

### Scholarship Essay

If you walk around and ask people, “why have workers’ wages stagnated, while corporate earnings continue to soar,” they all give similar answers stated something like, “greed of the men and women in power.” The people above, the people in power have the decision of where the money goes and most times the ones below them are not at the top of their list. They have the privilege to make these decisions and unless someone that once was at the bottom steps into power, these decisions will never change. “Since the early 1970s, the hourly inflation-adjusted wages received by the typical worker have barely risen, growing only 0.2% per year (Nunn).” This being said the bottom seventy percent of earners have had stagnant wages. “The last time we saw persistently low unemployment (the late 1990s) was also the last episode of across-the-board wage growth and a time when low-wage workers’ wages fared better than those in the middle (epi).” Corporate profits are at the highest they have been in the last eighty-five years and employee compensation is at the lowest in the last sixty-five years and that is when we begin to ask why (nytimes).

We, as Americans, are not born with greed. It is taught to us at a very young age. It is the American way of life to have the best of the best and to show others our accomplishments. Think about the owner’s perspective. They have an option to increase the wages of their employees (that are doing the same productivity as before) or to put that money into such things as technology, international trade, or the use of undocumented workers, all of which can do the job at a much quicker and cheaper rate. Success in the United States many times isn’t determined by how much love you have or how nice of a person you are; success is determined by how much money you have. We strive to be these people. We go to college hoping it will change our futures financially and not just because we want to get an education.

The increase of education and retirement also play a role in our stagnated wages. The amount of people that further their education into college only continues to increase. This allows for much more competition for jobs and many of those newly graduated will take any job that is offered to them allowing businesses to replace the retired, highly paid men and women with young men and women starting out. Those that do not find a job outside of college also turn to less skilled jobs that many uneducated men and women once worked leaving them to turn to more minimum wage jobs with few benefits. Though some states have increased their minimum wage, many have not, leaving families living paycheck to paycheck. Though union jobs, such as those in construction, are great jobs for those less educated to get involved in, they only continue to decrease as time goes on. “A significant portion of the rise of wage inequality between high earners and middle earners is clearly associated with the ongoing erosion of unionization—which leads not just to reduced union bargaining power, but also weakens unions’ ability to set norms and wage standards that raise the wages of comparable *nonunion* workers. The decline of unions can explain about a third of the entire growth of wage inequality among men and around a fifth of the growth among women from 1973 to 2007 (epi).”

I would like to end this essay at a memorable note. I once watched a video that stated a scenario similar to this: you pull up to a bus stop on a stormy day only to see three people: the love of your life, a friend that once saved your life, and an old sick woman. You have one seat left in your car, so who do you give a ride to? Though this question may seem tricky and like there is no right answer, a gentleman gave this: “I would give my friend the keys to take the old woman to the hospital and I would stay under that bus stop with the love of my life.” The only way to be successful in life is to think outside the box. Strive to

be the best you can be and maybe one day you will have the chance to be in a position to try and change not only the problem of stagnated wages, but much more.

Citations

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