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زبانهای اروپایی

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12.03.2025

## Trump to America: Let Them Eat Eggs

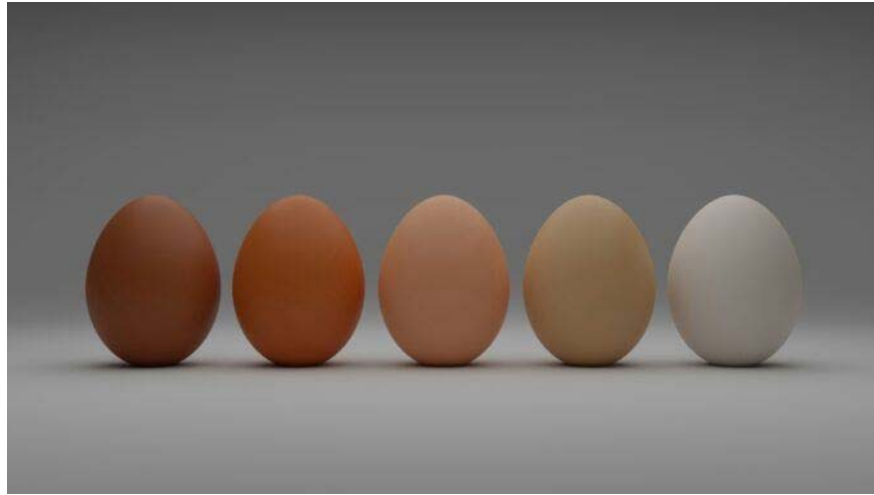


Image by Shubham Dhage.

As Donald Trump, Elon Musk and the cabal of plutocratic billionaires that the President calls his cabinet pursue their self-interested agenda, they are telling Americans that they need to prepare to sacrifice and feel economic pain for the good of society.

Why is it that the least advantaged in our society are always the ones asked to sacrifice for the greater good?

Trump's speech to Congress foretold economic pain for Americans. Supposedly, tariffs, budget costs, layoffs and the elimination of the already decimated social welfare net will be good for America in the long run. It will require sacrifice by farmers, laborers, people of color, and anyone who buys products or receives services from the government.

Perhaps sacrifice is occasionally necessary. Yet it never seems that the rich are the ones who are asked to sacrifice,

At one time the demand to ask the poor and the middle class to sacrifice was called trickle-down economics under the Reagan administration. Tax cuts for the rich, coupled with a loosening of the regular regulatory system and cuts to the social welfare system would eventually trickle down and benefit all Americans.

Then the call for the poor to sacrifice for the country was called free trade under the Clinton administration. Yet again, the argument was that by opening borders with free trade America would prosper, even though some in manufacturing and among the poor, the working class, and the people of color would have to sacrifice.

Then it was the demand under the Obama administration that people lose their homes so that we could afford to bail out the too big to fail banks.

The result of all those sacrifices were to produce an America with a gap between the rich and poor greater than we've seen in American history. It was to produce an America in where nearly one out of six children lived in poverty, where economic mobility has nearly come to a halt, and the American dream of homeownership has become something that only a few can hope for.

Many years ago, philosopher John Rawls wrote his book *[A Theory of Justice](#)*. He argued that disinterested individuals constructing the rules of societal justice would agree to two principles. The first would be like liberty consistent with the same liberty for everybody else. Two, what came to be known as the difference principle, specified that inequalities should be treated as arbitrary unless they work first to the advantage of the least advantaged person in our society.

Rawls' book was a call for both political liberty and a challenge regarding the economy and social welfare. The challenge was to say inequalities were presumptively impermissible unless one could show that they were first advantageous to those who were poor. Yet in the more than fifty years since his book was published, social policy has gone the other way. It has gone not to presuming inequalities are impermissible, and that the poor should not be to ask to sacrifice first, but that instead the poor should be asked to sacrifice ahead of the rich, ahead of the affluent, and that the inequalities in our society are somehow reflective of some basic principles of justice.

Trump's declaration that there will be pain for those who can least shoulder it is yet the latest manifestation of a series of social policies over the last half century that have wrecked the ship of American democracy. They are doing damage to the very framework of what has come to knit our society together. Somehow it is the belief that making people's lives miserable will motivate them to work harder, when in fact, making people more secure,

economically, socially and politically, is what motivates people to work harder than what makes us all prosper.

In the end, Trump and his cabal of billionaires have adopted a modern-day Marie Antoinette view of the world. When Marie Antoinette was once told there was not enough bread to feed the French masses, she remarked: “Let them eat cake.” Perhaps now the adage for Trump fittingly would be: “Let them eat eggs.”

MARCH 11, 2025

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