

‘Inequality for All’ Becomes a Cry for Democracy

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – One of the more underreported stories of the past year is that income inequality – the gap between the wealthiest one percent in the U.S. versus the rest of the population – is at historic highs. When that balance of power is tilted, the result is documented in the new film, “Inequality for All.”

Wealth possession, and the power associated with it, is the destroyer of the concept of democracy, according to this film. Not only is the U.S. dealing with these numbers (taxed at record low rates), the country also deals with an information industry that runs counter to the inequality message. The one percenters are gaming the media system to serve their greedy purposes, and then producing information that propagandize that this is the way it ought to be. Robert Reich, former Labor Secretary under President Bill Clinton, narrates the film with telling statistics and anecdotal examples. This is becoming a bigger problem, as jobs are shipped overseas and goods/services take a bigger and bigger chunk of income every year.

Today, Robert Reich is a professor at Harvard and Berkeley Universities, and has spent his career trying to spread the gospel of income inequality. The financial crisis of 2007-08 was a tipping point for the issue, as “too big to fail” and “bail-out” became the mantra of saving the wealth in this country, with no parachute for the working class.



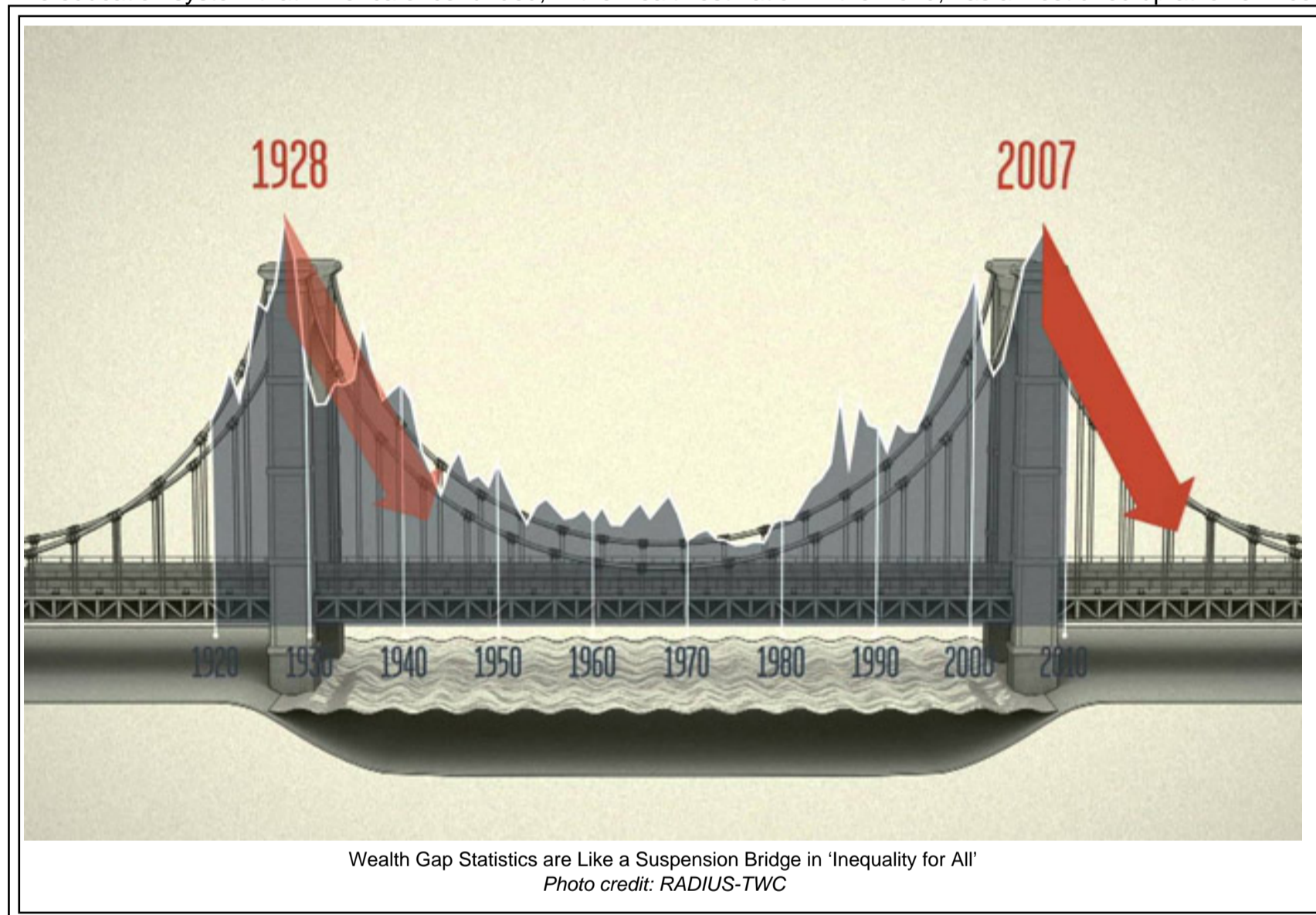
Robert Reich Informs America in ‘Inequality for All’
Photo credit: RADIUS-TWC

During the past thirty years, the income in this country has doubled, but the gains when to fewer and fewer people – the so-called one percent of the wealthiest – three times as much as during 1970. The 400 wealthiest Americans own more than the bottom 150 million. This resentment, and the inequality it forges, is destructive to all Americans – wealthy, middle class and poor.

Robert Reich is the centerpiece of the film, and starts and ends it with a lecture he gives at Berkeley University. The diminutive warrior (Reich is under five foot) has been a advocate for the elimination of the income gap, since his days serving under three presidential administrations. His fight is poignant, especially considering the dearth of information about this issue in the mainstream media. Who is government serving, and why, becomes the main question.

Director Jacob Kornbluth divides the film into Reich, archival evidence, statistics and real people. The dissolution of the middle class has consequences. The American family is being hijacked through too much pressure economically – with a larger percentage of income serving basic needs and material goods – and wages flatlining across the board. It is the middle class that buys things, and their lack of demand effects pricing and economics.

The cost of college is presented as a perfect example of the income inequality gap. State and federal governments give less to fund higher education, and colleges themselves have raised tuitions standards, leaving the middle class and lower middle class behind – and fueling an unnecessary and inequitable college loan system. This lowers the access to education to the underclass, and prevents the American Dream. The education system that America once funded, in the wealthiest nation in the world, has almost dried up at lower income levels.



But where the film makes its greatest case, is how this inequity is bad for all citizens. The one percenters can gorge themselves on laws the socialize loses and privatizes gain (with little or no tax), but essentially they produce nothing. This lack of production of goods does no service to the economy or jobs. The gates are up, but those gates can be broken, if this gap continues.

It will be an uphill battle, but there are intelligent and wealthy men who are willing to fight it. Eventually, the propaganda that counters the inequality gap truth will wear thin, and the wealthy who invest in this counter intelligence might wonder about their investment in nothing but self service. Because if something is not done, we all go down together.

"Inequality for All" has a limited release on September 27th, including Chicago. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Robert Reich. Directed by Jacob Kornbluth. Rated "PG"



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