxygen extinguishing firebombing of Tokyo, Dresden and hundreds of other cities, that we slaughtered 2 million Vietnamese while poisoning their agricultural lands simply because they sought national independence on their own terms.

American innocence and paranoia are nurtured by our lack of a consistent reliable and truthful American ethic or myth and narrative that is not fraught with outrageous lies. Democrat Paine's nobility was faked, despite Howard Fast's play, Citizen Thom Paine that tried to make him into a hero. Paine discovered that a consistent positive ethic was incompatible with his pragmatism in quest of independence, just as it was for the wealthy pre-Capitalist elites and is for today's Capitalist elites—be they conservative or liberal.

That perpetual duplicity has caused some of our subcultures—such as the African American which had such cultural stolidity coming out of slavery—to have been battered and beaten beyond recognition by contemporary market-based forces and conspiracies, like the Iran-Contra era drug infusions into urban communities, the disruption of families and other normal socializing forces. Watson and Skinner's rat-based behaviorist techniques have centered all our lives around social fragmentation, commodity acquisition, ,bogus-reality TV, hopelessness, and dreams of magical success like winning the lottery to soften the fall into the basement of insecurity in income, opportunity, education, housing, healthcare, aging and loss of humanity; and to convince us that there is not enough wealth or joy to be shared socially. Our children learn to focus their imaginations on the hedonist tinsel lives of entertainers and war games, while living a fear-filled nightmare.

Meanwhile, everyone knows that Capitalism and the market culture are transparently indifferent to human values and human value; that the game aims to divide us against others and each other. Bullying successfully is not some "new normal" but a blooming of disguised features of American reality going back as far as you like—to the witch trials or to the first slave ship that landed. Trump's offensiveness amounts only to a crude arrogant willingness to say and act out the mantra: "sure that's capitalism. So I will fuck you if I please; just because I can." The Media lambastes Trump precisely because they need to pretend that he doesn't represent their actual amoral ethos. But fundamentally he does.

On the other hand

In spite of all this, our people do still hold dear the recognizable high ideals we refer to like those in the Declaration and Bill of Rights. We've also advanced science and technology, art and literature, music and medicine, and produced many great humanists and truth tellers. Our workers have fought valiantly for their right to Unionize, for the 8 hour day, workers compensation laws, job security, social security, Medicare, civil rights and human rights. There is a clear distinction between the heart of this nation and that of those who have accumulated wealth and power and driven its political-economy into the speculative greed-ridden nightmare they protect at all costs, even though the powerful do derive from progenitors in our real history. There have always been many Americans who've consciously made great sacrifices, including those who've gone to war—just or unjust. . Though today's Resistance to the corrupt culture of power and greed seeks to upend Donald Trump and his minions, we all know that the State Power built upon chauvinist exceptionalist lies long precedes, and intends to supersede, Trump. That State is not going away of its own accord. Our normal includes a sick national culture that we need to cure by force of will.

In my view, we should require the rewriting of a Constitution based upon laws and protections furthering collaboration and equality among humans, nations, species in this delicate unstable world we inhabit. We need a Constitution that is not focused upon a schematic with formalistic tripartite rules that conceal a schema that assures the greatest power not only to wealth, but to the landowners of depopulated areas and slave states, and bolsters legal structures which exist to repress us all. We require a document that embodies and protects principles of freedom for all and those "unalienable rights." And we—that is, the whole world— also require a reorganized UN where all nations and peoples of the world acquire sufficient power to stand up to the almighty dollar nations and put an end to the IMF and its dictatorial exploits that are impoverishing billions, fomenting wars and destabilizing governments through debt enslavement. To unfold this process necessitates the widest exposure of the faked history of American Exceptionalism in detail; as it also requires immense sacrifices and great dedication. But you probably know all that.

Even simple democratizing measures are hard to achieve today when principles like equal universal suffrage are being undermined in our country. Systematic voter suppression though ludicrous in any nation claiming the mantle of "democracy," is not more ludicrous than was slavery and segregation. Turning the anti-democrats efforts back has to be hard-fought in State Houses and in the streets, yet this two party system has reached the end of its tether and blocks such challenges. It has no "Better Deal" to offer us because it is thoroughly mired in its own corruption. As in earlier times of slavery the first bloodshed in the new civil war now developing is being spilled by unarmed Blacks and protesters against White supremacy at the hands of armed and dangerous militarized police forces and paramilitary forces now gathering in the wings and entering the public arena against the rights of all else.

Exposing how the bizarre and dishonest concept of American Exceptionalism is not a side issue is a key agenda item. A consensus on how that myth was normalized requires at the least an aroused public taking back control of School Boards, State Legislatures and local governments everywhere. It will also require the formation of a national non-governmental militia to defend the Bill of Rights, equality and justice for all.

The Trump phenomenon has awakened millions to how far we have already marched toward Dante's hell. Even some people within the media, police agencies, the national security state, the "system" are recognizing this trajectory and rejecting it. Seek them out, join with them in Resistance. With no apologies to Chevron's phony ads: Resistance is "what people do."

*As I went walking, I saw a sign there,
And on that sign it said, "No Trespassing,"
But on the other side, It didn't say nothin',
That side was made for you and me.*

*In the shadow of the steeple, I saw my people,
By the relief office, I seen my people,
As they stood there hungry I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?*

(two verses from "This Land is Your Land", by Woody Guthrie, which have been often self-censored in concerts, recordings and whenever the song is popularly sung—cited from *Rising Up Singing, Sing Out Corporation* 1988 edition)