

# Study Guide

## ESCALATING INEQUALITY



Unitarian Universalist Association  
2014-2018 Congregational Study/Action Issue

# **Table of Contents**

<b><u>Introduction and Recommendations</u></b> .....	<b>3</b>
Learning Goals .....	3
Organization of this Guide .....	3
How to Use this Guide .....	4
Leadership.....	4
Increasing Access.....	5
Partner Organizations.....	5
<b><u>Part 1: Class and Classism</u></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b><u>Part 2: Economic Inequality: Roots and Realities</u></b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b><u>Part 3: Inequality, Class, and Our Congregation</u></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b><u>Part 4: Interrupting Cycles of Inequality</u></b> .....	<b>12</b>
<u>Appendix 1: Worship Materials</u> .....	14
<u>Appendix 2: Additional Resources</u> .....	16
<u>Acknowledgements</u> .....	19

## **Introduction and Recommendations**

Challenging extreme inequality is a moral imperative. The escalation of inequality undergirds so many injustices which our faith movement is committed to addressing: from economic injustice to mass incarceration; from migrant injustice to climate change; from sexual and gender injustice to attacks on voting rights.

“[Escalating Inequality](#)” was selected by the 2014 General Assembly as the 2014-2018 Congregational Study/Action Issue. This Study Guide provides Unitarian Universalist congregations with materials and guidance for beginning or deepening their exploration of economic justice, helping to navigate this complex and inspiring subject with many ways to engage at personal, congregational, local, state, national, and global levels.

### **Learning Goals**

Through using this Study Guide, you and your congregation will:

- **Engage with the complex history and realities of economic inequality**, which exists at every level of human community, from local to global, and is composed of overlapping and interrelated systems of education, income, housing, taxation, democracy, banking, public health, workplace policies, and many others.
- **Gain an awareness of how structures of oppression affect the systemic nature of economic inequality.** These structures, including classism, racism, sexism, and others, privilege some and disadvantage others. The creation and perpetuation of economic inequality is rooted, in part, in these power differentials.
- **Develop a spiritually-grounded, foundational articulation of the impact of class and classism** on oneself, one’s congregation, community, and wider society.
- **Experience a call, arising from Unitarian Universalist principles, sources, and values**, to bridge class divides and create a more just and equal world.
- **Be inspired and equipped to act against classism and economic inequality**, through activities including the existing social justice ministries of your congregation, building action plans, forming action/reflection groups, and other activities.

### **Organization of this Guide**

This Study Guide is organized into four subject areas which can be explored in any order or simultaneously. **Congregations are strongly encouraged to engage with all four areas:** when taken together they provide a deep and holistic engagement in this topic.

Within each area, the guide offers:

- Reflection questions to ground congregational learning and action in Unitarian Universalist values, principles, and sources
- Options for engaging in education
- Ideas for action and partnership

This format is based, in part, on a model of congregation-based social justice ministries that engages in equal parts in education, action, and reflection so as to maintain the spirituality at the center of our activism and ensure sustainable, community-based activism over the long term. **Congregations are thus invited to use all three parts—education, action, and reflection—as you explore each subject area.**

## How to Use this Guide

This guide is not a singular curriculum or a blueprint; instead, it offers **several different options** for education and action within each of the four subject areas. Congregations are not expected to implement every resource or project listed. You are invited to discern which options will work best in your congregation and create a plan for engagement.

Tips for discerning which options to utilize in your congregation:

- Try to **engage your entire congregation**, not just a small group. See tips from the UUA's [Social Justice Empowerment Handbook](#) (PDF), Section V.
- Plan for **a diversity of ways to engage**, for example, a discussion series, worship services, a film screening, and workshop(s). This helps to reach more people and meet the needs of people with different learning styles.
- Keep in mind that **the four subject areas overlap**. Some materials cover more than one area and are noted as such.
- Consider what will help individual participants and your congregation as a whole stretch and grow as much as possible. **Where is there resistance to change?**
- **Timeline:** The Study/Action Issue process is four years long. Decide on a timeline for your congregation's engagement that will work well in for your unique context. It could span several years.
- Find ways to incorporate your engagement with this Study/Action Issue into the **existing work and ministry** of your congregation.
- Whichever options you choose to use, be sure to use chalice lightings, poetry, reflection questions, or other religious resources in order to **ground the education/action/reflection process in spirituality**.

## Leadership

When preparing to engage with this Study Guide:

- **Don't go alone!** Form a small leadership team to make a plan for engagement and coordinate activities. It is helpful for such teams to include leaders from many areas of the congregation, including social justice, religious education, and worship ministries.
- **Talk with congregational leaders**, gather supportive members around you, and engage in conversations about how to best move forward. The more listening, consultation, dialogue, and consensus that occurs at the beginning between staff, trustees, boards, committees, and members of the congregation, the more impact you'll be able to make.
- **Facilitation skills:** When determining who will lead/guide conversations, discussions, and other events, be sure to select experienced facilitators. Skill like anti-oppression competency and nonviolent communication training will be more important than a high

level of “expertise” specifically on class and inequality. Check out these [Tips for Facilitation](#) around potentially charged topics.

## Increasing Access

One of the benefits of utilizing a variety of options for engagement is that it increases access. For example, people whose schedules don't allow them to be a part of a workshop series can participate in other ways.

Here are more tips for increasing access to events, discussion groups, etc.:

- Consider varying work schedules when selecting days/times. Avoid making assumptions about what shifts or hours people in your congregation are available.
- Offer childcare.
- Consider transportation concerns. Help arrange for rides for anyone who could benefit.
- Arrange for refreshments and/or meals if possible.
- Consider the needs of all participants when planning activities, being especially mindful of disability and accessibility concerns.

## Partner Organizations

In addition to the appendices and the UUA's [Economic Justice](#) webpages, congregations may find useful resources on the websites of these partner organizations:

- [UU Service Committee](#). Recognizing that workers' rights are human rights, UUSC is committed to defending and supporting living wages, fair trade, and workers' right to organize - and you are essential to these efforts.
- [UUs for a Just Economic Community](#) was founded in 1994 as a dynamic, independent grassroots affiliate of the UUA. Their mission is to engage, educate, and activate UUs to work for economic justice, recognizing that as people of faith in the struggle for justice, we are supporting and renewing our spiritual lives.
- [UU Class Conversations](#). UU Class Conversations provides workshops for congregations and UU organizations, plus other resources to help UUs explore class, address classism (a cause of escalating income inequality), and bridge class differences to build stronger, more inclusive faith communities.
- [Interfaith Worker Justice](#) has been a leader in the fight for economic and worker justice in the United States since 1996. They organize, educate, and advocate to make a difference for working families. Your voice matters.
- [Class Action](#) is a national nonprofit that provides a dynamic framework and analysis, as well as a safe space, for people of all backgrounds to identify and address issues of class and classism through trainings, workshops, presentations, organizational consulting, and public education.

## **Part 1: Class and Classism**

Class is a foundational aspect of our culture, permeating our sense of self, our opportunities in life, our relationships, our practice of religion, and much more. Deepening our understanding of inequality requires us to engage with our own understandings and experiences of class and expand our ability to build relationships across class differences. This work can lead to deep spiritual growth.

### **Reflection Questions**

- What are the different elements, factors, and signals that play into class?
- What was the story you were told as a child about your family's class?
- How has class impacted your life choices and opportunities? In what ways have elements of class made your life easier? In what ways have elements of class negatively impacted you?
- How is class related to religion/spirituality for you personally and for us collectively as Unitarian Universalists?
- Why do you think some people believe that the United States is a classless society?

### **Options for Engaging in Education**

1. Use your congregation's existing small group ministry program (if you have one) or organize small conversation groups to hold deep conversations about class and classism. These conversations can utilize the reflection questions in this section, readings from the appendix, and/or one or more of the resources below.
  - Class Action's [Class Background Inventory](#) (PDF).
  - Clips from PBS documentary [People Like Us](#) (their companion [Study Guide](#) (PDF) is also available).
  - *Unafraid of the Dark* by Rosemary Bray McNatt: A UU minister's memoir of growing up poor in Chicago in the 1960s and becoming one of the first black women at Yale. She shows why changes in the welfare system make it virtually impossible for her inspiring story to happen today.
  - *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett: This book discusses some of the pernicious effects that relative inequality has on societies, including eroding trust, increasing anxiety and illness, unhappiness, and encouraging excessive consumption.
2. Engage your congregation in 2-3 sessions of one of these curricula:
  - [The Wi\\$dom Path: Money, Spirit, and Life](#) (sessions 1-3): This recent, 12-session UUA Tapestry of Faith program helps participants understand how decisions and attitudes about money can be a more effective force for living lives of meaning and value, and for creating positive change. The first three sessions of the program focus on "money and self."
  - [Class Conscious: Class and Classism in UU Life](#) (modules 1-2): This curriculum, created by Dr. Suzanne Zilber, UU Class Conversations Steering Committee member, is composed of four 2-hour modules. The first two modules invite

participants to explore how class influences their values, coping styles, and expectations about others.

3. Bring [UU Class Conversations](#)'s workshops to your congregation, local cluster, or district. Developed and delivered by expert trainers and facilitators in class and faith, these workshops and consultations are grounded in UU principles and help congregations and organizations explore class and classism, organize to become more inclusive of people of all classes, and develop skills in cross-class dialogue. *Note: These workshops involve a fee.*
  - Facing Class and Classism, a 3-hour workshop, helps participants become familiar with concepts of class and classism and better understand their own class backgrounds.
  - Organizing for Change, a 6-hour workshop, covers the content of the 3-hour workshop and goes further, engaging with the Inequality, Class, and Our Congregation subject area below.

### **Potential Actions and Partner Organizations**

- Try out these ideas for individual action, among others, from [Class Action](#):
  - Patronize companies that support your values using [BuyBlue.org](#).
  - Gently interrupt classist jokes or patterns of "us/them" thinking.
- Use the resources of Section II in the [Social Justice Empowerment Handbook](#) to map your congregation's social location in relationship to your surrounding community. Notice the physical places where class diversity is present, and where it isn't. How do those places feel similar or different from each other and from your congregation? How do you recognize class diversity?
- Host a film screening of the PBS documentary [People Like Us](#) for your community. (Consider writing a [Letter to the Editor](#) of your local newspaper about the experience if it was impactful.)
- Research the class backgrounds of local elected officials or other community leaders. If possible, have a conversation with them about how their class background affects their perspectives.

## **Part 2: Economic Inequality: Roots and Realities**

Expanding wealth gaps and rising economic inequality illuminate a moral crisis in the United States and our world. Working toward our goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all requires us to understand this crisis, how we got here, the connections between the many different systems/manifestations of inequality, and the profound impacts of the current state of affairs.

### **Reflection Questions**

- In your family, community, or congregation, which of the myriad issues that contribute to escalating economic inequality (banking, wages, workplace policies, taxation, education, healthcare, etc.) are the most visible? Which are the most invisible?
- How does one's nationality or country of origin impact one's class status or one's position in global economic systems?
- How has your life been affected by escalating economic inequality? How has your congregation and Unitarian Universalism been affected?
- Looking at our Unitarian Universalist principles and sources, which phrases and values support our work toward economic justice? Do any phrases or values support the status quo of economic injustice? How might Unitarian Universalists (or Unitarians, or Universalists) use their faith to validate positions of economic power rather than challenging them?

### **Options for Engaging in Education**

1. Host a film screening and discussion using these or other films:
  - Short films from Brave New Film's [YouTube Channel on Inequality](#)
  - [Inequality for All](#)
2. Organize small discussion groups to learn together about racism, sexism, and ableism in economic injustice. These conversations can utilize the reflection questions above and/or one or more of the resources below:
  - Distribute United for a Fair Economy's "[State of the Dream](#)" reports to begin a discussion of some of the racialized aspects of economic inequality.
  - Spend time with the [National Women's Law Center's](#) website to identify a few ways in which sexism intensifies economic injustice.
  - Read some of the personal stories available on the webpage of [Council for Disability Awareness](#) and discuss ways that economic injustice exacerbates the marginalization of people with disabilities.
  - Use UUA Statements of Conscience [Economic Globalization](#) (2003) and [Immigration as a Moral Issue](#) (2013) to host a conversation about how international trade, globalization, and immigration are causes and effects of global economic inequality.
3. Host discussion groups on a congregational read using one or more of the following books:
  - *Divided: The Perils of Our Growing Inequality* edited by David Cay Johnston: This is an accessible collection of essays on many aspects of inequality by major thinkers on the subject, including Barack Obama, Paul Krugman, Chuck Collins, Kim Bobo, Elizabeth Warren, and others.



- *War and Peace and War: The Rise and Fall of Empires* by Peter Turchin: This compelling read describes a grand theory of world history in which inequality plays a powerful role.
  - *Capital in the 21st Century* by Thomas Piketty: Based on a survey of wealth and income inequality in Europe and the U.S. since the 18th century, this weighty best-seller argues that the trend toward inequality is not an accident but a feature of unchecked capitalism, only to be countered by systematic state intervention.
4. Host a speaker series or panel conversation for your congregation and community, covering a diversity of elements around escalating inequality—particularly those that are of concern in your community. Find local experts or activists, or ask groups you're already in partnership with (e.g., around immigration; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer equality; mass incarceration; reproductive justice; etc.). Some groups listed in Appendix 2 may have local affiliates you can contact.

### **Potential Actions and Partner Organizations**

- Get involved with [Public Citizen](#): sign a petition in support of a constitutional amendment to overturn damaging U.S. Supreme Court rulings.
- Investigate how your state's [minimum wage](#) and [tipped minimum wage laws](#) compare to the federal laws. Write letters to your state or federal representatives about what you discover.
- Attend a worker rally or find out what worker campaigns are happening in your local community. [Interfaith Worker Justice](#) or [Jobs with Justice](#) may be able to help.
- In partnership with the UU Service Committee, download the [ROC National Diners' Guide](#) and use it to talk with restaurant owners when you go out to eat. (There's also a supplemental [toolkit](#) (PDF) here about how to use the guide.)
- Get involved with [Caring Across Generations](#) (contact lead organizer [Dianne Enriquez](#)), an organization that is building a national movement to transform the way we care in this country. They are harnessing the power of social action, social media, and storytelling to spark connections across generations and to strengthen family and caregiving relationships.

## **Part 3: Inequality, Class, and Our Congregation**

As people of faith, we can change the world by changing how we are together. Engaging faithfully with escalating inequality requires us to examine our congregational life, asking how we can practice dismantling inequality and classism within our community of faith and how we can create congregations that are truly welcoming and inclusive of all.

### **Reflection Questions**

- What does my/our spirituality and/or theology teach about class and inequality and how are we “called” as people of faith?
- What assumptions and stereotypes do I/we make about class within our congregation and within Unitarian Universalism as a whole? How do we define who “we” are, and who does that leave out?
- What is our shared vision of the community we want to be? (e.g., welcoming of all class identities, educational backgrounds, levels of income, employment statuses, and occupations; dedicated to fighting inequality in our community and our world; and so forth.)
- Where could we make changes to get us closer to our shared vision? (looking at: requirements for membership, labor practices within congregation, welcoming practices for new members, access to activities/worship services, social justice ministry, fundraising practices, and more.)

### **Options for Engaging in Education**

1. Use *Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian and Universalist History* by Mark Harris as a congregational read. Use the accompanying UUA [Discussion Guide](#) (PDF) to engage your congregation or small group in 1-3 sessions.
2. Engage members of your congregation in 2-3 sessions of one of these curricula:
  - [The Wi\\$dom Path: Money, Spirit, and Life](#) (sessions 4-7): This recent, 12-session UUA Tapestry of Faith program helps participants understand how decisions and attitudes about money can be a more effective force for living lives of meaning and value, and for creating positive change. These four sessions of the program explore how our financial ways of being affect one another. *Note: if you choose to utilize this curriculum, congregations are advised to begin with the first three sessions.*
  - [Class Conscious: Class and Classism in UU Life](#) (modules 3-4): This curriculum, created by Dr. Suzanne Zilber, UU Class Conversations Steering Committee member, is composed of four 2-hour modules. The second two modules discuss how to make one’s congregation an even more welcoming place for people of all class backgrounds and prepares participants to take action against escalating economic inequality.
3. Bring [UU Class Conversations](#)’s workshops to your congregation, local cluster, or district. Developed and delivered by expert trainers and facilitators in class and faith, these workshops and consultations are grounded in UU principles and help congregations and organizations explore class and classism, organize to become more

inclusive of people of all classes, and develop skills in cross-class dialogue. *Note: These workshops involve a fee.*

- Tools for Change, a 3-hour workshop, helps participants develop skills needed to begin to shift their faith community towards greater awareness of class and classism.
- Organizing for Change, a 6-hour workshop, covers the content of the three-hour workshop and also begins more basically, engaging with the Class and Classism subject area above.

### **Potential Actions and Partner Organizations**

- Utilize the UUA's resources on [Fair Compensation](#) for clergy, other religious professionals, and other congregational employees and consultants.
- Do an anonymous poll of your congregation's members and their experiences of class identity, education, income, employment, and occupation, as well as their experiences within your congregation related to these issues.
- Discuss these questions for [Challenging and Changing Classism in Organizations](#) from Class Action and these questions to [Help Raise Class Awareness](#) from UU Class Conversations.
- Check out the [resources from Giving Circles Network](#) and start a conversation about creating a Giving Circle in your congregation, cluster, or district.

## **Part 4: Interrupting Cycles of Inequality**

*How* we take action can matter as much as *whether* we take action. What is most honest and unique about how Unitarian Universalists approach the issues of classism and economic injustice? In pursuit of sustainability and effectiveness in our justice ministries, we must discover and offer to our wider communities that which is most deeply true about ourselves.

### **Reflection Questions**

- What might be my contribution to my congregation or community's efforts against classism and economic injustice? What do I have to offer?
- What might be the important contributions of this congregation to our community's efforts against rising economic inequality? How is our voice unique or different?
- What, if anything, do I fear about change? What will happen if our vision becomes a reality?
- Who are the role models I have, within my class own background/position, who help me understand my potential place in movements for economic justice?
- How could our congregation's social action / social justice ministries be deepened so as to reduce inequality? How does "Escalating Inequality" intersect with the work we are already doing?

### **Options for Engaging in Education**

1. Host a film screening of [Sacred Economics](#) and have a discussion about the film and the potential contributions of the moral/religious left to movements for economic justice.
2. Organize small discussion groups to learn together about interrupting cycles of inequality. These conversations can utilize the reflection questions above and/or one or more of the resources below:
  - Rev. Richard Gilbert's UU World article (11/01/01), "[How Much Do We Deserve?](#)" (his [book](#) is by the same name) and use activities out of the [Study Guide](#) (PDF).
  - Check out these resources about the UUA's denomination-wide conversation about divestment and socially-responsible investment. Have a conversation about implications and options for your congregation.
    - 2014 UUA Business Resolution, "[Fossil Fuel Divestment](#)"
    - Two UU World articles (5/15/13), "[Fossil fuel divestment is moral, strategic](#)" and "[Fossil fuel divestment is not the answer](#)"
    - More information from the [UU Ministry for Earth](#)
    - More information from the [New Economy Coalition](#)
3. Choose one or more of the following books for a congregational read and host a discussion about the book(s) and your congregation's existing social justice ministries:
  - *Bridging the Class Divide* by Linda Stout: A practical and inspirational guide to overcoming barriers of race and class, this book tells the story of author Linda Stout's life as the daughter of a tenant farmer, as a self-taught activist, and as a leader in the progressive movement.
  - *Missing Class: How Seeing Class Cultures Can Strengthen Social Movement Groups* by Betsy Leondar-Wright: A useful tool for activists looking to bridge

class differences, this book is based on interviews of 362 members of 25 leftist groups across the United States.

4. Hold a social justice retreat focused on assessing your current congregational social justice / social action ministries. Consider how the escalation of inequality intersects with the work you are already doing and how you could further interrupt the cycles of inequality by expanding your existing activities.
  - Consider using Spirit in Action's [Collective Visioning Guide](#). This process intentionally brings people together across social divides and generates a positive vision that is long-term, expansive, and solutions-driven.
5. Engage members of your congregation in sessions 8-12 of [The Wi\\$dom Path: Money, Spirit, and Life](#): This recent, 12-session UUA Tapestry of Faith program helps participants understand how decisions and attitudes about money can be a more effective force for living lives of meaning and value, and for creating positive change. The final five sessions of the program allow participants to delve into ways to align faith, values, and a sense of life calling with their financial ways of being. *Note: if you choose to utilize this curriculum, congregations are advised to begin with the first eight sessions.*

### **Potential Actions and Partner Organizations**

- Find and partner with nonprofit organizations in your community that work with people of diverse or marginalized class backgrounds. Work with them on a "[Share the Plate](#)" Sunday or ask how you can help support their priorities and campaigns.
- Use the [prayers available from Interfaith Worker Justice](#) to host or contribute to a community vigil on an issue of economic injustice important to your local community.
- Engage in community investment. The UUA will [match your investment](#) with up to \$10,000 to double your impact!
- If your congregation is open to engaging with Christian curricula and communities, partner with local Christian congregations on [Lazarus at the Gate](#) or [Worker Justice Matters](#).
- If applicable, get involved with [Resource Generation](#), which is an organization that envisions a world in which all communities are powerful, healthy, and living in alignment with the planet. It organizes young people with wealth and class privilege to become transformative leaders working towards the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power. Check out their [Giving Plan Publications](#), in particular.

# **Appendix 1: Worship Materials**

## **Hymns**

In [Singing the Living Tradition](#):

- 108, *My Life Flows On In Endless Song*
- 109, *As We Come Marching, Marching*
- 113, *Where is Our Holy Church*
- 125, *From the Crush of Wealth and Power*
- 126, *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*
- 134, *Our World Is One World*
- 148, *Let Freedom Span Both East and West*
- 157, *Step By Step*
- 298, *Wake Now My Senses*
- 299, *Make Channels for the Stream of Love*
- 325, *Love Makes a Bridge*
- 407, *We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table*

In [Singing the Journey](#):

- 1008, *When Our Heart Is In a Holy Place*
- 1017, *Building a New Way*
- 1021, *Lean on Me*
- 1027, *Cuando el Pobre (When the Poor)*
- 1060, *As We Sing of Hope and Joy*

## **Readings**

In [Singing the Living Tradition](#):

- 435, *I Call That Mind Free*
- 462, *I Shall Take My Voice*
- 502, *Now Is the Accepted Time*
- 577, *If Someone with Courage and Vision Can Rise*
- 519, *Let Me Not Pray to be Sheltered from Dangers*
- 587, *Litany for Survival*
- 588, *Is This Not the Fast I Choose*
- 591, *I Call That Church Free*
- 598, *Take Courage Friends*
- 701, *Fragments of Holiness*
- 712, *Do Not be Conformed by This World*
- 732, *James 1*

From [UUA's Worship Web](#):

- [Worship Resources for Tough Economic Times](#)
- [Resources on "economic justice"](#)
- [Resources on "classism"](#)

From [Interfaith Worker Justice](#):

- Materials for [Faithful Education](#)
- Materials for [Prayer and Worship](#)
- Materials for [Special Occasions](#)

## **Appendix 2: Additional Resources**

### **Books**

Alperovitz, Gar. *What Then Must We Do: Straight Talk About the Next American Revolution*. This short book gives a good overview of Alperovitz' take on how we can build on the long tradition of non-profits, cooperatives, and public enterprise in the United States.

Chang, Ha-Joon. *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism*. A leading heterodox institutional economist specializing in development debunks the free-market orthodoxy in 23 entertaining, but thought-provoking short essays.

Collins, Chuck. *99 to 1: How Wealth Inequality is Wrecking the World and What We Can Do About It*. This short and very readable book explains how the rule-riggers created the current wealth inequality and how dysfunctional it is for the 99%, and often even the 1%.

Gates, William and Collins, Chuck. *Wealth and Our Commonwealth: Why America Should Tax Accumulated Fortunes*. Gates, the father of the billionaire founder of Microsoft, and Collins, cofounder of the non-profit United for a Fair Economy, argued in this 2004 book against the Bush administration's proposed repeal of the estate tax, but their general arguments on this perennially controversial tax remain valid.

Gilbert, Richard. *The Prophetic Imperative: Social Gospel in Theory and Practice*. A Unitarian Universalist classic on how to organize your congregation, both theologically and practically, for social action.

Hacker, Jacob and Pierson, Paul. *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer - and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. The authors argue that the sources of American economic inequality are largely political – the result of deliberate political decisions to shape markets and government policies to benefit those who are privileged already at the expense of an unaware public.

Hayes, Christopher. *Twilight of the Elites: America After Meritocracy*. Our post-civil-rights-era meritocratic professional and managerial elite, though professing equality of opportunity and more open to minorities and women, has yet contributed to widened income inequality and to lower general social mobility since the mid-seventies.

Heinberg, Richard. *The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality*. The foremost popularizer in the Limits-to-Growth tradition shows the current stagnation of global economic growth, which has baffled economists, is easily explained when you study energy resources and costs, especially oil.

Lareau, Annette. *Unequal Childhoods: Race, Class, and Family Life*. Class does make a difference in the lives and futures of American children. Drawing on in-depth observations of



black and white middle-class, working-class, and poor families, *Unequal Childhoods* explores this fact, offering a picture of childhood today.

Jensen, Barbara. *Reading Classes: On Culture and Classism in America*. Discussions of class make many Americans uncomfortable. This accessible book makes class visible in daily life.

Leondar-Wright, Betsy. *Class Matters: Cross Class Alliance Building for Middle-Class Activists*. Movements for social change could be more powerful if they had more class diversity—a factor that has limited their past size and clout. But attempting to cross class barriers has frequently left middle-class activists frustrated, with few resources to turn to for help.

Michaels, Walter Benn. *The Trouble With Diversity; How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality*. In this provocative book, Michaels makes the prescient argument that America's growing economic inequality is connected to a deeply ingrained class structure—which our focus on identity diversity and multiculturalism helps us ignore.

The New York Times. *Class Matters*. A team of New York Times reporters explores the ways in which class--defined as a combination of income, education, wealth, and occupation--influences destiny in a society that likes to think of itself as a land of opportunity.

Reich, Robert. *Beyond Outrage: What Has Gone Wrong with Our Economy and Our Democracy, and How to Fix It*. This very accessible book “connects the dots” in three parts: 1) explaining why the U.S. public justifiably feels that “the game is rigged” to favor the wealthy, 2) dissecting how the "regressive right" has nonetheless argued for lowering taxes even more on corporations and the rich while cutting public services, and 3) urging average people to move beyond outrage to take back our economy and democracy.

Shapiro, Thomas M, and Meschede, Tatjana, and Osoro, Sam. *The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap: Explaining Black-White Economic Divide*. Looking at the same set of families over a 25-year period (1984-2009), the report offers key insights into how policy and the experiences of families in schools, communities, and at work affect wealth accumulation.

## Films

From the Media Education Foundation:

- [Commercialism and Childhood Series](#)
- [Debt and Consumerism Series](#)

## Curricula

- [Created Equal](#) by Class Action. A curriculum for high schoolers and middle schoolers on class and classism.

## Infographics

- [Huffington Post](#) (6/12/2013)
- [New York Times](#) (9/4/2011)

## **Organizations**

[American Friends Service Committee](#). AFSC is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice, as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing on continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, we nurture the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social social relations and systems.

[Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#). CBPP is one of the nation's premier policy organizations working at the federal and state levels on fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

[Center for American Progress](#). CAP is an independent nonpartisan educational institute dedicated to improving the lives of Americans through progressive ideas and action.

[Economic Policy Institute](#). This is a think tank devoted to the needs of low- and middle-income workers in economic policy discussions, especially good jobs with fair pay, affordable health care, and retirement security.

[Institute for Policy Studies](#). IPS is a community of public scholars and organizers linking peace, justice, and the environment in the U.S. and globally. They work with social movements to promote true democracy and challenge concentrated wealth, corporate influence, and military power.

[Jobs with Justice](#). At Jobs With Justice, we are leading the fight for workers' rights and an economy that benefits everyone. We are the only nonprofit of our kind leading strategic campaigns and shaping the public discourse on every front to build power for working people.

[National Domestic Workers Alliance](#). NDWA is the nation's leading voice for dignity and fairness for the millions of domestic workers in the United States, most of whom are women.

[Public Citizen](#). Public Citizen serves as the people's voice in the nation's capital. Their work on an array of issues and shares an overarching goal: To ensure that all citizens are represented in the halls of power.

[Resource Generation](#). Resource Generation envisions a world in which all communities are powerful, healthy, and living in alignment with the planet. They organize young people with wealth and class privilege in the U.S. to become transformative leaders towards the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power.

[Wealth for the Common Good](#). A network of business leaders, high-income individuals, and partners working together to promote shared prosperity and fair taxation.

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Faithfully,

Jessica Halperin, on behalf of the Multicultural Growth and Witness staff group  
Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)