**Does Equal Opportunity Really Exist in America?**

“All Americans have an opportunity for success.”

This statement has long been an American ideal, and it may very well be true, but by adding one word to this statement, it transforms from a likely reality to a nearly certain falsity:

“All Americans have an EQUAL opportunity for success.”

An overwhelming amount of evidence suggests that the above statement simply is not the case, and that the wealth of the family into which a child is born plays an instrumental role in determining the likelihood of that child receiving a higher education and achieving monetary success in their life.

A child’s family wealth plays an instrumental role in determining how likely that child is to receive a college education. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research Working Papers, children born into families in the bottom quartile economically only complete college nine percent of the time while those born into the top quartile economically complete college a staggering 54 percent of the time. That means children born into top-quartile families are 600 percent more likely to complete college.

Additionally, data from NBER research shows that there is a direct correlation between the wealth that children attain as adults and the wealth of the families into which they were born. That is, children born into lower-income families, on average, tend to make significantly less money as adults than do those born into higher-income families.

There is also an alarming lack of economic mobility among those born into low-income families. According to Brookings Institution data reported in The New York Times, only six percent of children born into families in the bottom fifth of the country economically ever reach the top fifth economically as adults, and 58 percent remain in the bottom fifth their entire lives.

In today’s society, it is evident that equal opportunity does not exist. This doesn’t mean that children born into low-income families are completely powerless to reach the upper class; the data simply represents the general trend.

It means that we as a society should work to minimize the inequality in opportunity so that children born into low-income families truly have an opportunity for success comparable to that of children born into high-income families. We should work to make good primary and secondary education more accessible across a broader economic spectrum and to give all children access to career guidance and support, so that every child is equipped with similar career knowledge when entering the workplace and no child is disadvantaged simply because their family and community were unable to provide them with this guidance.

A child’s potential for success should be determined by their ambition, vision and hard work – not by their family’s established wealth.

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**Americans Should Defend Their Digital Privacy**

The 21st century is an unsettling era — In a manner reminiscent of 1984, the tech companies and NSA are spying on Internet users. It’s time for Americans to take back their digital privacy.

According to The New York Times, “It is no secret that Google, Facebook and other Internet companies track what you do online.” They provide free services such as search engines and social network accounts; however, according to The Wall Street Journal, “The ‘free’ content and services… come with a hidden price: [the customers’] private data.” In exchange for free services, numerous websites ask customers for private contact information and track their browsing habits to deliver targeted ads. Yet Americans are all too willing to take the bait; according to The New York Times, “most Americans are inured to being tracked online, and don’t think privacy is worth $29 a month.”

In addition, the NSA is colluding with the corporations to spy on Americans. According to CNET, this agency asks tech companies to hand over their customers’ data. The NSA also wiretaps on fiber-optic Internet cables to gather data about Americans’ Internet usage. It also tries to justify its mass surveillance as an anti-terrorism effort that has stopped dozens of attacks. However, two U.S. Senators have debunked this claim by stating that the same terrorist plots were instead foiled by standard law enforcement. The NSA’s surveillance eerily resembles that of 1984’s Big Brother, who also claimed to protect people for the price of privacy. As Benjamin Franklin once stated, “Those who surrender freedom for security will not have, nor do they deserve, either one.”

Indeed, it is time for America to do something about this massive digital surveillance. Currently, the U.S. government is heavily lobbied by tech corporations to avoid passing digital privacy laws. Ordinary Americans lack the wealth of CEOs, so they should rely on their strength in numbers to fight for privacy. Americans can take to the streets and organize rallies, picketing the corporations and government to grant more privacy. Street protests successfully secured racial equality in the civil rights era, so common Americans can protest to become equal with the government and corporations. The Internet is a double-edged sword; it is a vehicle for surveillance, but also a valuable tool for publicly promoting digital privacy. With millions of people condemning surveillance on social networks and blogs, the corporations and government might relent to public demand for privacy. In the meantime, though, the best way to stay discreet on the Web is to share a minimum of private details with companies.

Americans must act immediately to defend their digital privacy — or be silenced forever by the dictatorial corporations and government.

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