

There are lots of labels for people who are *not* in the Counting Class: working class, small business owners, farmers, retirees, richer and poorer folks, professionals, stay-at-home parents, farmworkers, middle class, working families, students, caregivers, and even super-rich executives. Let's call all these do-ers the Contributing Classes. That's all of us who show up each day and work, make, care, create, volunteer, and help one another.

Contributing Americans are all of us who *give* more than we *get*. We're the ones who keep paying into America, whether in terms of money or effort. We stay present in our communities, we feel the drive to do what it takes to make a difference, and we know we are accountable to our neighbors. In many different ways, most all Americans share membership in the Contributing Classes.

But we also have a Counting Class whose members *get* far more than they *give*. Counts draw out much more Free Income than they can realistically expect to receive as earned income. And they do so while they retreat from our communities, avoid work, take advantage of others, cause extreme waste and inefficiency, and shirk responsibility.

We in the Contributing Classes are *all in* for America. Unlike Counts, we're still rooted here in communities throughout our country, living with our American neighbors. So we can't pretend we don't answer to one another. We can't make believe that we don't depend on one another. We can't just turn our backs when our neighbors are struggling. We can't just walk away from responsibility for our mistakes. And unlike Counts, if we don't like how things are going, we can't afford to just pick up and leave for a foreign country.

But despite our commitment, Contributing Americans are losing control over our lives. Absentee Counts wield extreme money to call



the shots on the decisions that shape our futures. And no matter how much money we earn, no matter how much our investments grow, we are always getting poorer compared to the Counting Class. All of us in the Contributing Classes—richer and poorer—are getting leveled down and left behind. The gulf in America between Counts and Contributors expands wider and wider.

We can't rely on Counts to solve this problem, since they are the problem. They collect America's Public Gains for self gain, while Americans face cuts to public options and swelling debt. To really deal with the problem, we can say, "Enough!" to runaway extreme Money Counts, and trim them back.

That way, we can welcome Counts to join the Contributing Classes, as "regular" super-rich Americans. That way, we can cycle our Public Gains and regenerate our American Life. ■