

## Is It Education or Economic Inequality?

*David Kulick*

Republicans have always believed that government is bad and that it's up to free enterprise capitalism to run everything and make a profit. This explains their hatred of public education; for them it's up to each parent to decide whether and how to educate their children. They can band together freely and establish a school and teach what they want taught, but that's up to them, not the evil government.

Democrats believe otherwise; we believe it's important that children learn basic facts and understand basic ideas. We also believe that some things are too important to leave to corporations whose sole purpose is to make a profit, and education is one of them. If you find that you believe this, then congratulations, you're one of those dreaded Socialists.

Which brings us to an interesting article by Billionaire Nick Hanauer that was published in the July issue of The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/07/education-isnt-enough/590611/> I've long believed that the few decent billionaires like Bill Gates and George Soros, who fund various education initiatives were likely motivated by a real desire to help, but I take an instinctive dislike to anything that threatens our public school system.

Nick Hanauer explains that, like many of his friend billionaires, he believed that poverty and inequality were a result of a failing public education system. He felt that "if we modernized our curricula and our teaching methods, substantially increased school funding, rooted out bad teachers, and opened enough charter schools—American children, especially those in low-income and working-class communities, would start learning again. Graduation rates and wages would increase, poverty and inequality would decrease, and public commitment to democracy would be restored."

Mr. Hanauer has now come to a different conclusion: "American workers are struggling in large part because they are underpaid—and they are underpaid because 40 years of trickle-down policies have rigged the economy in favor of wealthy people like me. Americans are more highly educated than ever before, but despite that, and despite nearly record-low unemployment, most American workers—at all levels of educational attainment—have seen little if any wage growth since 2000."

He goes on to cite many of the statistics that we've written about before in The Delray Democrat. The top 0.1% are doing great. Everyone else is at best staying even, and most are doing worse. I'm okay right now, I'm retired with stocks that are nearing their peaks, and why wouldn't they be? The Republicans are gutting environmental regulations so corporations can pollute, they've devastated unions so pay is falling, and they've rewritten the tax laws so huge profits are untaxed

and go to shareholders rather than workers. Hey, what's not to like? Unless, of course, like half of Americans, you don't own any stock. Then you're not doing very well.