

The Passy Press

Letter to the Editor

From: James G Blaine jamesgblaine2@undisclosed.com

To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com

Date: February 21, 2016 08:10 EST

Subject: Novitski Essay December 2015

Dear Sir

Joseph Novitski has identified a critical problem for America: the emergence of an oligarchy representing a tiny fraction of our population, controlling an ever-growing portion of our collective wealth, and seeking to insulate and protect itself by purchasing our political system. He has also proposed an important solution to a country that is increasingly and dangerously marked by “divisions between regions, religions, races and riches.”

I completely agree that we must address the related issues of the concentration - and disparity - of wealth and the role of huge amounts of private money in our electoral process. And I strongly believe that we need the system of mandatory national service that Novitski outlines. My only question is whether the solution he offers fully addresses the problem he lays out.

In his discussion of the ways in which wealth accumulates – “combinations of creativity, persistence, luck, ambition, focus and greed” – the author omits corruption, which I think is where money and politics most dangerously collide: using my private money to assure that public servants do my bidding. Universal service may help by ensuring that, at least for two years, we all rub shoulders and work together for the good of the country (although as a former enlisted man, I can attest to a durable military caste system); and those experiences will hopefully stay with people for the rest of their lives. But will they mitigate the disparity of wealth and the power of money? Indeed, if we don’t deal with those issues, which insulate the very rich and exalt the me over the us, I wonder if we will ever see universal service again.

Whatever their connection to each other, it’s imperative that we address both issues.

Sincerely,

Jamie Blaine

James G. Blaine is a writer, teacher and consultant whose wanderings have taken him from teaching, to writing and running a group of community newspapers. He ran for Congress and designed courses and programs for educational institutions. He currently writes "Perspectives," a regular blog, consults on environmental justice programs with the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.