

Obama, the Great Dis-Equalizer

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Barack Obama has used up his people-friendly rhetoric over the past five years, and is now repeating promises he's already made and broken: to raise the minimum wage, strengthen worker rights, establish truly universal health care, and fight for the common man and woman. Obama's new rhetorical target is gross income inequalities – a catastrophe that has worsened on his watch.

President Obama, the Grand Facilitator of the greatest consolidation of financial wealth in human history, began his sixth year in office declaring that income inequality is “the defining challenge of our time.” The Grand Bargainer who saved George Bush’s bank bailout and presided over the (ongoing) infusion of tens of trillions of dollars into Wall Street accounts, and [who bragged](#) less than two years ago that, “Since I’ve been president, federal spending has actually risen at the lowest pace in nearly 60 years,” now calls for government action to reverse the momentum of his own policies. The Great Pretender, who in 2008 called for an increase in the federal minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour by 2011, and then [did absolutely nothing](#) to effectuate it when Democrats controlled both chambers of Congress, now proposes to raise the bar to \$10 an hour in order to embarrass Republicans in an election year. The Daring Debt Buster who, on his own initiative, has frozen federal workers’ wages since 2010, and worked hand in glove with Republicans to gut social programs in the name of fiscal restraint, [laments](#) “growing inequality and lack of upward mobility” among the masses.

The chief executive who lifted not a finger to pass “card check,” the [Employee Free Choice Act](#) of 2009, that might have given organized labor a fighting chance to survive, now pretends to be a born again champion of collective bargaining and yearns for the days when “you knew that a blue-collar job would let you buy a home, and a car, maybe a vacation once in a while, health care, a reliable pension.”

Meanwhile, Obama’s Justice Department [sided with the Republican-appointed](#) Emergency Financial Manager of Detroit, who was seeking to impose bankruptcy on the mostly Black city and raid retiree’s pensions – revealing the administration’s true colors.

The nation’s First Black President admits that “African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans are far more likely to suffer from a lack of opportunity – higher unemployment, higher poverty rates,” and claims he’ll push for “targeted initiatives” to combat this “legacy of discrimination” (although all the proposed targeting is in the form of tax incentives for business). Yet, nearly five years ago, in a press conference marking his first hundred days in office, Obama categorically rejected targeted aid for Black communities, thus ensuring that the cascading effects of the Great Meltdown would plunge African Americans deeper into the abyss. Obama [said](#):

“So my general approach is that if the economy is strong, that it will lift all boats as long as it is also supported by, for example, strategies around college affordability and job training, tax cuts for working families as opposed to the wealthiest that level the playing field and ensure bottom-up economic growth.

“And I’m confident that that will help the African-American community live out the American dream at the same time that it’s helping communities all across the country.”

By 2009, according to economist [Pamela Brown](#), white household wealth was 19 times that of Black households, “and is probably even greater now” – compared to a ratio of 12 to 1 in 1984 and down to 7 to 1 in 1995. The collapse of Black economic fortunes has been catastrophic, yet Obama offers only tax cuts for corporations, streamlined business regulations, undoing of sequestration, more rhetoric about ending off-shoring of jobs, and stronger application of antidiscrimination laws.

The president wants us to forget that he was the one who proposed sequestration in the first place, in an effort to force a Grand Bargain with Republicans; that his economic advisors are secretly meeting with hundreds of corporate lobbyists to shape a jobs-destroying Trans Pacific Partnership that is “like NAFTA on steroids,” and then fast-track it through Congress; and that Obama has nominated two Republican [prospective judges](#) from Georgia to federal courts, one of whom fought to keep the Confederate banner in the state flag, while the other was the lead lawyer in defense of Georgia’s Voter ID law. The Obama administration has many priorities, but nondiscrimination is not one of them.

Whatever Obama means when he says “targeted assistance,” it seldom translates as actual money for non-corporate persons. Back in April of 2012, his administration was cited for failing to spend almost all of [\\$7.6 billion](#) that Congress set aside to help communities and homeowners hardest hit by the housing crisis – a cohort that is disproportionately Black and brown. Obama’s Treasury Department offered no explanation other than they had not put together a proper spending plan. However, it is obvious that Obama’s people wanted to avoid doing anything that might interfere with the banks’ foreclosure processes, so as not to disturb Wall Street’s manifold schemes to further rig the market.

The growing crisis of income and wealth inequality is a result of the internal logic of capitalism under the hegemony of Wall Street. Obama’s fix for the vast social carnage the bankers leave in their wake, is to forge a State that is even more dutiful in propping up “the markets” and stripping down the public sector. There is no room in that presidential mission for even modest amelioration of the public’s pain. The president’s rhetoric is nothing more than noise, totally disconnected from actual policy. The Lords of Capital – for whom Obama is a servant – have nothing to offer but more austerity and war.

They must be disempowered, root and branch, and society “reformed” in their absence.

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