

# Are we in denial?

Unemployment rates are way up (closing in on 8 percent nationally), more than seventy million Americans have insufficient insurance for health care, hundreds of billions of dollars are being given to big banks and insurance companies (so much for the "free" market), and our food supply is loaded with genetically-modified (GMO), high fructose corn syrup as well as an increasing list of tainted products. Yet, we don't seem to be making much of a fuss. Meanwhile, French workers are staging strikes and massive protests in response to the economic crisis. Similar discontent among workers can be found throughout Europe—particularly in Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania. Brazilian and French farmers have been protesting the introduction of GMO crops into their fields. And, just last month, Icelanders dismantled their government. So why are we behaving as if everything is (or will be) okay?

I speculate that there are many reasons for our apparent reluctance to be demonstrative in our protestations and demands. All of them give me concern and all need to be more thoroughly discussed and examined in order to make sense of what is really going on and what might happen if things continue to get worse.

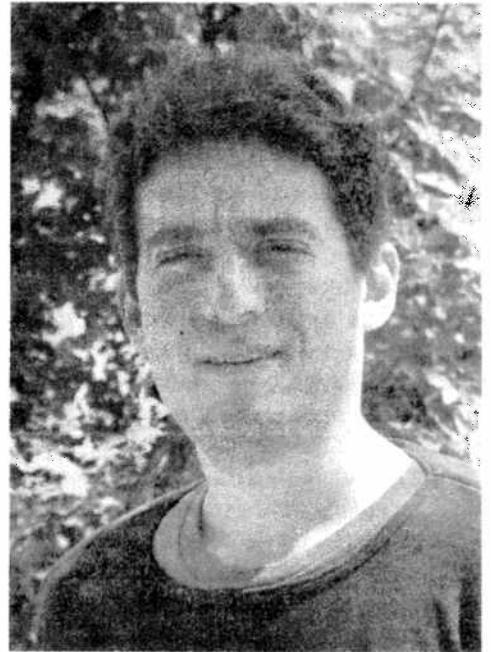
First, for many, President Obama is the savior that will bring a happy resolution to these matters. And while there is much that he can do, it is going to take a lot more than Obama and his appointees to redirect this ship. The amazing redistribution of wealth that has occurred over the past thirty years (from the poor and middle class to the richest few percent) makes our economic problems ever more severe. Since Senator Obama voted in favor of the bailouts of 2008 (so much of which went to the same firms and companies that were careless/reckless with their investment strategies), it is unrealistic to think he will support a major change in paradigm anytime soon. Furthermore, his choices for economic strategists have been more of the same when it comes to supporting corporations first and thinking about citizens second of particular note are: Lawrence Summers, is head of the National Economic Council; and, Timothy Geithner, as Treasury Secretary, formerly chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank in New York who played a major role in crafting the \$700 billion financial bail-out otherwise known as the biggest corporate welfare handout ever)).

Second, many of us have literally become exhausted because we are so busy. We spend our time wrapped up in immediate

day to day problems and responsibilities. After resolving these, we don't have much time or energy left to focus on (or become occupied with) the big picture. Both parents now work; some even work two or three jobs to make ends meet. As a result, our leisure is limited and many don't get much quality time with their children either. In this situation, most leave the "big" problems for the "experts." Unfortunately, it is the "experts" that are largely responsible for our collective dilemma. Among other sources, too many financial agents speculated too aggressively and government oversight committees looked the other way. Yet, ironically, when it came time to make these greedy speculators accountable for their reckless "gambling," what did we do? Give them more money! And did anyone in Galesburg (or surrounding areas) openly protest? Not that I heard.

Third, others have lost a sense of empowerment as the government has gotten bigger (especially via the "military industrial complex" and "homeland security") and large multinational corporations have gained monopolistic control over many small businesses as well as an overwhelming influence on our leaders. We figure, what is the point to speaking up against these powers. Who will hear and, more importantly, respond to their grievances? I don't blame people for this perspective. I think it is largely perpetuated by our entertainment and consumer-driven news media; television exists to sell things, not to help or empower people or communities. To counter this debilitating set of circumstances, I strongly recommend for people to engage in local politics and retake ownership over it (hence, my essay last week).

Does it sound like I am exaggerating



the seriousness of our situation? Well consider this. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, said, while on a TV talk show this past weekend, that we should consider nationalizing the banking system! Meanwhile, Nouriel Rubini, a distinguished economics professor from New York University, stated recently that the U.S. banks are "effectively insolvent" (in other words, "broken") (for more from Rubini, check out his economic website: [www.rgemonitor.com](http://www.rgemonitor.com)). Yet, no national leader has yet felt the need to use the "D" word to describe where we are headed. These are certainly unusual times. I don't know what will happen but we should definitely wake up out of our malaise and begin to assert our will so that our community doesn't suffer unnecessarily due to rapacious actions of financial speculators, or inaction/misaction by bought and corrupt politicians.

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