



Broke or broken?

The following excerpt is from a speech given by filmmaker Michael Moore to the protestors at the state capitol in Wisconsin in March. I believe it speaks to the actions and directions of our country.

“America is not broke. Contrary to what those in power would like you to believe, so that you’ll give up your pension, cut your wages, and settle for the life your great-grandparents had, America is not broke. Not by a long shot. The country is awash in wealth and cash. It’s just that it’s not in your hands. It has been transferred, in the greatest heist in history, from the workers and consumers to the banks and the portfolios of the super-rich.

“Right now, just 400 Americans have more wealth than half of the 310 million Americans combined. If you can’t bring yourself to call that a financial coup d’état, then you are simply not being honest with what you know in your heart to be true. But I can see why people don’t want to even think about this. For us to admit that we have let a small group of men abscond with and hoard the bulk of the wealth that runs our economy would mean that we’d have to accept the humiliating acknowledgment that we have indeed surrendered our precious democracy to the moneyed elite. Wall Street, the banks and the Fortune 500 now run this republic.

“When I was in school, every student had to take one semester of economics in order to graduate. And here’s what I learned: Money doesn’t grow on trees. It grows when we make things. It grows when we have good jobs with good wages that we use to buy the things we need. And guess what? That creates more jobs. It grows when we provide an outstanding educational system that then grows a new generation of inventors, entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, thinkers, and the people who will come up with the next great idea for this planet. And those ideas create jobs, and the jobs produce tax revenue.

“To help prevent the day when people demand their country back, the wealthy have done two very smart things. Number one, they control the message. By owning the media, they have expertly convinced many Americans of few means to buy their version of the

American Dream and vote for their politicians. Their version of the Dream says that you, too, might be rich some day. This is America, where anything can happen if you just apply yourself. They have conveniently provided you with believable examples to show you how a poor boy can become a rich man, the child of a single mother in Hawaii can become president of the United States. They will play these stories for you over and over and over again, all day long, so that the last thing you’ll want to do is upset the apple cart, because, yes, you too, might be rich/president some day. The message, though, is clear: Keep your head down, keep your nose to the grindstone, don’t rock the boat, and be sure to vote for the party that protects the rich man that you might be some day.

“And here’s the second smart thing the wealthy have done. They’ve created a poison pill that they know you will never want to take. It’s their version of mutually assured destruction. And when they threatened to release this weapon of mass economic annihilation in September of 2008, we blinked. As the economy and the stock market went into a tailspin and the banks were caught conducting a worldwide Ponzi scheme, Wall Street issued this threat: Either hand over trillions of dollars from the American taxpayers, or we will crash this economy straight into the ground! Crash it straight into the ground! Fork it over, or it’s goodbye, savings accounts. Fork it over, or it’s goodbye, pensions. Fork it over, or it’s goodbye, United States Treasury. Fork it over, or it’s goodbye, jobs and homes and future.”

I agree that America is not broke. I believe it is broken. We, the citizens, can fix it. We fix it by demanding that our elected officials respond to the workers and voters and not to the corporate greed that is fueling our current direction. ☒

NALC Retirement Department
Toll-free number: 800-424-5186
Available Monday, Wednesday and Thursday only
from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 to 4 p.m. (Eastern time)
This toll-free number is answered ONLY during these hours on the days indicated.