After nearly 20 years of opining in these pages, I am going to try a shock-and-awe approach to informing. Hopefully readers will be either inspired or outraged, or at least curious enough to pursue the topics here, and to not just verify but also to help better connect relevant dots, adding substantially to the scope of knowledge required to effect real change.

For instance, did you know that when you purchase stocks and bonds in today's market, you don't actually own them? Instead, you are only purchasing beneficiary rights that come with each unit. The real owner of your stocks and bonds is the little known Cede & Company, a division of the Depository Trust Company (DTC), which handles 99 percent of all securities trades in the United States and the majority of trades abroad. In other words, this privately held corporation (approximately 35 percent of which is owned by the New York Stock Exchange), which is actually a division of the Federal Reserve System, processes all book-entry securities transactions for every bank and brokerage firm in the United States. According to Wikipedia, in 2011, the DTC held approximately $1.7 quadrillion of the world's wealth, with many of the rights of legal ownership, if not the benefits derived therefrom, accruing to it via modern digital transactions replacing the traditional certificate system.

If you happen to have stock or bond certificates in your name from old-fashioned trades of the past, then you are still the registered owner and have all the benefits and attributes of true ownership. But if you trade in the current system of digital transactions, you are not the true owner, but merely the beneficiary of the stocks and bonds you paid your hard-earned money for. It is a deception of the highest order, yet it is perfectly legal under the modern U.S. Treasury regulations that have been implemented under the radar since the mid-1990s without our consent.

It is hard to believe, but it is absolutely true. Just try and get a physical stock or bond certificate from your broker and see what occurs. He/she will likely tell you that registered ownership and beneficiary ownership are virtually the same thing, especially because you receive dividends, voting rights, etc. You will also likely be told that a central clearinghouse for securities transactions is safer and more efficient. This is patently false. Cede & Company is the fictitious name, or street name, used by the DTC to legally hold your stock as the rightful owner, while allowing you the benefits of ownership without actually passing to you – the actual buyer – any legal title to the physical property that the stocks and bonds represent.

It is speculated, with good reason, that the Federal Reserve System holds this wealth as collateral against the fiat money it prints for the federal government's unsustainable borrowing.

Eventually, when Federal Reserve Notes (U.S. dollars) are no longer accepted by creditors, the assets held in trust by Cede & Company for the DTC will be surrendered in lieu of payment. This is permitted under the War Powers Act, giving the President unfettered powers to suspend the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, by declaring a national emergency and seizing all the country's resources, including its labor and privately owned assets.

It is a nightmare scenario that has merit when you connect other seemingly unrelated dots. Recall that this asset grab already happened in the 1930s, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt confiscated all the privately owned gold. Americans were told that it was to shore up the economy during the Great Depression, but history tells us the real reason was because we borrowed funds from France, which in turn insisted on, and succeeded in, redeeming their notes in gold. We suddenly had no gold in reserve to back our own currency. So Roosevelt claimed the gold belonging to American citizens under penalty of law if we refused. It was a form of theft, even though we traded for Federal Reserve Notes, which were essentially useless otherwise.

You can research this information for yourself. There have been countless books, articles, essays, and editorials written over the years on these very subjects – perspectives deliberately omitted from the mainstream news by the media cartel, whose interests are not ours. I know it is shocking to think that our own government would conspire with industry cartels against us, but if you continue to bury your head and ignore these facts, you will be remembered in history as the generation that allowed America to fail.

It all matters, it all has consequences, and it all requires our getting up to speed if we are going to act. Notice how the politicians, media-cartel pundits, and the myriad foundations and associations that endlessly meet in forums and on panels that are broadcast on C-SPAN, C-SPAN2 and C-SPAN3 – including the absurdly unproductive congressional hearings – never discuss meaningful solutions. Ever. America has experienced nothing but one insanely long bitch session for three decades. In most cases, government and non-government agencies' and organizations' performance/outcomes have only gotten worse. America's leadership is so profoundly incompetent as to defy reason. And the American people have become dangerously spoiled, lazy, and self-entitled.

Solutions for a lot of this are common sense, sprinkled with some moral character, because it will require sacrifice, whether of time or money; some of us will have to donate both. There is a pecking order of importance as it relates to civic participation. First and foremost, protect elections and the voting booths by getting involved with the election process. Become a precinct election judge. Demand to be one of the objective citizens who verifies your precinct's vote count during an election, whether general or local. Familiarize yourself with the potential

problems with elections, especially computerized voting. Visit BlackBoxVoting.org . Every American needs this information to be vigilant against schemes to corrupt our votes.

Second, run for a local office, even for just one term. If you can't do that, then at least pick a city-council or county-supervisors committee or department and follow it. Browse your city's and county's Web sites for a list of committees and departments and what each is responsible for. Pick one that interests you or is in your wheelhouse. Get a group together to help stay on top of the committee's or department's activities. Share what you learn via a blog or community Web site that accepts such data for public consumption. If such a Web site doesn't exist, start one.

If each of us followed a single committee and informed the rest of us in a timely manner, we could really effect change. You can't imagine the growing amount of international influence on our local governance, especially via Agenda 21. We should all have a say in such a serious transformation, but, so far, we don't. Too much is occurring behind closed doors, where the public is not allowed access. This is evident throughout the process that established the Scott County's so-called consolidated dispatching center, SECC 911, and its ill-conceived "no-cap tax" authority.

Call your county clerk's office and request the names and contact information of the grand-jury members currently seated, and inform the clerk that you need this information so that you can notify the grand jury of any instances when public officials have allegedly violated the law (e.g., abuse of power, extortion) and/or their oaths of office. Grand juries are the most effective method, in some cases the only method, to hold public officials accountable, but are also the most forgotten aspect of our government system.

It starts at home, folks. It is a trickle-up theory. America was founded in town-hall meetings, with most communities' families, neighbors, and friends engaged on some civic level. Today, precious few are involved on any civic level, and the country is greatly suffering for this lack. Politicians, bureaucrats, and industry cartels are colluding with ever greater frequency and destructive consequences, thanks to less and less accountability and a lack of enforcement of existing laws and regulations.

Our government has forgotten that it is the servant, not the master. Its privileged and protected excesses, which also extend to the industry cartels, have been successfully disguised as law and order. To witness this distortion of law firsthand, attend a Rock Island County Municipal Code Enforcement "hearing." They are held in the Rock Island City Council chambers (RCRea

der.com/y/munices
) and are operated as a revenue stream for the Bi-State Regional Commission.

Chances are good that you will observe an “administrative hearing officer” preside over a kangaroo court where primarily poor people come to have their “violation” of regulations, such as grass being too tall or placing a yard-sale sign in the wrong spot, “adjudicated.” On the rare occasion a “violator” brings up the Constitution and any of the protections afforded in it, such as the Bill of Rights, one will hear the hearing-officer-impersonating-a-judge tell him/her that the Constitution has no effect in these proceedings. One hearing officer actually stated that he was “precluded by Illinois statute from allowing the Constitution into this court.”

Yet these same administrative-hearing “officers” are allowed to set the fines at their own discretion. To add insult to injury, the fines are before court costs, and the court costs are on a tiered scale depending on how large the fine is. How can any matter cost the court more, or less, depending on the size of the arbitrarily set fine? One can see the potential for abuse in these circumstances.

Courts are at the heart of most things corrupted in this country, whether by poor rulings that have no basis in the Constitution, especially as it relates to the Bill of Rights, or lack of enforcement on the elite and over-enforcement on the poor. This has become painfully obvious in the overcrowded prisons and overwhelmed district courts, as well as the complete lack of prosecution of banksters and the upper management of industry cartels. Not to mention that there is broad-based consensus that most derivatives, including the systemically risky Credit Default Swaps that are still being abundantly traded, would not be a trade-able instrument if the courts did not enforce such abstract contracts.

Chaos is prevailing because the rule of common law is being either ignored or replaced with administrative-procedure law that has no mandate for justice, only revenue streams via fees and penalties. Americans inherently know this to be true. We must stop denying it, then commit to stopping it by getting active in our communities’ governance. If you don’t have time, then make it. Your forefathers managed to do this, with none of the conveniences that we enjoy today. We have no excuses, no matter what you tell yourself to absolve your civic responsibility. No more excuses. Get active, or get swallowed whole.