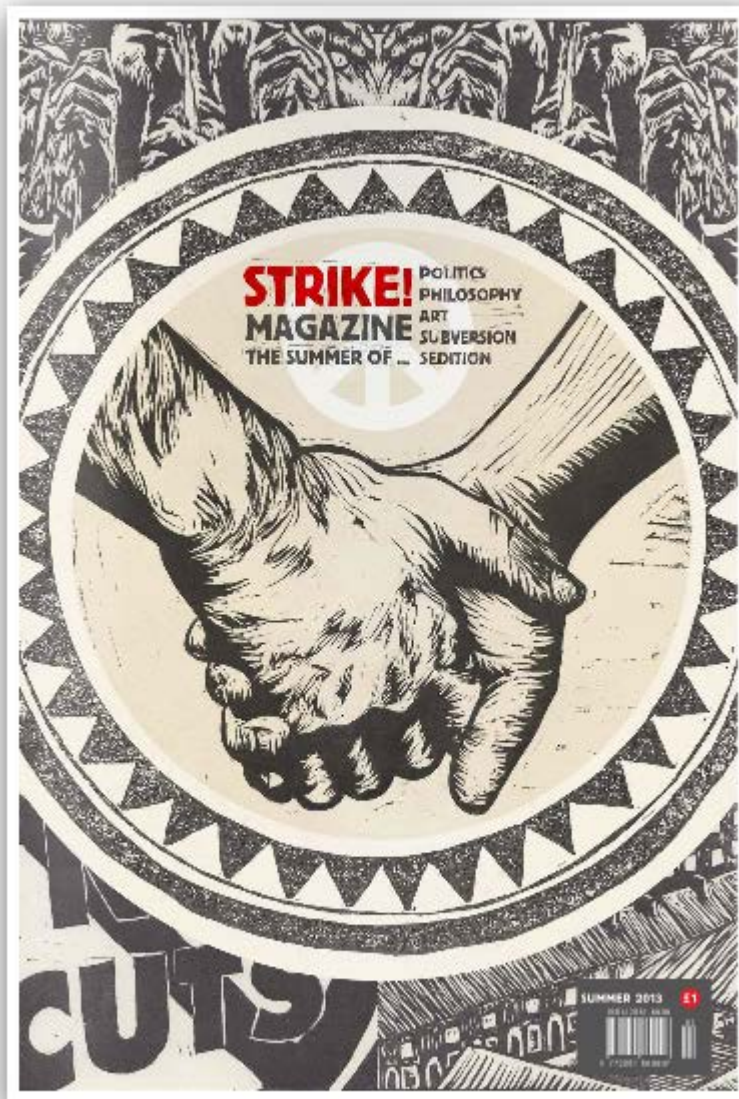


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Why more equality is good for you

Danny Dorling

“There’s ultimately a very small number of people that are phenomenally bright but also have the skills to run a company, the social skills to run a company at that level. It’s just the nature of the world ... If this person has those skills, then he deserves the money.”

Male, 37, private sector, earning more than £100,000 (\$160,000) a year

Equality matters because, when you have less of it, you have to put up with obnoxious behavior, insulting suggestions and stupid ideas such as the one above, that inequality is the ‘nature of the world’ that ‘a very small number of people’ are ‘phenomenally bright’.

Equality matters because human beings are creatures that thrive in societies where we are treated more as equals than as being greatly unequal in mental ability, sociability or any other kind of ability. We work best, behave best, play best and think best when we are not laboring under the assumption that some of us are much better, more deserving and so much more able than others.

We perform the worst, are most atrocious in our conduct, are least relaxed and most unimaginative in outlook, when we live under the weight of great inequalities – and especially under the illusion that these are somehow warranted.

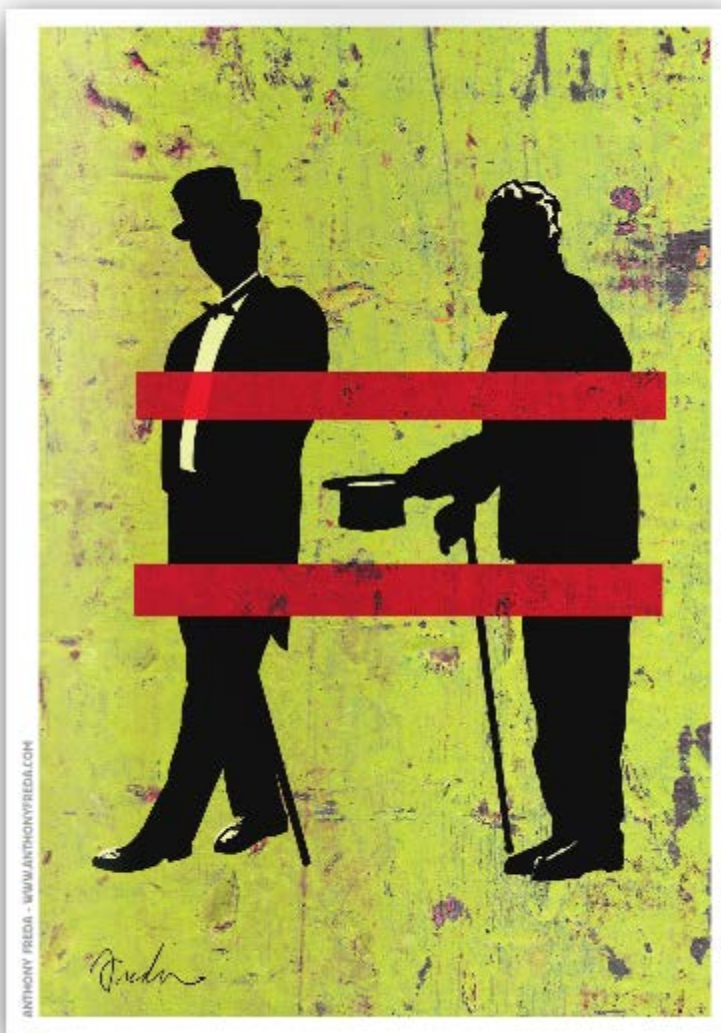
Inequalities harm the rich as well as the poor. The rich are not necessarily especially hard-working, well behaved, happy or creative. Some are obsessed with making money and can be driven by that. Most behave much better when they are more like the rest of us. They can have appalling social skills while believing that they are ‘phenomenally bright’. Many don’t

understand that it is questionable why the poor should work hard for a pittance; obey the law, or any other conventions, when the poor are members of a group being treated so unfairly.

How can people have the time and energy to contribute to our overall understanding and enjoyment of life when they are thinking of the world under delusions either of superiority or of inferiority? Inequality matters because it brings out the worst in us all.

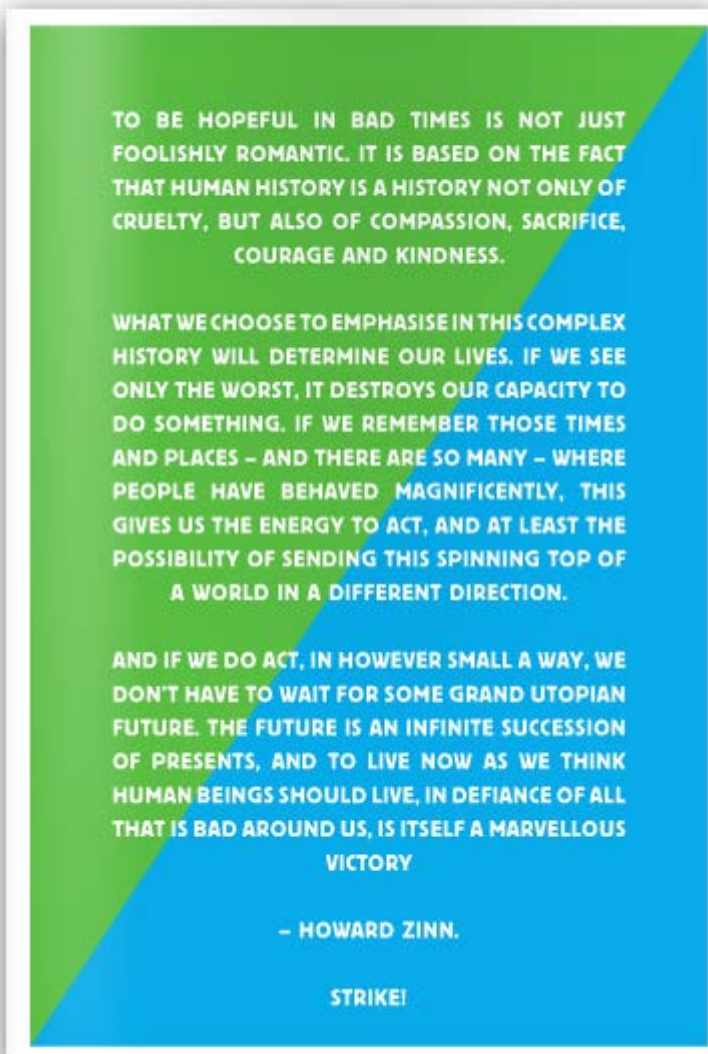
The vast majority of people in the world enjoy greater equality in so many more ways than did their great-grandparents. In relation to men, the position of women has improved most markedly. As mortality during childbirth continues to decline, for the first time in human history, women – any day now – are about to make up a majority of humans on the planet. Another example of progress is that few people now live in colonies (as explicitly defined). Fewer people are governed by obvious dictators than ever before.

Only recently have a majority of children worldwide been treated as being equal enough in value to other children to be taught to read and write – and, again, this is the first time in human history this has happened. At the same time, most people are enjoying less equality in many ways within their country than their parents did. Women make up the large majority of the world's poor.



Death in childbirth remains the biggest killer of women. More of us now, worldwide, live at the whims of colonizing corporate organizations, some of whose employees suggest that there is no alternative to concentrating primarily on inhuman profit-taking. For the first time in history, we could easily prevent the majority of the millions of deaths that are suffered by very young children every year, but we choose not to. At least we now have the choice.

The technologies and knowledge that gave us this choice were only developed themselves in places where enough equalities had been won to allow more than the élite to join in the study of medicine and science, and so make the advances. If greater equality has been, and continues to be, the underlying solution to so much that troubles people, then it is worth concentrating for once on what you gain from it, not on what you suffer as a result of inequality. The No-Nonsense Guide this extract is drawn from explains what is good about having more equality. It also gives many examples.



Take just one example, from a long time ago. In 1452 a servant-girl gave birth to an illegitimate boy, Leonardo. He went on to become perhaps the best known painter, sculptor and inventor the world has ever known. Although his achievements are naturally ascribed to his talents, and he has been described as the most talented man to have ever lived, it is also true that he thrived because of when and, more importantly, where he was born. He was born just outside the town of Vinci in the Italian region of Tuscany, whose urban center was Florence.

By the middle of the 15th century, Florence had grown rich on unequal trade (selling dear and buying cheap) and on a little relaxation of the laws of usury to allow profit to be made from lending money. As yet these riches had not totally corrupted those who received them. Lorenzo de' Medici was the wealthiest of the bankers. However, he took what appeared to be gifted artists and scholars into his household where there.

As Ernst Gombrich, in his 'A Little History of the World' explained (in 2008), there: '*...was no seating order at table. Instead of the eldest and most respected sitting at the top of the table above the rest, it was the first to arrive who sat with Lorenzo de' Medici, even if he were no more than a young painter's apprentice. And even an ambassador, if he came last, took his place at the foot of the table.*'

Leonardo da (of) Vinci was just one of those young men who came to sit at Lorenzo's table (around 1480). It is ironic that the Renaissance sparked such creativity while also creating a new form of banking, epitomized by the Medicis, which made profit by lending to others and making it permissible to receive interest on those loans.

What you get to hear about equality from the mainstream media in an unequal country depends almost entirely on what people say on issues like equality in the media, which is largely unconsciously self-censored because, to remain on the circuit of television invitation, pundits almost always modify their views to fit the status quo.



People who say very nasty things in private, or write them when they think only their friends are reading, try to come over as 'reasonable' on TV. Similarly, egalitarians often tend to water down their message on TV, feeling they must speak with stealth. After all, TV is the medium of celebrity culture.

You know what equality is. You have seen it if you grew up within what is now considered a normal family. You either treat your friends as equals or they are not your friends. The same with your partner, if you have one – they are not really your partner if you do not treat them as your equal.

Those who make excuses for great inequalities sometimes inconsistently suggest that there is something innate in humans that makes them desire inequality.

If you went to a normal state school, like most people all over the world, including most that now go to university, you may at

times have experienced being treated in an institution as an equal to other children. Only within the course of the last century have so many human beings experienced being treated as so equal to others.

In a hospital, in a park, on the sidewalk, at a party, in any situation in which entry was not conditional on your ability to pay or denied you because of the color of your skin, your sex, religion or caste: at all these points in life you have felt what equality can be. And you should feel it especially strongly at the weekend.

Ask why next year we cannot be a little more equal than this year. Ask why the barriers between us have to rise. Ask what is being organized to avoid things getting worse and to stop a rich few taking more and more. And keep on asking – it doesn't matter how quietly, or how infrequently.

If you are questioning why we need be so unequal, you are part of the solution. If you see others as being like you, then you are part of the solution. If you are decent, and want to treat others decently, you are part of the solution. Nobody should seek to be part of the problem.

This piece is constructed from a combination of extracts from the No-Nonsense Guide to Equality, see: <http://www.dannydorling.org/books/equality/>