

The America that we know today is what America has always been since the land was colonized. People that are full of greed and power. Americans being used by other Americans. The poor being exploited. A never ending cycle of working and nothing to show for it. America always had different classes; The upper class, the middle class, and the lower class. The upper class is “elite.” These Americans have money and power. They have family wealth and anything they could ever want. The lower class works and works and works with nothing to show for. They will always be at the bottom. Commodity fetishism pushes the fact that the working class remains the working class. The middle class is the Americans in between. They work but they’re not billionaires. Americans have always either benefited from their class or their class makes them remain idle in their lives.

The word class seems to trigger people. Mainly rich people. In Susan Ostrander’s study, she asked participants if they thought of themselves as upper class. One participant said “I hate to use the word ‘class.’ We are responsible, fortunate people, old families, the people who have something.” This proves the class-avoidance phenomenon. This phenomenon erases the conversation we should be having about privilege in America. It erases the struggles that should be talked about. Without talking about class, we can’t change the way America is.

America is home to 400 billionaires. Not even 1 percent of Americans make over one million dollars a year. But, 13 percent of Americans live below the poverty line. That is one out of every 8 people. The difference between less than 1 percent and 13 percent is big. The numbers don’t start there. 3.5 million Americans experience homelessness any given year and about half of these Americans are children. If we are too uncomfortable to talk about class then American children will always be in danger of being homeless.

The class that you and your family are affects everything. Your social class affects your education. Richard de Lone conducted a study that showed students with a higher social class

over thirty years ago and even now, the results are the same. Another study conducted by William Sewell showed that high schoolers in upper class families were four times more likely to go to college than lower class students. Race also plays into your educational success. In turn, your race plays into what social class you are your family are in. "People do not choose to be poor or working class; instead, they are limited and confined by the opportunities afforded or denied them by a social and economic system." The system America built was not made for People of color. It was made for white men. In America, the chances of being poor for a black male is 1 in 3 and for a black female it is 1 in 4. For a white female the chances of being poor is 1 in 4 and for a white male the chances of being poor is 1 in 10. That is a vast difference. It truly is a never ending cycle. Of course there are Americans that have broken this cycle and earned degrees and got great jobs for themselves.

Commodity fetishism is a concept developed by Karl Marx. Commodity fetishism is viewing a product as only the product. You don't think about what really went into making that product. You don't think about the blood, sweat, and tears. You don't think about the exploitation of the workers. The worker at the factory, the worker at the mines, and everyone in between. We glamorize products such as the Iphone. We're so lost in our heads about getting the newest thing and we get so caught up that we aren't seeing the actual people involved. By us feeding into commodity fetishism, the working class has nothing to show for all of the hours that they put in everyday. We look at the Iphone and think about Steve Jobs and all the accessories we can pair with our new phone. We don't give any credit to the exploited people who put in all of the work to make what we own. The working class will remain the working class because we always want the newest thing. They'll never have the chance to be like Steve Jobs. If your parents are working in the factories where Iphones are made, you are more than likely to be working the same jobs they worked. You'll have the same educational opportunities as them which is close to one.

American has an equal opportunity. That is what America is all about. We can start disrupting this system by talking about class, talking about privilege, and using our privilege to change America.