

New York Times says economic conditions for US workers ‘haven’t been this bright since men landed on the moon’

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The *New York Times* treated its readership to a piece of fiction on Tuesday when it ran a front-page, above-the-fold article by David Streitfeld entitled “For tens of millions of Americans, the good times are right now.”

In the article, the *Times* paints a fantastic picture of social and economic conditions in the contemporary United States. The recent period “has been a time of great financial reward for a large number of Americans,” the *Times* declares.

According to the *Times*, America is a land where “bosses are eager to please,” where the working class benefits from “widespread wealth” and where everyone is enjoying the fruits of an economic “boom.” The *Times* appears to be confusing contemporary America with the Big Rock Candy Mountains, the mythical hobo’s paradise that features a lake of stew and whiskey too and you can paddle all around them in a big canoe.

The *Times* assures its readers that workers are grateful and rightfully so: “For the 158 million who are employed, prospects haven’t been this bright since men landed on the moon,” writes Streitfeld.

The moon, incidentally, is where one would have to live to believe the *Times*’ presentation of social and economic life. The *Times* laments the fact that their fantasy version “does not get celebrated much,” something they chalk-up to the fact that the population’s “fascination with the schemes of the truly wealthy” makes them think about inequality too much.

In truth, the 90 percent of the population that comprises the working class confronts hardship on an unprecedented scale, and that life has never been more difficult.

Consider the following headlines that appeared in the

Times within 24 hours of the publication of Streitfeld’s piece:

“Overdose deaths continue rising, with fentanyl and meth key culprits.”

Over 108,000 people died of drug overdoses in the US in 2021, a 15 percent increase from 2020, when the figure rose by 30 percent from 2019. The rise in deaths is due at least in part to “social isolation and economic dislocation,” the *Times* article notes. “The number of drug overdose deaths has increased every year but 2018 since the 1970s.”

“Hundreds of suicidal teens sleep in emergency rooms. Every night.”

The brutal reality of American social and economic life has driven a substantial portion of the country’s young people to suicide. “Mental health disorders are surging among adolescents,” the *Times* writes. “In 2019, 13 percent of adolescents reported having a major depressive episode, a 60 percent increase from 2007. Suicide rates, stable from 2000 to 2007, leaped nearly 60 percent in 2018.” So many young Americans want to kill themselves that the hospitals are overflowing.

“Inflation pressures remain strong; consumer prices rise sharply.”

Wages are collapsing and the majority of American families are finding it difficult to pay for food, let alone gas and shelter. Inflation “is still running at about the fastest rate in four decades,” the *Times* writes. The price of food rose 9.4 percent from April 2021, and “an index for meats, poultry, fish and eggs rose 14.3 percent from the previous year, the largest annual increase since 1979.”

“War and weather sent food prices soaring. Now,

China's harvest is uncertain."

The war and US-imposed sanctions on Russia have caused a global food crisis that is causing immense economic hardship all over the globe. Combined with a climate catastrophe that the ruling class is unwilling to address, "global food prices have already climbed sharply" this year, "with wheat up nearly 80 percent since July 2021. The World Food Program warned last Friday, '44 million people around the world are marching toward starvation.'"

"A baby formula shortage leaves desperate parents looking for food."

Breakdowns in global supply chains exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and US sanctions have forced working class mothers to scramble to find enough food for their babies, with "some parents driving hours at a time in search of supplies." The "national out-of-stock rate for baby formula reached 43 percent for the week ending Sunday, up 10 percent from last month's average." The specter of malnourished infants in the world's "wealthiest country" looms large.

These headlines provide only glimpses of the harsh reality. The numerical indices of social suffering are equally devastating.

One million people have died in the United States alone of COVID-19. Millions who caught the virus and lived still suffer from Long-COVID. Over 1,000 children have died of the virus, and hundreds of thousands of children have lost parents. While millions were laid off or lost their jobs, the government bailed out the banks to the tune of trillions of dollars.

Seventy percent of the US population is concerned that the US/NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine will develop into a nuclear war.

Sixty-four percent of the population lived paycheck to paycheck in January 2022, up from 61 percent in December 2021. Real wages declined 2.6 percent in February 2022 as price increases ate up nominal wage gains. Average rent alone rose 15 percent over the same period.

The *Times* article produced a deluge of angry comments in the online edition, exposing the article's premise as false. The most popular comments include:

"Why would we celebrate a 'boom' that consists of housing becoming unaffordable for most Americans to the benefit of the minority who are currently homeowners?" "I'm so tired of NYT articles saying

how great so many people are doing." "What America is the author writing about?" "What a tone-deaf piece." "This is one of the most out-of-touch articles I've read in years. The average American feels like they are caught in an economic slough and are about to be pulled under. To depict this era as a golden age is sheer fantasy."

The article reflects the yawning social gap that separates the top 10 percent and the bottom 90 percent of the population. Obsessed with race, identity and Vladimir Putin, the *Times*' affluent staff and audience has no idea what reality is like for masses of people. That the *Times* editorial board prominently featured such a tone-deaf article is proof that the two classes inhabit two different realities altogether. This divergence is taking such extreme forms that make revolutionary upheavals inevitable.

Leon Trotsky described the self-delusional social outlook of the Russian Tsarina on the eve of the Revolution of 1917:

When Alexandra Feodorovna, three months before the fall of the monarchy, prophesies: "All is coming out for the best, the dreams of our Friend mean so much!" she merely repeats Marie Antoinette, who one month before the overthrow of the royal power wrote: "I feel a liveliness of spirit, and something tells me that we shall soon be happy and safe." They both see rainbow dreams as they drown.



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