

Chris Hedges on Wealth Inequality, Corporate Ruthlessness, Military Mind and the Antidote to Defeatism [MUST SEE]

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Abby Martin features Part 2 of her interview with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Chris Hedges, discussing wealth inequality, the unsustainable nature of the economic system, the military mind in solving world problems, and the antidote to defeatism.

Abby Martin: [Yesterday I spoke with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges about the notion of crisis cults and the collapse complex societies.](#) But, we also discussed the nature of the economic machine that's responsible for this collapse. This system is fueled by profit. And, although it's nature is so blatantly and unsustainable, humanity appears bound to it. The insatiable greed that drives the gears of the machine has never been more evident than today. The global inequality at a record high is a topic I was able to explore with Hedges more in-depth.

Abby Martin: Chris, let's talk about that [new Oxfam study that recently came out that shows how eighty-five people control their cover the bottom half the world's wealth.](#) What is your response to people who say that we just have to remove those 85 people?

Chris Hedges: Well, it's a system of corporate power, which is not necessarily driven by individuals – so much is driven by

corporate interests: Exxon Mobil, Citibank, Goldman Sachs. So you can I'll arrest and imprison the head of Goldman Sachs, Lloyd Blankfein, which is where he belongs. But somebody will take his place. What has to happen is that we have to break the back of corporate power, which is now global, and break the logic whereby everything is about profit – that nothing has any value beyond its monetary value. That's an extremely dangerous moment for any society to live in, because when nothing has an intrinsic value (whether that's water, air, and human beings), then the ruthlessness of those corporate forces mean that you will squeeze every ounce of potential profit. I mean everything becomes a commodity and you you squeeze those commodities until there's nothing left. And that's exactly what's happening. So it's not individuals. It's the rise of corporate power, which is a species of totalitarianism. It's different – it differs from past systems of totalitarianism. But, it is no less totalitarian than fascism or communism were totalitarian forces.

Abby Martin: Right. I mean that the system is a machine at this point. If those people died today, it would still grind on. In a recent article that you wrote, you discuss the menace of the military mind and how only devotion to establish forms behavior result in individual success. How do you think this concept applies to the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, and his feelings towards journalists who have exposed NSA documents?

Chris Hedges: Right. Well, I speak as a former war correspondent who spent 20 years covering conflicts around the globe: Latin America, the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa. So, I know the military really well. And blind obedience, you know, aggressiveness, resort to violence. All of these things – you know destruction of individuality – all these things work really well on a battlefield. They don't work very well in peacetime society. So when Clapper made this comment that Edward Snowden and his "accomplices" (he was clearly referring

to journalists such as Laura Poitras and Glenn Greenwald) should be prosecuted, I understood exactly what he was saying. He was a former lieutenant general. He comes out of this military culture, which detests the press and has always made war on an independent press. You know their vision of journalism are all the little sort of lackeys who sit through their press conferences and follow them around, and write sort of glowing tributes to their heroism, you know, whatever their directed to write in press pools. But actual journalism is something that within the military culture they're deeply hostile to. And the triumph of military values, again, is symptomatic of a civilization in decline – the rigidity, the celebration of hyper-masculinity, the lack of empathy, the belief that every problem should be dealt with by force (both internationally and domestically), you know, militaristic hyper-masculine speak exclusively in the language of force. And then you see with in popular culture subsequently a celebration of those hyper-masculine military values. And ,you know, I've been in enough combat to tell you that those values are quite useful in a firefight. But, they will destroy a civil society. And I think again that is another window into how tattered our civil society has become and how we have shifted our allegiance from an open society, from empathy, from
a capacity to embrace various opinions and outlooks and political stances to this increasingly rigid militaristic society. And Clapper is a figure who I think exemplifies precisely this sickness.

Abby Martin: Chris in a recent speech you gave you said: "I do not know if we can build a better society. I do not even know if we will survive as a species. But I know these corporate forces have us by the throat. And they have my children by the throat. I do not fight fascists because I will win. I fight fascists because there are fascists." Chris, Glenn Greenwald recently spoke about how one man, Edward Snowden, has changed the world. And that that singular capacity is the antidote to

defeatism. What do you regard as the antidote to defeatism?

Chris Hedges: You can't talk about hope if you don't resist. And Edward Snowden has certainly resisted heroically. You know, we must carry out the good (or at least a good in so far as we can determine it) and then we have to let it go. The Buddhist call it karma. I come out of the seminary. That's what faith is. It's the belief that it goes somewhere even if empirically everything around you seems to point in the other direction. Once we give up, once we stop resisting, then we're finished -not only finished in a literal sense, but finished spiritually and morally. And, so I fall back in a moments of distressed like this on that belief, which is one that I learned in seminary: that that we have a capacity, and an ability, and moral duty to fight against forces of evil even if it looks almost certain that those forces will try triumph.

Abby Martin: That was Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges.