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A NATION OF SCABS



by Miles Mathis

I just had another gloriously bad encounter with a gallery this month, which has led to this paper. I sent some jpegs to Haynes Gallery, Nashville and Maine, and the owner Gary Haynes—seemingly taken with my work—sent me a contract to sign. The contract was very short and looked like it had been written by Gary's ten-year-old grandson, whose command of the English language had not quite jelled. I knew to tread softly, since if you start negotiating contracts, things can go bad. But I couldn't sign a contract that made no legal sense and said nothing about my contractual rights. Since I was not arguing about or negotiating important things like percentages, I thought I could possibly get through it without a blow up. I was wrong.

I started by requesting that they themselves do a subtle rewrite of a couple of illegible sentences, just pointing out how it didn't make any sense as math and suggesting the solution. I didn't make any cracks about anything being illegible or anything like that. I just pointed out the problem in a friendly way. They responded that they were busy and didn't have time to do anything, but would try to get around to it when they could. I said, since you are so busy, why don't I make the changes and you can see what you think? No response. So I corrected the grammar of those few sentences and added a couple of very non-intrusive and commonsense bullet points, outlining my contractual rights. Things like that they were responsible for the artworks while in possession of them. Nothing pushy or out of bounds. Just normal contract stuff.

Two weeks later, I finally got a reply, not from Haynes but from his gallery director. He wasn't even man enough to send me an email. She told me Haynes had decided not to take any new artists, but that they would keep my info on file.

Now, you may not know what to make of this, but from vast experience, I do. What it means is that this gallery—like almost all others—does not want to work with artists who ask questions, make any

demands, have a personality, negotiate contracts, or have any opinions. The artist is now the slave of the gallery, and is expected to act like one. The realist artist is expected to be quiet and polite, and should follow all orders without stopping to cough or tie his shoe.

A contract used to be a two-party affair, by definition. Both sides were supposed to have input. But the modern contract is generally unilateral, as between a master and a slave. The gallery writes the contract, including only its rights, and the artist is expected to sign it without reading it.

I told Haynes not to bother keeping my info on file, since I wouldn't work with him for any amount of money. I also told him to take a flying fuck at the Moon. Which I wish I hadn't: the Moon is personal friend of mine.

I wrote an article last year called *Corporate Art*. Realism, like everything else, has been engulfed by the corporate mindset, where the producer is raped to support ever growing margins for the owners. Ever notice how the gallery owner is always driving a Mercedes or a BMW, but his artists are driving Hyundai's? This paper will spin out that theme even further, by suggesting that we have become a nation of scabs. For producers to be raped, they have to bend over, and very few people are standing upright any more. Most people have crossed the picket line and they now work for the Man. They may bitch about it when they are out of earshot of the Man, but they don't do anything about it. They say, "I have to feed my family," as if that justifies anything and everything.

You may think I am off topic, but I'm not. The reason art is so bad now—in both realism and the avant garde—is that it isn't created by artists anymore. It is created by scabs. It is created by those who crossed the picket line because they "had to feed their family." They aren't making paintings or sculptures because they are artists, because they have an innate and unquenchable desire to work with beauty and subtlety and skill. No, they are just making a living, and will do whatever it takes to do that. If they have to produce crap and constantly kiss ass, well, OK. If they have to sign contracts that make no sense and give them no rights, well, OK. If they have to smile and sit on their personality and have no opinions and act like miserable mice, well OK. The kids have to be fed.

But I have an idea: maybe you shouldn't have kids if you can't support them by doing honest work—work that needs to be done. If you have to sell your soul in order to have kids, maybe the deal isn't worth making. If you have to lick the Man's shoes in order to have kids, maybe the deal isn't worth making.

I hear people constantly complaining that wages are dropping, that they can't get by, that life isn't fair, blahblahblah. My response is, of course your wages are dropping. You're a scab. You are scared to negotiate, so of course you are going to get reamed. You crossed the picket line, dude. Scabs always get lower wages, because that is what it is to be a scab. Read *the Grapes of Wrath*, or watch the movie if you don't want to read. A scab is someone who accepts the lower wages, despite the fact that they are unfair, *knowing* they are unfair. A scab is someone who takes what he or she can get, *knowing* that it ruins everyone's bargaining power.



I always remember that scene in *the Grapes of Wrath*, where the young man drives up in a tractor, ready to knock over the Joad's house (see pic under title). Pa Joad confronts him with a shotgun, but the young man says he has to feed his family. That's the perfect scab mentality, right there. Selfish, small-minded, blind to morality and long-term consequence both. The Joads watch as he plows right through their house, with their stuff still in it. They should have pulled that idiot off the tractor and kicked him in the nuts to be sure he didn't have any more kids he had to feed by knocking over people's homes. Then they should have monkey-wrenched the tractor.

The young man couldn't see beyond tomorrow, and wasn't going to be able to feed his kids anyway. Once you knock down all your neighbor's houses—because the banks paid you to—what then? Knocking down people's houses with a tractor isn't a permanent wage, is it? Besides that, maybe his kids won't thank him for selling out to the Man, just so they can eat for a week. Maybe they would prefer eating out of a dumpster than having a father who was a scab.

But people living now, watching that movie, can't seem to get the message. Steinbeck wasn't subtle, but they still can't make the connection between the lives of the Joads and their own miserable lives. People can't figure out why their children don't respect them, why their children hate them. Their children hate them because they are scabs. Richer scabs and poorer scabs, but they have all sold out to the system to feed their families. Their children hate them for two reasons: 1) because they are scabs, and scabs are detestable, 2) because the children can see that the system has also doomed them, due to the sins of their fathers. The kids can see that they also have to become scabs, or live in a ditch. It is a scab world, and there is no third choice. It is only a question of who you sell out to.

All this has ruined my bargaining power, too, as we just saw, even though I'm not a scab. The galleries don't have to work with someone who wants to negotiate a contract, because they can work with scabs, who will sign any contract. Everyone's wages drop when the world is taken over by scabs, and I am part of everyone.

Yes, this has happened everywhere, in all jobs, and it has happened in art, too. People think that working artists are like Damien Hirst, with billions in the bank and not a care in the world. But the truth is far otherwise. The job market in art has devolved just like every other market, and it has devolved for the same reason: scabs. People with no scruples and no morals who will do whatever it

takes to make it. People who will sign any contract and produce anything that is requested, in order to make a buck. And of course this draws the sort of people to own galleries that we now see: the sort that have no problem taking advantage of the scabs. For them, the artist is just like any other hole in the ground: you take as much out of it as you can and give back as little as you are forced to.

People often say to me something like, “Why can't you just paint what people want to buy? Isn't that what it is about?” No, that isn't what it is about. I am an artist, and my job is *not* to paint things that tasteless people want to buy. The job of an artist is to create things of beauty and subtlety and power. There used to be a market for that. There isn't anymore, but that isn't my fault. I am an artist, not a worldwide determiner of markets. I can't wave a wand and make people see beauty, I can only produce it. It is up to them to respond to it.

Look at it this way: if I decide to just paint what people want to buy, I have not only destroyed the value of the wage, I have destroyed the value of the commodity. Historically, a scab was someone who accepted any wage, and thereby lowered the wage. But the contemporary artist is actually a double scab, because he or she not only devalues the wage, but also the art. The artist has become not only a wage scab, but an art scab. He has accepted any definition of art that suits the market, any quality of art that suits the client, and in so doing has destroyed his own field in at least two ways. The money has dropped toward nothing in terms of quantity, and the art has dropped toward nothing in terms of quality.

As in every other enterprise, the excuse for this is “efficiency.” I encourage you to read Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America*, which is about corporate farming but which has clear parallels in every field now. In it, Berry shows how efficiency in farming is used to justify all sorts of madness that is killing our topsoil, our food supply, and the health of consumers. But it is the same in art. Because galleries can make more money off scab-artists, that is all you see now. You see the little corporate wonks, mass-producing the pathetic café scenes and grapes in a bowl and whatnot, and keeping quiet. At the gallery openings, no one has anything to say. No interesting stories, just a bunch of overmedicated numbskulls standing around with their fingers in their shorts. If you try to tell an interesting story, the pall is incredible. They look at you like someone who forgot to read the rules posted on the door: **no interesting stories please, just blank stares. Interesting stories make us feel even more boring than we already are.**

It is more efficient for the corporate galleries—watching their profit margins—to work with the meekest young illustrators and the quietest, politest young hopefuls just out of art school. I honestly believe the galleries look for young artists with new families. They will do anything they are told. They can't produce great paintings or even interesting paintings, but they are pliable and don't argue over percentages. Either that, or the galleries work with the old retired guys and gals who don't need the money and are just happy to still be part of the game. They don't argue about percentages, either, since they are barely mobile and barely cogent. After 50 years of turpentine fumes, they wouldn't know a contract from a cataract.

And so the art market has imploded. No one buys the horrible scab paintings except half-blind old couples who are redecorating the boat house and need to fill a hole in the wall left over from the last hurricane. And even these buyers are drying up, since more efficient ways of covering the walls are being found.

The buyers are drying up and the galleries pretend not to understand it. I have an idea: maybe the buyers are in mass exodus because your paintings are shit. Maybe efficiency isn't a good way to judge

art or anything else. Maybe if you hired some real artists and treated them with respect, you would have an inventory that was actually worth something, and that drew people with taste to the gallery.

That thought never crosses anyone's mind, apparently. It is not part of the current business model. The current model is all short-term, ignoring anything that can't be banked by the end of the month. As in the stock market, the best short-term plan is to rip off the buyer by selling him horribly overpriced junk. See Facebook for this week's example of the Wall Street pump and dump. Well, the art market has been a classic pump-and-dump model for decades. The avant garde gallery spends all its money on advertising and PR—hence the “pump” part of pump and dump. After the buyer has been primed with a bunch of phony praise, testimonials, write-ups, and celebrity sightings, the “artwork” is dumped on him at a fantastic premium. As soon as the artwork leaves the gallery, it loses 100% of its value, since it never had any to begin with. In the realist market, the game is the same, with subtle variations. The pump part is normally somewhat less aggressive—except in the case of Thomas Kinkade—and the premium is somewhat lower, but in the end the artwork is still dumped on some clueless jerk who can't see what is right in front of his face. Like the jerks who thought Facebook was a great investment—based on nothing but hype—the marks of the art market are also clueless. Anyone who researched Facebook for half an hour could have seen what a sham it was. I have never invested in a stock and never will, but [I could tell Facebook was a sham](#) the first time I saw Zuckerberg's stupid face. In the same way, it shouldn't take a genius to tell that most realist art is garbage. Children and dogs and birds in cages won't look at it without wincing, but people buy it anyway. It is sort of like Monsanto's genetically modified crops. On farms, pigs won't eat it (this is true), but the farmer sends it to market (unmarked) anyway. Pigs wouldn't eat contemporary art, much less hang it in the sty, but people will.

Some people used to understand that short-term models are self-defeating, since they destroy their own markets. The stock market is crashing for many reasons, but one of the main reasons is that investors are catching on to the game. Most Wall Street investors are stupid, but they generally aren't quite as stupid as casino gamblers (or quite as drunk). If they get their money stolen over and over, eventually they quit. There are only so many Facebook IPO's you can dump before the investors go elsewhere. It is the same with art. If you don't give people something for their money, they stop giving you their money. The short-term rip-off can't work in the long term. It also can't work for galleries to treat their artists like slaves. They end up with the smallest, squishiest artists, and these people can't produce the goods.

You see, real artists have personalities. They have opinions. They have strong ideas. That is why they produce interesting paintings: the personality gets into the painting, you know. They are emotional and colorful and they know things. They have done interesting things and have stories to tell. Slaves and scabs, on the other hand, don't. Since slavery is no longer compulsory, these contemporary slaves are slaves by choice. It doesn't bother them to keep quiet and do what they are told. Selling out to the Man doesn't rub them raw. They have been looking for someone to sell out to, and they are happy to grovel and scrape and leave a trail of slime. Think of all the actors in Hollywood, standing in line to be able to kiss some famous person's ass. Think of all the sad singers on *American Idol*, standing in line to have the privilege of sucking Simon Cowell's dirty socks. Well, art has the same line of shallow people, who will do anything to make it. Crossing a picket line is nothing. That was old school. These people are willing to destroy all of art and art history, as long as they can make a few dollars or see themselves called artists for a day or two. I know there are many people in the avant garde who would literally set a match to the *Mona Lisa* if they could make a thousand dollars for it. Some of them have admitted as much (see Duchamp or the [Chapman Brothers](#)). But I suspect that most gallery realists aren't much better. See my article on [Kathleen Gilje](#) for an example of how far a realist will go to make it.

I have been to shows of both realism and the avant garde, and I have to tell you that they are both pretty pathetic. And I am not talking about the art now, I am talking about the people involved. You would think the feel at the two kinds of shows would be very different, but it isn't. The main difference is the clothing. And maybe the hair. And maybe the amount of tattooing and piercing. Realists are mostly Republicans, and so their clothing matches their conversation better: both are excruciatingly boring. Mostly a lot of munching on snacks and staring at the wall. Occasionally some talk about golf or Mitt Romney. At the avant garde shows, the people *look* more interesting—in a pathological sort of way—but they aren't. They are trying very hard to look edgy, so you see a lot of shaven heads and body art, but they have as little to say as the Republican realists, or less. I suspect many of them are also Republicans, especially the wealthy ones. But they went to art school so they know how to dress.

I don't mean to pick on the Republicans. I am not a Democrat. In my opinion, it is difficult these days to tell who is to the right of whom. They could rename themselves the red fascists and the blue fascists, and no one would know the difference. Basically, the rich have divided themselves based on abortion and gay rights, and the rest is the same. They are in favor of whatever drives up their investments, including war, ruining the food supply, drugging children, and filling the oceans with plastic litter. A few old ladies and few guys with beards are antiwar, but they don't show up at art shows, avant garde or realist. Even [John Currin, the current darling of the avant garde, is painting porn to fight Islamic terrorists](#). I kid you not.

A lot of people will think I am just ranting again, or trying to be funny, but if you think I am out in left field, you might try thinking of someone like Richard Schmid making this argument instead of me. He *has*, although not of course in the incendiary terms I use. For those of you who don't know, Richard Schmid is the polite old man of realism, the granddaddy of a lot of young realists now, figuratively speaking of course. In the past decade he has sort of returned as a panelist and judge and professor emeritus, but he basically took early retirement about 20 years ago. Why? Because he was driven out of the field by the scabs and the new corporate gallery mindset. By, say, 1990, he had reached the top of the field in realism, was a premier teacher, and was getting very high prices. I remember a one-man show he had in Tulsa about that time. He would have been 56 in 1990. The show was too big to fit in the gallery—Talisman, I think it was—and the show was up at the convention center or something. Pretty soon after that, he went off the map. Quit in disgust, is what I heard. I don't know all the details, I have only heard snippets from his former students, but we can fill in the blanks without straining too much. By 1990, the realist galleries had re-assessed the market based on the model provided them by the avant garde galleries. That re-assessment convinced them that they now had a lion's share of the power, and that they no longer had to treat the artist with any respect. In a word, they didn't *need* established artists. The established artist was now expendable. So many marginally talented illustrators were entering the field, willing to do anything, that it was easier for the galleries to deal with them than with the established artists. The most efficient strategy was therefore to work primarily with 20 and 30-something artists, and then ditch them when they started gaining confidence. The clients couldn't tell the difference between mediocre work and exceptional work, so there was no reason to coddle the exceptional artists, giving them higher prices and higher percentages.

Fortunately for Schmid, he was within a stone's throw of retirement age, had some money in the bank, and could always teach. He got out just before the deluge, in other words. But I have to tell you that he hasn't been much help lately in fighting the fight. In the early 90's I remember hearing some harsh words for the galleries from him, through the grapevine, but he didn't go public with them. Where would he have done that, after all? Do you think *Southwest Art* is going to print a critique of the galleries by a top artist? Of course not. *Southwest Art* is a gallery mouthpiece.

After a few years of playing Debussy on the piano, he calmed down I guess, and is now satisfied with his position as bearded idol. But I have to remind him that in the past, one of the main jobs of the professor emeritus was to fight the fights that the younger people couldn't fight. The professor emeritus has the name recognition and the pulpit to be heard. He is free of the market, and can't be influenced. So he can tell the truth. Just as [I have scolded Andrew Wyeth](#) in the past for keeping quiet, I now scold Schmid. If my loud mouth offends him, his silence offends me. He fancies himself a leader, but he isn't providing any leadership. He is continuing to look away from the real problems in the market, because it is more convenient for him to do so. If he starts telling uncomfortable truths, he may lose some of his idolaters. If he attacks the galleries and the markets, the scabs who now follow him will dump him like a hot potato.

Schmid will answer that he is tired of fighting. He is 78 and just wants a bit of peace. Well, bully for him. We all want peace, but it doesn't come from sitting around and smiling. It isn't just 78 year olds who use that excuse: "I'm tired of fighting, I just want a bit of peace." That is the excuse of everyone who can't or won't look at the real problems. Most of my 40-something friends make the same excuse, so it has nothing to do with being 78. You never earn the right to be complacent, no matter how long you live. If you are retired, you just have more time to act. If you are old, you have more power. That is what you have really earned: not peace but the obligation to use your wisdom to better the world.

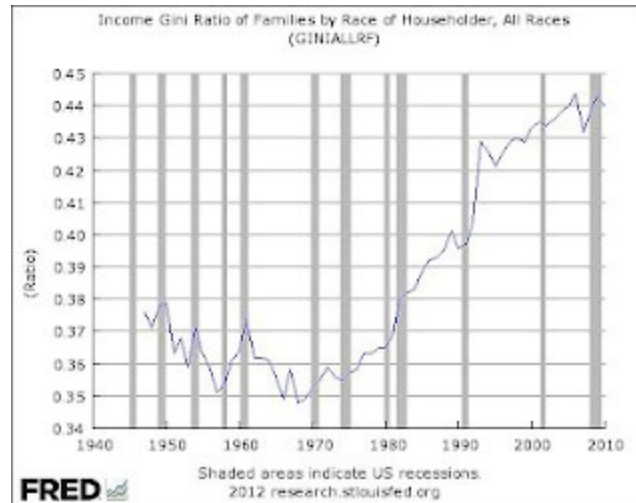
But back to my main thesis, which concerns collective bargaining and the right of both parties to negotiate a contract. We read a lot now from libertarians—such as Ron Paul and Alex Jones—about how we are sliding toward the European model of total state control. I am not a socialist and agree with much of this argument. I lived in Europe for several years, and from a political viewpoint, I was not impressed. The taxes are astronomical, the bureaucracy incredible, the rules overblown, and the amount of freethinking low. That said, the Europeans do have a couple of things we don't: active and respected unions, and frequent strikes. In this, the Europeans have kept a degree of empowerment we have lost. Now that the vote here in the US has been [completely stolen by machines](#), we have no fallback position of power. What can the people of Wisconsin do, for instance, now that Governor Walker has prevented his own recall by being in control of the computers? Will they march in the streets in greater numbers? Will they strike? Unlikely, since the powers-that-be purposely planned this move against unions during a depression, when people need jobs the most. There is a huge pool of scabs at the unemployment office, just waiting to fill any position.

In response, we are told that unions have gotten too powerful. That argument makes about as much sense as Rumsfeld's argument that the national debt is skyrocketing due to entitlements. Yes, right, Donald, the debt is now 100 trillion or whatever because of social spending, not because of military budgets that are 50 times higher than they need to be or because the bankers just stole trillions. It is because some poor black lady in Detroit is having kids while on foodstamps. I am not for welfare mothers having big families, obviously, but let's do the math right. The bankers and military have stolen more in the past decade than welfare mothers could steal in ten thousand years.

Even my "liberal" friends don't get it. The propaganda has been incredibly successful, and now even many of the most progressive progressives are anti-union, parroting the lines that they may have heard on Jon Stewart or the Colbert Report, but that originally came from Rumsfeld or Rove.

But we don't need to be "detoothing" the unions. We need *more* unions and *more* collective bargaining

and more strikes and more marching in the street. If unions were so powerful, do you think the median wage would have destructed back in the late 1960's, falling steadily in real terms since then? Do you think the gap between rich and poor would have grown so steadily over the past 40 years? Do you think if the unions were really so powerful, the US could have achieved the greatest gap in wealth in the civilized world, as well as the fastest increase in that gap?



We now have income distribution on a par with Uganda and Cambodia. Idi Amin and Pol Pot, to jog your memory. Uganda is still run by corrupt generals, and Cambodia is run to this day by Hun Sen, a former commander of the Khmer Rouge. That is the company we are keeping.

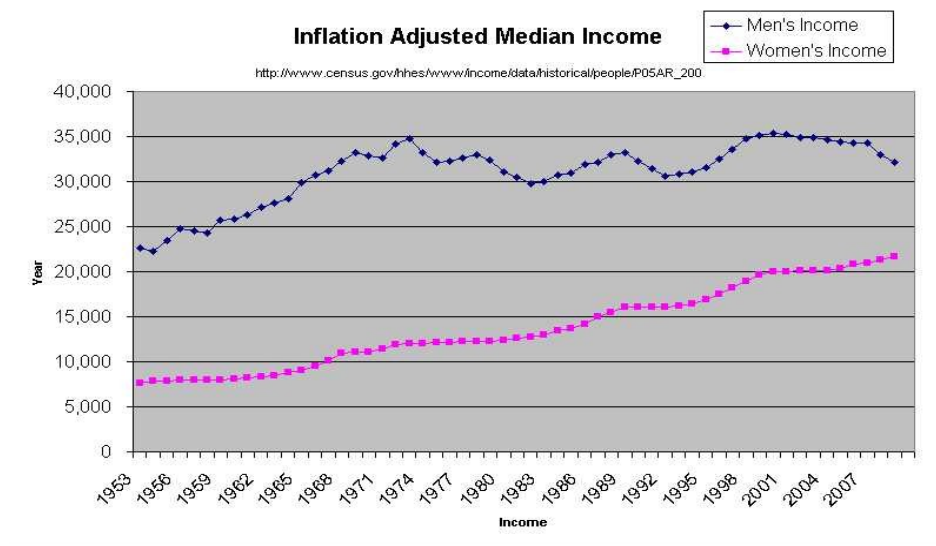
Here's some numbers you don't usually see: We are told the average income in the US (2010) was almost \$40,000. But that average is skewed by the obscene amounts of money at the top. If you look at median income instead of average, it falls to about \$26,000. The median is what most people have in their heads when you talk about averages, because it is right in the middle. Half earn more, half earn less. That's pretty pathetic, since the median income 30 years ago (1980) was \$18,000. Income has increased 45%, but of course inflation has increased a lot more than that since 1980. Inflation since 1980 is about 250% (prices have been doubling every 15-20 years). So unless you are in the upper 20%, you have lost a lot of money to inflation in the past 30 years. If you are middle class, you are trying to buy \$350 worth of goods for \$145, which is why you have been trying to make up the difference with credit card debt and multiple jobs. And if you are poor, it is even worse.

Sadly, the statistics you see on the internet are all pushed, even the ones from progressive or "revolutionary" sources. Few people seem able to do basic math. For instance, [the Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\) has released these figures](#), supposedly adjusted for inflation:

between 1979 and 2007, income grew by:
275 percent for the top 1 percent of households,
65 percent for the next 19 percent,
Just under 40 percent for the next 60 percent, and
18 percent for the bottom 20 percent.

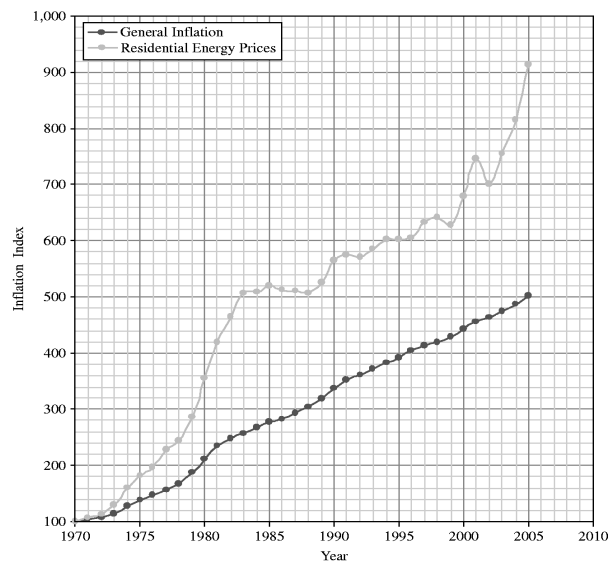
The CBO isn't progressive, of course: it is producing bald propaganda. Those numbers aren't even close. They would have you believe that the bottom 20% has seen a real increase in income of 18%.

Who believes that? It contradicts all of the government's other data. If the poorest 20% had seen an increase of 18%, they wouldn't be complaining. But I just showed you that they have actually seen a decrease of about 60%. Not +18%, but -60%. The CBO is pushing numbers by incredible amounts, and boldly publishing it on paper and on the internet.



Another set of statistics often mentioned [is from Stanford](#) or the US census. Take the link and see page one, or study the blue line in the chart above, which follows the chart at Stanford pretty closely. Stanford isn't progressive either, but I have seen this chart or one like it quoted by many sources, including sources claiming to be opposed to the current system. See for example [this video at youtube](#), which is otherwise fairly correct in its numbers and completely correct in its overall argument. You will see the chart at minute 5:03. In this chart, median income has flatlined since about 1965, showing zero or very little growth. In a growth economy, this is used to indicate that the middle class isn't keeping up or isn't being paid its fair share. But again, these charts are pushed. They are false. I just showed you that the median income hasn't flatlined relative to inflation. It is down around -60% relative to inflation. No one ever tells you that. The government and the universities use very strange indexes to measure inflation. Their methods are too complex for most people to follow.* But just ask yourself this: do you think inflation has been less than 30% total since 1980? For median income to have kept 18-40% ahead of inflation, as the CBO has told us, inflation would have to be quite low. It isn't. It is about 8 times what they are reporting. Or, since they aren't reporting it all—it is never included in their analyses—I should say it is about 8 times the inflation they are *hiding*.

They hide it when they are calculating median income and things like that, but we can find the truth rather easily by going to other government graphs. This is from the Department of Energy:



Source: US Department of Energy (2008)

You can see that prices have gone up by 5 times since 1970 and 2.5 times since 1980. Between 1970 and 1980, prices doubled in less than ten years. They had doubled again by 1995. Inflation has slowed since 1995, but it still averaged above 3% per annum after 1995. It is around 5% for the whole period after 1980, which gives us a total price increase of around 250%, as I said above. Since these charts stop at 2005 or 2007, we need to extend them. If we do that, the total inflation since 1980 is more like 300%, making my figures even worse above. The middle class has lost something like 70% of its buying power, and the poor have lost 80% or more. No wonder debt is skyrocketing. We are told the middle class can't control its spending, but the reverse is true. It is the upper class that can't control its *billing*. The bankers and the government are sending ever bigger bills to the middle and lower classes every year, via inflation, scab contracts, union busting, and skewed tax structures.

The middle class isn't just failing to be paid its fair share, it is being raped. Its share has fallen by -70% while the share of the upper 20% has risen by over 100% and the share of the upper 2% has risen by over 500%. [The 400 richest families](#) in the US now have more wealth than 50% of the country. And the wealth of these 400 thieves has quadrupled in the past 12 years. At the same time, [their taxes have halved](#). Worldwide, the richest people (the billionaires) [have seen their wealth rise](#) 14% in 2010 and 22% in 2011, for a total of 40% in just two years! That means *we* aren't in an economic downturn. The poor and middle class are in a depression, while the rich are raking it in. That isn't an economic downturn, that is planned looting by the rich.

What this all means for artists is that we should refuse to be looted. Do not sell anything to the rich for a discount, do not cross any picket lines, do not sign any one-sided contracts, and do not believe the propaganda. Do not read their magazines. Do not watch their shows. Do not buy their products. And for the rest, do not shine their shoes, do not pick their crops, do not fix their cars, do not mend their clothes, do not serve them food, do not make their beds. Strike, strike, and strike some more, until they can't find a man, woman or child to give them a drink of water.

*In short, they are cheating by taking the lowest year of inflation in that period—say 2000, when inflation was relatively low—and then using that number for the whole period of 1980 to 2010. [The Stanford graph](#) actually admits that “Note: all adjusted figures have been attuned for 2000 inflation rates.” Inflation in 2000 was about

2%. In 1980 it was near 12%. Average inflation for the period 1980 to 2010 was more like 5%. That is a huge cheat, since—as we have seen—it leads to an error of about 500%. You see, 2% over 30 years versus 5% over 30 years doesn't give us an error of 3% ($5 - 2$). At 2% for 30 years, you wouldn't even double your money. If you started with \$100, you would end with about \$167. But at 5%, you double your money twice in 30 years. If you started out with \$100, you quadruple your money in less than 29 years, which gives you something like \$420 after 30 years. The mathematicians at Stanford are trying to tell you that inflation has increased 100 dollars to 167 dollars since 1980, which would be a total inflation over the period of 60%. But the real inflation is 320%, a cheat of over 5 times. By attuning to 2000 rates, they have pushed the numbers by 500%.