



Should the Rich Be Condemned?

President Barack Obama, in stoking up class warfare, said, "I do think at a certain point you've made enough money." This is lunacy. Andrew Carnegie's steel empire produced the raw materials that built the physical infrastructure of the United States. Bill Gates co-founded Microsoft and produced software products that aided the computer revolution. But Carnegie had amassed quite a fortune long before he built Carnegie Steel Co., and Gates had quite a fortune by 1990. Had they the mind of our president, we would have lost much of their contributions, because they had already "made enough money."



Class warfare thrives on ignorance about the sources of income. Listening to some of the talk about income differences, one would think that there's a pile of money meant to be shared equally among Americans. Rich people got to the pile first and greedily took an unfair share. Justice requires that they "give back." Or, some people talk about unequal income distribution as if there were a dealer of dollars. The reason some people have millions or billions of dollars while others have very few is the dollar dealer is a racist, sexist, a multinationalist or just plain mean. Economic justice requires a re-dealing of the dollars, income redistribution or spreading the wealth, where the ill-gotten gains of the few are returned to their rightful owners.

In a free society, for the most part, people with high incomes have demonstrated extraordinary ability to produce valuable services for — and therefore please — their fellow man. People voluntarily took money out of their pockets to purchase the products of Gates, Pfizer or IBM. High incomes reflect the democracy of the marketplace. The reason Gates is very wealthy is millions upon millions of people voluntarily reached into their pockets and handed over \$300 or \$400 for a Microsoft product. Those who think he has too much money are really registering disagreement with decisions made by millions of their fellow men.

In a free society, in a significant way income inequality reflects differences in productive capacity, namely one's ability to please his fellow man. For example, I can play basketball and so can LeBron James, but would the Miami Heat pay me anything close to the \$43 million they pay him? If not, why not? I think it has to do with the discriminating tastes of basketball fans who pay \$100 or more to watch the game. If the Miami Heat hired me, they would have to pay fans to watch.

Stubborn ignorance sees capitalism as benefiting only the rich, but the evidence refutes that. The rich have always been able to afford entertainment; it was the development and marketing of radio and television that made entertainment accessible to the common man. The rich have never had the drudgery of washing and ironing clothing, beating out carpets or waxing floors. The mass production of washing machines, wash-and-wear clothing, vacuum cleaners and no-wax floors spared the common man this drudgery. At one time, only the rich could afford automobiles, telephones and computers. Now



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on November 23, 2011

all but a small percentage of Americans enjoy these goods.

The prospects are dim for a society that makes mascots out of the unproductive and condemns the productive.

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