From MAGA to Boss Tweed: The Family Trump's Art of the Steal

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by David Smith

MAGA – Making America's Grifters Affluent. Making American Governance Absurd. Making Attorneys Get Attorneys.

You voted for lower prices. You voted against foreign wars. You voted, in some cases holding your nose, for the man who swore on a stack of red-white-and-blue bibles that he alone could fix it. Day One prices. America First. No new entanglements. The working people of this country were going to eat again.

That was the contract. Here is the actual recipe served.

The Mental Struggle with Trump as Boss Tweed

The first time Trump ran for office, the first time I voted for Trump – I kept thinking that **"he looks like Boss Tweed."** I know that is cruel, that it is a Trope, I know that he said a lot of good things. The trouble is he not only looks like Boss Tweed, but he and his entire entourage now, act like Boss Tweed.

I have tried repeatedly to believe him, to vote for him and push the Boss Tweed reference to the back of my tiny mind.

But now, I cannot think of anybody in history who reminds me of Trump more than Boss Tweed does.

It now hurts inside, the spot where I voted for him. I don't have the usual Red/Blue paradigm. I detest Obama and Biden. But in his own way, Trump whipped out a shovel and dug their "American" hole deeper yet. Boss Tweed, gloating over the fact that Iran may let him put a Golf Course in Tehran. Another monument to his battered, worthless self-esteem. Everybody, everywhere, all at once – look at me, I'm going to put a resort in Tehran.

It is my carefully considered opinion that the Trump's operate as a Foreign National Cartel on American Soil, offshoring wealth and influence to the detriment of us all.

Here's why:

The Numbers Nobody On Fox Will Read You

In January 2025, Donald Trump's net worth sat at roughly $2.3 billion by most independent tallies. By late 2025, Forbes placed it at $7.3 billion. That's not a salary. That's not a real-estate upswing. That is a $5 billion wealth extraction carried out in broad daylight by a sitting president — a man who controls tariff policy, cryptocurrency regulation, foreign-aid disbursement, and the diplomatic relationships that happen to grease the very deals enriching him.

In 2015, before his first presidency, Forbes put Trump at roughly $4.5 billion. He shed wealth across both terms from management neglect, litigation, and pandemic closures.

Then, returned to the White House, he promptly rebuilt and surpassed it — this time faster, and with considerably more federal leverage. The instrument of this second ascent? World Liberty Financial, a cryptocurrency venture he co-launched with his sons and Steve Witkoff's family, plus a meme coin bearing his own face.

About $550 million in token sales in a single year. The $TRUMP coin launched at $10, spiked to $74 in a day on inauguration week, then settled to levels that benefited exactly the people who got in at the beginning. Those people were not standing in the Walmart checkout line.

His eldest sons, Eric and Don Jr., are worth an estimated $750 million and $500 million respectively, most of it accumulated through crypto mining venture American Bitcoin and their stakes in World Liberty Financial. Before the second presidency, they were wealthy heirs running a real estate company. Now they are centi-millionaires with offshore licensing deals — golf courses in Qatar, crypto operations in multiple countries — closed during diplomatic trips that ordinary trade delegates don't get to take.

Ivanka, who professes distance from Washington, carries an individual net worth around $100 million. That figure is almost quaint beside her husband's. Jared Kushner, who spent four years as a senior presidential adviser managing Middle East relationships he had no prior experience navigating, Jared founded Affinity Partners in 2021 — weeks after leaving the White House. Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund invested $2 billion in Affinity, overruling its own screening committee which had cited Kushner's inexperience, the excessive management fees, and the public relations risk. MBS overruled them.

The relationship Kushner cultivated in the White House was apparently worth something to Riyadh. Affinity now manages $4.8 billion, mostly from Gulf state sovereign wealth funds, and generates an estimated $40 to $45 million per year in management fees. Jared Kushner's net worth crossed the billion-dollar threshold in 2025. From the White House to the billionaires' club in four years, on the strength of relationships built on the public dime.

Barron Trump, who is 19 years old and attends NYU, is worth an estimated $150 million — with additional locked crypto tokens that could unlock to $525 million more. He has a 10% stake in World Liberty Financial. His mother, Melania, made approximately $20 million in 2025 through speaking, a documentary, a memoir, and her own personal meme coin.

Tiffany Trump, often described as the family's quietest member, married into a Lebanese-Nigerian billionaire dynasty. She is set, by most accounts.

Then there is Steve Witkoff. Trump's special envoy to the Middle East serves in that role without pay. He is worth $2.3 billion. His sons co-founded World Liberty Financial alongside the Trump children. A UAE trade deal Witkoff helped

negotiate — involving $2 billion flowing into World Liberty Financial — was the subject of a formal Senate inquiry by Elizabeth Warren and Chris Murphy, who noted that Witkoff's ethics disclosure forms still showed ownership in crypto entities he had claimed to be divesting. The White House ethics office had not cleared those forms. He was simultaneously negotiating the Iran conflict and Gaza ceasefire while his family's crypto venture collected Gulf sovereign money.

This is not alleged. It is documented in Senate letters, SEC filings, and the Forbes annual wealth index.

What America First Became

Let us be precise about what Trump promised his voters. No new wars. Lower prices, specifically on Day One. An economy that worked for working people, not the donor class. An implicit repudiation of the foreign-policy adventurism that had swallowed a generation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Marjorie Taylor Greene — no one's idea of a radical — put it plainly in March 2026 after Trump launched strikes on Iran: "'Make America Great Again' was supposed to be America first, not Israel first, not any foreign country first, not any foreign people first, but the American people first."

She resigned from Congress that same January, partly over the Epstein files. Tucker Carlson publicly condemned the Iran operation on his podcast. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters Monday evening in the Capitol: "We knew that there was going to be an Israeli action," meaning it was Israel's pre-existing plan to strike Iran that pulled the United States in. America First, it turns out, meant America Follows.

The Strait of Hormuz was closed. Gas prices peaked at $4.55 per gallon on May 21, 2026 — roughly 54% higher than they were on February 26, 2026, before the conflict began. In June 2020, you could fill your tank at a national average of $1.97. In June 2026, you are paying more than twice that. Trump promised cheap gas. The war delivered the opposite.

Some MAGA voters are now wrestling with pain at the pump. A Michigan voter told The New York Times that filling up "hurts." A Cincinnati voter said the second Trump term did not give him "the greatest feeling." Surveys suggest between 1 in 8 and 1 in 6 Trump voters express some measure of regret for their 2024 votes.

The Price of Groceries in the Great America

Here is a snapshot of what your dollar bought in 2020 and what it buys in mid-2026.

In 2020, a gallon of milk averaged around $3.30. A loaf of bread was about $1.40. A dozen eggs cost just over $1.50. Ground beef was around $4.50 per pound. Today, ground beef runs closer to $6.30 per pound. Spending $1,000 in groceries today only buys about $800 worth of food compared to what you could have gotten five years ago.

Ground beef prices are up 21% from January 2025. Orange juice is up 23%. Sandwich bread and chicken prices are also up. Eggs, yes, came down from their bird-flu peak — Trump has bragged about this repeatedly — but that's one item in a cart full of items that haven't come down. The groceries overall cost more than they did in Obama's second term, more than they did in 2020, and more than they did the day Trump was inaugurated.

Electricity prices saw the biggest acceleration under Trump. Groceries and medical care saw price increases slightly faster under Trump than during Biden's last year.

Trump promised Day One prices. He delivered a war-driven stagflationary squeeze on the Strait of Hormuz with a side of tariff-induced supply disruption.

The Woman at the Shoe Counter

There is a woman in California with two master's degrees. She works at a mall selling shoes three days a week. Her employer keeps her hours carefully curated below the threshold that would trigger health benefits or accrued vacation. She earns roughly the same per hour as she did before finishing her second graduate degree, because the job market for her field has calcified, and because part-time retail is what you do when the graduate-level openings evaporate.

She is not exceptional in her predicament.

Labor market conditions continued to be challenging for recent college graduates at the start of 2026. The unemployment rate remained elevated at about 5.7 percent in the first quarter of 2026, and the underemployment rate sat at 41.5 percent.

A Strada Institute and Burning Glass Institute report found that 52% of graduates were underemployed in food service, hospitality, retail sales, office administration

and other fields a year after earning a bachelor's degree. Ten years after graduation, 45% still didn't hold a job requiring college-level skills.

The average underemployed graduate earns roughly $45,000 annually, compared to $65,000 for graduates working in degree-matched fields. A Gallup poll found that just 35% of adults considered a college degree "very important" last year, down from 75% in 2010.

So you have: a woman with two graduate degrees scanning shoe inventory while her employer games her schedule to avoid benefits liability. Her student loan payments are real. Her rent is real. Her grocery bill is real. And while she is working that third Tuesday of the month, Eric Trump is closing a crypto mining deal, Jared Kushner is collecting $40 million in management fees from Riyadh, and Barron Trump — who is younger than some of her textbooks — is sitting on $150 million.

This is the distribution of America in June 2026. This is the great making.

The Conflict of Interest Catalogue

What Trump and his constellation of insiders have assembled since January 2025 is not incidental. It is systemic. It is a structure in which nearly every foreign-policy decision, every trade negotiation, every tariff exemption, and every regulatory posture touches a business interest held by someone at the table.

World Liberty Financial — the crypto venture seeded by Trump, his sons, and the Witkoff family — has received hundreds of millions in foreign sovereign investment. Those same foreign governments are now dealing with a U.S. president, his diplomat sons, and his unpaid Middle East envoy. The transaction and the diplomacy run in the same channels.

Jared Kushner's Affinity Partners manages $4.8 billion, overwhelmingly from non-U.S. sovereign wealth. The Saudi Public Investment Fund invested $2 billion in Affinity Partners in 2021, even though the PIF committee that screens investments recommended rejecting Kushner's proposal, citing "inexperience" and "excessive" fees. The committee's recommendation was overruled by MBS, who heads PIF's Board of Directors. That relationship is now being leveraged again in Trump's second term, with Kushner formally reintroduced to the diplomatic infrastructure as a semi-official presence in the Peace Envoy apparatus.

Most modern presidents before Trump put their assets into blind trusts or broadly diversified funds in order to avoid concerns about the White House favoring policy decisions that would benefit a president financially. Trump did not. He has instead constructed an arrangement where the presidency is the business, and the business is the presidency.

Jimmy Carter gave up his peanut farm. Richard Nixon was undone by far less. Trump's family has collected a cumulative fortune running into the multiple billions — much of it traceable directly to relationships, regulatory postures, and foreign-government access that are inseparable from the office itself. The graft isn't hidden. It's branded.

The Math Nobody Is Running On Cable News

The official U.S. unemployment rate stands at approximately 4.3 percent as of early 2026. That number, as economist John Williams of Shadow Government Statistics has long documented, is constructed using a methodology the Bureau of Labor Statistics revised significantly starting in 1994. The pre-1994 methodology — which counted discouraged workers who stopped looking more than a year ago, and workers forced into part-time employment, in a fuller accounting — would put the true rate closer to 24 to 25 percent, by Shadow Stats' reckoning.

The BLS's own U-6 measure, which is more inclusive than U-3 but less inclusive than the pre-1994 accounting, was running at approximately 8 percent in early 2026. That covers the part-time workers who want full-time work and the marginally attached — people like the shoe saleswoman who isn't counted as unemployed because she technically has a job. The headline number does not capture the graduate teaching yoga because she can't find a position in her field. It doesn't count the electrician who went from 40 hours to 22 when the commercial construction pipeline slowed after tariff-driven cost increases.

Trump's supporters were told the economy was roaring. They were not told which economy, or for whom.

The Voter Who Wanted MAGA

He is a machinist in Ohio or a sheet metal fabricator in Pennsylvania or a cattle rancher in Nebraska. He voted for Trump in 2016 because he was sick of wars and sick of prices and sick of hearing that things were fine when they weren't. He voted again in 2024 because Joe Biden, whatever his genuine qualities, was old and

halting and presided over an inflation surge that hit the working class hardest. The MAGA promise was simple: someone is finally in your corner.

That voter is now filling up at $4.34 a gallon. His grocery bill is up roughly 25 percent from 2020. His employer's health insurance premium is higher than it was under Obama. His grown daughter — who got a communications degree — works at a hotel front desk and makes $17 an hour without benefits. And he is watching Eric Trump announce a crypto mining deal and Jared Kushner's management fees and Barron Trump's meme coin portfolio and Melania's documentary.

He may still broadly approve of Trump — polls suggest many do. He may still believe the war with Iran was necessary, or frame the economic squeeze as temporary, or blame the Democrats for obstruction. He is not stupid. He is loyal, and loyalty to a tribe survives a great deal of factual contradiction. But the question is whether loyalty without material improvement can be sustained past a certain threshold.

Trade wars and renaming the map won't lower prices. And people are starting to notice.

The midterm elections are five months out. One in six Trump voters, in some surveys, now says they regret 2024.

A Closing Note on the Arithmetic of Extraction

Donald Trump's net worth: from roughly $2.3 billion in early 2024 to an estimated $6.5 to $7.3 billion in 2026. Gain: approximately $4 to $5 billion.

Jared Kushner: from roughly $800 million in 2021 to over $1 billion in 2025, managing $4.8 billion in assets that flow an estimated $40 to $45 million per year in fees. Kushner's starting net worth when Trump first took office in 2017 was estimated at roughly $200 to $300 million, much of it tied to the troubled 666 Fifth Avenue property deal that itself required foreign refinancing through Brookfield.

Eric Trump: from roughly $75 million pre-2024 to $750 million. A tenfold increase on the strength of crypto ventures that exist alongside his father's office.

Don Jr.: from roughly $50 million to $500 million by the same machinery.

Barron: $150 million at 19 years old and climbing, with locked tokens that could unlock to $525 million more.

Melania: $20 million in a single year of speeches, books, a documentary, and a personal meme coin.

Steve Witkoff: $2.3 billion, serving as an unpaid peace envoy while his family's crypto venture collected Gulf sovereign money through the same diplomatic channels his envoy role created.

And the woman at the shoe counter in the California Mall? Her hours got cut again last week. The employer is very thoughtful about keeping her just below the benefits threshold. She is thinking about a third part-time job.

This is Trump's great America in June 2026. The prices are not lower. The wars are not fewer. The family is considerably richer. And the receipt, as always, goes to the people who can least afford to pay it.

Trump as Boss Tweed is such a Trope. It is both so ridiculous and feeble minded and yet it is so true at the same time. I constantly try to push the idea aside that Trump is President Tweed. That he still has time to “Drain the Swamp” and “Go After the Deep State.” But he and his entourage are the Swamp and are the Deep State.

Every thing that he touches, even elections and wars, become Tammany Hall. Our votes are now Tammany Hall, as are our tax dollars. Even Baron is Tammany Hall. The Nepotism and Decay alone are not enough – he demands our adoration for it. There is a perverse, bitter irony to the man. **Hell hath no fury like a scorned President.**

The Boss Tweed part of my brain is completely wired to Trump’s image on TV and the sound of Trump’s voice. President Tweed,l the Boss Tweed money bags. His family as little mini-Boss Tweeds, little Mini-Mes of a corpulent materialist with dementia. **Make Alzheimer’s Grafting Again.**

MAGA: Making America’s Grifters Ascendant.

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