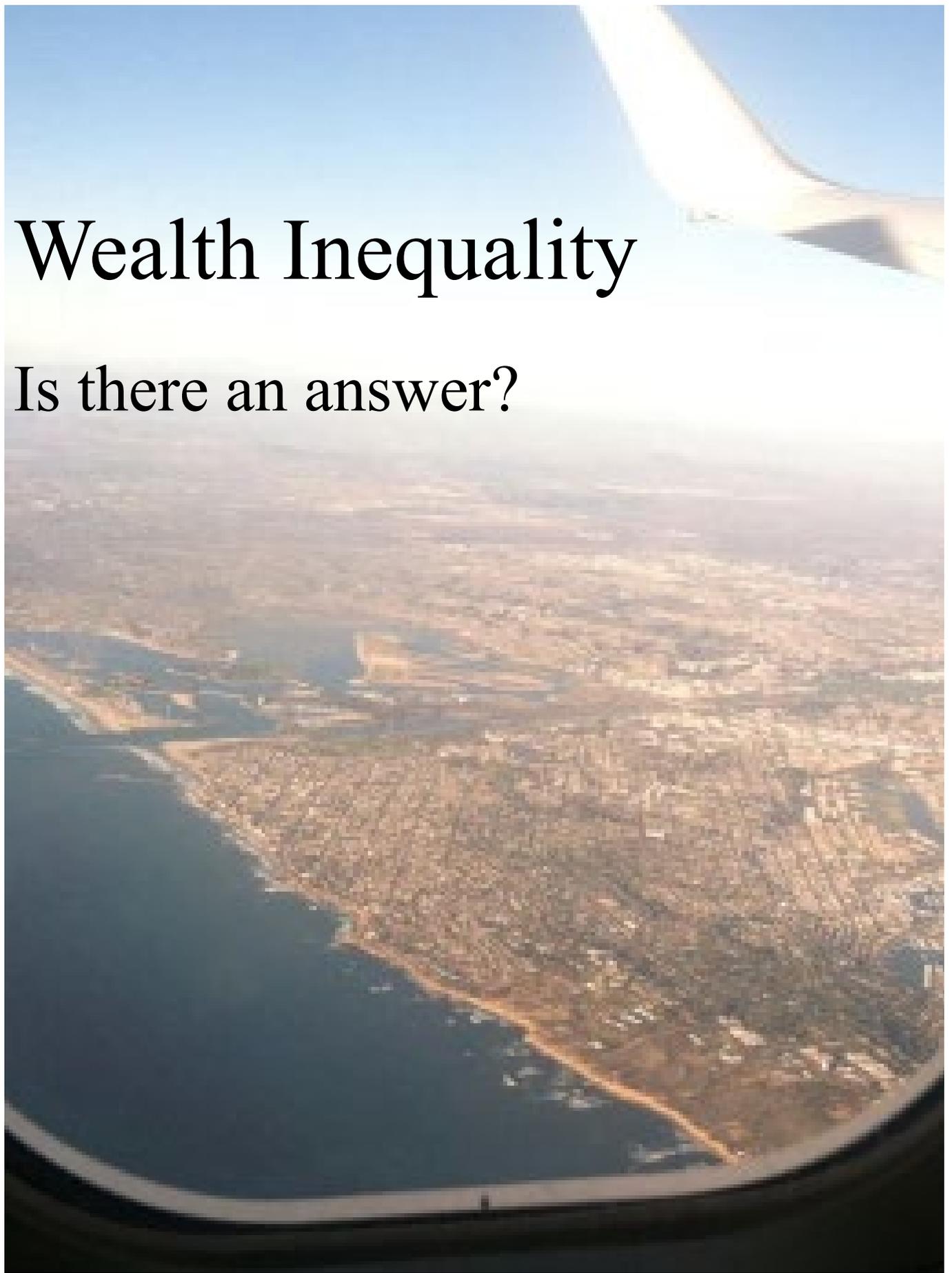


# Wealth Inequality

Is there an answer?



The worn, leather, calloused hand grasps the handle of the mop at the start of each day scrubbing the polished floors with the familiarity of routine. Washing with a rhythm until grimy knuckles reach their extinct of being bone-tired. The backbreaking hoist of bagged garbage only to be immediately tossed into the dumpster, the courage to sanitize the unthinkable, now that is truly mentally, and physically, taxing work. Work only to be rewarded with a couple smiles here and there and, at times, a paycheck barely above minimum wage.

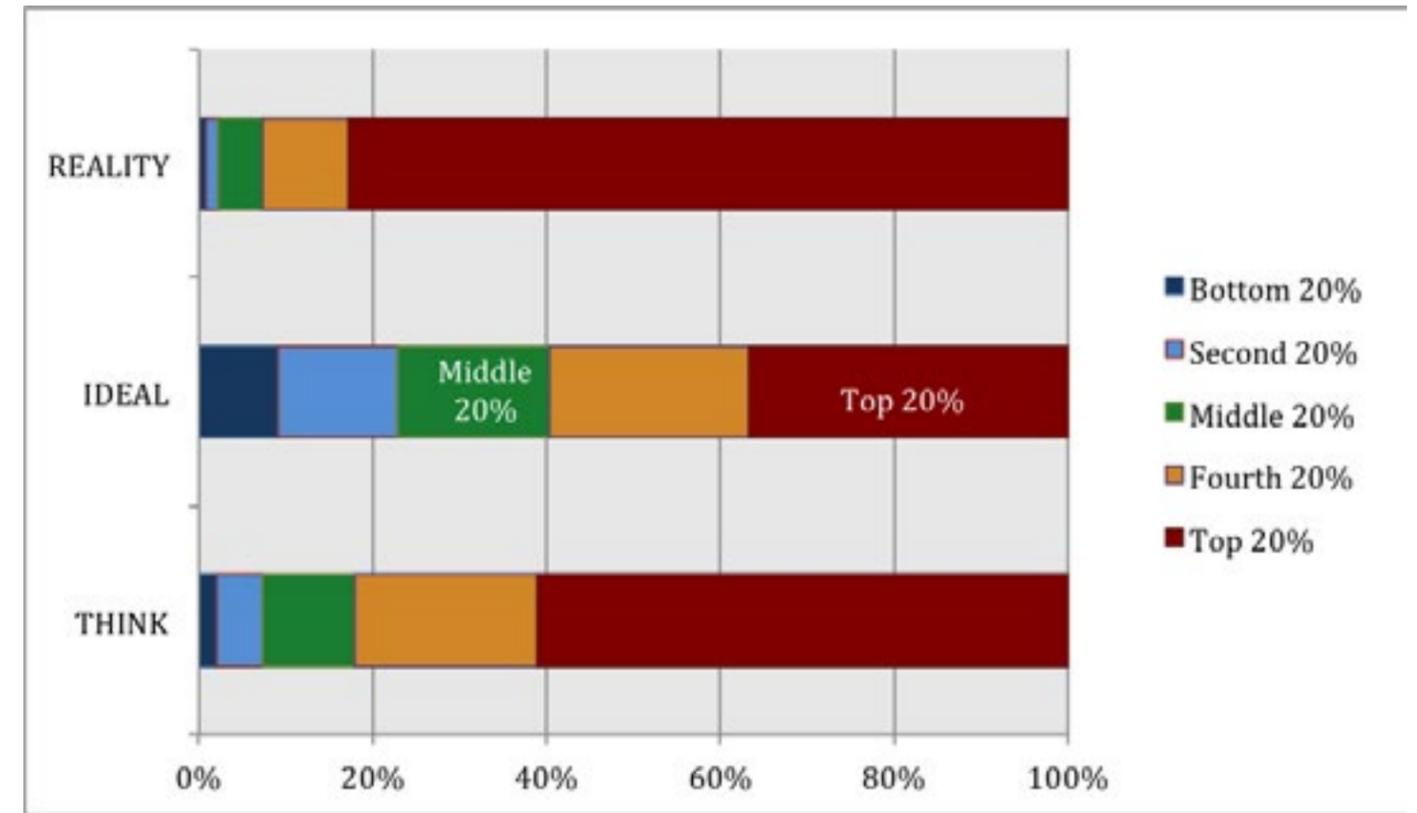
In all actuality these hard-working servants are underappreciated and often ignored. Invisible to society, they hover under the radar of many. At Belmont University at the wake of the sun you will see an army of blue shirts and navy pants begin to file into buildings like army ants. The blue clad people are the humble cleaning service crew who, without a single complaint, through blood, sweat and tears, clean our campus endlessly to the point you will rarely find a piece of unattended garbage laying on the ground or in the buildings. Yet, you never hear of a cleaning service crewmember earning a substantial amount of money. Why is that?

In a land where the American dream is to be achieved and strived for, is only that – a dream. Is it a deception? In a land where freedom rings, where all men are created equal, is where individualism

flaunts their botched attempt to make it to the “top.” This land we call home, our home, from the beautiful western landscapes, to the wondrous beaches of the east and west coast, to the flat lands of the Dakota’s, is our shelter. There have been many of videos and articles published in the last couple years talking about America’s wealth distribution. Is our perceived idea of wealth in America a reality? What determines salary wages? Is it education? Opportunity? Who is to say the cafeteria worker should get paid less than say an investment banker? Who is to say one is better than the other? We need cafeteria workers just as much, if not more, than investment bankers. They provide a service just like investment bankers but accept a discriminated, underpaid wage.

A Harvard business professor and economist interviewed 5,000 people to see what they thought the wealth distribution was in America. He divided the country into a top, bottom and middle three 20% groups/quintiles and asked what they thought the distribution of wealth was and what they thought the ideal wealth distribution should be in America.

Here is what they said:



People just like you and me answered the Harvard Professor and Economist’s questions and here are the results. The numbers speak for themselves. When the 5,000 people were asked what the ideal distribution should be, 92% said what you see in the above chart. That is at least 9 out of 10 people. This shows that most Americans at least know the distribution of wealth isn’t what it should be and this system of class is already skewed. If we already think this system is flawed between just what we think it is and what the ideal situation is, what is the reality of wealth distribution. This chart puts things into perspective. Our

perception of wealth in America isn’t even comparable to the reality of this distribution.

Let’s break out some stats, in the actual/real distribution, the bottom and second group/quintile barely have any of the wealth. They make up less than 10% of America’s wealth. What is also mind-blowing from the video, “Wealth Inequality in America,” the top 20% group/quintile that single 1% of that group make more than what we THINK the entire top 20% group should even make. Pathetic.

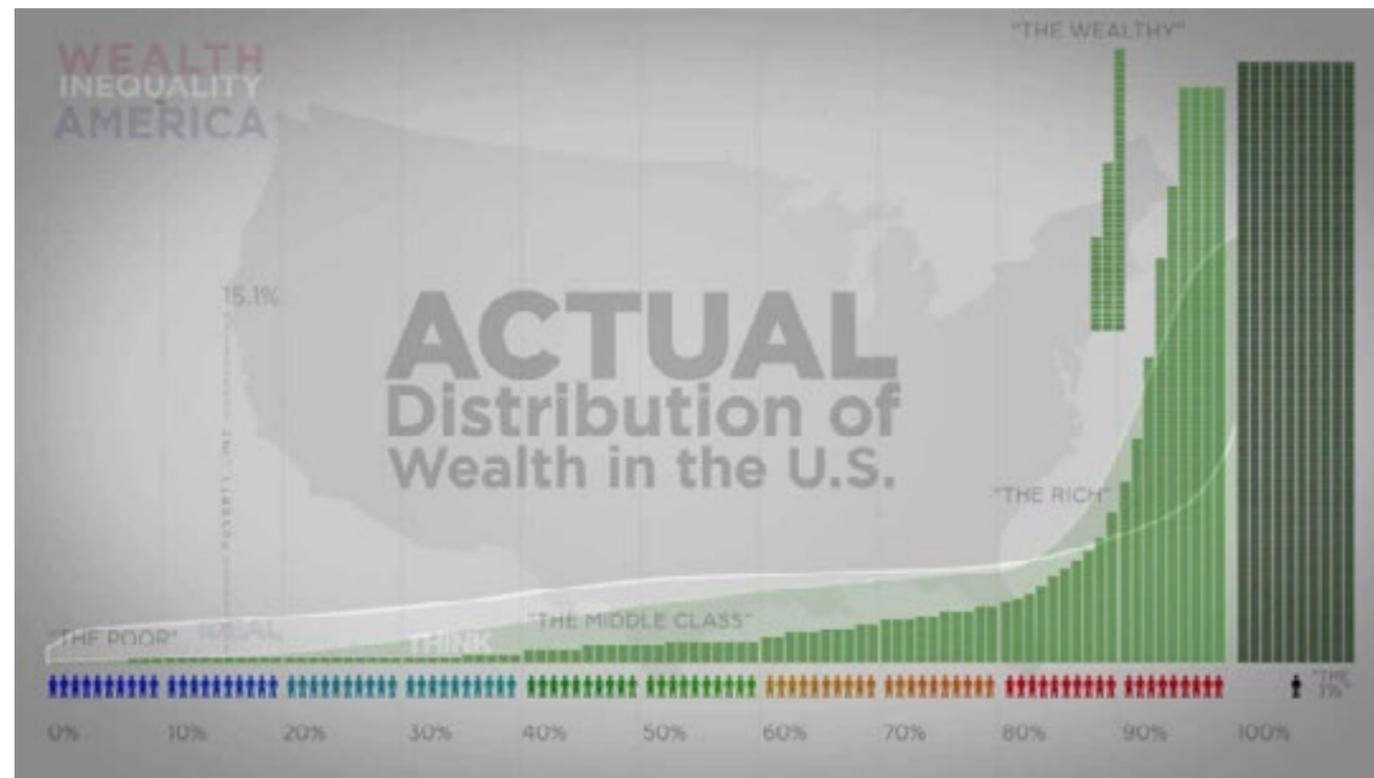
Another way to think of it is in our ideal distribution of wealth in a society the rich are about 10-20%

better off than the poorest Americans. The poor are not even that poor because the poverty line is almost off the charts. The middle class is super “healthy” and can actually be considered well-off. “Republicans and Democrats alike chose this curve.”

However, things get real when you become aware of the Actual distribution of wealth in America. The poorest 5% don’t even register on the charts and the next 5% are below the poverty line. The middle class is barely distinguishable from the lower class and the rich is barely distinguishable from the middle class. Only the top 10% are better off from the rest of the population, the wealthy. So much so the top 2-5% are off the chart. The Top 1% makes 40% of the nations wealth. The middle and poor combined,

the bottom 80% of Americans, as well as some of the fourth quintile, only make 7% of nation’s wealth. The richest 1% takes home about 24% of the income, in 2012. That top 1% owns 50% of stocks, bonds and mutual fund. The bottom 50% only own .5% which means they are not investing, they are just scraping by. The average worker needs to work more than a month to earn how much the CEO earns in an hour.

This can be overwhelming and can get bogged down in stats but it’s harsh reality knocking on our doors. We just have our blinders on unable to wrap our brains around the rapping sound at our doors, telling us to wake up and smell the coffee. As a whole, society tends to put their blinders on to avoid seeing this widespread epidemic of atrocities.



America is a society divided by class. Class is everywhere, it is how big your house is, what kind of clothes you wear, what neighborhood you live in, etc. If you want to know class in America all you have to do is look around you and see what people surround themselves with. Just go down to The Gulch in the evening, right at dinner rush hour and see the numerous valet parking booths streaming with cars, the fancy clickaty-clack of heels, the suit jackets accompanying a fancy doll on the one shoulder as they enter expensive Flyte World Dining off of Division Street. Then take a cab down to Broadway after dinner and see the world of classes merge. You will see men and women of rhetoric stumbling their way down the street side curb to catch a cab for the night, college kids with too high of heels and too much hair gel try to take someone home for the night, men and women fighting with the musk of alcohol on their breaths as a mask to their real problems, and you will see the man in the alleyway, quiet, wrapped in thatched blankets, trying to keep the bitterness of society from seeping into his pores.

Society flaunts their class and wealth and uses it as a personality trait to describe ones belonging. In the PBS film, People Like Us, a film based on the idea social class doesn’t truly exist it is an illusion that has been turned into a political construct. Society columnist, R. Couri Hay speaks in People Like Us “It’s

basically against the American principle to belong to a class. So, naturally, American’s have a really hard time talking about the class system because they really don’t want to admit the class system exists, when, in reality it does.” As a whole we are aware there is a misdistribution of wealth in our hometown, in America. What we aren’t aware of, however, is the harsh reality of the situation. The wealth of America should not be so skewed to the point the top 1% almost makes a quarter of the nation’s wealth. Is class, after all, a social and political construct to create desperation of earning enough money but only instead to be slaving for the scraps and minimal remains the top 1% leaves behind?

The reality of wealth distribution needs more than a solution. America needs awareness in order to achieve the expanse of the “American Dream.” We do not need the extreme solution of Socialism but simply awareness of the reality. In reality, class is simply a social and political construct designed to create a divide among the people; a division of salary and pay based on what?

