

American Reinvented: Run for the Few, Run by the Few

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### Abstract

The political system in the United States is complex to say the least. Many factors contribute to the decisions and policies put in place by the government. The needs of the economy, those who keep it running, the people, the environment, and political preferences all come into play. The three-party system ultimately controls what happens in the nation, and this research paper explores what force controls them. The four theories of American government that explain how the government is run are the traditional democracy theory, the pluralist theory, the hyperpluralist theory, and the elite class theory. By analyzing information in articles found online, through documentaries, books and personal experience, the relationship between democracy and capitalism, democracy and the media, and the current policy toward higher education, this paper gives a definitive answer onto who, or what, exactly runs America.

## America Reinvented: Run for the Few, by the Few

### **Introduction**

Since its liberation in 1776, the United States has attracted attention all over the world, and enticed immigrants to travel there to fulfill the American Dream. America, the combination of a free-market and democracy, has been advertised to be a land of opportunity. As a republic set by up the Founding Fathers, the United States is a nation run for the people by the people; and where an unregulated markets makes for the prospect of starting a business and becoming successful. On paper, citizens vote for politicians at different levels who will represent their needs and interests once they are permitted into government. The government is to look at the needs of the nation as a whole, and govern in a way that benefits the majority of the population the majority of the time.

The gold rush, industrial revolution, advances in transportation and a high standard of living drew people of foreign nations to the United States time and time again. So wrapped up in their own prosperity, citizens often overlook the corruption behind the closed door. In government, spying, sabotage, affairs, and connectivity with the economic system has tainted the image first painted by the promising nation. The system of checks and balances were meant to regulate power in the three branches of government, but no one anticipated all to be other thrown by one exclusive party.

Currently, much of the American public would argue that the American Dream is dead, and the fortune that was once to be made has been sucked dry by a large group of influential. Others argue that it is not one large group, but a collection of smaller assembly with different interest's debate at the top tier, trying to get their financial needs met. Or, many Americans are unwilling to believe that the United States would ever be run other than the way it was designed

to; to serve public interest. The four theories of American government are as stated; the democratic, the pluralist, the hyperpluralist, and the elite theory.

The traditional democratic theory suggests the United States is run by the system is has on paper, one influenced equally by the citizens and policy makers. Democratic theory is based on the notion that each individual with the right to vote is able to have a say in which representatives are elected, affect outcomes of propositions and cast their ballots during the presidential elections. Each voter, theoretically, will have their needs, and what they believe to be the nation's needs, met.

Pluralism contends that many non-state parties of influence rise up to gain power and control of the traditional government. Various groups compete with each other for the final say in public policy and federal action. This is a peaceful arrangement, where bargaining, compromise and trade are vital to the foundation of the system. Ultimately, the government is in charge, but their decisions are in response to the decisions and desires of the assemblies and not the individual.

Hyperpluralism is the theory that an excess number of groups are competing against each other for control over government policy and decision, and the surplus of needs spoil the government's ability to govern. Hyperpluralism is like pluralism gone wrong; too many conflicting views are in consideration, and produces in a ratification of government productivity. Due to the constant conflicts, this theory is often paired with nation that is seemingly experiencing incessant discontent with decisions.

The elite class theory consists of a society divided into two socio-economic classes; the upper wealthy class and lower working class. The two classes do not begin this way; they develop side by side with the implementation of capitalism. The competitive nature of the

ideology creates this division, and normally the upper class is smaller and has more control over the majority class. Principally, elite class theory is in sync with that of an oligarchy.

Events particularly in the twenty-first century have bred a group of corporate superpowers to gain control of the free market, and access into the government. Unregulated campaign spending, the classification of companies as people in a place of law, federal intervention in a bank failure, and involvement in wars in order to make profit off of the military industry all discredit the democratic notion this nation has glorified for so long, that the United States is run by the people, for the people. However, when one analyzes three components in America, a pattern tending toward accommodation to elite interests over those of the public emerge. Capitalism, the media, and the policy on higher education in the United States have chiseled away at the authentic image of democracy the people have clung so tightly to for generations, and instead have paved the staircase for elite capitalists to climb to the commanding seat in the government.

### **The Inevitable Capitalistic Overthrow of Democracy**

Capitalism in the United States has corrupted the integrity of a once true democracy set up by its Founding Fathers to govern their country. Since the turn of the century, juxtaposing the American government with an oligarchy rather than a democracy has become increasingly more effective. Neither the executive, judicial, nor legislative branches of government have altered how they implement the system of checks and balances, but a fourth corporate branch has time and time again demonstrated its overarching power over the other three. This new branch, though unofficially titled and a supposed non-state actor, has deeply embedded itself into the inner workings of the United States government, making sedentary the democratic political system the nation was built upon. On paper, a capitalistic economic system is designed to be an

opportunity for its users to have an equal chance of obtaining wealth, free of government intervention. Ironically, an opposite effect has taken place, where corporate superpowers have become intermingled with the creation and enforcement of laws and mandates set forth by a now questionably titled democracy running the country. In any nation in the world, it is impossible for both to coincide without influencing the other.

One of the best examples of the inevitable intermingling of federal and economic affairs is the presidential debates in the United States. The now televised event is run by a private entry titled the Commission on Presidential Debates. The rules and regulations of the debates have been conjured up and established by this corporation, not the government. In the 1992 debate, a woman asked candidate Bush a question about how the recent recession had affected him personally. At first, the candidate did not seem to understand the question. He talked about seeing signs of the recession's negative effects, but could not respond on how it had directly impacted him. When the question was handed over to Clinton, the woman did not receive any better of an answer (George Bush Sr..., 2014). Neither candidate could not provide an answer because neither of them had been affected by the economic downfall, they are both extremely wealthy. It is undesirable for corporations sponsoring presidential candidates that such questions are asked, because they tamper with the nominee's portrait painted by funders for the public's viewing. The debates continued to air on television, but new rules were incorporated which prohibited many liberties permitted beforehand, such as "The candidates may not ask each other direct questions during any of the four debates" (The 2012 Debates..., 2014) A debate is defined as "a formal discussion on a particular topic in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward" and a discussion as "a conversation about a certain topic." Essentially, the debate should involve an exchange of words between two or more parties in

response to questions asked by the audience; but as demonstrated in 1992, such a set up could result in the downfall of a runner's credibility and relatability to voters. The Commission on Presidential Debates has completely dismantled the concept of a debate to fill the purpose of gaining popularity for their candidate, and ultimately privileges for themselves; and federal government, to blatantly disregarding principles of democracy put in place to halt such unequal events from unfolding, shows no intent of interfering.

Secretly, the Commission had decided on new rules for the event, which included preventing audience interaction, allowing candidates to not only preview the questions beforehand, but personally choose which they wish to answer, reducing the so-called political debate to be nothing but a corporate devised screenplay. The documents disclosing how the debates were run were exposed to the American public in 2000, but not before the League of Woman Voters publically renounced their sponsorship in 1998. (The 2012 Debates..., 2014) In the announcement, spokesperson Neuman said "It has become clear to us that the candidates' organizations aim to add debates to their list of campaign-trail charades devoid of substance, spontaneity and honest answers to tough questions." Neuman continued by stating that the commission was committing "fraud" against American people by censoring their understanding of the way political debates are run. (League Refuses, 1998) The corporations who sponsor the candidate and event essentially choose how they will appear to the people, whether it be fake or not. Jobs of public servicemen, such as those who run for presidential election, are meant to serve the people, not corporate financiers. Their true stance on vital issues discussed in the debate is crucial to be known by the people before they are allowed to run the country, so there will be no confusion on who the public wanted. Instead of the government working for the people, by the people, it is for the corporations by the corporations.

In the recent 2012 election, third party candidate Jill Stein arrested simply for attempting to get into the debate (Jill Stein Arrested...2012). The rules set forth by the Commission, a party must have 15% of national polls to participate. (The 2012 Debates..., 2014) In a nation with a population in the millions, one cannot assume all beliefs can be expressed solely within two parties. If the debate was run with a truly democratic approach, those watching would be able to hear ideas of the other running for election even if they are not involved in one of the two main political parties. Upon arrest, Stein said the debates were a “mockery of democracy” and that her campaign was on ballots in 85% of states (Jill Stein Arrested...2012). A corporation focused on maximizing profits is in charge of whom the public sees the opinions of, instead of government itself. One would expect a nation that parades its democracy as much as the United States does to have a government more actively involved in ensuring the election take place democratically, incorporating all third parties during the nation-wide presentation of the candidates. It is an improbable case to assume all political viewpoints of the millions of residents of the United States are represented by two major parties invited to the debates; for the system to be truly democratic, a broader spectrum of political parties would be present.

To obtain 15% of polls however, those third parties would require now unlimited corporate campaign funding that has been the backbone of countless political figures in all branches. This was ruled by the Supreme Court itself in the *McCutcheon vs. Federal Election Commission*, which now allows donors to unrestrictedly financially aid their party to spread its influence across the nation (Hurley & DeBenedetti, 2014) This decision alone is proof of judiciary support of corporations, which stems back to the Supreme Court “Era of Corporate Power”, or 1890-1937 (Naron, 2005) Corporate sponsors may not directly influence policies made by their judicial, legislative, or executive campaigner, but lending hundreds of thousands



of dollars in funding to a candidate with ideologies and intentions which could potentially benefit the sponsor gets the job done equally as well. Even an influence lobbyist stated “The return investment in politics is astonishing” (Ennis, 2014). The problem stems from capitalism itself because it is an economic system based on competition, resulting in a successor and a defeated runner up. After centuries, the system has bred an elite class of the successors who have accumulated so much wealth, their vast amount of capital now funds essential campaigns used to get members of congress, or even the president, a position in the federal government. In turn, these government officials tend to pass legislations supporting the growth of their already billionaire supporters in hopes of being sponsored in the next election. Without making it to the next term, officials face the most detrimental consequence, the loss of power and speech; and this has made businesses a viable asset in government. When federal concern and dependency on the support of corporations surpasses that of its people, like as it has in the United States, the government is no longer justified in using the title ‘democracy’. By permitting, and practically endorsing this corruption, the government has undermined the underlying principle of democracy, which is a government should be by the people for the people; where the people are the vast majority, not the 1% with the most wealth. Politicians these days are more concerned with pleasing the corporations supporting them than getting the vote of the public.

BP is a major sponsor of President Barack Obama, and was responsible for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. Many parties, though completely unrelated to the causation of the spill, fell victim to the more distressing effects. The seafood industry, tourism and the economy especially in the states of Mississippi and Louisiana, the ecosystem of the Gulf, and families in the area are still enduring the consequences of the corporation’s mishap. In regards to the lives lost, BP oil has made a single generic apology

posted on their website, stating they “deeply regret this loss of life and recognize the tremendous loss suffered by the families, friends and co-workers of those who died”. No amount of public apology nor compensation by means of capital is equitable to loss of a loved one. And while thousands are still being affected four years later, BP oil has hereof paid an estimated \$28.447 billion in compensation for their negligence (Gulf of Mexico Restoration, 2014). The substantiality of this payment diminishes as one looks at the revenue and gross income of the company the years surrounding the spill. Years leading up to the spill, BP had experienced an increase in profits, a trend that remained unscathed by the catastrophic event. In 2009, the year before the incident, BP had accumulated revenue of \$153.32 billion, and a gross income of \$25.42 billion. The year of, those numbers increased to \$192.44 billion and \$29.47 billion respectively. The gross income for the company unquestionably peaked in 2011 when \$33.76 billion was collected. As of last year, BP raked in a whopping \$242.55 billion in revenue and \$24.96 billion in profits (Annual Finances for BP..., 2014). In a true capitalistic system, the government would have shut down BP for violating numerous environmental regulations, namely the Clean Water Act, because government interference, let alone support, of a business supposedly thwarts the free market; yet the company is still accumulating capital as if the incident had never occurred. Undemocratically the needs of those affected, the citizens of the country, have been held below the dependency of the government on the funding of BP oil.

The Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad Supreme court case of 1886 ruled that during a trial, a corporation is to be given the same rights as, and to be treated the same way as a citizen of the United States (U.S. Supreme Court, 2012) In appealing to this ruling, the Supreme Court displayed undoubted support of capitalists. During the 2014 General Motors, or GM, ignition switch crisis, the company was able to be defended as a person in court. Though

the death count recently rose to 29, it is not possible to tri a company for murder like a human. Instead, GM was forced to make a public announcement for the recall the cars and pay a fine of around \$900 million (Vlasic, 2014) Interestingly enough, the President of the American sector for GM has on their website “Ensuring our customers’ safety is our first order of business... We are deeply sorry and we are working to address this issue as quickly as we can.” (GM expands Ignition Switch..., 2014) though investigation showed the company was aware of the malfunction back in 2005 and rejected the notion because it would “be too costly and take too long.” GM was hit hard by the federal punishment, with magnitudes represented by the almost doubling of profits from last year’s 2013 revenue. (Vlasic, 2014) Under the democracy of the United States, one will see a kid on the street get years of jail time for smoking pot on the street, while witness laws being made to ensure that companies like GM will not go out of business after killing 29 of its customers (Basu, 2014).

Americans are fully aware of this clash between capitalism and democracy, and they demonstrated this frustration during the Occupy Movement. Government is supposed to be for the people, they are public servants. Yet, their decisions are influenced by their corporate sponsors. The heads of these sometimes trillion dollar corporations grouped together only make up 1% of the U.S. population. A democracy is when the government strives to fill the needs of its people. American government similar to one of an oligarchy, in the sense that those possessing political status adhere to the needs and requests of their 1% sponsors, and are neglecting those of the other 99%; who happen to be the common citizen. The Occupy Movement was the first national joined opposition of such magnitude against the government itself. People were in the streets for months, even Wall Street, protesting against the affiliation between federal law and money. At first, local law enforcement attempted to dismantle the

protests. But once support grew to a national level, the movement was taken as a threat on a federal level. The more the people were repressed, the harder they pushed back; for the increasing image of the government as an enemy only unified the organizers even more than before. However, the movement fizzled out in less than a year, and for real change to be made, time and dedication must be treated like profit to a capitalist, essential to survival. Most shocking about the Movement was the corporate-state partnership set up to stifle the movement, and in doing so, virtually the people themselves. The corporation of the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund led a coordinated effort involving the FBI, HBS, police, regional fusion center and various private sectors to “crackdown” on Occupy. In documents unveiling the cooperation, it was revealed that death threats had been placed on many of the movement’s leaders, and the FBI broke protocol by not informing them of their danger. Executive director Mara Verheyden-Hilliard called the movement a “terrorist threat.” Such an intense intent on the disorganization of the civil liberty free speech, a fundamental of democracy, discredits the United States as the accepting, equal, fair and just nation it flaunts itself to be (Wolf, 2012)

Proof of the corruption of the Democratic government of the United States through its economic system was undeniable during the communist witch hunts of the Cold War. McCarthyism was an era of imprisonment for those associated as being communist, a title of horrific magnitude throughout the Cold War. Communists were public acclaimed enemies of the United States, and hundreds of social figures were blacklisted for their title. Few inspect the event regarding what actually transpired, a punishment of U.S. citizens for identifying with the economic competitor of capitalism. The United States was a Super Power in the 1960s, and they owed their wealth to capitalism. The United States’ best chance at growing more powerful was to spread their system around the world, spreading company’s marketing to international levels.

However, the communist nation of Russia was halting chances of expansion. Instead of recognizing its citizen's affiliation with the Communist Party as a right to free speech, the government punished its own people for supporting an 'enemy' system; which makes one wonder how long it has been since an economic preference has had anything to do with the federal government. If money and state were two separate entities, the persecution of communists would not have been blown up to the levels it was (53.a McCarthyism, 2014).

The government has fundamentally teamed up with many big businesses thriving off capitalism. In the documentary Gasland, reporter Fox investigates the harmful effects of fracking on local communities in close proximity to where the fracking was taking place. Fox brings into light that many were experiencing illness traced directly to exposure to the chemicals used in the fracking process. Due to the improper and hasty disposal of the waste products, chemicals were seeping into the ground and tainting their water supply. When confronted about the issue, the gas company either gave compensation money to pay for water, or showed no apathy. Residents had already resulted to purchasing gallons of water from town, because in some cases the water was so tainted, it would catch on fire. When the homeowners asked the company's workers who reported to these houses to drink the brownish, murky water, they refused. Ironically however, the representatives repeatedly denied any involvement with the contamination, and claimed the water supply had been not been tampered with in general. When Fox went to a hearing to inform the government on this issue asking for state intervention and was denied, he clearly stated a number of congressmen had a bias with this company because it is one of their funders. Fox was then told the previous information was not accurate and was thereafter dismissed. Another case of federal and capitalistic partnership was found in the story of writer W. H. Boyer. Boyer shares "In 1945, when I was in the Air Force and stationed downwind from the Hanford nuclear plant,

there were high releases of radioactive iodine. I found recently that I had acquired thyroid cancer from the releases and I am now trying to control the progress of the disease. Others were also affected by those radioactive releases; and we are in a class action suit against the Department of Energy. The major corporations involved in Hanford are actual objects of the suit and, unbelievably, the Department of Energy has provided the corporations with over \$55 million of public money to pay their attorneys to fight us” (Boyer, 2006)

In today’s technologically driven society, the vast majority of the citizen knowledge on current national and global events stems from either online or televised media coverage. What people see, hear, and are told to believe about the world and our country’s politics comes from some multi-billion dollar news company. In the United States, three groups dominate politics; red republicans, blue democrats, and corporations. The vast majority of US citizens are unaware of the great influence corporations have on the government, because they are too focused on the supposed deadlock rivalry of the two parties being highlighted by the media. Yet, a recent article revealed some of the most hotly debated topics which are believed to divide Democrats and Republicans resulted in similar opinions. Between the two parties, those who believed “Government should work to prevent discrimination against women” had only a 2.8% difference in opinion, and “gays and lesbians should be able to be hired as high school teachers” had a margin of a mere 3.3%. This Red versus Blue ‘rivalry’ is not as big of an issue as it has been portrayed in the media, a corporation in itself. The real issue arises in the fact that Americans themselves have no say in whether those they elect, be they Red or Blue, will actually represent their beliefs as a people, the 99%. Congressmen, Judiciaries, and Executive officials alike are bribed and funded by wealthy CEOs. Though this group of elites only makes up one percent of the population, their concerns orbit around increasing the output of their corporate mill, relying

on the grit generated by the working class. This concept is explained by the “Deep State” theory, which basically states there exists an encompassing authority in government, which lies in corporations purposely dodging the spotlight and allow it to illuminate political figures and parties instead, namely the Republican and Democratic parties. Though businesses influence most decisions and policies, the public misunderstanding of the framework of the system is vital to the perpetuation of the power structures for the century(Street,2014).

Once the public recognizes who really holds power in the government, the “Deep State” will come into light. Because voters have no direct say in what policies are made and if what they as a people want done, they rely on their vote to carry a promising political party candidate to power. However, the more involved they get in government the more of an asset they become to big businesses, and vice versa. If the people truly crave a government that will benefit them over the minority group of wealthy capitalists and corrupt government officials, they need to realize who the real rivalry is between, them and the corporations (Street, 2014).

With the liberty and opportunity of the free market, capitalism has granted many working in business a spot in the 1% of wealth in the nation. A healthy economy is what paves the way for a powerful country, and capitalism has made the U.S. a major world superpower. Because the wealth is in the hands of the capitalists and not government, the cooperation between the two systems was inevitable, especially considering how much is spent on the military. The money has to come from somewhere. Capitalism has transformed America into an oligarchy with CEOs saturating the ruling elite. To fulfill demands of capitalism, democracy must sacrifice values and dedication to its people’s wishes and instead serve capitalists who have created franchises serving as the backbone of the economy to keep to nation’s power steady. The partnership between state and financial leadership was created a gap between the government and those it is

intended to serve. This margin is only increasing as the century progresses, a trend that gives no reassurance of being sustainable. The Constitution itself says it is the duty of the people to overthrow a government that works against their common goal; and the Occupy Movement in particular proved the existence of the discontent of the 99% with the policies executed by the 1%. The two systems of democracy and capitalism are both beneficial to a country in their own ways; but when once forced to coincide into a single unit, the integrity of one system is bound to dismantle. There is no one person to blame, for humans are susceptible to greed and corruption once put in a position of power, be it political or financial. The integration of two distinct practices has birthed a nation of gluttony for power and wealth; and the culprit is no other than the system itself.

### **The Distortion of Democracy Through a Free-Market Media**

The mass media functions as a window for the common people, so that they may be informed of global challenges without having to step outside. In the United States, the looking glass many Americans peer into has been tainted by filters; thus obstructing the integrity of the media to a point where the bulk of the population is not aware of many worldly issues, and how their nation is handling them. Sociologists Croteau and Hoynes argue that an effective media reports unbiased and diverse opinions, backed by substantial information, on political and social issues. In the democratic United States however, corporate ownership has destroyed the 'free' press and confined the media into a lapdog to funders rather than a watchdog for the people.

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's propaganda model comes from their book *Manufacturing Consent*. The model serves as a framework in explaining and understanding the inner workings and motivations of the U.S. media. The five filters that inhibit the media from being a watchdog for the people include sourcing, ownership, flak, funding and an anti-



communist feel. Because many mainstream media sources rely heavily on corporate funds, 'news stations' cannot criticize nor discuss any data that could harm capitalism, such as the propaganda model itself. Written into the Bill of Rights is the very first amendment, the right to a free press. Unfortunately, most of the mainstream media has been put under corporate control, so the interests of the 'elite' owners like propaganda and advertisements are often broadcasted instead of substantial coverage of political or economic events.

According to Chomsky's propaganda model, the filter 'ownership' in particular greatly affects the reliability and overall relativity of the stories run. In western culture, corporate jobs, like the press, run in an undemocratic power structure. In short, journalists do the research and writing, editors review the final product, and owner of the company ensures no controversial or potentially damaging stories are reported. This applies to all sources of information with corporate ownership, ranging from television stations like CNN, NBC, ABC and FOX News, which already all have political affiliations and biases. Websites, newspapers, and magazines alike all are influenced by the overpowering hand which controls the output information of the news station. The free market is by no means a force certified to regulate the media. The corporate media's driving force is profit and sales, not listener satisfaction. The purpose of the press is to deliver unbiased, undistorted, accurate news relative to world events. The propaganda model states that "The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest" (Cromwell, 2012).

Corporate ownership of media has led to censored topics and a discard of morality for the sake of profit. For example, Nestle, a sponsor of NBC, ABC and CBS, uses cocoa harnessed with slave labor. This 'slave chocolate' is an abomination, and featured on many human rights awareness sites. However, advertisement of fair trade cocoa, or the topic of slave labor for that

matter, has never been discussed on any of those mainstream news stations. If an article about slave chocolate and its culprits were to be run in any major corporate media with Nestle as a funders, it would discredit and harm the company, a major player in the issue, if an ad for their products were anywhere in the paper or magazine. A major sponsor of NBC is General Electric, a nationally-known corporation (List of Sponsors..., n.d.). What not many are aware of however, is about the millions G.E. makes on military investments alone. By mid-January of 2015, General Electric had already reaped the benefits of 6.19 million dollars in federal contracts regarding military intervention. Controlling a good share of NBC, G.E.'s sponsorship indeed affects how the war in the Middle East is to be discussed and criticized, if at all. Again with profits reigning above all else, untainted media coverage is sacrificed for the sake of capital wealth (EIN News Desk, 2015).

In addition, many major funders of media outlets include gas companies, who are also major investors in wars, namely those in the Middle East because of their large oil deposits. During the Iraq War, President George W. Bush appointed John Rendon to win public support for the invasion. He is now in charge of a field officially titled perception management. This field manipulates information, and simultaneously the media and what they report. One assignment he was given by the CIA was to "create conditions for the removal of Hussein from power". Those who claim Rendon's work to be unsuccessful are discredited by his lavish lifestyle. In return for purposely manipulating the public, Rendon now lives in the Kalorama neighborhood and enjoys a multi-million dollar salary. Despite the desire of the public for the simple truth, the labeled democratic United States supports a man to 'manipulate' the truth with federal pay. A government that supports censorship and a swaying of its people's opinion cannot

simultaneously hold up a Bill of Rights which encourages the freedom of their press (Bamford, 2005).

Depicting countries as enemies to increase public support for a war is misleading if not all details on why the two nations are at war are present. Regarding the coverage of ‘enemy’ countries, Hiram Johnson said “in war, the truth is the first casualty” (Hightower, 2014). As the documentary *Dirty Wars* points out, the truth about casualties and targets are not always honestly reported. Even if a journalist gets information from an official military website, they cannot know for sure if that data is valid. Only when reporters like Scahill, from *Dirty Wars*, immerse themselves into the story are they guaranteed to obtain accurate information. Documentaries like these have undisputable, hard hitting video evidence with first- hand accounts of what is being reported. Unfortunately, documentaries are not often widely publicized due to lack of funds. The cost of airing a commercial on television for example depends on the number of viewers. The more who see an ad, the higher the cost. If factual documentaries like *Dirty Wars* were to be effectively advertised, the product would need to have already generated a generous amount of profit to cover the anticipated high volume of viewers, as well as the cost of creating a well-produced commercial. However, true news is created with the intention to inform and aware its audience, not to generate revenue.

The Society of Journalists "Code of Ethics" states "the duty of the journalist to ... seek truth and provid[e] a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues." Four major points of the code include “to seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable” (SJP Code of Ethics, 2014). Corporate ownership inhibits journalists in not allowing them to follow this code of conduct by restricting their account of the event if it may cause discontent amongst. In a capitalistic system, profit comes before anything else, and if a

covered event results in a loss in profits then it will not be published. At the end of the day, the journalists themselves have no say in which stories are investigated, who is interviewed regardless of how biased their judgments are, nor what is and is not published. In addition, televised broadcasts often interview various 'experts' on topics, which is addressed in the sourcing aspect of the propaganda model. These experts more often than not hold partisan opinions on the subjects at hand, thus misinforming the viewers by crediting biased standpoints.

Because stories are often skewed to achieve a desired response from its readers, one begins to wonder who exactly is keeping it honest. The alternative press struggle to report stories overlooked by the corporate media, but even they do not deliver the least opinionated source of information. The free press tends to hold a left-wing stance on many topics, and is likely to pin blame and use suggestive language in their articles. This is common in writing in general, the concept of pointing fingers and letting one's own judgment leak into the writing, but a true reporter will challenge their reader to discover their own opinion on the topic. A watchdog media reports hard-hitting facts that in themselves reveal the true nature of a situation, addressing the sourcing aspects of the Propaganda Model. Both sides of a story must be addressed for a story to be reliable. Project censored exposes the stories and world events that the mainstream media's organizers see unfit to publish under their name. This consortium goes beyond the Kim Kardashian diet fads and Cosmopolitan sex advice Americans are known to feed on. Project Censored is an organization of mostly college-level writers hungry to expose the truth. Tragedies in countries that have little economic affiliation with the United States are not common to appear in any sort of main stream media, because awareness of the topic does not wreak benefits to corporate sponsors. Groups like Project Censored destroy the wall that separates Americans from the truth. Each year, stories are compiled that serve as an "antidote to top-down, managed news

propaganda and censorship” (Oscar & Hecker, 2013). The Los Angeles Times said that the Project Censored 2014 edition provided “Devastating evidence of the dumbing-down of mainstream news in America. . . . Required reading for broadcasters, journalists, and well-informed citizens.” Publisher’s Weekly also commented on the 2014 edition, saying, ‘One essay deals with the proliferation of “Junk Food News,” in which “CNN and Fox News devoted more time to ‘Gangnam Style’ than the renewal of Uganda’s ‘Kill the Gays’ law.’ Another explains common media manipulation tactics and outlines practices to becoming a more engaged, free-thinking news consumer or even citizen journalist... An expose on working conditions in Chinese Apple factories is brutal yet essential reading. This book is evident of Project Censored’s profoundly important work in educating readers on current events and the skills needed to be a critical thinker” (Project Censored, 2014).

Torture is defined as ‘excruciating physical or mental pain’, and had also been referred to as ‘water torture’. The language used in many main stream media reports however, is subjective in that waterboarding is or is not referred to as torture, depending on who the perpetrator is, and when it was used. For example, anti-terrorist sentiments grew out of 9/11, and the majority of the United States population, including those involved in government, jumped on the band wagon. The media consequently decreased its criticisms on torture dramatically. Since 9/11, major newspapers have reduced to much more lenient writing on the topic of waterboarding than they had been prior to the incident. This is in part due to the United States’ own utilization of the torture technique. Until 2004, *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* characterized or implied waterboarding as torture in 81.5% and 96.3% of their articles on the topic respectively. In 2002 through 2008, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today* called the practice torture in 1.4%, 1.6%, 4.8%, and 0% respectively. However,

the tables turn when a country other than the United States is responsible for the practice.

Waterboarding was implied to be torture when another nation was the culprit in 5.5% of *The New York Times* articles, and 91.3% of those belonging to *The Los Angeles Times*. The wavering of the media's reporting bias on the topic is due to how they, and ultimately how both the government and their corporate sponsors, want the public to view the event. The general populous needs to side with the upper powers if these officials are to continue carrying out such practices behind closed blinds, all the while leaving the window of public speculation wide open to neighboring countries in the same boat (Dessi, Fusunyan..., 2010).

However in recent news, the government has been exploited in their usage of waterboarding after the 9-11 attack. Newspapers have presented the situation to the nation with loaded headlines such as 'a Crime' (Wallach, 2014), 'Waterboarding Didn't Work', and 'Horrific details about the torture report' (Brook, 2014). These words not only grasp the reader's attention, but unconsciously brew opinions in their head. During the coverage of the event on NBC in December, the morning newscast dubbed the report as "explosive" and "damning". The report continued with "The U.S. embassy in Egypt is one of many on alert today as Washington braces for the release of an explosive Senate report on the CIA's use of torture, ordered by President Bush after 9/11", and "the report is expected to accuse the CIA of lying repeatedly to Congress, the White House, and the American people" (Balan, 2014). Coincidentally, not once was it mentioned that members of the democratic United States government were on the board of approving the interrogations. The blame was immediately pinned on the CIA and the president, because their department physically carried out the orders, and for many Americans the president serves as the face of 'the government', thus becoming the easiest to place blame on.

The CIA torture report was brought to light in the United States during late 2014, four years after the French documentary *Torture: Made in USA* was made available to the public. This documentary explored the interrogation techniques used in the ‘black sites’ to extract information from terrorists, and interviewed those who oversaw the interrogations. The film provided video evidence of President Bush, Condoleezza Rice, and other government officials debating whether or not to use various “torture” techniques for interrogations regarding the 9/11 attack. The information on the waterboarding case has been available for years, a fact made evident by the publication of the film. A true watchdog media would have notified the public of their country’s violation of their signed pact to not use torture in war. On the ground research, like that demonstrated in the foreign documentary, should serve as a model for true reporting, rather than accepting facts handed by a superior in a company (Marie-Monique, 2010).

This event in itself greatly supports the claim against the American media serving as a watchdog to its people. Whether torture should or should not be used is a debate in itself, but honest reporting of who was responsible for the United States using it is simple and expected. Information in the CIA torture report was available years ago, but was not readily broadcasted to the public to cover up government decisions. In a democratic government, the free press would choose to expose such a story when it was discovered, not years later.

With the internet, access to information has been reduced to the click of a button. Anyone is able to say anything they want, so believing everything one reads seems unreliable. The same truth stands for the media in general, at the cost of denial of the truth in the media starts with the integrity of the government system. Media is the link between the people and the government, and is a tool that has the power to sway opinion, provoke emotion, and essentially manipulate the people. The common citizen’s opinion is derived from online or televised media coverage of

global events; and in a democracy however, the people would read about and watch what they want, the truth. As a government run by the people for the people, every asset of the government, including the media, is fixed so that the citizens would be kept informed about the challenges facing of their nation. However, under capitalism, much of the public sector has been privatized. The media sector functions as a money-making entertainment business. The people are shown what will feed their curiosity, but not enough to cause much discontent with any major sponsor of the news section. Ads and propaganda are intertwined with news stories, thus taking away from the integrity of the once political and economic awareness duty the media once held. The propaganda model explains how certain lenses obstruct and fog the clear truth non-corporate media offers. When people think, they become dangerous. Ideas and awareness of the tight grip capitalism has on the media threaten the sustainability of the system. To keep Americans at bay, mass media offers 'junkfood news' to entertain, rather than inform, the public. Ignorance to this unhealthy diet will lead not only to the demise of the awareness of the individual, but the nation as a whole. People only suppress themselves by not searching for the truth, which is not always easy to find. If Americans are to regain any say and power over the media, they must first take up a person responsibility in finding out what exactly is going on in the world, and why so many other nations label our country as ignorant. The system, not the government, and people's ignorance to it, is to blame for the American public's gap of knowledge in politics and substantial global events. Each person is their own answer to how to find the truth; knowledge is power, and the only way to obtain that power is to hunt for it.

### **Elite Perspective and the Cost of s Higher Education**

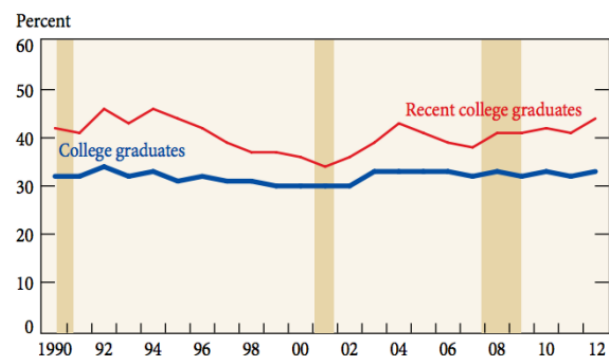
For centuries, our world has implored the obtainment of a college degree. Distinguished universities are home to iconic figures and achievements in history; such as the research and



discovery of elements at the University of California in Berkeley, or the notable theories on time by Stephen Hawking during his enrollment at the famous Oxford University. Colleges are institutions that take on students, and satisfy their pursuit of knowledge to varying degrees, so that by their graduation a more educated, strong-charactered, and experienced citizen is reciprocated back into society. Countries like Finland, Sweden and Norway charge no tuition fee for attendance to their Universities, while in the United States, annual tuition spills into the ten-thousand dollar range. Unfortunately, the higher cost of admittance does not correlate with the value of a degree in American society. Under elite corporate control, the government has had a decreasing involvement with higher education, and it is doing the people much more harm than good. Students who were promised a better life after college are now drowning in debt, and their once promising degree has turned out to be an inefficient life preserver. In recent years, policy towards higher education in the United States has taken a hands-off approach, one proving to be damaging to the people. To restore education to its former glory, the American government must branch off from corporate interest, and get involved in bettering their nation's higher education system.

Before one can put a price on the value of higher education as a whole, they must first analyze the necessity of a college degree in the job market. In corporate America, the creation of jobs is what fuels the economy, and in turn the value of a company in that economy. In recent years, increasing numbers of current college graduates aged 22 to 27 years old with a new Bachelor's degree have found themselves stuck with a job in which they

### Underemployment Rates for College Graduates

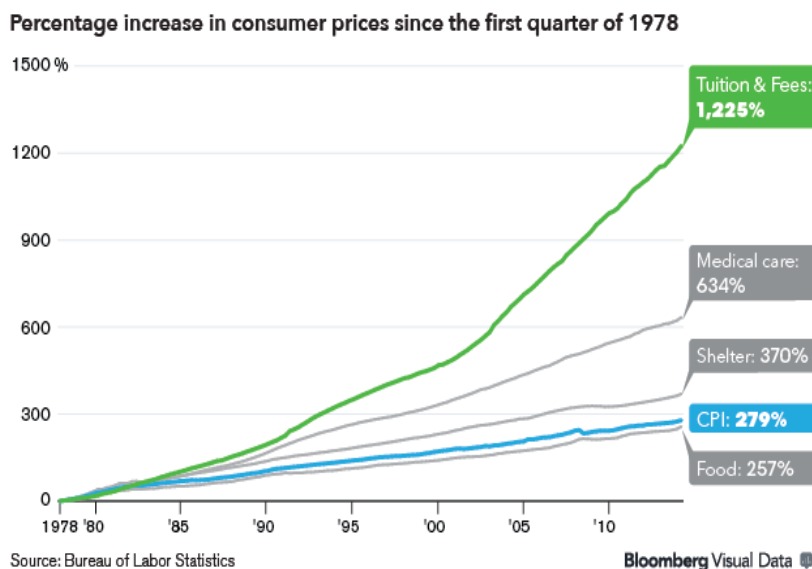


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, March Supplement; U.S. Department of Labor, O\*NET.

were either overqualified, or were not making enough to pay off student debt as planned. The class of 2014 has managed scrape by with 8.5 percent unemployment, 16.8 percent underemployment in terms of constant job-hunting, and 44 percent underemployment regarding over qualifications. However, the wages are what make or break the system. Roughly 40 percent of recent college graduates are making less than 40,000 dollars a year, and 20 percent of that group has an annual salary of 2,500 dollars. Graduates eager to join the workforce with a brand-new B.A. are finding that there are limited numbers of occupations that meet their financial needs. Yet as rates of underemployment increase, college tuition and student debt only climb to new heights (Weissmann, 2014).

Ivory Tower is a documentary that explores modern day higher education in the United States. The film exposes why tuition is so high, the alarming number of college students well past the four-year attendance mark, the burden and amount of student debt, and the extravagant spending by universities for decorative or higher-position related salaries and living conditions. Schools like Arizona State University have felt the cut in government spending in higher education as much as every other college, yet they are able to expand their campus. Why? It is a party school. Arizona's sunny weather attracts students ready to let loose and enjoy the hotel-like layout of the campus, complete with a swimming pool. Not all students sacrifice academics for fun, but those who do pay the ultimate price. Flunked classes in every university require it to be retaken, with no refund. Not passing enough classes combined with not taking enough credits has resulted in a deterioration of the four-year plan. College websites now display their four-year graduation rates because they are becoming less and less common. Ivory Tower explains how inflated tuition, alongside prolonged graduation, keeps the schools running. Annual college tuition for the 2014 year was averaged \$22,826 for a public college, and a conservative \$44,750

for private universities (What's the Price Tag..., 2014). Tuition has increased more than any other good or service in the United States since 1978. Tuition, however, is only the beginning of the financial burden put



on students. After room, board, food and transportation are covered, students find themselves with personal costs such as clothing, books, school supplies, laptops, trips home, and dinners outside campus. Federal financial aid, FAFSA, lowers the overall cost, but not effectively enough. No student pursuing a Bachelor's degree, especially those aided with federal money, should find themselves in hundreds of dollars of debt; which is beginning to be the case. In addition, higher education centers that once were tuition free are now charging fees, going against the principle of the pursuit of knowledge being free game. Cooper Union for instance slashed its free-tuition scholarship under circumstances that the school could no longer afford it. Despite student protests, the school finalized its decision for the 2014-2015 year. Interestingly enough, the salary of president of the university has remained constant, at around \$88,000, a salary close to that of the president of Harvard University. Tuition, rising at a steady 4.5 percent each year, is now running American colleges; and the students and their families are having trouble keeping up with the cost. The decrease in federal funding towards higher education

directly correlates, to the point of causation, with the overblown tuition. The government still offers loans to combat costs, but not without a price (Rossi, 2014).

Student loans are the only variety that do not ‘die with you’, literally. If debt is not paid off before a student’s death, the payment load will go on to burden a spouse, the student’s children, parents, or any living relative. The volume of student debt surpasses any other in the nation, including that of credit card debt. The interest rates are about 7 percent, and are compounded continuously. It is the degree that students go into debt for, not the knowledge, because in the end that degree is supposed to get them a well-paying, respectable job. However underemployment makes paying off that debt very difficult, especially with the other finances that come along in life such as food, shelter, and the prospect of starting a family.

Due to lack of financial support from the government, colleges all over the country are fighting for ways to obtain capital on their own. One method many high schoolers can relate to is incessant emails and letters to their home, containing praise of the student and encouragement to apply for the school by the listed deadlines. Even top-notch Ivy League schools will send aesthetically appealing packets to ‘prospective students’. Prestigious or not, students are bombarded with information from colleges nationwide, pushing for enrollment in the fall. Without a waiver, application fees range from \$35 to \$75. For higher ranking schools, which pull in hundreds of applicants based on their name, regardless of how much they spend to advertise their campus, the admission to acceptance ratio is quite disproportionate. Regarding the Fall term in 2014 for undergraduates interested in Stanford University, 42,167 students applied, and only 2,145 were granted admission; a rough 5.1percent acceptance rate (Our Selection Process, 2014). Schools like Stanford profit around a million dollars from application fees alone. If only half of the students had paid the fifty-five dollar application fee, which would be much more than those

who were actually admitted, the school would have made \$1,159,565. Like most institutions in the United States, higher education has taken on a capitalistic flavor to their system. Colleges are starting to act like corporations; those once regarded as a 'student' have essentially evolved into 'customers'. Public scrutiny regarding the every-rising tuition has had no effect on costs, and now the people must look at the bigger picture; the policy on higher education.

Currently, an ongoing war is being waged in the Middle East. Despite the capitalistic motives of the United States' involvement, hundreds of billions of federal dollars are being spent each month in support of the war effort. For example, by mid-January of 2015 alone, the government gave General Electric 6.19 million dollars through contracts regarding militaristic intervention (EIN News Desk, 2015). Claims that insufficient funding of higher education is necessary due to the national debt is undermined by how much federal wealth is spent on the military alone. The budget for military spending at a federal level for 2015 is 839.9 billion dollars, and is only 130.7 billion for the entire category of education; from primary schooling to post-secondary (United States Federal..., 2014). Already the leading militaristic world power, the government must look at the value of a population of educated citizens rather than another weaponry contract. The nation's defense superiority makes them untouchable; but what is being protected? The wealthy elite are gaining immense capital off the wars, but the nation behind the guns is struggling to simply afford education past high school. True, a Bachelor's degree does in fact earn its owner a million more dollars in a lifetime over someone who only has a high school diploma. However, the considerable amount of debt that goes along with pursuing, and obtaining a degree almost cancels out the difference (Rossi, 2014). Elite interest must be overlooked if any policy changes are to be met in regards to higher education. If the United States wishes for its labeled democratic government to remain largely unquestioned, it must meet the demands of the

people for an affordable education, and better shot at independency after graduation. If not, the top corporations will continue to watch their companies prosper off of federal funding, while the other 99% struggle to get by.

One major factor in determining the policy on higher education is the overall readiness of undergraduate students. Because of the wide variety of options for adolescence post high school graduation in the states, not all students are as motivated as other students overseas to attend a post-secondary school. The American education system almost ill-prepares students for college from the beginning. Overall, the system's efficiency and success is measured by test scores, rather than promoting critical thinking. Competition and stress greatly increases at the high school level, because students are contending in not a nationwide, but global race to college admittance. In a world where a 4.0 GPA is no longer enough, students cram their schedules with all sorts of extracurricular and community service to give them an edge. A 'well-rounded' student participates in sports (preferably varsity), a performing art, volunteers their time to better themselves through career-orientated classes and to aid the less fortunate, perhaps holds an afterschool job to demonstrate responsibility, all the while maintaining a high GPA. Elevated standards for admission into higher education have bred a generation of cram studiers, who are able to sustain their impressive resume by sacrificing understanding of a concept for a good grade on its test. Extracurriculars set aside, most students strive for high test scores, which in turn reciprocate a desired grade. Unfortunately, a letter grade does little to communicate understanding of a class' criteria; which is where the problem begins. The student who received an 'A' in a history class whose final grade was rounded up from an 85 percent is going to be judged no lighter than the one who received a 'B' in a different history class with hundred point tests and an unrounded 89.9 percent. To combat this, some colleges require students to write an

essay about various topics, which ideally unearth their aspirations and personality. In the end however, grades, not a true measure of critical thinking and understanding, are what are placed on the pedestal. When students get to college however, everything changes.

The attainment of a degree is meant to demonstrate an understanding of a concept to a certain level. However, with the way students are conditioned to 'learn', and as the competition for perfection in order to be admitted into colleges intensifies, degrees are becoming less and less accurate in communicating a student's mastery of a subject; and rather serve as proof of many passed classes. This does not stand true for all students of course, but the number of students who enter college and need to take remedial classes proves the gap between comprehension and letter grades is widening.

Students who do not function well in the grade-orientated system often feel discouraged by lower grades, and are less motivated to pursue further education. The high tuition costs also burden students, especially those who already feel overwhelmed with school. So, when a student is required to pay for a remedial class which offers no college credit, the affects can be damaging. On a national average, 20% to 40% of students attending a four-year university are enrolled in at least one remedial class. In regards to community colleges, over 50% of students are, on average, taking remedial courses. Only 17 % of students in remedial reading and 27% in remedial math end up earning their intended bachelor's degree (Hot Topics on..., n.d.). with so much at stake in pursuing a higher education, many are starting wo wonder if it is even worthwhile. Truth be told, higher education is no longer a viable resource for the majority of the population. Tuition alone has elevated to a point where only the wealthy elite are able to go through college without the encumbrance of an ever-growing debt.

Realistically, it is recognized that college is not for everyone. High school graduates have the opportunity to pursue a degree at a community college, a four-year university, a trade school, join the military, or enter the job market right off the bat. Recently, President Obama proposed a nation-wide act that would make community college free; and this should be looked at as only the beginning of bigger changes to come. The education system as a whole has been neglected as funding of the elite corporate class has increased. A degree is no longer required for one to sustain themselves in the current job market because of the deep imbedding of capitalism into the nation's structure. However, a prospering economy is not what defines a country, the people do. The United States has neglected the ultimate purpose of a higher education, to allow citizens to pursue their desire of knowledge so the population can be made of innovative, intelligent and informed thinkers that can actively contribute and give back to society. The increasing trend of college graduates becoming obsessed with job hunting to pay off debt has tainted the essence of the purpose of the utility. Thinkers create ideas, which lead to change, which is poison to the 1%. The system itself will be put in danger if the majority of the population had affordable access to a higher education. If policy alteration is to be made, the people need to make it look as crucial to policy makers as it is to them. The revolution back to affordable and accessible education begins with who it affects the most; and only when the 99% percent realize knowledge is a power worth fighting for will change be made.

### **Conclusion**

The normative belief of Americans is that their country is an indirect democracy, because they buy into the propaganda that the government and media are always truthful, and have the best intentions for the people, namely the large middle class, at heart. However, there is much evidence to support the contrary. The dependency on capitalism has made the United States an



economic superpower in the world, but has also undone the ideology which the majority of citizens adorn, the sweet system of democracy. The government has cast its people's needs aside for those few elite capitalists that keep the economy running smoothly. The traditional theory of democracy in America has been replaced with that of a ruling elite; a one percent group that is comprised of wealthy capitalists who have politician in all branches of the government wrapped around their finger.

Essentially, they control everything. From who the nation goes to war with, to what news Americans are exposed to, the level of involvement successful capitalists have in the country is incredible. This ruling class has suppressed the people by inflating the cost of their education as to keep resistance and knowledge of the system at bay, they have found ways to morph public opinion, and encouraged a two-party system where both sides are invested in keeping this elite-capitalistic system pressing forward.

Unlimited funding of campaigns allows very wealthy business persons to fund a candidate that might have an idea that would benefit their sponsor. With enough funding, script writers, publicity, makeup artists, and whatever else money can buy, that candidate just might win. And one in a position of power, that politician owes the sponsor a big favor. Unofficial bribes continue to pay that member of the government so the company's needs are met. However, capitalists do not use this method with just one candidate; they go to both parties with similar propositions so that whatever the outcome of any election, they will be victorious. This situation is not subjective to any particular branch of government either; corporations have made affiliations with presidents, House members, congressmen, deans of schools, Supreme Court judges and all the way to the president himself.

There are no single individuals to blame for this corruption, it has been an unregulated prolonged process that has blown out of proportion. There is, however, a way to gain back the idolized democracy that once was; and that is by having the people, especially the middle class, to step up to the plate.

The Occupy Movement was the starting point, but unfortunately faded away. Awareness of the connection between capitalism and politics before any change can be made. There is nothing immoral or unethical about being rich, or getting rich off of a system. Issues arise when the futures and lives of the majority of a country are put at risk for the benefit of a small elite group. Because the United States takes so much pride in its status and image as the good guys in the eyes of its people, a method of altered truths has replaced finding solutions to problems. Out of view of the public eye, measures have been put into place to protect the elite capitalistic system. However, in instances where a company like G.M. knowingly releases a product that has the potential to kill, which it did, the corporation is publically bashed, but no permanent damage is done. Corporations have the same rights as a person in the court of law, so no individual is reprimanded for their actions within a business. Dependencies on resources like oil instead of alternative fuels exist because there are still capitalists and politicians alike are getting rich off of it. The elite takeover has proved to not only be selfish, but dangerous. The well-being of the 99 percent of the nation, and the future of generations to come, depend on what is done now to address this issue. Americans need to take it upon themselves to educate themselves about the true interest of the government, and remember that this nation was founded on the notion to be run for the people, by the people; not for the few by the few. When people come together with ideas, they are dangerous, because that is how change is made.

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