Making Sense of Change so that we can make real Change

1968-2012

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Your children and grandchildren [will] take their place in America, going to high school and college, and taking good jobs at good pay.

Robert Kennedy, Delano, California

Figure 3.5: Wages have increased for those with the most education, while falling for those with the least. Source: Acemoglu and Autor analysis of the Current Population Survey for 1963-2008.

Incarceration Rates Triple

Source: Bruce Western, “Punishment and Inequality in America.” 2007.
Income Inequality Rises (share of income for top 1%)

Changes to Education, Incarceration, and Income are interconnected
Three Explanations

Economic
Political
Cultural
Economic Explanations

Introduction of new technology leads to reduction in routinized work and greater productivity.
Why then are most gains concentrated in the top 1%?

A Political Project (neoliberalism)

Shrinking public sector
Eroding regulation
Undermining unions

See: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2005
A Cultural Shift

The culture of the new capitalism
Culture of new capitalism characterized by …

- Security is constructed as a negative thing;
- Short term contracts and short term jobs, rather than long term careers;
- Assumption that skills are portable;
- Diminished commitment to investment in workers.

Culture of New Capitalism Leads to

• Lower institutional loyalty;

• Diminishment of informal trust among workers;

• Weakening of institutional/local knowledge.

A Progressive Alternative

Link education to economic and community change

Challenge false freedom and the logic of scarcity
Reclaim Change

Invest (long term) in individual and collective capacity;

Build institutions that promote and value trust and collaboration

Develop and value local knowledge and local problem solving