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## CLASS IN AMERICA: GUESTS AVAILABLE

Greetings,

“Class matters,” says the *New York Times* in a series that began Sunday.

“As Rich-Poor Gap Widens in the US, Class Mobility Stalls” was Friday’s *Wall Street Journal* headline on the first in a series of articles on *Challenges to the American Dream*.

These national newspapers are recognizing some important trends: that the economic divide is growing, and the ladder of upward mobility is missing more and more rungs. We’re proposing a show on questions such as these:

1. Is the American Dream a myth – or a nightmare? How much does your parents’ net worth still influence where you end up? Is the answer different depending on your race? How can we make the dream a reality?
2. What are the costs to working-class people of living in a country of vast inequalities combined with a myth of classlessness? What are the costs to affluent people and the super-wealthy of their increasing isolation?
3. Why do Americans tolerate high levels of inequality? How do classist prejudices shore up an economic system full of unequal access to opportunity?

The guests below have grappled with class in America in a variety of ways: as authors, as organizers, as members of cross-class dialogue groups, as people in mixed-class couples; as people raised in poverty, inheritors of millions, and middle-class professionals.

Give us a call at 617-423-2148 x113 if you’d be interested in any of these guests.

Regards,  
Betsy Leondar-Wright and Chuck Collins

## GUESTS AVAILABLE ON CLASS IN AMERICA

### 1. The American Dream of opportunity: a reality, a lie, or a promise that exists to the extent we build and defend it?

*“Americans, constitutionally optimistic, are disinclined to see themselves as stuck. [But] Blind optimism has its pitfalls. If opportunity is taken for granted, as something that will be there no matter what, then the country is less likely to do the hard work to make it happen.”* -- *The New York Times*, 5/15/05

#### Meizhu Lui

- Executive Director, United for a Fair Economy
- **Co-author of the forthcoming book, *The Color of Wealth*** (New Press, 2006) on **the racial wealth divide**
- Longtime labor and health activist; raised middle class Chinese-American

#### Sam Pizzigati

- Author of ***Greed and Good: Understanding and Overcoming the Inequality that Limits Our Lives*** (Apex Press, 2004)
- Retired publications director at the National Education Association
- Board member of United for a Fair Economy
- Raised middle-class

### 2. The heavy costs of our class-segregated lives

*“More than in the past, [the affluent] tend to live apart from everyone else, cocooned in their exurban chateaus. Researchers who have studied data from the 1980, 1990 and 2000 censuses say the isolation of the affluent has increased.”* -- *The New York Times*, 5/15/05

#### Felice Yeskel

- Co-Director of **Class Action** and United for a Fair Economy
- **Co-author of *Economic Apartheid in America*** (New Press, 2005)
- On the faculty of the Social Justice Education Program at UMass Amherst
- Raised working class.

#### Jennifer Ladd

- Co-Director of Class Action and co-founder of Responsible Wealth
- Activist and organizer on class issues
- **Heir to Standard Oil fortune; raised wealthy**

#### Jerry Koch-Gonzalez

- Board President, United for A Fair Economy; Board member, Class Action.
- Co-founder, Institute for Peaceable Communities, and director of its Communication with Compassion project
- **Facilitates support groups for cross-class couples**
- Cuban immigrant raised in a working class/lower middle class family.

