

Subject: Michael Moore.
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Nov. 16, 2011.

This shows how Michael Moore thinks. I can't say that I agree with him completely but it's one way of looking at things.

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A voice from the fringes, but one I whole-heartedly support.
J-nis

From: Michael Moore
maillist@michaelmoore.com
Sent: Thursday, October 27, 2011

Friends,

Twenty-two years ago this coming Tuesday, I stood with a group of factory workers, students and the unemployed in the middle of the downtown of my birthplace, Flint, Michigan, to announce that the Hollywood studio, Warner Bros., had purchased the world rights to distribute my first movie, 'Roger & Me.' A reporter asked me, "How much did you sell it for?"

"Three million dollars!" I proudly exclaimed. A cheer went up from the union guys surrounding me. It was absolutely unheard of for one of us in the working class of Flint (or anywhere) to receive such a sum of money unless one of us had either robbed a bank or, by luck, won the Michigan lottery. On that sunny November day in 1989, it was like I had won the lottery -- and the people I had lived and struggled with in Michigan were thrilled with my success. It was like, one of us had made it, one of us finally had good fortune smile upon us. The day was filled with high-fives and "Way-ta-go Mike!"s. When you are from the working class you root for each other, and when one of you does well, the others are beaming with pride -- not just for that one person's success, but for the fact that the team had somehow won, beating the system that was brutal and unforgiving and which ran a game that was rigged against us. We knew the rules, and those rules said that we factory town rats do not get to make movies or be on TV talk shows or have our voice heard on any national stage. We were to shut up, keep our heads down, and get back to work. If by some miracle one of us escaped and commandeered a mass audience and some loot to boot -- well, holy mother of G-d, watch out! A bully pulpit and enough cash to raise a ruckus -- that was, an incendiary combination, and it only spelled trouble for those at the top.

Until that point I had been barely getting by on unemployment, collecting \$-- a week. Welfare. The dole. My car had died back in April so I had gone seven months with no vehicle. Friends would take me out to dinner, always coming up with an excuse to celebrate or commemorate something and then picking up the check so I would not have to feel the shame of not being able to afford it.

And now, all of a sudden, I had three million bucks! What would I do with it? There were men in suits making many suggestions to me, and I could see how those without a strong moral sense of social responsibility could be easily lead down the "ME" path and quickly forget about the "WE."

So I made some easy decisions back in 1989:

1. I would first pay all my taxes. I told the guy who did my 1040 not to declare any deductions other than the mortgage and to pay the full federal, state and city tax rate. I proudly contributed nearly 1 million dollars for the privilege of being a citizen of this great country.
2. Of the remaining \$2 million, I decided to divide it up the

way I once heard the folksinger/activist Harry Chapin tell me how he lived: "One for me, one for the other guy." So I took half the money -- \$1 million -- and established a foundation to give it all away.

3. The remaining million went like this: I paid off all my debts, paid off the debts of some friends and family members, bought my parents a new refrigerator, set up college funds for our nieces and nephews, helped rebuild a b-ack c-urch that had been burned down in Flint, gave out a thousand turkeys at Thanksgiving, bought filmmaking equipment to send to the Vietnamese (my own personal reparations for a country we had ravaged), annually bought 10,000 toys to give to Toys for Tots at Christmas, got myself a new American-made Honda, and took out a mortgage on an apartment above a Baby Gap in New York City.

4. What remained went into a simple, low-interest savings account. I made the decision that I would never buy a share of stock (I didn't understand the casino known as the New York Stock Exchange and I did not believe in investing in a system I did not agree with).

5. Finally, I believed the concept of making money off your money had created a greedy, lazy class who didn't produce any product, just misery and fear among the populace. They invented ways to buy out companies and then shut them down. They dreamed up schemes to play with people's pension funds as if it were their own money. They demanded companies keep posting record profits (which was accomplished by firing thousands and eliminating health benefits for those who remained). I made the decision that if I was going to earn a living, it would be done from my own sweat and ideas and creativity. I would produce something tangible, something others could own or be entertained by or learn from. My work would create employment for others, good employment with middle class wages and full health benefits.

I went on to make more movies, produce TV series and write books. I never started a project with the thought, "I wonder how much money I can make at this?" And by never letting money be the motivating force for anything, I simply did exactly what I wanted to do. That attitude kept the work honest and unflinching -- and that, in turn I believe, resulted in millions of people buying tickets to these films, tuning in to my TV shows, and buying my books.

Which is exactly what has driven the Right crazy when it comes to me. How did someone from the left get such a wide mainstream audience?! This just isn't supposed to happen (Noam Chomsky, sadly, will not be booked on The View today, and Howard Zinn, shockingly, didn't make the New York Times bestseller list until after he d-ed). That's how the media machine is rigged -- you are not supposed to hear from those who would completely change the system to something much better. Only wimpy liberals who urge caution and compromise and mild reforms get to have their say on the op-ed pages or Sunday morning chat shows.

Somehow, I found a crack through the wall and made it through. I feel very blessed that I have this life -- and I take none of it for granted. I believe in the lessons I was taught back in C-tholic school -- that if you end up doing well, you have an even greater responsibility to those who don't fare the same. "The last shall be first and the first shall be last." Kinda commie, I know, but the idea was that the human family was supposed to divide up the earth's riches in a fair manner so that all of Go-'s children would have a life with less suffering.

I do very well -- and for a documentary filmmaker, I do extremely well.

That, too, drives conservatives bonkers. "You're rich because of capitalism!" they scream at me. Um, no. Didn't you take Econ 101? Capitalism is a system, a pyramid scheme of sorts, that exploits the vast majority so that the few at the top can enrich themselves more. I make my money the old school, honest way by making things. Some years I earn a boatload of cash. Other years, like last year, I don't have a job (no movie, no book) and so I make a lot less. "How can you claim to be for the poor when you are the opposite of poor?!" It's like asking: "You've

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never had s-x with another man -- how can you be for gay marriage?!" I guess the same way that an all-male C-ongress voted to give women the vote, or scores of wh-te people marched with Martin Luther Ling, Jr. (I can hear these righties yelling back through history: "Hey! You're not bl-ck! You're not being lynched! Why are you with the blac-s?!"). It is precisely this disconnect that prevents Republicans from understanding why anyone would give of their time or money to help out those less fortunate. It is simply something their brain cannot process. "Kanye West makes millions! What's he doing at Occupy Wall Street?!" Exactly -- he's down there demanding that his taxes be raised. That, to a right-winger, is the definition of insanity. To everyone else, we are grateful that people like him stand up, even if and especially because it is against his own personal financial interest. It is specifically what that B-ble those conservatives wave around demands of those who are well off.

Back on that November day in 1989 when I sold my first film, a good friend of mine said this to me: "They have made a huge mistake giving someone like you a big check. This will make you a very dangerous man. And it proves that old saying right: 'The capitalist will sell you the rope to hang himself with if he thinks he can make a buck off it.'"

Yours,

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P.S. I will go to Oakland tomorrow afternoon to stand with Occupy Oakland against the out-of-control police.

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