

**PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL TO MEMBERS MEETING BY MICHAEL
CROSBY
SUGGESTING AN APPROACH FOR OUR WORKING GROUPS
Outline of Talk Given on September 21, 2005, at ICCR, New York
“The Faith that Energizes Us in Socially Responsible Investing”**

The proposal was shared with the members. Michael outlined the rationale for the proposal and his suggested strategy for 15 minutes. This was followed by 15 minutes of discussion. The membership endorsed the basic thrust of the proposal. It will be fleshed-out in the months ahead.

Michael’s talk became a microcosm of the basic approach he suggests we take for the coming year: 1) social analysis with a stress on the growing disparity between the rich and poor; 2) biblical/theological reflection on #1 and 3) pastoral implications for our Working Groups:

- I. Social Analysis. Michael said that he was going to concentrate on the rich/poor gap in the U.S. more than globally for two reasons: our members are more influenced by the current reality and other shareholders are more influenced by the U.S. reality. He suggested we are now at a “Kairos Moment” given us by the Katrina Hurricane to address disparity concerns.
 - A. Previously this was impossible, given the cultural mindset of basic equality.
 1. He noted the sharing of “data” that only created more division exposing the ideological divide in the nation.
 - a. Alan Wolfe, “The New Politics of Inequality” in which he asked if candidates would care about the wealth gap if the voters didn’t.ⁱ
 - b. He pointed to the cover article of *BusinessWeek* Jan. 20, 2003 on “Class Warfare?” and the heated reaction to it, again, along ideological lines in the February 10, 2003 “Readers Report” letters section.
 2. He suggested that there was something in the assumptions of a high percentage of U.S. citizens around the possibility of their own “upward mobility” that kept them from really caring and how this was exploited by partisan politicians appealing to this myth.
 - a. 19% of Americans believe they have incomes within the top 1%.
 - b. Another 20% believe they will be within the top 1% some day.ⁱⁱ
 - B. The series on “class” that appeared in major U.S. newspapers during 2005 exposing the myth and revealing deep fissures in the U.S. economic world.
 1. The *Wall Street Journal* series on “Challenges to the American Dream.”
 - a. “As Rich-Poor Gap Widens in the U.S. Class Mobility Stalls,” 05.13.05
 - b. “Most Paychecks Fell in 2004,” 09.13.05

2. *The New York Times* series on “Class Matters.”
 - a. “Richest Are Leaving Even the Richest Far Behind.”
 - b. The data shows the system favors the super rich on the backs of the middle class, not the poor.
 3. U.S. Census Bureau, August 31, 2005. He noted the way the report was featured on the same page as another item dealing with the disparity between top CEOs and average worker in *The Wall Street Journal*
 - a. “Recovery Bypasses Many Americans: Despite Economic Growth, Median Household Income and Wages Fell Last Year,”
 - b. “The Institute for Policy Studies, a think tank, found that in 2004 chief executive officers made 431 times as much as the average worker. This is up from a 301-to-1 ration in 2001.”
 4. He noted various opinion pieces on the above data which show that “the economic mythology underpinning the present reality has been unmasked for the middle class.
 - a. He quoted from a piece by Paul Krugman: “As The Times’s series on class in America reminds us the middle class society no longer exists. . . . The wealthy have done very well indeed. Since 1973 the average income of the top 1 percent of Americans has doubled, and the income of the top 0.1 percent has tripled. . . . Above all, the partisans engage in name-calling. To suggest that sustaining programs like Social Security, which protects working Americans from economic risk, should have priority over tax cuts for the rich is to practice ‘class warfare.’ To show concern over the growing inequality is to engage in the ‘politics of envy.’”ⁱⁱⁱ
 - b. He quoted from Nicholas D. Kristoff: “The U.S. Census Bureau reported a few days ago that the poverty rate rose again last year, with 1.1 million more Americans living in poverty in 2004 than a year earlier. After declining sharply under Bill Clinton, the number of poor people has now risen 17 percent under Mr. Bush.”^{iv}
- C. Turning to *BusinessWeek* op-ed pieces, Michael then showed how “the economic mythology of the U.S. has been unmasked by Katrina, revealing the class/race face of its greatest victims.”
1. “What the images Americans saw on the evening news revealed about who was dying, who was trapped, who was without food, who was drinking contaminated water—and, yes, who was looting—should give us all pause.

“If September 11 showed the power of a nation united in response to a devastating attack, Hurricane Katrina exposed the fault lines of a region—and a nation—rent by profound social divisions.”^v

2. “Those scenes confirmed the inescapable conclusion of recent series in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*: Class, defined by economic and social status and often linked with race, largely determines how one fares in modern America.

“According to surveys, most Americans value a ‘fair’ society defined as one in which ‘no one is left behind.’ Scenes from New Orleans reveal this is definitely not the society in which they live today.”^{vi}

D. Michael then turned to the global reality.

1. He pointed to the growing disparity between rich and poor that seems to be replicated in nation after nation around the world.
2. The 2005 UN Report on Human Development (09.10.05) noted that “every hour poverty kills 1,200 children” and that “the rich and poor divergence increases:” “The 500 wealthiest men earn all together more than the 416 million poorest people in the world.”
3. He pointed to the previous week’s failure to put teeth into the UN’s Millenium Development Goals.

II. Scriptural/Theological Reflection.

A. Michael pointed to the fact that ICCR is composed of Jews and Christians at this point. What we share in common via the Jewish scriptures revolves around two elements:

1. Concern for the widow and the orphan. The victim-class; the underclass. This must be translated in contemporary terms of race and class.
2. The fact that the greatest indictment comes to those co-religionists who may partake in the festivals, etc. but do so always planning further ways to enhance their income. In a “Limited Good” world of the days in which the SS were written, this is done on the backs of the poor. He pointed to passages in Amos and Isaiah that condemned such “religious” activities.

B. He then showed how all the mainline Christian bodies in the room had developed pastoral letters on the economy. These sources from our “tradition” would be used to offer our various judicatories’ unique “spin” on issues of (in)justice and the political economy, such as Catholic Social Teaching does in Catholicism.

III. He suggested that the Working Groups consider whether such an approach around class and race might not be applicable to their work for the coming year. Later Pat Wof, ICCR’s Director suggested this be all-embracing.

A. Mike went through the suggested timeline.

B. He suggested that this come to a culmination at the September ICCR Event with a major speaker such as Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia, Laura D’Andrea Tyson of the London School of Economics or Barbara Erhenreich.^{vii}

¹ Alan Wolfe, “The New Politics of Inequality,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 1999.

¹ Clarence Page, Commenting on a *Time* survey: “How Rich Do You Think You Are? Well, Here’s the Truth,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2003. Michael thanked Louise Milone from the SEIU for sharing this him after an ICCR meeting.

¹ Paul Krugman, “Losing Our Country,” *The New York Times*, June 25, 2005.

¹ Nicholas D. Kristof, “The Larger Shame,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 6, 2005.

¹ Mark N. Naison, “Black Poverty’s Human Face,” *BusinessWeek*, September 19, 2005.

¹ Laura D’Andrea Tyson, “Land of Unequal Opportunity,” *BusinessWeek*, September 26, 2005.

¹ She is the author of *Nickle and Dimed* as well as *Bait and Switch*.

ⁱ Alan Wolfe, “The New Politics of Inequality,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 1999.

ⁱⁱ Clarence Page, Commenting on a *Time* survey: “How Rich Do You Think You Are? Well, Here’s the Truth,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2003. Michael thanked Louise Milone from the SEIU for sharing this him after an ICCR meeting.

ⁱⁱⁱ Paul Krugman, “Losing Our Country,” *The New York Times*, June 25, 2005.

^{iv} Nicholas D. Kristof, “The Larger Shame,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 6, 2005.

^v Mark N. Naison, “Black Poverty’s Human Face,” *BusinessWeek*, September 19, 2005.

^{vi} Laura D’Andrea Tyson, “Land of Unequal Opportunity,” *BusinessWeek*, September 26, 2005.

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