

Many Americans are dissatisfied with how the Democrats and the Republicans run the country. What can citizens do about the state of affairs and how to correct this downward spiral? First we must understand why there is so much discontent.

US Fractured By Dr Shila Patel MD

Order the book from the publisher [BookLocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12635.html?s=pdf>

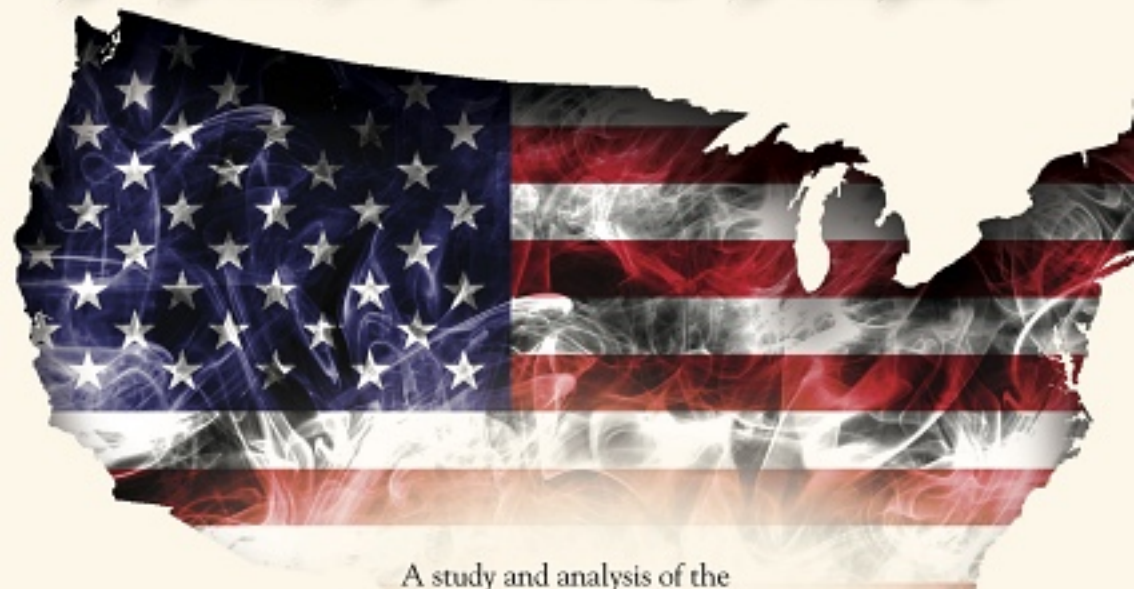
**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

AMERICA, WAKE UP!

We are witnessing our demise with the loss of our
democratic rights and freedoms.

US

FRACTURED



A study and analysis of the
political, sociological, and psychological effects from
the January 6th insurrection on the Capitol.



Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

Dr. Shila Patel is known as someone who speaks the truth, and people seek out her advice when they want someone to give them straightforward wisdom. People trust her opinions because she bases what she says in truth and fact. *US Fractured* is full of her thought-provoking words. When she speaks, you can feel her authority and insights that make you stop and ponder the realities of this country. Most of all, Shila Patel has a love for our country that is big as Texas and a spirit of concern that reigns down like thunder. I have studied Dr. Patel's work for many years. She is a woman who can be trusted to give you honest feedback and direction. I highly recommend *US Fractured*.

Mark Webb, M.S., L.M.F.T.

Author of *How To Be A Great Partner* and *How To Argue-Proof Your Relationship*

Dr. Patel has carefully and thoroughly researched the current state of affairs in the United States from 2020–2022. *US Fractured* is an in-depth study of the sociological events, political uprisings, Supreme Court rulings, economic failures, and conflicts that are continuing to affect the lives of all Americans, both young and old. As an educator, I am in awe of the amount of research Dr. Patel included in this book. I sincerely appreciate the education that I received. During this period, so many events transpired; I did not fully understand the effects on our society today. After finishing the last chapter, there is only one conclusion. Our democracy is in turmoil, with threats from multiple parties bulldozing their political agendas in local and state legislatures across the country. I highly recommend that all individuals, whether you are a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or undecided voter to please read this book with an open mind to understand fully the events and their disastrous consequences to our democracy.

Arthur D. Gottlieb, Retired Secondary School Principal

Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

US Fractured is a must read! Face it, Americans, we must become accountable for the issues that have us speeding in the wrong direction! Dr. Patel presents the unbiased facts of how we got here and suggests we make changes in our thinking and our actions so that our wonderful country can be healed.

Marianne Pluchino, Environmental Manager, Marine and
Freshwater Biologist

US Fractured is the thoughtful follow-up of Dr. Patel's two previous books, *Us Unhinged, Book 1* and *US Unhinged, Book 2*. Her theory states the country is losing Power and Status on the world stage due to the actions of both politicians and citizens. Clearly stated, the author notes how blind loyalty to a political party, or political movement, rather than the Best Interests of the Country has given way to a divide that becomes wider and seems at times to be unsurmountable. Serving the needs of the people cannot be agreed upon. A dangerous lack of trust in the election processes, government over involvement and the lax court systems speaks to a need to re-evaluate much of what is occurring. The author suggests several answers to these dilemmas. Citizens must insist on voting integrity, where all that are entitled can vote safely and can also trust the results to be accurate. Citizens must elect representatives that will focus on doing the business of the nation and not their own interests. Perhaps term limits or a Third Party may be in order to bring together ideas to solve the nation's ills. It will be a daunting task to face the many strongholds that currently fracture all that has been held sacred about the United States for its almost 250 years. That task must be done, however, to preserve the integrity of our country and ensure the freedom that is promised and sought after by so many who have come to her shores from all corners of the globe.

Carrol Shannon, MSW, LCSW

With the current state of affairs gripping this country, it needs open-minded people to see the facts as they are, not spun or twisted by their favorite politician or media channel. If the facts are essential, Dr. Patel has objectively laid them out in well-researched detail. The political division and discourse brought on by the extremes of racism and a culture war are reviewed for one to make their own decisions. This book will explain how compassion and empathy are badly needed today to save this country. It will show how the country needs people to be aware, responsible, and enlightened to understand and solve the assault on democracy. For almost 250 years, this country has endured and flourished while strengthening our democracy because people were willing to trust it instead of assaulting it for their benefit. Politicians will always fight each other but were inclined to let the people make the final voting decisions to prevent an unprecedented constitutional crisis we are now facing. Read this book to be informed about the facts in an opinionated world.

Vijay Patel, Engineer, Region Business Manager

Thought-provoking book!

I am a Christian, a Republican, a Trump voter, and a Fox news-watching conservative who refused to listen to any other news sources or views. The author of *US Fractured*, Shila Patel, M.D., has disproved most of my opinions on events ongoing in the U.S., including but not limited to politics, President Trump, and January 6th insurrection. The author spent a lot of time, effort, and research writing this book. Initially, I struggled with it when I began reading *US Fractured* because of my steadfast beliefs. I would find myself reading and disagreeing with what I was reading. However, it did open my mind to seeing things in another light. After reading this book, I feel strongly that our main problem is the division we see here in the United States. WE, as a "COUNTRY," should stand united. The violence needs to

Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

stop NOW. We need to get out and vote for the individual who will do the best job to return our country to a peaceful state. We all need to keep an open mind and make choices to better our society as Americans, not Republicans or Democrats.

Traci Mullis, RN, Retired Public Health Nurse Manager

US Fractured

How did we arrive at this point in the history of the United States of America? We are inhabiting the greatest country where every citizen has the freedom to pursue their dreams and economic opportunities. As Americans, we have the freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and the right to petition the government. But unfortunately, extremists in our country are slowly eroding these privileges that have made us one of the freest nations in the world. Are state legislatures, with their unprecedented power threatening our democracy? Will sanity and rationality pull us back from the brink of self-destruction of this great nation?

Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

Copyright © 2022 by Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publishers, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review to be printed in a newspaper, magazine, or journal.

The author grants the final approval for this literary material.

The views and opinions expressed in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the publisher or any parties mentioned hereafter. While every effort is made to ensure that the content of this book is accurate, the information is provided "as is" and the author and publisher make no representations or warranties in relation to the accuracy or completeness of the information found within.

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-7377849-7-5

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-7377849-8-2

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-7377849-9-9

Printed on acid-free paper.

US Fractured is printed in Times New Roman.

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Patel, M.D., Dr. Shila

US Fractured by Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022921347

Disclaimer

This book details the author's personal experiences with and opinions about societal problems. Currently, the author is not a healthcare provider.

The author and publisher are providing this book and its contents on an "as is" basis and make no representations or warranties of any kind with respect to this book or its contents. The author and publisher disclaim all such representations and warranties, including for example warranties of healthcare for a particular purpose. In addition, the author and publisher do not represent or warrant that the information accessible via this book is accurate, complete, or current.

The statements made about services have not been evaluated. They are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any condition or disease. Please consult with your own physician or healthcare specialist regarding the suggestions and recommendations made in this book.

Except as specifically stated in this book, neither the author or publisher, nor any authors, contributors, or other representatives will be liable for damages arising out of or in connection with the use of this book. This is a comprehensive limitation of liability that applies to all damages of any kind, including (without limitation) compensatory; direct, indirect, or consequential damages; loss of data, income, or profit; loss of or damage to property and claims of third parties.

You understand that this book is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a licensed healthcare practitioner, such as your physician. Before you begin any healthcare program, or change your lifestyle in any way, you will consult your physician or other licensed healthcare practitioner to ensure that you are in good health and that the examples contained in this book will not harm you. As such, use of this book implies your acceptance of this disclaimer.

Chapter Summaries

Introduction

Too many adverse events continue to permeate the American culture. In a land with so many opportunities, I struggle to understand the divisions and reasons for the chaos. I hope that other Americans who are also experiencing this negative trend will want to step up and assist in changing the direction of our country.

Disbelief

The January 6th riot on the Capitol brought out the worst behavior in our democracy. Incidents like this very rarely happen in a land of law and order. It shocked the American people and the rest of the world. We are losing the fundamental rights that our forefathers fought so hard to establish. Why did these events occur, and how responsible was former President Trump?

Learning from History

We are witnessing Vladimir Putin's war and the Russian assault on the Ukrainian people. As these events unfold, the rest of the world watches in horror. President Biden unites NATO countries in Europe to aid and assist Ukraine, while China and India benefit from this unprovoked aggression. What does this war mean for world peace?

Immigrants and Assimilation

I immigrated to this country forty years ago. My aspirations and hopes for freedom and opportunity were similar to all other immigrants coming to live in America. How does the government control the influx of migrants and the associated challenges? Why are

citizens worried about immigrants when they have assimilated and contributed tremendously to the prosperity of this nation?

Freedom and American Core Beliefs

Journey back in history and recall the beliefs that define America. Many citizens still practice and live by these core values, but many politicians have forgotten them. It is time for citizens to remember why the United States of America is known as the land of the free and the brave.

In the Name of Freedom

The Republican party has always strived for less government intrusion in Americans' lives. But unfortunately, after Trump and the Republicans lost the last election, they enacted many laws severely restricting the rights of the American people. They attacked voting and women's rights to choose. The majority of Americans do not agree with these new laws. And while the Biden Administration tries to maneuver a safe path during the pandemic, other politicians undermine scientists and physicians by declaring they know better.

Intolerance and Division

Rather than learning from the experts in the field, the politicians want to dictate policies about LGBTQ issues and what parents can and cannot do to help their children. Parents, especially groups like "Moms for Liberty," are recruiting more Republican voters to control the school curriculum. Different interpretations of the "Critical Race Theory" are causing conflicts. When did banning and burning books become the American way?

Division of the Nation with Bad Behavior

Why have Americans tolerated the outrageous behavior of people in power? We all need to scrutinize the candidates and elect ones that share the values and beliefs of the people they serve. Instead, Washington politics is a sham where nothing gets done, and we keep accepting this conduct as the norm. Do we have to put up with this travesty from our elected officials?

Will Reality Set In?

Will the politicians who have wronged this country be tried and finally receive retributive justice? Despite numerous legal challenges, Trump can even consider running for President in 2024. Are the American people so accommodating and willing to accept the status quo rather than looking at the facts and making better decisions to serve the majority of hard-working Americans?

In Service of the Nation

Many brave Republicans who were distressed and disappointed with Trump's actions and inactions around the events of January 6th dared to speak up and inform the American public about what transpired. But, will all this be enough to change some minds, or will the majority of Trump supporters keep their blinders on? Will the GOP politicians continue to support the lies about a stolen election and not assist in passing laws to help the country move forward?

Covid-19 Pandemic and the New Norm

It is two years after the pandemic, with over a million lives lost in America. Politicians and citizens continue arguing about managing and treating the virus. Planning and preparing for an ongoing battle

with an enemy we cannot see continues to be a top priority to maintain the health and welfare of all citizens.

Issues That Need to Be Overcome

Many serious issues plague our country. We must vote for people who want to address our nation's problems. Let's stop the lies, fake news, and violence on social media to stay in power. Let's pass laws to protect all citizens from gun violence and stop pandering to lobbyists. And stop taking away women's freedom to appease religious groups. Let the Supreme Court Justices know that their opinions should not reflect their bias but rather uphold the constitution. Finally, it is time to address the serious mental health issues stemming from the pandemic. Americans need to feel that the government is focusing on everyone's needs.

Last Thoughts to Ponder

Will Americans look for a way out of the dysfunction in Washington? Do we continue to accept the gridlock and accomplish nothing as politicians refuse to work across party lines? Will a moderate third party materialize? Do we have politicians as fed up as the general public who want to make a difference? Let us all say enough is enough of dysfunction, intolerance, loss of freedom, "greedflation," and lies and conspiracy theories. The loss of our democracy in America is real. So what can we all do to accept responsibility and move forward?

Epilogue

Acknowledgements

Note from the Author

About the Author

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Disbelief	5
Learning from History	17
Immigrants and Assimilation	35
Freedom and American Core Beliefs	49
In the Name of Freedom.....	65
Intolerance and Division.....	85
Division of the Nation with Bad Behavior	109
Will Reality Set In?	135
In Service of the Nation.....	147
Covid-19 Pandemic and the New Norm.....	157
Issues That Need to Be Overcome	175
Last Thoughts to Ponder.....	205
Epilogue.....	217
Acknowledgements	223
Note from the Author	225
About the Author	227
Endnotes	229

Introduction

*"Freedom means the opportunity to be what we
never thought we would be."¹*

Daniel J. Boorstin, American Historian

The year is 2022. I emigrated to the United States of America forty years ago after completing my medical education in the United Kingdom. However, it was not my first introduction to the USA; I came for a visit with my parents as a sixteen-year-old tourist. We arrived in New York and travelled across the country to San Francisco on a Greyhound bus, stopping at numerous towns and cities. I was in awe of the big, paved highways, tall buildings, and ease of travelling long distances. After all, I was visiting from Africa where there were many unpaved roads or only single lanes. In addition, you had to worry about getting accosted by the local tribes or stopped by corrupt police officers at borders between the different countries. I remember, on some occasions, having to stay in some remote town if we had a broken windshield, punctured tire, or needed repairs on the car until the part was available while we were travelling. The adults played cricket to keep themselves entertained, and the children played amongst themselves or watched the game.

My father always dreamt about coming to this land of opportunity. As a young child, I remember seeing my mother toil daily over coal fires and bartering with the "locals" to obtain cooking utensils in exchange for clothes and money. My family and I all wanted to rise above poverty. I described my growing up years, both personally and professionally in *Us Unhinged-Book 1* and *US Unhinged-Book 2*, so I will not review that journey. It took me four years out of my retirement to write, rewrite, and edit the two books with help from an editor, Michele Gottlieb, and the publisher BookLocker. I continue to receive

positive feedback from readers across the country. Their comments have propelled me to write this third book *US Fractured*.

I mentioned in my first book that I had no ambitions of being a writer or an author of books, but writing gets under your skin. You cannot stop thinking about how to get your thoughts down on paper. I continue to feel that someone must document and explain what we are experiencing here in the United States. And concurrently, help people understand the current turmoil occurring in our political, economic, and social landscapes.

The impetus for writing the *US Unhinged* was the #MeToo Movement, school, and other mass shootings. Then the Covid-19 pandemic reared its ugly head in 2020, just over a hundred years since the "Spanish Flu" pandemic. I thought this health crisis would make people more compassionate and want to care for each other while rationally handling this major catastrophe. However, our country is more divided now, especially with conspiracy theories still circulating and politicians pandering to their party affiliations rather than taking care of their citizens. Individuals act more outrageously now than anyone can remember, both publicly and privately. One wonders if the emotional impact of the pandemic has cultivated the disgraceful behavior of some of our elected officials and citizens. People make threats, become violent, bully, and spread lies to intimidate officials and administrators by voicing their opinions in the name of freedom.

The primary catalyst for writing this book was the January 6th, 2021, insurrection on the Capitol building, which left me disbelieving that anything like this could happen in America. I wanted to spend time and energy gathering the facts to explain what has transpired. We need to return to the rules of civility, debate without violence, and work cooperatively rather than continue to divide the people. Despite having the brainpower and resources to do great things for our country and its citizens, nothing gets accomplished. And in advance, I

apologize to any readers who feel uncomfortable. I am angry about our elected officials' behavior. They have contributed to the ongoing chaos.

While working full time as a psychiatrist, I did not have the luxury of following the local and world news like I do now. My sister reminded me the other day that there was not this much chaos and disorder back then. The Covid-19 pandemic cost over a million lives in the United States alone, accompanied by many hardships and mental health issues. It will take time to recover from all this distress bestowed upon humanity, but we must get back to our fundamental principles of decency and kindness toward one another. We will not agree on everything but lies and conspiracy theories will tear us apart. There will always be those individuals who cannot take off their blinders and want to cause anarchy. As Americans, we know better, and many citizens are weary of the constant bickering where neither political party in Washington can pass any bills to improve our lives.

I want to understand fully and explore the roots of this chaos, and then it is up to you, the readers, to make up your minds about which path you want to follow; one to heal the nation or the other, to continue to divide the country.

"Instead of dwelling on our mistakes, we can use them to move forward. Make it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it. Regrets only apply when we don't learn from a situation. There are two kinds of guilt: the kind that drowns you until you're useless, and the kind that fires your soul to purpose."²

Sabaa Tahir, Novelist

In the Name of Freedom

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."¹⁶³
Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Republicans and some Americans have opposed the mask restrictions and vaccination mandates. They are adamant about granting citizens their free choice to decide whether to participate in health safety measures. Their battle focuses on each individual's right to exercise his right to free will and choice. In a society that continues to face the effects of the pandemic, this belief can be highly detrimental to the entire population.

The most recent United States census occurred in 2020. It represented the most participation by American citizens ever witnessed in our country. The census takes place every ten years. It also determines the lines for the states' legislative districts and the reapportionment of congressional seats.¹⁶⁴ Based on this population data, the Federal government distributes hundreds of billions of dollars to local communities. In addition, the census provides us with directions for state initiatives, where to expend funds to help our communities build, repair, and refurbish everything from schools to supermarkets and homes to hospitals.

In U.S. politics, redrawing the boundaries of electoral districts can offer one political party an unfair advantage over its rivals. This practice is known as gerrymandering. It first occurred when minorities were given the right to vote. It is an important concept to understand since it dilutes the voting power of members of ethnic or minority groups, also known as "cracking." Another tactic used is "packing," by which the opposing party's voting power is concentrated in one district to reduce the voting power in other communities.¹⁶⁵ The voters are

supposed to choose the politicians they want to represent them. However, in 2021, the politicians redrew the districts to rig the system by deciding which voters they wished to serve in specific areas. This deliberate manipulation is overtly harmful to our democracy.

The Republicans have been busy maximizing their advantage to control the U.S. House of Representatives in the 2022 midterm elections. So far, 49 states (98%) and 429 (99%) of House Districts have adopted proposals.¹⁶⁶ North Carolina redrew its congressional map to secure at least 10 of the state's 14 congressional seats.¹⁶⁷ The GOP-majority state legislature in Florida fine-tuned the new congressional map but was constrained by an anti-gerrymandering state constitutional amendment, which limited the influence of politics in the redraw. DeSantis vetoed the Senate's changes; the Senate had declared that they were unconstitutional. After a month, DeSantis achieved his objective by redrawing the boundaries. The new congressional districts gave 20 of Florida's 28 seats to Republicans and scrapped two Black "performing" seats. In June 2022, the Florida Supreme Court refused to look into a challenge to a new map of the state's congressional districts that the Republican State Legislature approved. The ruling ensured that the November elections will be based on these districts, even though a lower state court stated it diluted the voting power of Black residents, violating the State Constitution.¹⁶⁸ Under the Voting Rights Act, minority-performing districts are communities where racial or language minority groups members have sufficient numbers to elect candidates of their choice.¹⁶⁹ Colorado's new independent commission drew a map with four Democratic-leaning districts, three where GOP is favored, in addition to one new competitive seat.¹⁷⁰ Republicans in Texas protected their incumbents by bolstering longtime members whose districts were getting more competitive. Both parties play this game. Democrats in New York produced a plan that would eliminate four GOP seats.¹⁷¹

For American democracy to work, our citizens must have equal voting opportunities. However, Republicans in the Senate are obstructing attempts by Democrats to pass new voting rights legislation. There are several moderate Democrats who have blocked efforts to change the rules. As a result, the measures can only pass with their Democratic votes. This manipulation, underscored by Trump's election fraud lies, creates the impression that Republicans are simply stacking the political system to stay in power by making it more difficult for Americans who oppose them to vote. Between 2000 and 2020, voting options like mail-balloting, no-excuse absentee voting, and early in-person voting have become more widespread. Other policies, like voter registration, have adapted to the 21st century with the advent of online registration and a marked increase in same-day registration. Numerous revisions in election policies assist voters and increase election efficiency, accuracy, and security. Many changes have been adopted with bipartisan support. Yet, many believe that political parties push for the policies that conventional wisdom says help them and hinder their opponents. The election administration has become highly professional, and voters have more options and access than ever. Democrats and Republicans were under pressure from the voters to modernize the voting process. Americans are used to convenience.¹⁷²

In April 2022, Georgia state lawmakers passed a bill initiating new election policing powers to the State's Bureau of Investigation.¹⁷³ The State Investigations Agency has the authority to initiate inquiries into voter fraud, call for the public inspection of paper ballots, and limit third-party donations to the election administration. After Florida, Georgia became the second state to pass an election police force bill this year. Republicans continue to claim that the 2020 election was rife with voter fraud. Georgia also passed a law stating that no one should give "any money or gifts, including, but not limited to, food and drink"

within 25 feet of voters standing in line. Violations of this law are a misdemeanor and punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Previous state law made it a felony to give gifts "for registering as a voter, voting, or voting for a particular candidate."¹⁷⁴ In 2020, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger interpreted it to include food or water.¹⁷⁵ In Florida, the law expands the pre-existing solicitation ban to include zones around drop boxes and "engaging in any activity with the intent or effect to influence a voter." While that law doesn't mention food or water, critics of the law worry that the regulation could be interpreted that way. New York's law would allow someone to buy bottles of water or cheap snacks in bulk and hand them out anonymously to voters. Georgia's law makes no such exceptions.¹⁷⁶

Offering food or water while waiting in line to vote does not violate any part of the new election law in Texas. Providing it as a form of influencing votes has been illegal for years. However, Texas has enacted several changes to its voting laws. There is now a ban on drive-through and 24-hour voting. There are also new regulations for early voting hours and a ban on the distribution of mail-in ballot applications. It is now a felony for local election officials to send unsolicited applications to request a mail-in ballot. The same punishment applies to officials who approve the use of public funds "to facilitate" the unsolicited distribution of applications by third parties. This ruling prevents county administrators from offering applications to local groups that help get people out to vote. Political parties can still send out unsolicited applications if they pay for them. There are new ID requirements for voting by mail. Voters must provide their driver's license number or if they don't have one, the last four digits of their Social Security number on applications for those ballots. They must also provide the same numbers on the envelope used to return their completed ballot.¹⁷⁷

Voters 65 and older, and individuals with a disability or illness that prevents them from voting in person, are the only ones who can receive a paper ballot to be filled out at home and returned in the mail or dropped off in-person on Election Day. People who assist voters in filling out their ballots, including voters with disabilities, could face possible criminal penalties. They must pledge to limit their assistance "to read the ballot to the voter, direct the voter to read and mark it or guide the voter to mark the ballot". In Texas, they also made it easier for partisan poll watchers to move about freely, making it a criminal offense to prevent them from observing. In addition, monthly reviews of the state's voter rolls will focus on identifying non-citizens.¹⁷⁸ Previously, local initiatives made it easier for voters of color to vote. These regulations have been rolled back, while expanding the access to vote for individuals in more conservative, rural areas.

The image of the Supreme Court must rise above politics. Supreme Court judges are the last resort to uphold democracy. Now, the recently life-appointed judges leave many Americans with a loss of faith in the system. Instead of the Court staying out of politics, the right-wing Supreme Court majority nominated by former President Trump, and approved by top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell, is exerting its power to change America. There is a controversy due to the latest redrawing of congressional districts in Alabama, a conservative Southern state with a distressing racial history and a significant black minority disproportionately voting for Democrats. In Alabama's redistricting case, the Supreme Court's action on February 7, 2022, forecasts a new threat to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and electoral opportunities for Blacks and other racial minorities nationwide. In a 5-4 vote, the justices reinstated an Alabama congressional map that a lower court found to dilute the voting power of Blacks in the state.¹⁷⁹ In their dissent, the three liberal judges wrote that "the Court does a disservice to Black Alabamians. With this new precedent, their

electoral power is diminished in violation of a law that the Court once strongly defended for American democracy."¹⁸⁰ Led by Chief Justice John Roberts, "the Supreme Court's conservative majority in 2013 destroyed a key section of the Voting Rights Act that required states with a history of discrimination to obtain federal approval before changing election rules. The Conservative judges have consistently enhanced states' control over election practices while limiting Federal oversight and judicial safeguard opportunities."¹⁸¹ If the highest Court in the land cannot uphold previous laws and continues to side with party affiliations, justice will continue to diminish in the United States.

Before the last election in November 2020, President Trump selected Amy Barrett for the Supreme Court. She is a "devout Catholic" but belongs to a secretive Catholic "covenant community" called People of Praise. Barrett is a member and faces claims of adhering to a "highly authoritarian" structure.¹⁸² She stated that legal careers should not be a means of gaining satisfaction, prestige, or money, but rather "as a means to the end of serving God." A review of the group's literature reveals that this organization dominates members' everyday lives, in which so-called "heads," or spiritual advisers make life decisions. Members are expected to financially support one another by donating 5% of their income. Married women follow their husbands' leadership. Does she have to consult with her husband about her judicial judgments? It sounds like a cult. She is only 48 years old and now a life-long United States Supreme Court appointee. We now have a profoundly religious person passing legal judgments at the highest level in the land for many years. Religious freedom means you can practice any religion you want or none at all. It does not denote that you can use your beliefs to dictate what others can and cannot do. During her confirmation hearings, despite her firm adherence to religious beliefs, she repeatedly stated that her convictions would not interfere with her judgment as a Supreme Court

Justice. Her voting decisions have been precisely the opposite. She has compiled a conservative voting record in cases touching on abortion, gun rights, discrimination, and immigration. She also said several times that as an appeals court judge, she would follow the Supreme Court precedent on abortion.¹⁸³ Now we know where she stands on this issue. On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court issued an opinion that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, taking away a federal constitutional right to an abortion.¹⁸⁴ This opinion is the most consequential Supreme Court decision in decades and will transform the landscape of women's reproductive health in America. Access to abortion is a right critical to guaranteeing a wide range of other human rights, including the rights to life and security of a person, privacy, non-discrimination, and freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, among others.

It is not easy to understand why women across America have allowed men, who dominate the political field, to dictate what they can and cannot do with their bodies. I addressed this issue in my *US Unhinged-Book 2*, under the chapter "Understanding a Woman's Right to Abortion." I will not repeat that information here, but since I wrote that chapter, many states are making it very difficult for women to make this choice themselves. Abortion is controversial in many countries due to moral, ethical, religious, and political reasons. Teen pregnancies typically have high abortion rates, especially among teens 14 and under. Abortion laws permit, prohibit, restrict, or regulate the availability of abortion. *Roe v. Wade* was the landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision that affirmed the constitutional right to abortion. Since then, States have made changes to regulate and limit when and under what circumstances a person may obtain an abortion.¹⁸⁵ The states are also capable of criminalizing the act now that the Supreme Court has overturned its ruling on the *Roe* case. On December 1, 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, a case about a blatantly unconstitutional

Mississippi law that would ban abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy. As the lawyers for the state made clear in their July 22, 2021, briefing to the court, the ultimate goal of that case is, and always has been, to overturn *Roe* and ban abortion altogether. In this case, they demanded outright that the Supreme Court ignore established legal precedents and overturn *Roe*. By agreeing to hear the case, the Supreme Court signaled its potential willingness to overturn it and did so after decades of its own decisions upholding abortion rights.¹⁸⁶ Without *Roe*, 26 states are certain or likely to ban abortion to the fullest extent possible, including 13 states that have 'trigger' laws in place that will automatically enact bans within days or even hours of the decision on June 24, 2022.¹⁸⁷

As of September 1, 2021, the Supreme Court failed to intervene and allowed a Texas law banning abortion after six weeks to go into effect in direct violation of the *Roe v. Wade* ruling.¹⁸⁸ Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed legislation to ban abortion at six weeks of gestation. It is so early in a pregnancy that most women will not even experience symptoms.¹⁸⁹ This law is callous and cruel. It permits any individual opposed to abortion to sue a provider or anyone who helps a patient in Texas to obtain an abortion, including providing financial help or transportation. It does not matter where the claimants live or whether they are associated with the patient. Individuals will be able to win a judgment of \$10,000 or more. This law will create the potential for numerous frivolous lawsuits against clinics and bury them in legal fees, forcing them to close their facilities. Healthcare will not be accessible for women within the six-week time frame. Abortion rights supporters have aptly dubbed this regulation the "sue thy neighbor law." In addition, people who successfully defend themselves from such lawsuits are prohibited from recovering their legal fees.¹⁹⁰

The law does not provide exceptions for cases of pregnancy resulting from rape, incest, or sex trafficking. The only way doctors can intervene is for "a medical emergency," which is so vague that care providers are scared of getting involved in a case where they may be sued, like an ectopic pregnancy. This condition is life-threatening. It occurs when a fetus grows in the fallopian tube outside of the uterus. Any Texas resident who cannot obtain an abortion must travel outside the state for services. If there is no access to abortion care, the average one-way driving distance to an abortion clinic will increase from 17 miles to 247 miles.¹⁹¹

Texas has a long list of restrictions and abortion bans. Patients must receive state-mandated counseling that includes information designed to discourage them from having an abortion and then wait 24 hours before receiving care. Furthermore, people in Texas may not use telehealth to see their provider for a medication abortion, meaning patients have to come to a clinic for care in person and schedule two separate visits. Additionally, patients cannot use their health insurance, either public or private, to cover the cost of their abortion except in extreme situations. Patients must undergo unnecessary ultrasounds. And patients who are minors must obtain parental consent. These restrictions and regulations increase the financial and logistical barriers for abortion patients. The result will be a significant decrease in abortions in Texas. The state also requires abortion clinics to meet unnecessary and burdensome standards related to their physical building, equipment, and staffing.¹⁹²

I understand that abortion is an emotionally charged issue. However, it is incredible that the Republicans have always touted minimal government interference in the lives of Americans, and now they want to dictate this very private matter of a woman to conceive or not conceive. Texas has almost seven million women aged 15 to 49 out of a total population of 75 million within this age group in the

United States. As a result, *Roe v. Wade* is now effectively meaningless for one in ten U.S. women of reproductive age.¹⁹³ "Pro-life" politicians state that their actions are responsible for the life of the unborn child. They have no relationship with that fetus. It is not viable outside the mother. In opposition to their right to decide what is best for the fetus, the woman is very much alive, functioning, and able to make her own decisions.

There are many financial and logistic reasons for a woman to decide to get an abortion. Her family may be unable to afford to feed and care for another child. She may be the only working parent and cannot take time off to have another child. The idea of carrying a child conceived from an incestuous relationship, rape, or sex trafficking may be too emotionally taxing for any woman. Does anyone care to look at these issues? Are politicians willing to offer healthcare during the pregnancy, care for the child, and provide financial support to these citizens? The Republican states spend the least on women's health care, childcare, or for minorities who will be affected the most by the abortion bans. No laws require males to contribute to childcare, especially in cases of rape or incest. So, let's punish women, force them to have children, and raise them regardless of their financial status. Soon, states will have to open up orphanages and adoption agencies. Politicians and civilians who support these rulings have never experienced poverty or the emotional toll it requires to have an abortion. These restrictions will disproportionately harm people who already face discriminatory obstacles to healthcare, including people of color, Blacks, Indigenous, and Latino individuals, people with low incomes, LGBTQ people, young people, people with disabilities, immigrants, and people in rural areas.

People struggling financially often delay care to secure funding. Texas prohibits coverage of abortion care through its Medicaid program and most private insurance plans. Governor Abbott lacked

sound judgment when he vowed to keep rapists off the streets of Texas. He did not want abortions to increase from these crimes.¹⁹⁴ He does not understand domestic abuse victims or women getting raped and becoming pregnant by their husbands or partners. Maybe he will devise a law to perform vasectomies on men convicted of rape or incest. Although it is most unlikely, men would never tolerate that kind of intrusion or regulation on their bodies. Men have rights, but women don't in this "land of freedom."

In Idaho, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would allow family members of the fetus to sue the medical provider who performs the abortion for a minimum of \$20,000 within four years of the procedure. The state legislature also passed another bill to prevent most abortions after six weeks. In addition, fathers, siblings, grandparents, uncles, or aunts of the fetus may sue a medical provider who performs the procedure, according to ABC News.¹⁹⁵ How is the medical community going to cope with these legal pressures?

The year 2021 is already a defining one in abortion rights history. The 97 abortion restrictions enacted through July already surpass the count from 2011, previously the worst year on record, with 89 regulations. An overview of state abortion laws in 2022, provided by the Guttmacher Institute, reveals that 38 states require an abortion to be performed by a licensed physician. Nineteen states require a hospital abortion after a particular time frame in pregnancy. Forty-three states prohibit abortion after a specific time frame, except when necessary to protect the woman's life. Twenty-one states have laws banning "partial-birth" abortions.¹⁹⁶ June 24, 2022 beat a 50-year ruling, eliminating the federal rights of women to get an abortion by allowing States to pass laws regarding abortion restrictions or access. Florida, West Virginia, and Arizona have passed 15-week abortion bans.¹⁹⁷ The legislation in Florida's bill contains several exceptions to the prohibition of abortion, including cases with fatal fetal abnormality,

lifesaving measures, or severe injury to the pregnant person. There are no exceptions in the case of incest, human trafficking, or rape.¹⁹⁸ Many state governments have now issued their revised abortion regulations. Women must lay down their life for their unborn child under most circumstances. Highly patriarchal Christian legislatures are now severely restricting a woman's choice to obtain an abortion.

In April 2022, the Oklahoma Legislature also passed a near-total ban on abortion. There are no provisions or exceptions for rape and incest victims. The bill states performing an abortion or attempting the procedure is a felony punishable by a maximum fine of \$100,000 or a full ten years in state prison, or both.¹⁹⁹ Kentucky's House of Representatives and Senate have approved a similar 15-week ban which restricts access to abortion with medication. It also makes it more difficult for a minor to obtain an abortion in the state.²⁰⁰ In South Dakota, a similar law restricts abortions with medication. It is one of the most challenging places in the country to obtain abortion drugs, requiring pregnant women to make at least three visits to a clinic to receive abortion medication.²⁰¹

On a rare occasion, with a Democratic sponsor, the Colorado House of Representatives passed a bill supporting abortion rights. The legislation states that "every individual has a fundamental right to use or refuse contraception, and every pregnant individual has a basic right to continue the pregnancy and give birth or to have an abortion."²⁰² In 1967, Colorado became the first state to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape, incest, or in which a pregnancy would lead to permanent physical disability. In 1978, the state of Colorado had set aside Medicaid funding to provide poor women abortions if they needed one.²⁰³

Abortion is essential health care, critical to health equity, reproductive autonomy, and racial, gender, and economic justice. The procedure ensures that women can control their bodies, lives, and

futures. Yet, how do teenage girls pursue their education and careers if they must continue their pregnancies without the freedom of choice? What messages are we sending to these young women due to society's restrictions on them?

On a more hopeful note, female CEOs are taking a stand against these inhumane, newly enacted abortion laws that are so restrictive to women. Austin-based Bumble, Match Group, which owns dating apps Tinder and Hinge, Yelp, and Citigroup, are four companies who have announced they will cover the travel costs for their employees seeking abortions and where there is a ban on abortion.²⁰⁴ CEO Shar Dubey of Match Group was one of the first to speak out. "I immigrated to America from India over 25 years ago, and I have to say, as a Texas resident, I am shocked that I now live in a state where women's reproductive laws are more regressive than most of the world, including India. Surely everyone should see the danger of this highly punitive and unfair law that doesn't even make an exception for victims of rape or incest." Dubey said.²⁰⁵ Whitney Wolfe Herd, CEO of Bumble, has created a relief fund to support women's reproductive rights and people across the gender spectrum who seek abortions in Texas. "Bumble is women-founded and women-led, and from day one, we've stood up for the most vulnerable," the firm announced on Twitter. "We'll keep fighting against regressive laws," referring to the Texas Heartbeat Law, which prohibits abortion after the detection of embryonic or fetal cardiac activity.²⁰⁶ Apparently, there is a growing list of companies that are establishing their policies to help vulnerable employees. Lyft & Uber both said in September 2021 that they would create legal defense funds to protect any drivers who might be sued under Texas law for driving a person who receives an abortion. Amazon became the latest corporation to cover employees' travel costs to seek abortion care. The company told its staff that it would pay up

to \$4,000 in travel expenses annually for medical treatments, including abortions.

Witold Henisz, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, told Reuters, "Millennial workers and consumers demand that companies take stands and look to their CEOs, especially where the government has failed to act or taken a stand of which they disapprove. This support will continue to grow as a strategic challenge for companies."²⁰⁷ Salary raises alone will not be enough to recruit the most talented employees. A company's social policies really do matter. "Do well by doing good" is now a mantra for many leading companies. Consumers and other stakeholders demand that companies conduct themselves in a socially responsible way to improve society and the environment. Taking a stand on a political issue that most Americans agree on (about 60% say they wanted *Roe* to be upheld) is a relatively low-risk way to tout their progressive policies. Uber, Nike, Lyft, Disney, JP Morgan, and other companies vowed to assist their employees with access to abortions after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.²⁰⁸ At first, major companies like Walmart and Disney were silent when there was a leak of the abortion draft. It sparked outrage among consumers. As states pass laws to enforce extreme anti-abortion policies, many more executives may come forth. When CNN asked the Business Roundtable, a large group of lobbyists representing more than 180 CEOs, what it thinks of the anti-abortion measures, a representative said the group "does not have a position on this issue."²⁰⁹ Even though most Americans want abortion to remain legal and safe, companies do not want to antagonize roughly 40 percent of the people who want to abolish it. Despite the bottom line calling the shots, corporate America can no longer afford to stay silent on the most pressing political issues. It is increasingly drawn into the political sidelines, and CEOs are finding themselves in the uncomfortable position of openly disagreeing with Republicans,

once defined as the more business-friendly party. Their investors, customers, and employees will ask them to take a stance. Executives make their position known when racial injustices or threats to voting rights are debated. They are siding with equality and democracy. When rioters attacked the Capitol on January 6, 2021, business leaders condemned the insurrection, and many paused campaign donations to Republicans who opposed ratifying Joe Biden's victory. When Putin invaded Ukraine, firms were willing to abandon or limit operations in Russia swiftly. This reaction was not only the right thing to do, but also, the PR risks would have caused a monetary backlash. Atlanta-based Coca-Cola and Delta both drew GOP fire when they spoke out against legislation that would have curbed voting rights for some Americans.

Many lawmakers profess to be Christian but have forgotten to care for their constituents and fellow human beings. They think they must exert power and make rules that align with their opinions. Discussing what the Bible does or does not condone is a distraction. The United States is not a theocracy, and religious texts should never be the basis or justification for public policy.²¹⁰

"You don't need religion to have morals. If you can't determine right from wrong then you lack empathy, not religion."²¹¹

"Christian Hypocrites"

Men who do not believe in women's reproductive rights need to get a vasectomy. This action would hopefully stop most of the rhetoric around unwanted pregnancies and the need for birth control. The ultimate solution: women should not have sex with men who have no respect for women's rights.

A key vote on a Democrat-led bill aimed at preserving access to abortion nationwide failed in the Senate on May 10, 2022.²¹² The bill

was unable to advance. The Democratic Party faced enormous pressure to take action on abortion rights amid fears that the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling would soon be struck down.²¹³ The final vote tally was 49 to 51, with Democratic Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia joining Republicans to vote against the measure and stop it from advancing. As anticipated, the bill was blocked on a nearly party-line vote due to gridlock in Washington. President Joe Biden lashed out at Senate Republicans for blocking the passage of the Women's Health Protection Act. "This failure to act is when women's constitutional rights are under unprecedented attack. It also runs counter to the will of the majority of American people," Biden said.²¹⁴ Senator Joe Manchin should be running as a Republican since he has sided with the Republicans and opposed the Democratic agenda on many issues. After all, he is from the coal, fossil fuel state of West Virginia. Most of his votes are for the benefit of that state and not the entire American population. Biden has often met with failure to fully pass his massive domestic agenda due to obstacles, mainly because of the objections of two moderate Democratic senators, Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, and Joe Manchin of West Virginia. "I came to office with an ambitious plan and expected it to face stiff opposition in the Senate. I just hoped it would be from Republicans," the President said jokingly, but at the same time, truth said in jest.²¹⁵

Clinics in states likely to maintain access to abortion procedures are preparing for a potential influx of out-of-state patients following the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.²¹⁶ "This ruling is a devastating blow to millions of women who will find themselves in a vast abortion desert," said Jennifer Welch, president, and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Illinois.²¹⁷ In the draft opinion before the final decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, conservative Justice Samuel Alito tried to make it clear that other personal choices would not be impacted, like the right to marry a person of a different race or the same sex, and

the right to contraception.²¹⁸ Many advocates on reproductive health issues think Alito's draft opinion will further fuel some conservatives' efforts to limit access to birth control. This effect is already being discussed in states like Texas, Missouri, Idaho, and Louisiana, where the Republican-led lawmakers regard forms of contraception not as birth control but as abortifacients.²¹⁹ Following the overturn, Justice Thomas already put out a statement that they may use the same arguments to restrict the use of contraception and Gay marriages. He is in an interracial marriage which was finally legalized in 1965, only eight years before *Roe v. Wade*. One would think that he would be more sympathetic to issues affecting minority populations.

There may be hope that suburban women who were disillusioned by President Joe Biden and are a key electoral constituency might be so outraged by the conservative court majority built by Republicans that they will look at Democrats for the mid-term elections. Perhaps young people who are tough to get to the polls might also be motivated by the potential loss of abortion rights. Multiple polls show that most Americans oppose overturning the constitutional right to an abortion, and statewide demonstrations support this view. Even some world leaders described the end of constitutional protections for abortions in the United States as a "backward" move. The Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, the French president, Emmanuel Macron, and the ousted British prime minister, Boris Johnson, all condemned the Supreme Court's overruling of *Roe v Wade*. New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, said the decision was "incredibly upsetting."²²⁰

"Freedom is the open window through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit and human dignity."²²¹
Herbert Hoover, former President of the United States

Reflection

June 24, 2022, was a somber day for women's rights in America. The Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* on this day, holding that there is no longer a federal constitutional right to an abortion. I am heartbroken for the many women who will be resorting to medieval ways to get an abortion, especially the minorities who cannot afford the expense of traveling to states where it will still be legal to get an abortion. Many young girls will experience carrying a pregnancy from incest or rape and be scarred for the rest of their lives. This opinion is unthinkable, unimaginable, simply undemocratic! How could any intelligent human being think that they have the right to tell any woman in the United States of America, the land of the free, how to care for her body and what she can or cannot do with it!

Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett, and John Roberts have set a firestorm of political upheaval in the nation. The three Trump-appointed Justices lied to receive lifetime appointments. These conservative justices have dragged religion and their personal biases into their opinions instead of upholding the constitution and the personal freedoms of all Americans, women included. From New York to California, North Dakota to Texas, American men and women must march to every state capitol. As of 2020, the U.S. population census listed 108+ million women 18 years or older. And across the nation, about one-third of these women, 36 million, identify themselves as conservative, based on the statistics from the Pew Institute.

There remain 72 MILLION WOMENS' VOICES and VOTES who will now shout throughout the land: "My body, my decision, my right to choose." The thunder of their voices and marches has just begun to echo throughout the United States. None of us will ever give up our inalienable rights to choose or not to choose an abortion. Anyone with a daughter, wife, sister, or friend should be worried as

she may be next to get raped or be a victim of incest and forced to bear a child, she neither wants nor can care for. Our country has returned to the dark ages, and this loss of freedom does not stop here. Now Justice Thomas wants the Supreme Court to judge on regulations for contraception and Gay marriages. If young people do not wake up and understand what is happening in this country, the old, conservative men of the court will continue to restrict the rights of all American citizens. We need to get young people off of their I-phones and social media. They must understand what is happening, be enraged, protest, vote, and start replacing corrupt politicians. We need new blood, younger, more energetic, forward-thinking people with progressive ideas, leading the next generation into the next decade.

Issues That Need to Be Overcome

"I think that we have to realize that times of stress are also times that are signals for growth, and if we use adversity properly, we can grow through adversity."⁵¹³

Dr. Abraham Twerski, Rabbi and Psychiatrist

2022: Faith in Scientists and the Field of Medicine

The last few years have been challenging. After the pandemic, everyone worldwide was looking forward to some respite. Instead, the political and economic events of 2022 have continued to lower our morale considerably. So many of us have lost our faith in humanity. During the pandemic, people became isolated with minimal socialization. Social media provided an escape. Cable television and news anchors became the primary sources of information. Unfortunately, most people only listen to others who are like-minded and hence do not grasp "the other side of the story." As a result, their views become skewed, focusing on differences rather than understanding and learning from each other. With so much bad news, it is not surprising that there is such an uptick in mental health issues. Most of the reporting is repetitive, numbing, and sterile. After two years of isolation, people continue to spend an excessive amount of time on their cell phones and computers.

Despite a million deaths due to Covid-19, many Americans did not want to continue wearing masks. They wanted all mandates lifted instead of remaining cautious against future variants. Seventy-five percent of people who died from the Covid-19 infection were elderly, with approximately 750,000 families who lost a parent or a grandparent.⁵¹⁴ Some people are still resistant to vaccines because of their distorted thinking about the safety of vaccinations and boosters. These individuals will demand an antibiotic, a strong pain medication,

minor tranquilizers, or anti-depressant medication if they experience physical discomfort or are mentally distressed. Moderna, one of the companies manufacturing Covid-19 vaccines, just announced that they are creating individualized, mRNA-based, and personalized cancer vaccines. They will deliver custom-tailored medicine to one patient at a time. This research is the same technology used in Covid vaccines. It will be interesting to discover if the anti-vaxxers refuse this treatment when diagnosed with cancer. They gambled that they would not become ill from a deadly virus, even though many lost their lives. Generally, Americans have not questioned medical professionals about their healthcare. Due to the fake news and conspiracy theories, they now display a deep sense of distrust toward medical personnel. The politicians go one step further. They mock the experts even though they do not possess any medical expertise or professional credentials. Their actions are solely for political gain to win supporters.

Healthcare workers will be in more demand as the American population ages. Instead, the reality is that one in five physicians want to retire within two years, and two in five nurses want to quit from burn-out.⁵¹⁵ The healthcare workforce is on the brink of experiencing high staff turnover, part of the "Great Resignation" movement. More than one in four health department leaders quit their jobs during the pandemic, some after harassment and death threats. The public disrespect of their profession caused distress after serving thousands of overtime hours dressed in highly restrictive safety garb, trying to save Covid patients. America won't be able to restore its public health workforce until people value and respect their work. The health of the nation will depend in large part on vaccines. During the pandemic with Covid, we saw a fringe anti-vax movement move more mainstream, endangering our nation's safety, security, and economic prosperity. With influenza expected back in the U.S. in the fall, flu shots could be critical to prevent severe illness and keep hospitals from becoming

overwhelmed. It will be harder and harder to get children and adults to continue with their vaccinations. Polio has already made a comeback after being eradicated for decades. We have been privileged as a society; we have not seen children on crutches from polio. No one is in an iron lung. We are numb to the potential of what could happen. Monkeypox is now spreading. These are all virulent diseases. Health officials are banking on vaccinations to contain monkeypox and polio before they become standing threats in the United States.

2022: Six Months Later, Russia's War in Ukraine Continues

It has been over six months since Putin started his unprovoked assault on Ukraine. There is a concern that Americans will become wary and numb to the plight of the Ukrainian people. Trump and his close political cronies are already questioning our continued support of the war efforts to stop the Russians from destroying Ukraine. The real possibility of hunger worldwide, especially in third-world countries, is a reality due to rising prices and a shortage of grains. This situation is exacerbated by soaring fertilizer costs and price spikes for critical metals. Russia is a leading exporter of oil, natural gas, and coal, while Ukraine is a significant source of wheat and corn. The conflict has cut off supplies from Ukraine's ports. According to the world bank, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has contributed to a historical shock to commodity markets. Items like gas, clothing, milk, and cheese move up and down in cost more quickly during inflation. And low-income families suffer the most from high prices for necessities. It is predicted that global prices will remain high through the end of 2024.⁵¹⁶ Over the past two years, the spike in energy prices was the biggest since the 1973 oil crisis. After nearly doubling last year, energy prices were expected to jump more than 50% in 2022 before easing in 2023 and 2024, the World Bank said. At the same time, food prices were the highest since 2008. Global food prices are almost 30% higher than last

year's. According to the report, food prices would soar by 22.9% this year, highlighted by a 40% rise in wheat prices. According to the United Nations Secretary, a global food crisis may last for years.⁵¹⁷ Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the conflict combined with the effects of climate change and the pandemic "threatens to tip tens of millions of people over the edge into food insecurity followed by malnutrition, mass hunger, and famine." "There is enough food in our world now if we act together. But unless we solve this problem today, we face the possibility of global food shortage in the coming months," he added.⁵¹⁸

It is mind-boggling. In this century, we still have not learned anything from past conflicts. One man, Vladimir Putin, is single-handedly leading the destruction of a neighboring country, Ukraine. Over 8 million Ukrainians have been displaced within Ukraine, and another 6.3 million have fled the country. Poland has already housed three million people and provided them with food, healthcare, and education.⁵¹⁹ The Russian people have become pariahs to the rest of the world. They have chosen to believe what they want, contrary to information on the Internet. However, Putin does threaten anyone who opposes him. Russians have become fearful for their lives. No one man should have this much power to threaten nuclear war and annihilate people and property. The rest of the world can only send aid, weapons, and support to Ukraine. China, India, Venezuela, Brazil, Hungary, Syria, Turkey, and some other countries have chosen to stay out of the conflict or have supported Russia by buying Russian gas, oil, fertilizer, and weapons, in addition to providing funds for Putin's war machine.⁵²⁰

2022: Gun Violence Continues to Kill Innocent Victims in the United States

Every month in America, mass shootings occur in grocery stores, shopping malls, nightclubs, and schools. In May 2022, more families

suffered the loss of family members in a local grocery store in Buffalo, New York. A young disgruntled white male, eighteen years old, became indoctrinated into the white supremacy movement. He planned this mass execution of innocent victims as they were grocery shopping on a Saturday afternoon.⁵²¹ How many other disgruntled white males are waiting to legally purchase a semi-automatic rifle or a military-style weapon and cause mayhem? Generally, school shooters have been male, on average 18 years of age. Before the attacks, they tend to leave posts, messages, or videos on social media platforms, warning of their intent. Inspired by past school shooters, some are seeking fame and notoriety. However, most are motivated by a wave of indeterminate anger. Their path to violence may involve self-hate and despair turned outward at the world. Research finds that they often communicate their intent to harm individuals in advance as a final, desperate cry for help. The key to stopping these tragedies is for society to be alert to these warning signs and act on them immediately.⁵²²

There have been nearly 1,000 school shootings since 2012.⁵²³ Gun violence and school shootings are unique to America. Twelve children die daily from gun violence, and another 32 are shot and injured. Guns are the leading cause of death among American children. The Republican Party does not think that guns are the problem. If some of their children or family members were casualties of this horrific statistic, they would certainly be more proactive in changing the laws. Not only are the families whose children die traumatized, but nearly 300,000 students have been on campus during a school shooting since the historic attack at Columbine High School in 1999. Why do children suffer unnecessary stress from such events before politicians enact common sense laws to protect them? Other countries care more for their citizens than hiding behind the second amendment. They took action immediately following similar shootings. They imposed new

gun restrictions on gun ownership. Mass shootings became rare, and homicide and suicide rates decreased. Britain, Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, and Norway enacted these restrictions between 1987 and 2021.⁵²⁴ Their statistics are now sharply different than those in the United States. Gun-related killings as a percentage of all homicides in the United States was 79%, in the United Kingdom-4%, Canada-37%, and Australia-13%.⁵²⁵

Why don't Republican lawmakers support measures to limit firearm sales and gun owners' rights?⁵²⁶ One of the main reasons is that pro-gun organizations like the NRA and Gun Owners of America spend millions of dollars on lobbying and donating to political candidates to further their interests. In the 2020 presidential race, the NRA spent more than \$16 million to back Trump.⁵²⁷ Gun control groups spent an additional \$12 million on congressional races. Trump attended the NRA convention in Houston three days after the shooting at the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24, 2022. This event was the 30th shooting at a K-12 school in 2022.⁵²⁸ During his speech, Trump chastised the Democrats for focusing on gun control. They should be improving school security, increasing the police force, and offering mental health services.⁵²⁹ He accused Democrats of advancing an "extreme political agenda." "Now is the time to find common ground," Trump said. "Sadly, before the sun had even set on the horrible day of tragedy, we witnessed a familiar parade of cynical politicians seeking to exploit the tears of sobbing families to increase their power and take away our constitutional rights."⁵³⁰ How hypocritical! He read the names of the massacred children. Nineteen children and two teachers died in that shooting. The NRA has spent more than \$2 million in lobbying for politicians in the Texas Legislature, which is more than in any other state, according to The Dallas Morning News.⁵³¹ The Republican solution is to reinforce schools with increased security. Schools, colleges, malls, grocery

stores, workplaces, medical buildings, and hospitals require additional security. The list is endless. After the shooting, Governor Abbott of Texas told his fellow Republicans that the state "must reassess the twin issues of school safety and mass violence."⁵³² However, he essentially ruled out gun restrictions and focused on mental healthcare and school security. In essence, he is saying that guns should be made available in Texas to anyone over 18, but they will offer mental health services to the victims of mass shootings. He blamed the school shooting for lacking mental health resources. Still, he reportedly cut more than \$200 million from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, which oversees mental health services.⁵³³ This shooter had no history of mental illness. He was angry and vengeful. He was a student at the town's high school. He used an AR-15 style semiautomatic rifle, one of two rifles he legally bought shortly after his 18th birthday, just days before the attack. The number of requests to buy firearms in Texas has already topped one million for 2022. In 2015, Abbott tweeted that he was embarrassed: Texas was #2 for new gun purchases, behind California. "Let's pick up the pace, Texans."⁵³⁴ He also signed into law that it was anyone's constitutional right to buy a gun without a license or any training after the age of 18 years.

Recently, in a Facebook posting, the statements are most profound about young men shooting innocent victims. The author is unknown. "How about we treat every young man who wants to buy a gun like every woman who wants to get an abortion with a mandatory 48-hour waiting period, parental permission, a note from his doctor proving he understands what he's about to do, a video he has to watch about the effects of gun violence, and an ultrasound wand up the ass (just because). Let's close down all but one gun shop in every state and make him travel hundreds of miles, take time off work, and stay overnight in a strange town to get a gun. Make him walk through a gauntlet of people holding photos of loved ones who were shot to death,

people who call him a murderer and beg him not to buy a gun. It makes more sense to do this with young men and guns than with women and health care, right? I mean, no woman getting an abortion has killed a room full of people in seconds, right?"⁵³⁵

Prayers and hollow words of support mean nothing when no laws are passed to deal with this severe problem. Politicians like Abbott, Trump, and most Republican Senators share Alabama Republican Senator Tommy Tuberville's view-"Guns are not the problem. Okay. People are the problem. That's where it starts. And we have had guns forever. And we're going to continue to have guns."⁵³⁶ This was his response when asked whether he was willing to tell the Uvalde parents who lost children that this 18-year-old boy's right to buy an assault-style rifle was more important than the rights of their children to be safe in school. The reality is that there are already 400 million guns in our country. There are more guns than people. Hence, combatting gun violence will have to be addressed on multiple levels. Since the Sandy Hook school shooting in 2012, Democratic Senator Chris Murphy from Connecticut has been begging senators to pass sensible gun reforms.⁵³⁷ Due to the polarization among elected officials in Washington, and the rule requiring 60 votes to pass legislation, nothing gets done. President Biden was also pleading with his Republican colleagues to side with fifty Democrats in the Senate to pass some reforms.⁵³⁸ Past presidents have acted independently to curtail gun violence, but significant reforms require legislative action. The modern gun control movement started in California, which has more gun control laws than any other state in the nation. The first noteworthy piece of legislation restricting the right to carry a gun was drafted and signed into law in 1967 by a very popular, conservative Republican, Governor Ronald Regan.⁵³⁹ The next administration can undo executive orders. When Trump came into office in 2017, he revoked Obama's mandate that tried to make it harder for those

individuals with mental illness to purchase weapons, but now he wants to increase mental health services!⁵⁴⁰

After every shooting involving children or schools, politicians talk about increasing mental health funding. The story is similar to gun reforms, but mass shootings continue. As of June 2022, ten Republicans joined their Democrat colleagues and agreed in principle to some gun legislation reforms. It provides increased resources for mental health and school safety, incentivizes states to raise funding to implement "red flag laws," and requires expanded criminal and mental health background checks for gun buyers under 21. It will help prevent criminals and mentally ill individuals from purchasing weapons. The majority of citizens are in favor of sensible gun reform legislation. Thousands of people marched in protests against gun violence around the country, including an estimated 40,000 citizens in Washington. The famous actor Matthew McConaughey delivered an emotional plea for action on guns at a recent White House press briefing. Uvalde, Texas, was his hometown.

Despite this support, the lawmakers did not raise the age of gun owners from 18 to 21, nor was there any discussion on banning assault rifles or having a waiting period for purchasing AR-15s. How will we stop workplace shootings in malls, medical centers, hospitals, and parks? At the "Las Vegas, Route 91 Harvest Music Festival" shooting in October 2017, 58 people were slaughtered, and at the July 4th 2022 parade in Highland Park, Illinois, six people died, and 30 were injured. There are some incidents through excellent policing and patrolling that have been intercepted. On June 12, 2022, 31 people were arrested for conspiracy to riot near a Pride parade in Idaho. People worldwide cannot understand why Americans care so little about each other. Legislators are more interested in monetary gains and touting freedom rights. Their subversive ideals prevent lawmakers from passing laws to bring gun violence under control. Responsible gun owners are fed

up with the Second Amendment being abused and hijacked by some deranged individuals. These regulations are not a step backward but a step forward for civil society and the Second Amendment.

And now, even the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled on two gun rights cases that have effectively expanded its interpretation of the Second Amendment in the Constitution, ratified in 1791.⁵⁴¹ It reads, "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." According to Warren Burger, Supreme Court Chief Justice, the gun lobby's interpretation of the second amendment is one of the greatest pieces of fraud on the American people by special interest groups that he had ever seen in his life.⁵⁴² The very language of the second amendment refutes any argument that it was intended to guarantee every citizen an unfettered right to any kind of weapon he or she desired. Military assault-style weapons were not available then. Even now, what is the purpose for people to own them other than firing multiple rounds to kill as many people as possible in a short time? The Second Amendment doesn't necessarily mean anyone can wield the deadly weapon of their choice, and the government has no power to regulate the types of guns sold. The early American leaders did not anticipate 18-year-olds having access to such lethal weapons and randomly killing innocent people. The court ruled that states with strict limits on carrying guns in public violate the Second Amendment. This decision allows more people to have weapons in public when citizens are reeling from daily shootings. Laws must be passed to limit, not increase, access to firearms.⁵⁴³ For more than a century, the state of New York restricted people from carrying handguns in public. Until now, residents were allowed to have guns at home but had to explain to authorities why they needed to take them on the streets. Justice Clarence Thomas wrote in the majority opinion that the constitutional right to bear arms means the reason "why" is none of the government's

business. This decision will reverberate across the country. In the future, when they go outside, Americans can assume that most people around them may carry loaded firearms. Our country has returned to some modern version of the Wild West.⁵⁴⁴

A Supreme Court judge gets threatened, and the Senate passes a bill unanimously. And the House voted to pass the bill to extend security to family members of the Supreme Court justices.⁵⁴⁵ Why are their lives any more essential than ordinary citizens? Another ridiculous solution requires teachers to be trained and armed to keep schools safe. So now, there will be even more guns in the community. Teachers should not be sacrificial lambs for Americans to keep their AR-15 rifles. GOP Republicans cannot understand that violent crimes will increase if more individuals have access to guns. You cannot fortify the whole country. Other countries have kept themselves safe by banning firearms. Common sense decisions have to be made for younger generations to survive this onslaught of weaponry.

Sadly, people are feeling hopeless with the endless number of mass shootings. We are becoming numb emotionally. Some organizations want to hold elected officials accountable for their inaction. "Sandy Hook Promise" is a national nonprofit organization founded and led by several family members whose loved ones were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012.⁵⁴⁶ They intend to honor all victims of gun violence by turning their tragedy into a moment of transformation. They want to empower youth to "know the signs" and unite all people to value the protection of children. These actions in schools, homes, and communities can prevent gun violence and stop the tragic loss of life. "Moms Demand Action" is a grassroots movement of Americans fighting for public safety measures that can protect people from gun violence. They want Congress to pass stricter gun laws and close the loopholes that jeopardize their family's safety.⁵⁴⁷ The House of Representatives passed the Domestic

Terrorism Prevention Act of 2022. It aims to prevent domestic terrorism and deal with threats of violent extremism by White supremacists after the shooting massacre in Buffalo in May 2022. It was successfully passed in the Senate.⁵⁴⁸

The only questions Americans need to ask their elected officials is why they are opposed to a ban on assault weapons, stricter background checks, and changing the minimum age of gun purchases from 18 to 21 years. People cannot drink alcohol until age 21 but can buy deadly weapons and kill innocent victims at 18. Therefore, it makes sense to have a waiting period between purchasing a firearm and possessing it for several days. This action would provide a "cooling off" period, which may help to prevent impulsive acts of gun violence, especially in cases of suicide and homicide.⁵⁴⁹ About a third of U.S. adults own a gun, 44 percent Republicans and 20 percent Democrats. Most people have a firearm for personal safety or protection. According to a Pew Research Center survey in April 2021, around 48 percent of Americans see gun violence as a big problem. In addition, 53 percent favored stricter gun laws. There is broad support for universal background checks and enacting "red flag" laws. However, permitting gun ownership rights to law-abiding citizens is constitutional. Implementing public safety campaigns to promote safe firearm handling and storage is essential. There are two policies that most Republicans and Democrats agree on: preventing individuals with mental illness from purchasing guns (85% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats support this) and subjecting private gun and show sales to background checks (70 % of Republicans, 92% of Democrats).⁵⁵⁰ It is an uphill battle until the availability and ease of access to firearms are addressed and curbed. NRA donations and lobbyists should be boycotted.

2022: Need for Division of Church and State

Many laws are passed in the name of religion, dragging the country backward. Many founding fathers, Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, and Monroe, practiced a faith called Deism. It is a philosophical belief in human reason as a reliable means of solving social and political problems. Deists believe in a supreme being who created the universe solely to operate by natural laws; after creation, it is absent. Their belief in reason over conviction guided them to respect faiths like Christianity while isolating both ideals from encroaching on one another, not diluting the overall purpose and objective of either one.⁵⁵¹

In the words of our Founding Fathers:

Thomas Jefferson, "Christianity neither is, nor ever was a part of the common law. Christianity is the most perverted system that ever shown on men. Religions are all alike, founded upon fables and mythologies."

John Adams, "The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion. The United States is not a Christian nation any more than it is a Jewish or a Mohammedan nation."

Thomas Paine, "Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God. It has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind."

James Madison, "Religion and government will both exist in greater purity the less they are mixed together. The purpose of Separation of Church and State is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe with blood for centuries."⁵⁵²

The major Supreme Court decisions in 2022 will transform the legal landscape for years regarding abortion, gun rights, religious liberty, and climate change. Regrettably, these unelected, lifetime Justices are making decisions that are intolerant to half or more of the population of America. The new configuration, with the conservative majority, is out of touch with public opinion. The overturning of the constitutional right of abortion established by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 was the start. A loss of freedom and choice for all women!

Another ruling by the court about a public high school football coach and the constitutional right to pray at the 50-yard line after his team's games. The Constitution neither mandates nor permits the government to suppress such religious expression. The school district was right to suspend the coach due to the First Amendment's Separation of Church and State. I wonder if the ruling would have been the same if a Jewish Rabbi or a Muslim coach wanted to lead a prayer.

On June 21, 2022, the Supreme Court ruled that state programs providing money for public school tuition cannot exclude schools that offer religious instruction. This decision relaxed long-standing restrictions on using taxpayer money to pay for religious education, further lessening the separation of both principles. The vote was 6-3, with Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor dissenting.⁵⁵³

2022: Dealing with Intolerance

When the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 1996, they imposed an extremist version of Islamic law across the country. They tried to erase all traces of a rich pre-Islamic past and ordered the destruction of ancient statues, including the world's tallest standing Buddhas.⁵⁵⁴ Many people worldwide, including Americans, were horrified at this intolerance. Sadly, the removal of historical monuments throughout the United States is occurring today. A

mysterious public artwork, sometimes called the "American Stonehenge," by some, while others refer to it as the work of Satan, is no more. On July 6, 2022, unknown individuals detonated a bomb that severely damaged the sculpture that had stood in Elberton, Georgia, for more than 40 years. The 19-foot-high, 237,746-pound monument was erected in 1980 at the request of a man calling himself R.C. Christian. He represents a "small group of loyal Americans who believe in God" and wanted to "leave a message for future generations." The stones also served as an astrological calendar with a hole in the center stone, allowing the midday sun to shine through on the day's respective date. The most mysterious part of the work was the 4,000-character inscription, written in the ancient languages of Sanskrit, Babylonian cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek, English, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, Hindi, Chinese, Spanish, and Swahili. The message was written in 10 lines, like a modern-day 10 Commandments, offering instructions for the conservation of humanity and future generations, instructions that some believe come from a dangerous cult.⁵⁵⁵

1. Maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature.
2. Guide reproduction wisely—improving fitness and diversity.
3. Unite humanity with a living new language.
4. Rule passion—faith—tradition—and all things with tempered reason.
5. Protect people and nations with fair laws and just courts.
6. Let all nations rule internally resolving external disputes in a world court.
7. Avoid petty laws and useless officials.
8. Balance personal rights with social duties.
9. Prize truth—beauty—love—seeking harmony with the infinite.

10. Be not a cancer on the earth—Leave room for nature.

Kandiss Taylor, a conservative politician running for Governor of Georgia, recently made a campaign promise to demolish the artwork, which she believes is satanic.⁵⁵⁶ Thankfully, she lost against Brian Kemp. When politicians have no real issues to deal with, they want to pander to their base with promises to be ignorant and intolerant. The prominent conspiracy theorist Alex Jones had linked them to the Illuminati.⁵⁵⁷

2022: Climate Change Continues to Wreak Havoc on Our Environment

The Biden Administration is doing all it can to promote green energy, trying to deal with climate change. The Inflation Reduction Act's clean energy provisions are expected to fulfill Biden's goal of cutting emissions by 50% with its \$320 billion investment in clean energy and electric vehicle tax credits by 2030.⁵⁵⁸ In August 2020, the state of California announced a path to end the era of gas-powered cars, adopting the world's most stringent rules for transitioning to zero-emission vehicles. All new cars, pickup trucks, and SUVs have to be electric or hydrogen by 2035.⁵⁵⁹ Republicans, on the other hand, especially Trump, questioned the legality of the reports from scientists worldwide. In recent years, hurricanes have rapidly intensified, as we have never seen before. Storms are dropping historic amounts of rain and snow. Overflowing rivers and streams from excessive rain have destroyed numerous towns and cities across the United States. Volcanic eruptions last for months, even years at a time. The Kilauea on Hawaii's Big Island has erupted for over 30 years. Fires are exploding at an alarming pace, with homes destroyed and massive acreages of forests and towns burned to the ground. The western states in the U.S. have experienced millions of acres destroyed by forest fires.

Life has become challenging during the summer months with excessive heat waves. Hundreds of people have died from exposure to daily temperatures above 100 degrees across the U.S. There is increased drought. Water is becoming scarcer in more regions. Droughts can stir destructive sand and dust storms that can move billions of tons of sand across continents. Deserts are expanding, reducing land for growing food. Many people now face the threat of not having enough water regularly. In addition, there is danger from warming and rising oceans. The ocean soaks up most of the heat from global warming. This process melts ice sheets and raises sea levels, threatening coastal and island communities. At the same time, the ocean also absorbs carbon dioxide, keeping it from the atmosphere. More carbon dioxide increases the acid in the sea, which endangers marine life. Several species of wildlife are becoming extinct. They are threatened by forest fires, extreme temperatures, invasive pests, and diseases. Some species can relocate and survive, but others will not. Food shortage is the biggest threat to the population of the world. Increases in extreme weather events are the reasons behind a global rise in hunger and poor nutrition, leading to more health problems. Fisheries, crops, and livestock may be destroyed or become less productive. Heat stress can diminish water and grasslands for grazing. Changing weather patterns are expanding diseases such as malaria. There is an increase in poverty and displacement when floods may sweep away urban slums, destroying homes and livelihoods. Heat can make it challenging to work in outdoor jobs. Weather-related disasters displace 23 million people annually, leaving them much more vulnerable to poverty.⁵⁶⁰ Our world is changing. Climate records are broken every week. These record-breaking events are becoming the new normal. Who will be in charge of dealing with these calamities that are affecting millions of Americans?

Scientists around the world are crying out about climate change. The court ruled to curb the EPA's (Environmental Protection Agency's) ability to broadly regulate carbon emissions from existing power plants. Congress did not grant the EPA the authority to devise emissions caps based on the generation-shifting approach the agency took in the "Clean Power Plan of the Clean Air Act."⁵⁶¹ The Republicans want to stay with their fossil fuel companies that contribute heavily to their campaigns to maintain the status quo. Many people across the world are experiencing the devastating effects of climate change. If America does not lead the world to bring down carbon emissions, very few countries around the world will have a reason to do so, either. The United Kingdom conducted an exciting thought experiment two years ago: What will their forecasts look like in 2050? The "plausible" became a reality 28 years earlier, in 2022. The U.K. and European countries are experiencing temperatures around 104 degrees. The meteorologists had to issue a red heat warning for the first time.⁵⁶² Despite all this evidence, our GOP politicians and Manchin seem to think they know better and are making their stand in opposition to dealing with climate change policies.

2022: The Economic Effects of the Pandemic and Inflation

Americans and many people worldwide have had their lives filled with dread due to worries of getting infected with the Covid-19 virus, dealing with shutdowns of businesses, struggling with a loss of income, and social isolation. Inflation was a problem, but the economic recovery from Covid-19's initial onslaught had been remarkable, with GDP growth rebounding to a nearly 40-year high in 2021, registering at 5.7 percent.⁵⁶³ Jobs were readily available, as employers struggled to hire in almost all sectors of the economy. There were signs everywhere, advertising to hire and at above minimum wages.

Whoever wanted to work could find a job. Inflation was maybe not as bad as the headline-grabbing figures suggested, as they started from a low baseline. At the same time, disposable incomes increased faster than prices over the past year. So why were people feeling a sense of dread? Fareed Zakaria from CNN suggested that something else may have been happening.⁵⁶⁴ "People are not responding rationally to objective data right now. We are living in intensely polarized, partisan times. There are questions about consumer confidence or the country being on the right or wrong track. Nothing lies outside of politics anymore. American sentiment is being swayed more by cultural anxieties and class conflict than facts, from the economy to the January 6th Capitol attack to Covid-19 vaccination."⁵⁶⁵ Republicans wanted to blame the Biden administration for everything and made the case worse than it was to scare people into voting for the opposition in November at the mid-term elections.

Many factors contributed to the higher prices of goods, all outside the government's ability to fix them. Most people could not travel or eat out during the pandemic, and they were able to save money. Spending had been pent up for two years. Once the government eased the restrictions, there was an excess demand for services and goods. People wanted to get out and participate in previously restricted activities during the pandemic. Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the U.S. economy, accelerated. Demand remained so strong that the U.S. supply could not keep up. The need for imports skyrocketed. China would not back down from its zero Covid-19 policy. China's decrease in the production of goods caused a significant shortage of products and parts required for manufacturing in the United States. Russia's war on Ukraine created large spikes in oil and gas prices, and OPEC's unwillingness to pump more oil did not help the situation.

Strong consumer demand led to a decade's highest annual grocery price surges. In addition, the average restaurant price has increased dramatically since the early 1980s.⁵⁶⁶ Americans tend to forget that inflationary concerns are worse in other countries worldwide. Also, the gas prices in Europe have been over \$5 to \$6 a gallon for many years. Americans are fortunate that the government subsidizes this country's gasoline costs. If there were an easy solution to this problem, President Biden's government would not want this negative publicity and constant criticism from the Republican party.

There is a shortage of workers, especially in the food service industry. Many individuals decided not to return to low-paying jobs or work from home. This situation has forced the restaurant industry and others to increase their hourly wages. It is difficult to understand when the cost of everything was rising, and people were complaining about inflation, 4.5 million Americans quit their jobs in March 2022.⁵⁶⁷ The staggering number of people leaving the workforce, facing layoffs, and discharges was at 6.3 million by March. There were two job openings for every unemployed person. The number of available jobs reached a new record of 11.5 million, the highest level since the government began tracking the data two decades ago. People were re-evaluating what was more important to them. Workplace flexibility has become more critical than ever in many industries. As employers wanted workers to return to offices, people working from home decided to quit to find work with an opportunity to work remotely or look for jobs with upward mobility or higher pay.

According to analysts, employers could continue to raise wages to attract workers, fueling rising inflation. Wages and salaries increased 4.7% in the 12 months ending in March, while inflation hit 8.5% for the same period. An estimated 166,000 Americans filed initial unemployment claims in the first week of April 2022.⁵⁶⁸ It was the lowest figure since November 1968 and the second lowest since

weekly reporting began in January 1967. Continuing claims rose slightly by 17,000 to 1.52 million, two years after the number reached an all-time high of 6.1 million in April 2020. Tremendous job gains were seen once recovery started after the pandemic, and it was just over a million jobs short of the February 2020 level. The shortage in the labor market also fueled inflation. But it was also a sign the economy could withstand the interest rate hikes the Federal Reserve announced for the first time since December 2018 without falling into a recession.

The average American took close to a 4% pay cut in 2021 because of inflation.⁵⁶⁹ In addition, many people struggled to meet the higher costs of food and gas, especially individuals living from paycheck to paycheck. The Federal Reserve raised interest rates by three-quarters of a percentage point three times in 2022, on June 15, July 28, and September 22 in an aggressive move to tackle inflation. It was the most considerable increase in 28 years. It will affect millions of American businesses and households, adding to the borrowing costs for homes, cars, and other loans.⁵⁷⁰ Rising food prices have the potential to push 263 million people into extreme poverty this year, according to Oxfam.⁵⁷¹ Expectations for global economic growth over the next two years have been downgraded by the International Monetary Fund because Russia invaded Ukraine. The IMF now expects the world economy to expand by 3.6% in both 2022 and 2023, a sharp deceleration from growth of 6.1% in 2021.⁵⁷²

On the other side of the economy, there was the birth of 573 billionaires.⁵⁷³ The world's billionaires increased their net worth by 42% to \$12.7 trillion during the pandemic. Investing in these companies was beneficial when prices rose for food and oil. Investors also benefitted greatly when the Feds cut interest rates to zero. Stocks continued to hit record highs even as the pandemic continued to spread. Efforts to levy any taxes on the net worth of the wealthiest Americans

have failed in Congress in recent years.⁵⁷⁴ Under Biden's proposal, households that earn more than \$100 million would have to pay a 20 percent tax rate on their income and unrealized gains from liquid assets (like bonds and stocks). Since coming into office, Biden has put forward several versions of the proposal, each one failing to get approval in Congress. A version of Biden's tax plan made it into the "Build Back Better" legislation, which passed the House last fall but failed to advance in the Senate.⁵⁷⁵ Under that bill, the wealthiest Americans would have paid a 5% surcharge on income above \$10 million and an additional 3% levy on income above \$25 million. A \$740 billion "Inflation Reduction Act of 2022" passed on August 7, 2022. Biden wanted a \$3.5 trillion package for the "Build Back Better Act." In addition, the IRA has a provision to levy a 15% minimum tax on corporate book income for corporations with an average annual adjusted financial statement income exceeding \$1 billion for three consecutive prior tax years, effective beginning in 2023. A second revenue raiser is a 1% excise tax on stock repurchases made by domestic publicly traded corporations.⁵⁷⁶ Senator Kyrsten Sinema, a Democrat from Arizona, balked at raising taxes on the rich and corporations, together with Senator Manchin. So, it is not only the Republicans who stand in the way of getting the ultra-rich to pay extra to meet the needs of many. CEO pay bounced back strongly from the pandemic. Compensation of the top 100 CEOs was up 31% over 2020 to a median of \$20 million.⁵⁷⁷ It is difficult to accept the reality that so many people are struggling with the rising costs of essentials like food, rent, and gas while the world's billionaires are laughing all the way to the bank.

The current surging inflation is painful for all except the wealthy. Blaming it on the Biden administration is a distraction from personal responsibility and an excuse for the Republicans to accuse the Democrats of causing the financial mess. The Biden Administration

can do little about supply chain disruptions, material shortages, and challenges in finding labor that delays the completion of many projects and the gap between housing starts and completion. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was the primary reason for record gasoline prices in the United States. However, it was not the only cause of the spike. People began to drive more and fly once the government lifted the pandemic restrictions. As a result, the energy demand increased exponentially. The United States was pumping less oil than before Covid-19 began. Energy prices were also driving up the cost of living for Europeans due to Russian sanctions on oil and gas. China's lockdowns slowed its massive, globally interconnected economy and threatened to drag everyone else down too. Many of our products come from China, and production stopped due to Covid community lockdowns. China's support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine was also the catalyst for products and supplies to leave China.

In case Americans need another reason to be angry, Mike Konczal, an economist at the Roosevelt Institute, graphed corporate profit margins over time. A concept dubbed "Greedflation" was coined for corporate profit-taking, which also drove up prices. "Their big profit margin has gone from about 5% over the last several decades to almost 10% in the past two years," he said. "So, there's been a giant jump in corporate profits during the pandemic and the recovery."⁵⁷⁸ Their obligation is to their shareholders, not consumers who are keeping them in business but can least afford to pay higher prices. CEOs received 351 times as much as a typical worker in 2020. A CEO at one of the top 350 firms in the United States was paid \$24.2 million on average, including vested stock awards and cashed-in stock options, when he retired.⁵⁷⁹ It was a blowout year for many companies, despite rising inflation, the ongoing supply chain crisis, and the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic. President Biden reported that they did not pay any taxes. The Republicans will maintain the status quo since they

receive mega-corporate donations. Together, the Fortune 500 corporations generated a record \$16.1 trillion in revenue and \$1.8 trillion in profits!⁵⁸⁰

All Americans received stimulus money during the pandemic, even if they did not need it. They saved a record amount. With the current inflation, this bonus could have helped many individuals. Instead, many people chose to gamble with this extra funding. It was a challenging year for casino gambling in 2020. Lockdowns kept casinos closed or forced them to operate under severe restrictions. However, the gambling industry has since recovered.⁵⁸¹ Commercial gaming revenue, including in-person gambling, online gambling, and sports betting, all set a new record in March 2022, receiving more than \$5.3 billion in revenues, according to the American Gaming Association. During the pandemic, casinos across the U.S. became Covid testing sites and vaccination centers. Now, they are back to blackjack and slot machines.

Due to the vows of pent-up spending, many people chose to indulge, driving up demand and the cost of goods and services. Many corporations, legal firms, and even churches received large sums of money from the Covid relief funds, especially if they had connections to the Trump organization. The pandemic-era gravy train was now gone. Those individuals who quit work may now have to become employed to meet the extra cost of everyday items.

2022: Gasoline Prices Reach a New Record High

During a congressional hearing, Democrats pressed oil company executives to do whatever it takes to relieve prices at the pump for American consumers by increasing production and reducing share buybacks and dividend payments. Oil companies are devoting \$45 billion to buybacks plus another \$40 billion in dividends. Maybe some of those funds could go toward ramping up production and helping the

American people. When inflation is at a 40-year high, every oil executive has refused to consider reining in buybacks or dividends.⁵⁸² Instead of using this cash to lower the price of oil or fulfill their climate pledges, companies are giving it to their wealthy shareholders and company executives. Last year, 28 top oil and gas CEOs raked in \$394 million in compensation, nearly a \$45 million increase since 2020.⁵⁸³ The war in Ukraine has been very profitable for the oil executives. The top 25 companies made more than \$205 billion in profits in 2021, but the first-quarter gains for 2022 were even more astounding. While families on tight budgets struggle to pay the sky-high price of gasoline, five oil companies more than tripled their profits in the first quarter of 2022. Shell, ExxonMobil, BP, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips brought in more than 300% in profits than in the first quarter of 2021. It is more than \$35 billion in profits in just three months. Consumers and investors are increasingly aware of their behavior, and some corporations have taken note. The speed at which Western brands left Russia underscores a relatively new era in which investors and customers demand brands do more than maximize profits at all costs.

2022: Increase in Crime Rates

Crime rates are up, and robberies occur in the middle of the day. Flash mobs are entering stores, grabbing merchandise, and running away. How did people become so bold and lawless? Societal rules are breaking down. A disgraced Trump returned to Washington for a rally at the "America First Agenda Summit" on July 26, 2022. He said the problem in the country was lawlessness.⁵⁸⁴ In light of his MAGA rioters attacking and assaulting the Capitol police officers, the DC Metropolitan Police, and other law enforcement agencies on January 6th 2021, his statement was outrageous. Officers were speared, sprayed, stomped, and brutalized, and several officers lost their lives. Despite people around him pleading, telling him to ask his supporters

to stop and go home for over three hours, he sat there silently.⁵⁸⁵ Then he dared to tell them that "they were special. He loved them."⁵⁸⁶ Now, he thinks that the problems of this country are due to others becoming lawless. Trump legitimized the use of violence to solve political disputes and to try to enforce the will of a minority. Trump's words are destructive regardless of whether he runs for the presidency in 2024.

In conclusion, he is dangerous to the United States of America if he does not run, more threatening if he runs and loses again, and will be the most destructive to our democracy if he runs and wins.⁵⁸⁷ Many on the right love him more than they respect and cherish a democratic nation. We are on the brink of opening a floodgate of anarchists.

2022: External Threats

We are a country of law and order. But unfortunately, a past president, Mr. Trump, continues to destroy our democracy. He continually speaks about "Making America Great Again," but the MAGA movement has torn the country apart. These circumstances are not the only internal threats throughout our country. We should be worried about China, its aggressive tactics toward Taiwan, and even its ability to infiltrate our infrastructure here in the United States. Federal officials have investigated Chinese land purchases near critical infrastructure since 2017. It should be an eye-opener and concern for all Americans. Among the most alarming discoveries, the FBI uncovered Chinese-made Huawei equipment atop cell towers near U.S. military bases in the rural Midwest. According to multiple sources familiar with the matter, the FBI determined the equipment was capable of capturing and disrupting highly restricted Defense Department communications, including those used by U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees the country's nuclear weapons.⁵⁸⁸ Some former counterintelligence officials expressed frustration that the U.S. government isn't providing more detail about what it knows

to companies, cities, and states considering a Chinese investment proposal. It is frightening that none of the equipment has been ripped out and replaced as ordered by the FCC in 2019 due to insufficient funds allocated to get the job done. Buying cheaper Chinese equipment when there is the possibility of spying on us may be our demise in the future.

2022: Banks Extremely Low Interest Rates and Investments in Starter Homes

Greed does not stop with oil barons. Banks have also paid close to no interest while charging all sorts of fees. And bonuses at big banks are expected to hit their highest level in over a decade.⁵⁸⁹ Goldman Sachs, the bank known as the "Vampire Squid of Wall Street," set aside nearly \$18 billion for compensation expenses last year, an increase of 33% from 2020. That figure pays an average of \$404,000 for the firm's 43,900 workers. Goldman's CEO David Solomon took home a \$33 million bonus on top of his \$2 million base salary. Morgan Stanley CEO James Gorman also received a \$35 million pay package. And JPMorgan Chase's Jamie Dimon got a \$3 million raise to \$34.5 million in 2021.⁵⁹⁰ The market finished last year near all-time highs, and bank stocks were among the market leaders.

The latest greed of Wall Street is to purchase starter homes and turn first-time buyers into renters.⁵⁹¹ During the pandemic, Americans worked from home. They were saving money. They no longer traveled to work or went out to eat. Restaurants were closed. They received stimulus checks; their savings increased. They began house hunting, and mortgage rates were at their lowest. All these factors brought on an onslaught of new buyers. There was less availability, which created a massive spike in home prices. Wall Street tycoons started using tech firms like Zillow to buy up starter homes. Owning a house is an American dream. People want to settle down and build some equity,

but now, for many, this dream is lost. Instead, this business has now become an underground pipeline for big investors. They are swooping in and paying top dollar to buy properties and then turn them into rental properties. A Bloomberg News analysis of more than 100,000 property records shows that Zillow and the two other biggest iBuyers, Opendoor Technologies Inc. and Offerpad Solutions Inc., are selling thousands of homes to landlords backed by KKR & Co., Cerberus Capital Management, Blackstone Inc., and other large institutions.⁵⁹² In many cases, these properties are never even listed, further squeezing average buyers out of the competitive housing markets.

"Capitalism is against the things that we say we believe in—democracy, freedom of choice, fairness. It's not about any of those things now. It's about protecting the wealthy and legalizing greed."⁵⁹³
Michael Moore, Filmmaker and Activist

Responsible capitalism seems a thing of the past. Corporations and Wall Street are only interested in increasing the wealth of their shareholders. Now the salaries of CEOs are a ridiculous amount compared to the employees' diminished wages and benefits. People in charge of the corporations are not interested in the workers, only the end game, which is maximum output at the lowest cost. The quality of products has declined due to outsourcing to make the most profit. "Made in America" is a catchy slogan for national pride. Unfortunately, it no longer seems to ring true.

Abraham Lincoln was right to be concerned about the future of this great nation.

"I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. Corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow,

*and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed."*⁵⁹⁴

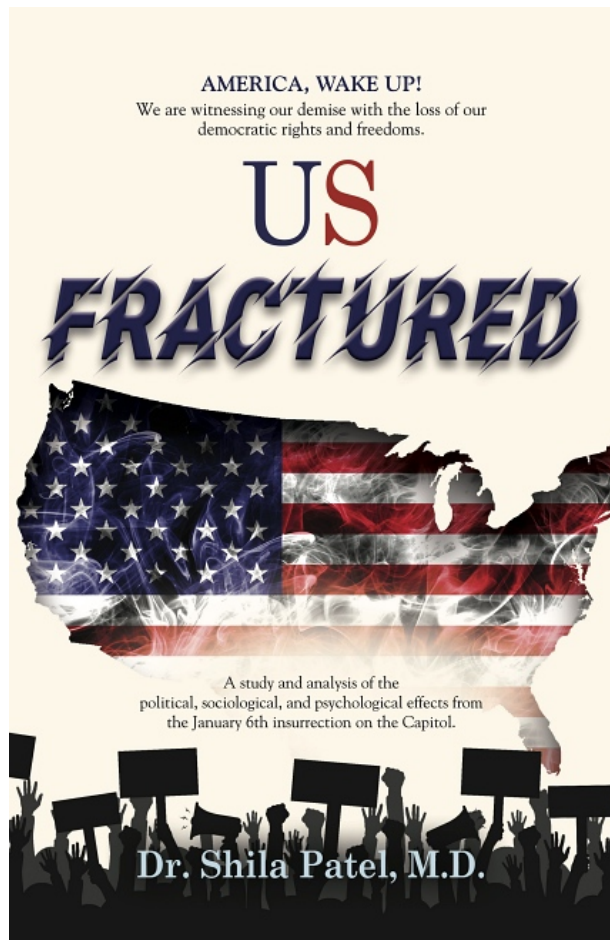
*Abraham Lincoln,
Lawyer and former President of the United States*

Reflection

The problems keep multiplying, and solutions seem far and few in between. Until the politicians take active steps to deal with these unsurmountable issues, future generations will experience more anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems culminating in higher alcohol, drug use, and suicide rates. It is not surprising that there is no motivation for people to work, and so many have left the workforce in the "Great Resignation." The fake news and conspiracy theories have to be stopped. Americans deserve to be told the truth instead of fabrications to make the other political party look bad. Individuals cannot use social media platforms to incite violence and unrest. America needs to learn from other countries about gun control as it is way out of control. Do we want to return to the wild, wild West? The bad guys are winning. Taking away women's rights is taking away freedom from over half the population of the United States. What civilized society would do that? Presently, we are not as advanced as we once were. There has to be a Separation of Church and State. Religion must not influence congressional legislation. The Supreme Court justices need to reel in their conservative agenda and remember that their job is to uphold the constitution and not allow personal biases to dictate their opinions. Corporate greed needs to be monitored for the good of all citizens, especially for those individuals who struggle financially. Young people cannot afford to buy houses, let alone rent. It is so depressing for them. Deregulation of many agencies like prisons and food safety monitoring breeds more corruption. The

Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

government must overhaul the subsidies given to oil companies, farmers, and other entities. The general public has no idea how much tax revenue is squandered. The list goes on. Amen.



Many Americans are dissatisfied with how the Democrats and the Republicans run the country. What can citizens do about the state of affairs and how to correct this downward spiral? First we must understand why there is so much discontent.

US Fractured
By Dr Shila Patel MD

Order the book from the publisher [BookLocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12635.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**