

The “Gig Economy”: Another Vicious Attack on Ordinary Working People, Decimating the Middle Class

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“Contrary to the rising-tide hypothesis, the rising tide has only lifted the large yachts, while many of the smaller boats have been dashed on the rocks.” -Joseph Stiglitz, economist

American plutocrats and their political lackeys in congress have implemented a plan that’s putting pressure on wages and further decimating the already-battered middle class. By sustaining high levels of unemployment over a long period of time, US elites have “restructured the labor force”, which is a pretentious-sounding expression that means they’ve created a permanent underclass that’s willing to slave-away at demeaning, part-time jobs for mere peanuts without uttering a peep of protest. This metamorphosis of the workforce has taken place mostly in the shadows, concealed behind a thick fog of state propaganda touting the fictitious “recovery”, a recovery in which long-term jobless workers have abandoned all hope of finding gainful full-time employment and resigned themselves to a lifetime of scrambling from one odious task to the next just keep a roof over their heads and the wolves away from the door.

After eight years of applying this coercive ‘starvation strategy’, the plutocrat’s ‘grand plan’ is finally coming into focus. According to economists Lawrence F. Katz and Alan B. Krueger’s new paper titled “The Rise and Nature of Alternative Work Arrangements in the United States, 1995-2015”:

“All of the net employment growth in the U.S. economy from 2005 to 2015 appears to have occurred in alternative work arrangements.”

“Alternative work arrangements”? You mean there’s been zero growth in ordinary 9 to 5, 40-hour-per-week jobs in the last 10 freaking years???

Indeed, that’s exactly what it means. It also means that Obama’s relentless crowing about the phantom “recovery” is mostly bunkum. There is no recovery. It’s an invention built on the ruined lives of people who have been forced to take all-manner of servile, low-paying, part-time, service-sector jobs just to keep food on the table. That’s Obama’s glorious recovery in a nutshell. Here’s more from the World Socialist web Site:

“All US job growth for the last decade came in “alternative work arrangements”—people working as independent contractors, temps, through contract agencies or on-call—according to a study published Tuesday by Princeton University and the RAND Corporation...

The actual number of contingent full-time workers rose from 14.2 million in February 2005 to 23.6 million in November 2015, an increase of 9.4 million. Since total US employment rose by 9.1 million during this period, the number of workers in conventional, full-time positions actually dropped by nearly 400,000." ([Temps and contractors accounted for all US job growth since 2005](#), World Socialist Web Site)

Repeat: "The number of workers in conventional, full-time positions actually dropped by nearly 400,000."

Great. So we're actually going backwards, is that what they're trying to say?

Yep. And if you look a little deeper into this topic, you'll see that things are actually worse than the Princeton report suggests. For example, check this out clip from Bloomberg:

"The differences between Katz's and Krueger's 15.8 percent finding and the higher percentages reported in some other recent surveys mainly have to do with definitions. The Government Accountability Office's April 2015 estimate that 40.4 percent of U.S. workers were in alternative work arrangements included part-time workers as well as some self-employed workers not covered under the BLS's definition of alternative work. It was also based on a survey conducted in 2010, when the percentage of involuntary part-time workers was still quite elevated in the wake of the recession. The 2015 Freelancing in America survey that deemed 34 percent of U.S. workers to be freelancers included moonlighters who already had other jobs, as well as some small-business owners with employees." ([The Gig Economy Is Powered by Old People](#), Bloomberg)

Let's skip the bullsh** about "freelancers" and "moonlighters" and any other cutesy sobriquet for part-time drudgery. What we're interested in is the GAO's damning April estimate that "40.4 percent of U.S. workers were in alternative work arrangements." As far as I'm concerned, that's where the rubber meets the road.

Bottom line: A large percentage of the working population can't find ordinary, decent-paying jobs with benefits and retirement because the shithead oligarchs who own this country figured they could use the financial crisis to further dismantle whatever gains labor has made in last century while reducing workers wages to something on a par with a peasant stitching blue jeans in a windowless Hanoi sweatshop. That's the objective, isn't it, making sure that everyone everywhere is exploited equally?

You know it is. Obama was ordered to slash fiscal stimulus in 2009 while the corporate honchos curtailed business investment. But, why?

To reduce the amount of money flowing into the real economy while the double-dealing Fed pumped trillions into the financial system so asset-stripping investment bankers and corporate scalawags could net beaucoup profits while working people scraped by on next to nothing. You've heard the expression "Strangle the beast"? Well, this is how it works in real-time.

Keep in mind, that according to the nation's number one economics blog, Calculated Risk, over 578,000 good-paying public sector jobs were lost under Obama, which is a situation that could have been easily avoided by targeting fiscal stimulus at the state and local level.

Instead, Obama chose to shrink the size of the stimulus package (The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009), keep the economy on a ventilator, and shower the country with pink slips, just to prevent strong-enough growth to generate full employment and upward wage pressure. That was his assignment, and that's what he did. Here's a little background from an article at Huffington Post by Sam Stein:

"...members of the president's economic team felt that if they were to properly fill the hole caused by the recession, they would need a bill that priced at \$1.8 trillion — \$600 billion more than was previously believed to be the high-water mark for the White House.

The \$1.8 trillion figure was included in a December 2008 memo authored by Christina Romer (the incoming head of the Council of Economic Advisers) and obtained by Scheiber in the course of researching his book.

"When Romer showed [Larry] Summers her \$1.8 trillion figure late in the week before the memo was due, he dismissed it as impractical. So Romer spent the next few days coming up with a reasonable compromise: roughly \$1.2 trillion," Scheiber writes." (Huffington Post)

Clearly, what Obama and Summers wanted was exactly what they got, a sluggish, underperforming economy that kept unemployment needlessly-high while the Fed transferred trillions to their cockroach friends on Wall Street. (The ARRA was eventually whittled down to a paltry \$800 billion, a miserable \$100 billion more than the bank bailout fiasco called TARP) The plutocrats raked in record profits while working Americans saw their incomes drop, their wages freeze, and their prospects for upward mobility annihilated. Welcome to Obama's Amerika. Here's more from the WSWS:

"The proportion of contingent workers holding multiple jobs has more than quadrupled over the past 10 years, from 7.3 percent in 2005 to 32 percent in 2015. Nearly one-third of people working with no benefits or job security are holding down an additional part-time or full-time job just to make ends meet...

With spending on transportation and food also rising, 2014 became the first year studied by Pew in which median spending on these basic necessities surpassed median income. By 2014, median income had fallen by 13 percent from 2004 levels, while expenditures had increased by 14 percent." ([The social crisis and the US elections](#), World Socialist Web Site)

Hurrah, for Obama's recovery! There's so much work out there, people can work two, three, or even four jobs a day if they want! The only problem is they still can't make ends meet because the shitty pay won't even cover their expenses. "The more I work, the poorer I get." Isn't that what the PEW report is really saying?

Sure, it is. And yet we're supposed to believe this is all just a big accident, that the weakest recovery in history is just an honest miscalculation by Ivy League-educated economists and government bean counters who just forgot how the economy works? Is that it; all the economic whizkids and Nobel Prize winning gurus are all just suffering from some odd strain of collective amnesia that prevents them from recommending solutions that actually generate growth, jobs, inflation and -dare I say it-economic recovery?

Baloney. The crappy recovery is all part of the plan, just like it is in Europe, just like it is in

Japan, just like it is everywhere the western bank cartel and their globalist colleagues have extended their tentacles to expand their corporate extortionist empire. Let's not dignify this phenom by calling it a "conspiracy". It's not a conspiracy, it's plain-old shock therapy, the likes of which the neoliberal economists and their miscreant IMF friends have been using for decades. Create a bubble with easy money and low rates. Burst the bubble and precipitate a crisis. Impose excruciating belt-tightening measures that restructure the workforce, privatize public assets and transfers more of the national wealth to the parasites at the top of the foodchain, the mighty one percent. Wash, rinse, repeat. The current crisis in the US follows this exact same pattern. It just looks different this time-around because we're the ones with the bull's-eye on our backs.

Is it that different in Japan?

Heck, no. Here's a clip from Reuters which shows how Japan's ruling elites are not satisfied with slave wages alone. What they want is to shift more of the cost of government operations onto the backs of the people who can least afford it. Here's an excerpt:

"part-time, temporary and other non-regular workers who typically make less than half the average pay has jumped 70 percent from 1997 to 19.7 million today — 38 percent of the labor force."

Abenomics has made life considerably harder for these people due to the higher taxes, soaring prices, and reduced welfare benefits. The data show that Japan's poverty rate is "the sixth-worst among the 34 OECD countries" while "child poverty in working, single-parent households is by far the worst at over 50 percent, making Japan the only country where having a job does not reduce the poverty rate for that group." ([Japan's working poor left behind by Abenomics](#), Reuters)

Is this the next phase of America's inexorable devolution into Third World poverty and immiseration? Are we about to see our bought-and-paid-for representatives levy more regressive VAT and sales taxes on the workerbees so the glorious "job creators" can continue to move more of their wealth offshore to the Caymans without adding even one lousy dime to the public coffers?

It wouldn't surprise me at all. From my experience, the uber-rich don't believe that they should have to contribute anything to a country they already own. It's a matter of principle. Besides, how did Leona put it: "Only the little people pay taxes."

Here's more from Japan Today:

"Casual and part-time employees number nearly 20 million, almost 40% of the current Japanese workforce..."

Casualisation is contributing to a less egalitarian society,... At the moment, millions of young casual workers still live at home, rent-free, with mum and dad, whose generation drove Japan's post-war boom. Once that generation passes, she adds, underlying poverty will become more evident." ([Temp workers: Helping or hurting Japan's future?](#) Japan Today)

Sound familiar? A whole generation living in the basement of Pop's house because they have no job, no future and are loaded to the eyeballs with student debt. The only difference

I can see here is the quality of the propaganda. In Japan, they call this 'alternative work arrangements-phenom', "casual labor", whereas in the United States, the media has airbrushed the concept into a cheery-sounding moniker called "the gig economy."

Nice touch, eh?

In the gig economy, workers aren't exploited by a ruthless corporate machine that deliberately slows growth to intensify unemployment and put pressure on wages. Oh, no. Workers merely dabble in various occupations like a freewheeling handyman or a carefree musician who makes his living strumming his guitar at the local honkytonk before trundling off to the nearest Best Western for a good night's sleep.

What utter hogwash. There is no "gig" economy. The ruling elite and their political flunkey friends are waging a vicious class war against people whose only aim is to make a decent living so they can provide for themselves and their families and avoid spending their waning years in a makeshift tent under the freeway overpass.

Is that too much to ask?

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