**THE WEALTH GAP: FACTS, IMPACTS, AND IDEAS**

**🡪 “World’s 85 richest people own nearly half of global wealth: Oxfam report,” The Economic Times/India Times, January 21, 2014:** “A tiny elite comprising the richest 85 individuals hold wealth equivalent to that owned by the bottom half of the world’s population, a report says … ‘Wealthy elites have co-opted political power to rig the rules of the economic game, undermining democracy and creating a world where the 85 richest people own the wealth of half the world’s population,’ Oxfam claimed. It further added that since the late 1970s, tax rates for the richest have fallen in 29 of the 30 countries for which data are available, meaning that in many places the rich not only get more money but also pay less tax on it. … The report alleged that the richest individuals and companies in the world hide trillions of dollars away from the tax man in a web of tax havens around the world. ‘It is estimated that $21 trillion is held unrecorded and off-shore,’ it said.”

**🡪 “Fed chief worries over ‘wealth gap’,” Chicago Sun-Times, October 18, 2014:** “Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen sounded an alarm on Friday about widening economic inequality in the United States, suggesting that America’s longstanding identity as a land of opportunity was at stake.”

**🡪 “Half of fast-food workers need public assistance,” RedEye, October 16, 2013:** “More than half of low-wage workers employed by the largest fast-food restaurants earn so little that they must rely on public assistance to get by, according to a study released Tuesday. This ends up costing taxpayers billions of dollars a year, the study said. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau and public benefit programs show that 52 percent of fast-food cooks, cashiers and other ‘frontline’ staff had relied on at least one form of public assistance, such as Medicaid, food stamps and the Earned Income Tax Credit program, between 2007 and 2011, researchers at the University of California Berkeley and the University of Illinois said. … [T]he 10 largest fast-food companies in the United States cost taxpayers more than $3.8 billion each year in public assistance because workers do not make enough to pay for basic necessities themselves. … The studies follow large nationwide demonstrations in August, when fast-food workers went on strike and protested outside McDonald’s, Burger King and other restaurants in 60 cities, demanding a ‘living wage’ of $15 per hour. The U.S. fast-food industry generates sales of $200 billion a year.”

**🡪 “Impact of fast-food minimum wage boost: Experts face off,” L.A. Times, August 29, 2013:** “Tsedeye Gebreselassie, an attorney with the National Employment Law Project, said that for the last decade, worker wages in low-paying industries such as fast food have stagnated or declined while productivity levels increase. ‘Workers are working harder than ever for less pay, but CEO pay is going up and the corporations they’re working for are enjoying very healthy profits,’ she said. ‘And the gap is only getting wider.’”

**🡪 “How American companies change their address to avoid corporate taxes,” PBS NewsHour, August 26, 2014:** “In recent years, a number of American companies, as many as 22 since 2011, have relocated outside U.S. borders, usually through mergers with or purchases of a foreign company. One impact of changing their business address: They’re no longer subject to U.S. corporate taxes. It’s a process commonly known as tax inversion. And Burger King appears to be the latest example.”

**🡪 “America’s wealth gap unsustainable,’ may worsen: Harvard study,” Reuters, September 8, 2014:** “The widening gap between America’s wealthiest and its middle and lower classes … is unlikely to improve any time soon … ‘Shortsighted executives may be satisfied with an American economy whose firms win in global markets without lifting U.S. living standards. But any leader with a long view understands that business has a profound stake in the prosperity of the average American,’ according to the report. … ‘Struggling citizens are disgruntled at work, frugal at the cash register, and anti-business at the ballot box.’’”

**🡪 “How income inequality hurts the U.S. economy,” Salon.com, August 6, 2014:** “…a new study from Standard & Poor’s Capital IQ [says] rising inequality leads to all sorts of nasty economic problems: political discord, dampened investment, reduced trade, lower employment. … Rich people save more of their income. Poorer people have to borrow to buy stuff. When that easy money dries up, crashes happen. Meanwhile, the more affluent use political influence to push policies that maintain their economic advantage, so the problem tends to grow worse. … So what’s their suggested solution? In a word, it comes down to education. … [But] college graduation rates for lower-income students are slowing, while a higher percentage of wealthier students is attending college and, in turn, getting the skills, and jobs, that pay more. And the whole depressing cycle rolls ever forward.”