

5 Groups That Are Killing the Middle Class



By Paul Buchheit | [Common Dreams](#)

Their unspoken goal is a two-class nation, with a heavily armed security force to quell resistance from the more outspoken members of the lower class. It may be somewhat of an unwitting goal, since narcissistic wealth-takers, as they build their fortunes, tend to lose their ability to [empathize](#) with others.

Barack Obama [said](#), “We are not as divided as we seem.” But those are just feel-good words. A middle class still exists, but in weakened form, as many families from the once-dominant mainstream of society continue to move up or down, [mostly](#) down. The conspirators in the breakdown of the middle class have complementary roles that allow them to divide the country as they perpetuate the *myth of prosperity* for all.

Congress: The Kingpins

[Gun control](#) is the most flagrant example of Congressional ***disdain for the middle class***. Over [90%](#) of Americans want background checks, but Congress has failed to act. The House of Representatives even [rejected](#) an amendment that would have allowed ***research*** into causes of gun violence.

The list goes [on](#) and [on](#):

Over [90%](#) favor laws on clean air and water, but Congress has proposed to weaken them. Almost [80%](#) want to increase Social Security benefits. [83%](#) want Medicare to negotiate drug prices. Nearly [90%](#) support mandatory labeling of genetically modified foods. About [two-thirds](#) of polled Americans believe corporations pay too little in taxes. [90%](#) support the protection of public lands.

Based on a study of 1,779 policy issues, Princeton researchers Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page [concluded](#) that “the preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy.”

Military: The Enforcers

Barack Obama [said](#), “*They are not very good at feeding their people, but they invest a huge amount in their weapons systems.*” He was talking about North Korea. In the U.S., where [half](#) the discretionary budget is spent on the military, one of five children live in [food insecure](#) households.

As we pour [trillions](#) into war, cutbacks decimate programs vital to the middle class—vital to the ***[one out of five Americans who have \[mental health problems\]\(#\)](#)***; to the dependent ***children*** who [lost funding](#) for the first time in nearly 20 years; to the neglected [public schools](#); to [injured workers](#); to [food pantries](#).

The conspirators also feel the need to protect themselves within our own borders, and they do this with an increasingly

militarized system of local law enforcement. In recent years the Pentagon has [armed](#) local police forces with assault rifles, land-mine detectors, grenade launchers, and half-million-dollar mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles (MRAPs).

[Research](#) by Samuel Bowles and Arjun Jayadev indicates that greater inequality is correlated with a greater demand for security services, which apparently stems from the need to stifle lower-class opposition, and which is manifested in violence between police and minorities.

Lobbyists: The Con Men

The [top lobbyists](#)? The US Chamber of Commerce, a consortium of [business interests](#) supporting job outsourcing and climate denial; followed by the National Association of Realtors, which seeks Congressional favors even as [three-quarters](#) of renters with incomes below the \$30,000 median are “cost burdened,” paying more than 30 percent of their incomes for rent.

Next come the American Medical Association, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Pharmaceutical Research, and the American Hospital Association, with Pfizer close behind. According to the [Milliman Medical Index](#), the cost of healthcare in 2015 for a typical American family of four covered by a PPO was \$24,671—***nearly half the median household income***. Pharmaceutical companies have successfully [lobbied](#) Congress to keep Medicare from bargaining for lower drug prices, and they pay off generic drug manufacturers to [delay entry](#) of their products into the market, thereby forcing consumers to pay the highest prices for medicine. For every \$1 they spend on basic research, they invest [\\$19](#) in promotion and marketing. Meanwhile, the industry has [cut](#) nearly 150,000 jobs since 2008.

Also in the top 20 are Northrop Grumman, Boeing, and Lockheed

Martin, all complicit with Big Business in keeping the nation ***safe for profit-making***. Lockheed Martin's [revenues increased](#) 15.7% after President Obama announced the addition of 250 troops in Syria.

The conspiratorial revolving door is spinning fast: Of the 352 people who left Congress alive since 2008, [almost half](#) have joined the lobbyist and related industries.

Media: The Illusionists

The popular business-oriented media insults the middle class with inane headlines and quotes that betray their ignorance about issues that matter to most of us:

- *Income inequality is simply not a significant problem.* ([Benjamin Domenech, The Wall Street Journal](#))
- *I define peace as the ability to defend yourself and blow your enemies into smithereens.* ([Sean Hannity, FOX News](#))
- *The global atmosphere hasn't been warming lately.* ([Mark Phillips, CBS News](#))
- *Global warming shouldn't even be in the top five on the list of problems our president should be worrying about.* ([Ed Rogers, Washington Post](#))

The mainstream media is complicit, of course, with its [corporate](#) bosses. As Bernie Sanders [explained](#), "The corporate media does everything they can to keep us entertained without addressing the real issues...[Young people] don't even know that we are the only major country without healthcare for all. They don't know that in Germany or in Scandinavia college is free...Media is not telling them that...If you talk about the real issues and people get educated on the real issues, you know what happens next? They actually may want to bring about change."

Instead, the media keeps scaring us into dependency on the military/police state, with panicky reports from sources like

FOX, which skipped past wars and lynchings and [called ISIS](#) “the single biggest threat in [America’s] 200-year history.”

Finance: The Hitmen

As our nation bemoans the violence in lower- and middle-class communities, the financial industry keeps to itself, perfecting the role of [Economic Hitman](#) that John Perkins defined on a global scale. [Despite](#) generating about 25% of all corporate profits, finance creates only about 4% of all jobs, and it has decimated middle-class homeowners and students through [unpayable debt](#). In a direct hit to lower-class workers, the industry pays itself enough in **bonuses** to [boost all 2.6 million](#) U.S. fast-food workers to a \$15 minimum wage.

Nothing would help the middle class more than a [financial transaction tax](#). In [Chicago](#), sales of \$1 quadrillion (a thousand trillion dollars, 4 times more than **all the money in the world**), generated ZERO SALES TAX. Instead the Chicago Mercantile Exchange complained that its own taxes were too high, and they demanded and received a [tax break](#).

In a recent [letter](#) to his Berkshire Hathaway stockholders, Warren Buffett, the beloved old man of finance, whose company has been [avoiding](#) its taxes for years, blathered: The babies being born in America today are the luckiest crop in history... America’s economic magic remains alive and well.

That “economic magic” is making the American middle class disappear.

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