

# OPINION

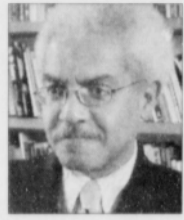
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## Inequality and Class Conflict

Class divide grows across the globe

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

At no previous moment in world history has the gap between the rich and poor been as wide as today. As an important, newly-released report reveals, this growing class divide exists in virtually every nation on earth.



*We are witnessing a phenomenon that the media describes as the 'very rich' leaving 'merely rich' behind.*

A 2006 study by the World Institute for

Development Economic Research of the United Nations University, establishes that as of 2000, the upper 1 percent of the globe's adult population, approximately 37 million people, average about \$515,000 in net worth per person, and collectively control roughly 40 percent of the world's entire wealth.

By contrast, the bottom one-half of the planet's adult population, 1.85 billion people, most of whom are black and brown, own only 1.1 percent of the world's total wealth. There is tremendous inequality of wealth between nations, the U.N. report notes. The United States, for example, comprises only 4.7 percent of the world's people, but it has nearly one-third, or 32.6 percent, of global wealth. By stark contrast, China, which has one-fifth of the world's population, owns only 2.6 percent of the globe's wealth. India, which has 16.8 percent of the global population, controls only 0.9 percent of the world's total

wealth. Within most of the world's countries, wealth is disproportionately concentrated in the top 10 percent of each nation's population. It comes as no surprise that in the United States, for example, the upper 10 percent of the adult population owns 69.8 percent of the nation's total wealth. Canada, a nation

with more liberal social welfare traditions than the U.S., nevertheless still exhibits significant inequality. More than one-half of Canadian assets, 53 percent, are owned by only ten percent of the population. European countries such as Norway, at 50.5 percent, and Spain, at 41.9 percent, have similar or slightly lower levels of wealth inequality.

The most revealing finding of the research is that similar patterns of wealth inequality now exist throughout the Third World. In Indonesia, for example, 65.4 percent of the nation's total wealth belongs to the wealthiest 10 percent. In India, the upper ten percent owns 52 percent of all Indian wealth. Even in China, where the ruling Communist Party still maintains vestiges of what might be described as "authoritarian state socialism," the wealthiest 10 percent own 41.4 percent of the national wealth.

But even these statistics, as useful as

they are, obscure a crucial dimension of wealth concentration under global apartheid's neoliberal economics. In the past 20 years in the U.S., where deregulation and privatization has been carried to extremes, we are witnessing a phenomenon that the media describes as the "very rich" leaving the "merely rich" behind.

A recent study by New York University economist Edward N. Wolff has found that one out of every 825 households in the U.S. in 2004 earned at least \$2 million annually, representing nearly a 100 percent increase in the wealth percentage recorded in 1989, adjusted for inflation.

We still tend to perceive the political world in 18th and 19th century terms: as competing "nations," geopolitical units defined by territorial boundaries, which conduct international affairs based on their perceived objective interests. In the 21st century, however, we must perceive of our political world entirely differently: as an environment in which multinational corporations exert greater power and influence than many countries; where millions of low-wage, manufacturing jobs each year are being relocated to south Asia, China, and Latin America.

Globalization and the widespread adoption of the neoliberal economic model of development are constructing an affluent, transnational "ruling class," a privileged stratum whose class interests largely supersede its national allegiances.

*Dr. Manning Marable is professor of public affairs, history and African-American studies at Columbia University in New York City.*

## Finally, Support for Community Colleges

But gap still remains

BY PRESTON PULLIAMS

Gov. Kulongoski proposed a budget to the Legislature that begins to reverse the downward trend in funding for community colleges in Oregon.



I want to thank the Governor for pro-

posing such a strong budget for education at all levels, and for his continued commitment to increasing funding for student financial aid. He understands the need for a world-class education system in this state and his budget makes a positive step in that direction.

But we need to talk with our legislators about the gap that still remains and make them aware that this budget falls short of

our real needs.

An investment in community colleges makes good economic sense for the state. No other institutions offer such open access and opportunity for higher education, and clear pathways to living-wage jobs than our state's community colleges. We must do more to invest in Oregon's future.

*Preston Pulliams is president of the Portland Community College district.*

## Katrina Aftermath

### Bureaucracy needs streamlining

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

In the days following Hurricane Katrina, the federal government was slow to send aid to the hardest hit areas, slow to rescue survivors trapped in the heavily flooded city and slow to find suitable shelter for those lucky enough to evacuate the city before the storm hit.

It's been well over a year since Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast. And though the storm left a path of destruction that will take years to clear, it's the government's continuing incompetence in handling the aftermath of the disaster that continues to victimize hundreds of thousands of people.

Billions of dollars allocated to help residents recover from the natural disaster, sit unused according to the

Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. government has spent less than \$80 million of the \$110 billion Congress set aside to help communities devastated by the storm. According to USA Today, a \$7.5 billion dollar program designed to help residents reestablish themselves - in the Gulf Coast or elsewhere - has approved payouts to just 87 of the more than 89,000 people who have applied. Funds aren't the only thing residents are having trouble accessing. In New Orleans' Lower 9th ward, Katrina's flood water damaged more than 1,000 buildings. However, they city has only issued four permits for new homes to be built in the mostly poor neighborhood.

Across the Gulf Coast, there are residents desperate to get their lives back on track. They want to rebuild; they need to rebuild. But bureaucracy and red tape keep their desires on ice. Many are still waiting for the federal aid that was prom-



ised them more than a year ago. Individuals aren't the only ones losing out. Businesses, schools - both essential to the rebuilding process - are also being shortchanged.

The Small Business Administration can't keep up with its payouts to business owners affected by the disaster and the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been slow to repay local governments for repairing schools and public water systems that were damaged during the storm.

Most Americans realize that rebuilding and reviving the Gulf Coast after such a tragedy takes time. But it is unthinkable that, 15 months later, so little progress has been made. Travel along the Gulf

*How much longer will the U.S. government continue to victimize people who have already been through so much?*

Coast and you'll find that many areas look exactly as they did after the storm hit. To add insult to injury, the government has to yet to reveal a stable, long-term housing plan for evacuees, many of them elderly or ill.

How much longer will the U.S. government continue to victimize people who have already been through so much?

Gulf Coast residents have suffered at the hands of the federal government long enough. We can't prevent natural disasters, but our elected and appointed officials can put a stop to the pain and frustration the endless runaround and unfulfilled promises have caused. It is not too late for the government to do right by the men, women and families along the Gulf.

*Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.*

# 22nd Annual

## "Keep Alive The Dream"

Tribute to: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**When?**  
Monday January 15th, 2007 11:00 A.M. - 6:00P.M.

**Where? NEW LOCATION!**  
**Highland Christian Center 7600 N.E. Glisan, Portland, Oregon**

**Who?**  
**Invited Speakers:** Governor Ted Kulongoski, State Senators, Mayor Tom Potter, Superintendent Dr. Vicki Phillips, Dr. W.G. Hardy, President Charles Schlimpert  
**Featured artists:** Jefferson Dancers, Congregation, GNC Linda Hornbuckle with Janice Scroggins & Friends, Aurora Chorus, DaNell Dayman & Royalty - Seattle, WA, Aaron Meyer, Bill Lamb Portland Symphonic Choir, African Gospel Acapella Inspirational Sounds, University of Oregon - Eugene, OR  
**Special Feature:** Agrippa Williams - Dramatic Portrayal  
**Art Displays, Vendor Bazaar, and Special Food Court**

11:00 a.m. Live Program /Radio Broadcast: KBOO (90.7FM)  
Broadcast/tape delayed on Portland Community Media (PCM), 1:00 - 7:00 p.m. on channel 11  
Broadcast/tape delayed on Television Services (PPS), 3:00 - 10:00 p.m. on channel 28

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Donation: \$3.00 or 3 cans of non-perishable food

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