



Who Are the Most Dangerous People in America?

By Peter Dreier

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GUEST COMMENTARY - I am starting a contest and asking for nominations for a list of THE 10 MOST DANGEROUS PEOPLE IN AMERICA.

I was thinking of using the phrase "worst people," but that doesn't quite convey the point. There are many people who are despicable human beings, some of them in positions of some influence (i.e., Cong. Margorie Taylor Greene, Cong. Matt Gaetz, Senator Josh Hawley, Alex Jones, Roger Stone) but who don't have the kind of institutional power that elevates them into the top-tier of people who pose an existential threat to democracy, fairness, human rights, and the climate. It is a high bar, to be sure.

I considered putting hedge fund billionaire and right-wing funder Peter Thiel, NRA leader and demagogue Wayne La Pierre, major ultra-conservative funders Robert Mercer and his daughter Rebekah (the money behind Breitbart News and many reactionary politicians), Walmart heirs Jim and Alice Walton (each worth \$66 billion, much of which they donated to right-wing causes and politicians), Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, and Florida Gov. Rick DeSantis on the list, but I only had 10 spots and they didn't make it.

Of course, there are many people in corporate America, the media, politics, philanthropy, the military, and other sectors who, on a daily basis, threaten our society, but the people listed here (in no particular order) are my top ten. I welcome other nominations.

DONALD TRUMP—The former and would-be president has led the Republican Party into the abyss of fascism and white supremacy. The charismatic sociopath has a long track record as a business grifter, sexual harasser, and pathological liar, but his gig may soon be up and he may find himself in federal prison.

STEVE BANNON—A graduate of Harvard Business School and a one-time Goldman Sachs financier, he found his niche as the head of Breitbart News, a cesspool of big lies and faux populism. He then catapulted himself as mastermind of Trump's 2016 victory and as part of Trump's inner circle, even after he was booted out of the White House. A practicing fascist agitator and Trump's key strategist and henchman, he makes no secret of his desire to turn the United States into an authoritarian plutocracy.

HOWARD SCHULTZ—The CEO of Starbucks, with a personal wealth of \$4.2 billion, is famous for seducing America into craving overpriced coffee. He is now America's #1 union-buster, using heavy-handed and illegal tactics to thwart baristas from gaining better pay, hours, and a voice at work.

JEFF BEZOS—The founder of Amazon is America's richest person, worth \$167 billion. He's gotten even richer during the pandemic. His personal wealth grew by around \$70 billion. Even if he gave every Amazon employee in America a one-time \$100,000 bonus, he'd still be nearly as wealthy as he was before the COVID crisis. He nevertheless spent a small fortune trying to undermine the union organizing drive at Amazon warehouses in Alabama and New York.

JAMIE DIMON—Barely a billionaire (he's worth \$1.5 billion), Dimon is the CEO of JPMorgan Chase, the nation's largest bank). His annual compensation increased from \$31.7 million in 2020 to \$84.4 million in 2021 in the midst of large lay-offs and suffering during the pandemic. He has miraculously escaped punishment for his bank's predatory practices, but he found his match in Congressperson Katie Porter, who grilled the embarrassed Dimon about the huge gap between his pay and that of the bank's everyday employees.

MITCH McCONNELL—The Senate Republican leader from Kentucky has been determined to kill any progressive bills or reject any liberal federal judges proposed by Obama, Biden, and Democrats in Congress. He almost single-handedly gave us the current reactionary Supreme Court that just outlawed abortion and would like to also outlaw same-sex marriage, environmental regulations, and labor unions. If the Republicans take back the Senate, McConnell, as majority leader, will be a take-no-prisoners bully.

CLARENCE THOMAS - The leading reactionary on the Supreme Court, Thomas wants to roll back the human rights clock to 1950. Once viewed as a right-wing extremist, he is now the court's most influential member, whose equally repugnant wife was a major cheerleader for the January 6 insurrection.

CHARLES KOCH—Once he had inherited a fortune from his John Birch Society-loving father, Koch (and his brother David, who died in 2019) used his wealth (estimated at \$58 billion) from the family business—Koch Industries, a fossil fuel conglomerate—to fund right-wing Republicans, reactionary lobby groups, and think tanks that produce "research" denying the reality of climate change.

RUPERT MURDOCH—As CEO of News Corporation, he owns hundreds of news outlets, including the Wall Street Journal, the New York Post, and Fox News, the leading propaganda arm of American fascism. The media mogul is personally worth \$20 billion, and his news operations have steadfastly embraced Republican and right-wing candidates and cause, while Murdoch served on the board of the libertarian Cato Institute.

TUCKER CARLSON—The most popular public face of Murdoch's Fox News, Carlson attracts about three million viewers a night, far more than the competition on MSNBC and CNN. Underneath his snarky, preppy persona is a white supremacist, sexist, and immigrant-bashing sicko and a wannabe dictator like his hero, Hungary's Viktor Orban.