

August 16, 2010: Our Have and Have-Not Society

For many years I have wondered out-loud how America could maintain itself in the face of ever concentrating wealth in the hands of a few. Our "Have/Have-Not" society is becoming increasingly unstable. For the first time ever, our bottom 50% has a negative net worth and is not competitive in the global economy. Our top 10% earns the majority of income and owns nearly everything worth owning, and they are getting tired of carrying the entire load. Something's gotta give.

The following are some scary statistics that show just how out-of-balance our country has become:

83 percent of all U.S. stocks are in the hands of 1 percent of the people.

Source: ACS, Lending Report via Financemymoney.com

61 percent of Americans "always or usually" live paycheck to paycheck, which was up from 49 percent in 2008 and 43 percent in 2007.

Source: Careerbuilder.com poll via CNBC

Only the top 5 percent of U.S. households have earned enough additional income to match the rise in housing costs since 1975.

Source: Dailyfinance.com

For the first time in U.S. history, banks own a greater share of residential housing net worth in the United States than all individual Americans put together.

Source: Federal Reserve Board via endoftheamericandream.com

The bottom 50 percent of income earners in the United States now collectively own less than 1 percent of the nation's wealth.

Source: UN via informationclearinghouse.info

The top 1 percent of U.S. households own nearly twice as much of America's corporate wealth as they did just 15 years ago.

Source: CBO via MSN

For the first time in U.S. history, more than 40 million Americans are on food stamps, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture projects that number will go up to 43 million Americans in 2011.

Source: [Boston Globe](http://BostonGlobe)

In 1950, the ratio of the average executive's paycheck to the average worker's paycheck was about 30 to 1. Since the year 2000, that ratio has exploded to between 300 to 500 to one.

Source: Smirkingchimp.com

What will it take to turn the U.S.S. Titanic around? Certainly the solution begins with re-conceptualizing our education system, so that a larger percentage of our population is competitive. But that will take at least 10-15 years – assuming we get started now and

even know how to do it (we don't). We'd better figure out something...or Have-Nots wielding modern-day pitchforks (somehow they have these) will ultimately replace tea partiers in our cities.

-Rob

Comment directly to Rob Slee at R.Slee@midasnation.com