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| **Equality for All** |

**Equality for All**by Rebecca Walkiw*“All men are created equal”* is a principle that we Americans have heard repeatedly throughout our lifetime. It appears in our Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776, and is considered the foundation of American democracy. This principle was intended to guarantee the basic freedoms and natural rights of all citizens of the United States. Many Americans, however, including women, ethnic minorities and people with lesser abilities, poorer education and little or no material possessions have been denied equality from day one of our national independence. As a matter of fact, the Father of our Constitution, James Madison, did his best to limit this universal principle to white, male property owners by inventing a principle of his own, known as the “*unequal faculties of acquiring property”*, which he explained in *“The Federalist no. 10”*. According to this principle, property owners, who were solely wealthy white men back in 1787, are endowed with *unequal faculties,* from which their rights to acquire property originate. Furthermore, the first object of government, according to Madison, is the protection of these faculties. In other words, the main job of government is to protect the privileged property owners from the unprivileged populace (see *“All Men are Created Equal?”* by Steven Hill). Has equality in America improved since 1776? Well today, the top 20 percent of American earners take over half of the national income, while the bottom 20 percent only take 3.4 percent. Moreover, the U.S. has 269 billionaires, who live in unimaginable luxury, while 37 million Americans live below the poverty line, many of whom, by the way, work two or three jobs (see *“37 Million Poor Hidden in the Land of Plenty”* by Paul Harris). On a global basis, the world’s 356 richest families own 40 percent of humanity’s wealth, while the remaining 7 billion members of our global family have to more or less fight for a slice of the rest of the pie. Nearly half of the human population is losing this fight and now lives in poverty. Inequality is the root cause of all discrimination, intolerance, disrespect, degradation, oppression, exploitation, mismanagement and slavery. Combined with a rapidly growing population, it inevitably leads to mass unemployment, the collapse of traditional social services like health care and old age assistance, a shortage of food, water, housing and energy and ultimately to poverty, hunger and disease. These consequences have already hit many of America’s hard-working lower and middle class citizens, whereas the upper class continues to swim in luxury due to the *unequal right* of propertied citizens to acquire more wealth, more riches and more property than the rest of humanity, based on their *unequal faculties.* If we as Americans and as a global humanity do nothing to stop this inequality, it will lead us deeper and deeper into a quagmire of irreversible consequences that include tyranny, dictatorship, violence, greed, hatred, terror, global war, civil war, national dissolution and anarchy. It’s quite obvious that the problem of inequality hasn’t changed much in America since 1776. Its consequences, however, are far worse today than ever before due to our far greater population. On July 4, 1776, the population of the first 13 American colonies was about 2.5 million. Today, some 230 years later, the U.S. population has increased 120-fold to nearly 300 million. This extremely high growth rate becomes even more apparent when compared to the current American Indian population which is less than 3 million. As a result of this alarming increase in population, most people in our present-day, profit-oriented society have been reduced in value to mere cost factors. If the jobs we have cost big business owners too much, they’re simply rationalized without regard to the human consequences for millions of families across the country. After all, profit maximization is of greater value today than a human being. Why turn a mere profit of millions or billions of dollars a year, when it’s possible to double or triple that profit by simply out-sourcing local American jobs to countries where labor is cheap. On a global level, the problem of inequality is even worse: 20 percent of the population in developed nations consume 86 percent of the world’s re-sources. How can we possibly divide our global pie equally among a rapidly growing family of over 7 billion members? It’s downright impossible! And with a current global birthrate of 2.25 percent, by the year 3000, each person on earth will have less than 2 square centimeters of living space (see *ueberbevoelkerung.at)*. That’s why the first logical step to solving the problem of inequality is to establish a global commission of experts to draw up a truly humanitarian program of birth control with the aim of significantly reducing and maintaining our global population at a level where all the people of earth have enough to live on, so we can all lead a life that is truly worthy of human dignity. This global birth control program must equally apply to all nations and must be approved by the people, before it is put into practice. One example of such a program is a7-year cycle birthrate check, which is explained in an article by Christian Frehner at *figu.org/us/overpopulation-/birthrate\_check.htm*.According to Articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *all human beings are equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind.* This means that no human being is more valuable or less valuable than another human being, regardless of all differences, such as sex, age, race, belief, education, intelligence, abilities, skills, etc.,. All people are equal in dignity and worth and are therefore entitled to equal human rights, such as the right to equal treatment and equal respect as a human being, the right to equal opportunities in life, the right to equal education, equal health care, equal housing, equal wages, equal benefits, etc.,. According to Article 7 of the human-rights declaration, “*all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law”*. This means that the human rights of all people must be equally protected by the law.As a result of the increasing globalization, driven by profit maximization, combined with a rapidly growing world population and the rationalization of ever more jobs due to the advancement of computer and information technology (see *Interview with Jeremy Rifkin*), the value of a human being in our society diminishes with each passing day, and this global trend is going from bad to worse, as our global birthrate continues to boom, while the job market gradually shrinks. In 1995, 800 million people were unemployed or underemployed worldwide, and in 2001, this number rose to over one billion. How can we stop this global trend and its devastating consequences? Certainly not by ignoring it or pretending it doesn’t exist! We have to wake up and face reality. We are dealing with a ticking time bomb called overpopulation that only we can defuse and bring under control, if we start to use the common sense we were born with to develop an effective solution. If we do not reverse this trend and reduce our global population, all other problems we face today, including inequality, will only get worse and eventually become unsolvable. So instead of fighting each other for the last remaining resources on earth, let’s tackle this problem with our ingenuity like rational human beings. We can easily do this by introducing a global birth control program, like the 7-year cycle birthrate check mentioned above. Such a measure would be of great help to us in our fight for equality. Human equality, by the way, also means that no work of any human being is more valuable or less valuable than the work of another human being. All work fulfills an important function in society and is therefore absolutely equal in value. Consequently, the work of every human being is an equally valuable contribution to society, be it the work of a computer specialist at Microsoft or a burger flipper at McDonalds. As a society, we are indebted to specialists like Bill Gates whenever we use a computer and we are equally indebted to our nation’s burger flippers whenever we’re on the go and need a quick meal. However, it’s hard teaching young people that one job is just as valuable as another, when a privileged minority like Bill Gates rakes in billions of dollars a year, while millions of hard-working American families can barely make ends meet. In a truly democratic and humanitarian society, it’s the right and the duty of every responsible citizen to question such inequality. After all, 37 million *working* Americans live below the poverty line, and that is unworthy of human dignity! If all work is equally valuable and worthy of human dignity, then why aren’t all wages?The prevailing wage inequality throughout the world stems from a false and arrogant assumption that certain jobs are more valuable than others because they allegedly require greater responsibility or a higher education. All jobs, however, require responsibility and know-how, whether it’s the job of a teacher, a farmer, a musician, a writer, an office cleaner, a scientist, a street sweeper, a politician or whatever. Every human being fulfills an important function in society through his work, and viewed as a whole, no human being is more or less important or more or less valuable than another in the fulfillment of his work. Therefore, no work of any human being is better, higher, nobler, more important, more meaningful or more valuable than that of another. Every job is equally important and should therefore receive equal pay.Decisive in performing any work is the effort put forth. Therefore, all human beings have an equal obligation to perform their work to the best of their ability. In return, they should be paid according to the human effort they invest. This means that whoever performs a job to the best of his ability should be paid more than whoever performs a job far below his ability. A system based on rewarding human effort would be more just than the current system of rewarding performance alone because no two people are alike in their abilities and skills. Why should someone be punished with a lower wage for doing his best, when he is less skilled, or rewarded with a higher wage for performing below his potential, when he is more skilled? Besides, a fair system of payment, based on human effort, would be a great incentive for every human being to do his best at work. All people determine the course of their own life by the decisions and actions they take, and as human beings, we are all obliged to do what we can to fight injustice and to improve our situation in life. Since we alone carry the full responsibility for all of our problems in life, we should also be invested with the full power of self-governance, so we alone can determine the most effective solutions to our problems. After all, a real democracy is a *government of the people, by the people and for the people*. However, if we as a people choose to ignore our problems or expect other people, like politicians, to solve them for us, we will never overcome them. The people of the United States or any other nation of the world can easily put an end to the inequality they suffer by simply taking control of their own lives and practicing self-governance. The Swiss have been doing this for nearly 150 years now. (See *Direct Democracy in Switzerland* by Gregory Fossedal at *adti.net/ddis/DDinSwitzerland\_031203.htm* and also *direct-democracy.geschichte-schweiz.ch*)How can we acquire more self-governance? Well, we can start by promoting the organization of people’s referendums at all levels of society, so all people can exercise their right to vote on world, national, state and local matters. That way, we the people no longer have to support the activities of political parties or leaders that no longer represent our interests or succumb to the whims of some big business that decides to rationalize jobs in our towns and communities. With people’s referendums at world, national, state, county and local levels, we the people – not the politicians – decide whether we as a nation go to war, whether we approve of a particular tax or whether we permit big business to rationalize jobs in our communities. On a global level, we alone decide when and where to send our multinational peace-fighting troops to restore peace in the world (see *“World Peace and Multinational Peace-Fighting Troops”* by Barbara Harnisch and Billy Meier under *Friedenskampftruppen*). The power of a nation will therefore rest in the hands of the people and not the politicians or any other leaders. Our leaders, who must be wise and knowledgeable experts from all walks of life, will only serve in an advisory capacity to educate the population on all issues of concern to the people. They will only be permitted to bring ideas before the people and must then put them into action, once they are voted on.With the help of people’s referendums, we can even put an end to wage inequality. Fair wages for all can be achieved by organizing a nation-wide referendum to vote on this issue. Just think, if we voted for a maximum wage of 120,000 dollars a year in the United States, millions of new jobs could be created, and the wages of all workers could be raised to 50,000 dollars or more a year. This would not only improve the quality of living in America but would also be a real incentive for all people, young and old, to find work and do their very best on the job. Similar referendums could be organized in all countries of the world. As a matter of fact, if equal wages were established globally, it would quickly put an end to all cheap labor and with it the outsourcing of our jobs and the exploitation of foreign workers.Many people throughout the world have come up with great solutions to common problems that are just begging to be put into practice. As a matter of fact, the ingenuity of the common people is the most valuable asset of any nation. I’ve heard better solutions to many of our world and national problems from secretaries, housewives and cleaning ladies than from most politicians. Walt Whitman described the common people with the following words: *Genius, “is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors … but always most in the common people.”*All people have the right to practice self-determination and the responsibility to free themselves from all forms of tyranny so they can go on to accomplish all the things that free and sovereign people have ever dreamed of, such as true freedom, lasting peace and equality for all.**What is Direct Democracy?****Twelve Questions and Answers**(The following questions and answers are from the Direct Democracy Campaign)**Q What is Direct Democracy?****A** ***Direct Democracy*** is a form of government under which we the people vote directly on many of the issues, unlike the existing ***Representative Democracy*** where we basically just vote for a political party to make all the decisions for us.**Q You mean it’s about referendums?****A** Yes, that's the main bit, although it also encourages people to get more generally involved in running their communities. **Q So what is the Direct Democracy campaign?****A** It's a campaign set up to work for direct democracy. It is not tied to any particular political cause or party, and there are many similar groups working for the same thing in other countries around the world. **Q But why set up a new group when you could just as easily campaign from inside one of the political parties?** **A** Because the leaders of the political parties are deeply opposed to direct democracy. After all, nobody likes having some of their powers taken away. **Q All right, but what are the advantages of Direct Democracy anyway?****A** Many! For a start, it means that voters are not just restricted to voting for a party manifesto once every four years or so, even when they disagree with many of the policies contained in it. Under ***Direct Democracy*** we will be able to vote for those policies we actually agree with, but against the ones we think are wrong. It means that politicians will not be able to get away with policies that the voters at large don't want. It means that voters themselves will be able to raise issues that the politicians are avoiding. It means........... **Q Hold on, are you saying that it won't just be the government who could call referendums?****A** Yes! Under ***Direct Democracy*** anybody can call a referendum, be they government or just an agreed percentage of the electorate signing a petition detailing the question to be asked. There is no reason why writing the question should always be in the hands of the politicians. **Q Doesn't all this mean an awful lot of voting all the time?****A** Not really! In Switzerland the government deals with all the legislative details then puts the big questions to the voters to decide on, along with any issues which the voters themselves have raised. Voters vote up to four times a year, and in the future that will probably be done electronically from home, rather than having to traipse to the polling station every time. **Q So you're saying that *Direct Democracy* exists in Switzerland already?****A** Yes, they've had it for nearly a hundred and fifty years now, and it not only works nationally, but they use it at county and local levels as well. The Swiss people really are in control of their government and local councils, not the other way round. The people vote on economic and social issues, on the constitution, foreign affairs, health, the environment, and also all the issues that crop up at the local level right down to planning applications. And the Swiss are not the only ones. Most democracies hold referendums at some time or another, but some hold far more than others. Recently Italy, Australia, Canada, France, Denmark and Ireland have held referendums, and over half of the states of the United States hold them on a regular basis as a way of making decisions on local issues. **Q OK, this all sounds very fine, but surely the politicians know better than we do, what's right for the country?** **A** That's what they'll tell you of course, but ask yourself this: If the politicians are so good at knowing what's best for the country, then why is it that the two parties are always going at each other throats, each insisting that the other one in government is totally incompetent? The reality is that we the voters would be just as good at making the decisions as they are, if not better. Remember that the Swiss are now the richest country per head of population in Europe. They don't seem to have done too badly with ***Direct Democracy***. **Q But it’s different here. We don't have a tradition of using referendums.****A** No, but then we didn't have a tradition of votes for women either before we gave women the vote. Tradition must never be an excuse to avoid change. Today, we are better educated than ever before, more inclined to argue with our politicians and much more aware, via the media, of what's going on in the world. We have grown up, and it's time to start making decisions for ourselves. **Q All right, but what about all those pressure groups - big business and the like? Wouldn't they use money to influence the outcome of referendums?****A** There are about 220 million voters in the U.S. So there is no way that pressure groups can influence that many people. **Q OK, so what can I do to help?****A** Lots of things! Today we have only partial democracy. Internationally, ***Direct Democracy*** is the way of the future, but because our government institutions are so deeply entrenched, it will only happen here in the near future if we make it. ***Direct Democracy*** itself is about each of us playing our part. So with or without the politicians’ agreement, let's get to work. You can find more information on Direct Democracy under the following links:* **The Plea for Direct Democracy: voicesfordd.com**
* **Direct Democracy League: ddleague-usa.net/index.html**
* **Direct Access Democracy: etches.net**
* **Worldwide Direct Democracy Movement: world-wide-democracy.net**

***Let the people decide................*** |

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