

Paul Kivel's Newsletter Winter, 2012



This newsletter is focused on the 20th anniversary edition of *Helping Teens Stop Violence, Build Community and Stand for Justice* by Allan Creighton and I. But the newsletter begins with some resources for understanding power, wealth, and class in our society, drawn from my earlier book *You Call This a Democracy? Who Benefits, Who Pays, and Who Really Decides*.

With the powerful mobilizations across the country, including the struggles for immigrant rights in Arizona and Alabama, worker's rights in Wisconsin and Ohio, prisoner's rights and the transformation of the prison/legal system in California and Georgia, environmental justice in Washington, DC and elsewhere, and the many forms of organizing coming out of the Occupy movement--not to mention the revolutionary struggles in Latin America, North Africa, Western Asia and in other countries--we each must ask ourselves: what is my role? How can I contribute? How can I get together with others to amplify the efforts of those already in motion for justice? I hope that this newsletter and the many new resources on my revised website will inspire and support your activism in these exciting and hopeful times.

In This Issue

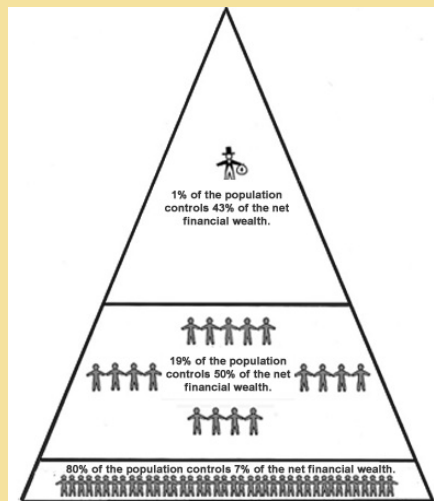
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Economic Justice

"In the past, Americans smugly assumed that European societies were more stratified than their own, but it now appears that the United States has surpassed all industrial societies in the extent of its family wealth inequality." - Lisa Keister, sociologist

"If it's class warfare, my class is winning." - Warren Buffett, billionaire investor

The Economic Pyramid



Numbers are from 2007 from "Recent Trends in Household Wealth in the United States: Rising Debt and Middle-Class Squeeze, an update to 2007" by Edward N. Wolff, Jerome Levy Economics Institute, Working Paper #589, March, 2010 available at http://www.levy.org/pubs/wp_589.pdf

For a downloadable version of the economic pyramid click [here](#).

Do you think the United States has a ruling class—a portion of the population who own tremendous amounts of wealth and who benefit from the way that decisions get made in this country? If you do, you are absolutely right. There is a ruling class in the United States, and it is just as rich and powerful as any ruling class has ever been.

There is an even smaller number of people, the power elite—primarily a few thousand powerful white men, who make many of the decisions that affect our everyday lives. They decide where to invest money, where to build factories or whether to move jobs overseas; they decide what kinds of people get locked up, what's on the evening news, who runs for elections (and who gets to vote), and what is the quality of the food we eat and the water we drink. They decide on the conditions where we work, the state of our neighborhoods, and who has access to health care. Most of the time they decide, they and the ruling class benefit, and we pay. We pay in our wages, our taxes, our health, the quality of our housing, and often with our very lives.

How our society works is not a secret, but neither is it widely known. **CONTINUED**

What is a ruling class?

A class is a segment of society that, through its shared economic position and cultural values, participates in common social, political, and economic interests and specific forms of access or lack of access to power.

A ruling class is the segment that dominates society through its control of power and wealth. It influences and often determines the distribution of and control over resources; who has access to political power; which groups benefit and which do not from social policy; and which groups are central to the life, considerations, and attention of a society, and which are relegated to the margins. **CONTINUED**

What does the economic structure of the US look like?

Who Makes Up the U.S. Ruling Class?

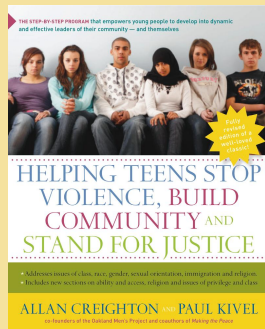
The ruling class in the United States is about 1 percent of the population, or approximately 2.9 million men, women, and children. These families have incomes starting at about \$383,000/year (2011) and/or net worth of at least \$5 million as of 2007. Most of the ruling class is white and it is predominantly Christian. There are some African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos/as, and Arab Americans in the ruling class, but they are few and far between and rarely in positions of power. There are practically no Native Americans in the ruling class. There is a higher percentage of Jews in the ruling class than their representation in the general population, but despite the stereotypes, they still constitute a small part of that class.

The ruling class is substantial. But even when you subtract from it children, women, and men who are wealthy but do not participate in making political and economic decisions, the group of predominately white Christian men who constitute the power elite—those who make the decisions that impact all of us—is still large in absolute terms although small in relation to U.S. society as a whole. Obviously they don't all meet in a big room and decide on financial and social policy. There can also be widespread differences of opinion among these decision makers, although these differences generally fall within a narrow range of the political spectrum on economic issues.

Some members of the ruling class are new members who have built up wealth during their lifetime. **CONTINUED**

Featured Book

Helping Teens Stop Violence, Build Community, and Stand for Justice



Revised and expanded from its first-edition release 20 years ago, *Helping Teens Stop Violence, Build Community, and Stand for Justice* is a guide for adults who work in diverse environments with pre-teens and teens, teaching topics related to social justice. Its emphasis is on helping adults become effective allies to young people, and developing understanding and the skills they need to facilitate community building among youth. The framework and tools are especially applicable to adults working in schools, youth detention facilities, residential programs, after-school programs, recreation programs, colleges, and universities. Committed parents and guardians can also use this materials for insight into the lives and needs of young people they care for.

The book discusses major systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and adultism in an accessible format. New sections include coverage of Islamophobia, Transphobia, Christian dominance in the classroom, ableism, and immigrant rights. Adults are given exercises for their own development, for staff training, and also to help direct their work with young people.

New Edition Now On Sale

Take 20% off web price
Pay \$15.95 until the end of March
Purchase the latest edition [here](#).



Paul talks about the newly revised and expanded *Helping Teens Stop Violence*

Some helpful excerpts from the book

Introduction:

In the United States today, millions of young people live in poverty; lack health care; experience physical, emotional, and sexual abuse from adults; and

experience inadequate educational opportunities and a lack of living-wage job opportunities. Young people lack political representation, and many live in toxic environments. Adults and adult-centered institutions routinely belittle, interrupt, or criminalize young people's efforts to survive, sustain their relationships, nurture their opportunities, work for justice, and express their creativity. **CONTINUED**

Resources:

To download the bibliography and resource listings from *Helping Teens Stop Violence*, click [here](#).

Sections include:

- Preparing to Work with Youth
- Liberation Theory
- Overview of the "isms"
- Being in the Classroom
- Do You Have My Back? Young People and Solidarity

Featured Exercise

Examining Class and Race: An Exercise

I grew up believing that all Americans have equal opportunity to succeed because there is a level playing field, and affirmative action was no longer necessary. Since then, I have found this exercise useful to challenge our common assumptions of equal access.

Everyone starts out standing on a line in the middle of the room facing one wall. Participants are told that the line is the starting line for a race to get some well-paying jobs, which they need to take care of their families. But before the race begins the starting positions will be adjusted via the following exercise. Participants are asked to silently take a step forward or backward, depending upon given instructions and if a statement applies to them. They may decide for themselves whether the statement applies, and, as much as possible, keep their steps the same size throughout the exercise.

Explain that the exercise will be done in silence to allow participants to notice the feelings that come up during the exercise and to make it safer for all participants.

Begin the Exercise

1. If your ancestors were forced to come to this country or forced to relocate from where they were living, either temporarily or permanently, or restricted from living in certain areas, take one step backward.
2. If you feel that your primary ethnic identity is "American," take one step forward.
3. If you were ever called names or ridiculed because of your race, ethnicity or class background, take one step backward.
4. If you grew up with people of color or working class people who were servants, maids, gardeners or babysitters in your house, take one step forward. **CONTINUED**

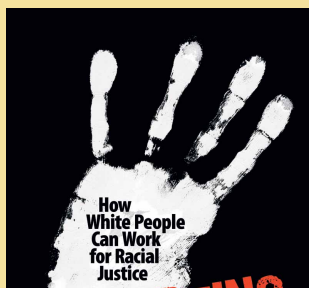
Upcoming Appearances

Look for Paul this spring at the **White Privilege Conference** (March 28-31, Albuquerque, NM) and the **National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education** (NCORE) (May 30-June 2, New York, NY).

New Edition

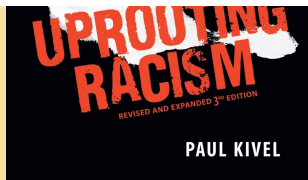
Uprooting Racism: How White People can Work for Social Justice Newly Revised and Expanded Third Edition!

by Paul Kivel



Uprooting Racism explores the manifestations of racism in politics, work, community, and family life. It moves beyond the definition and unlearning of racism to address the many areas of privilege for white people, and suggests ways for individuals and groups to challenge the structures of racism. *Uprooting Racism's* welcoming style helps readers look at how we learn racism, what effects it has on our lives, its costs and benefits to white people, and what we can do about it.

In addition to updating existing chapters, the new edition of *Uprooting Racism* explores the ways entrenched racism



has been revealed in the new economy, the prison industrial complex, health care policy, and increased attacks on Arabs, Muslims, and recent immigrants. Special features include exercises, questions, and suggestions to engage, challenge assumptions, and motivate the reader towards social action. The new edition includes an index and an updated bibliography.

Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice

Price per Unit (piece): \$19.95

Now: \$17.95

You Save: \$2.00

Buy the book online [here](#).

To learn more about the expanded edition of this book, watch a short video of Paul [here](#).

Family



SOLAR PANELS
The Solar System powers our Cine Solar, website management, camera charging and daily tasks.
ALL POWERED BY THE SUN!

BICI MAQUINAS
Washing Machine and Blender
Constructed almost entirely from scrap materials our bike machines use a truly renewable energy "pedal powered" to wash clothes and prepare food!

PROPANE FUEL
Burns lighter than gasoline or diesel releasing ZERO heavy particules and 20% less carbon in the air. While not a truly sustainable fuel helps us it allows us to make the trip with a smaller footprint.

with a DRY TOILET we:
- Save Water
- Don't Pollute
- Feed the Soil
- Teach through example
TURN WASTE INTO A RESOURCE!

A year and a half ago, our son Ryan and his partner Leticia bought and equipped an old RV and drove to Tijuana to embark on a multi-year project to document alternative and sustainable communities throughout Central and South America. Now in Columbia at an inter-American ecological gathering, they continue toward their destination in Southern Brazil, connecting communities, sharing innovations, exchanging seeds, and teaching about alternative technologies and sustainable practices.

Check out their inspiring [video](#) about their first year on the road and many other videos and blogs about their trip at www.comuntierra.org.



One Year of the Comun Tierra Project!

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