

In work ethic doesn't
mean anything in
today's



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In "Fuck Work" economic historian, and professor of history James Livingston argues that Americans must transition away from the idea, that having a job is the only way an individual can build character and a sense of self-worth. Livingston claims most Americans define themselves through their work ethic, however, this work ethic doesn't mean anything in today's workforce. Many jobs simply don't pay enough to provide workers with a living wage. Most full-time workers qualify for food stamps because they do not earn enough to survive. American's belief in hard work is based on the assumption that a fair reward will be earned for hard work. While most full-time workers are barely able to afford to live, others earn ridiculous amounts of money. Simply put, there just aren't enough jobs for everyone, and those that are available just don't pay enough. Livingston says, " These beliefs are no longer plausible.

In fact, they've become ridiculous, because there's not enough work to go around, and what there is of it won't pay the bills." There have been 0 net jobs have been created in recent years. Also, per one estimate, up to half of American's current jobs might disappear due to robots within 20 years. The idea that government policies can restore the country to full employment is unnecessary. This can be a chance to reflect on the current predicament. Why have a job that doesn't provide for your basic needs? Livingston believes American's must look beyond jobs for other ways to build character, income, and self-worth.

Livingston wrote this essay, targeting readers who are unemployed and looking for work, and those who work a full-time job that just does not pay

enough. One could also argue that his target audience is all Americans. The essay was published by Aeon Digital Magazine, a publisher of articles involving ideas, philosophy, and culture.

It makes sense that this article would be published here because of the target audience. The purpose of Livingston's essay is to address a few economic issues, the outlook of America's workforce, and a possible solution. He examines a workforce that is tired of unemployment, underemployment, stagnant and shrinking wages; a workforce who resents the rich whom they work for; and a polarized political climate. Livingston wants Americans to know that the future workforce does not look good. If the current situation does not change that eventually the system will fail. He also wants to persuade Americans to believe in a possible solution. That solution being a universal basic income paid for by taxing corporations.

Livingston argues that, "Taxing the profits of corporations to finance a welfare state that permits us to love our neighbors and to be our brothers' keeper isn't an economic problem. It's something else - it's an intellectual issue, a moral conundrum." Livingston wants Americans to imagine a life without work because he believes it is inevitable. Livingston does a good job persuading the reader that Americans need to change the way they view jobs. He presents compelling market and economic statistics, and hyperlinks to outside sources that support his arguments to persuade the reader. He also does a good job presenting the reader with, what he believes to be, the solution to the problem.

Livingston attempts to persuade the reader that we need to move to a universal basic income system. He tried to persuade the reader by asking, "What would society and civilization be like if we didn't have to 'earn' a living—if leisure was not our choice but our lot? Would we hang out at the local Starbucks, laptops open? Or volunteer to teach children in less-developed places, such as Mississippi? Or smoke weed and watch reality TV all day?" Many aspects of Livingston's essay are agreeable and very persuasive, such as Americans workforce problems, workforce resentment, and political polarization; however, the idea of a universal basic income is not. Universal basic income will never work because Americans will never support it.

As long as Americans believe their hard-earned tax dollars would be going to support someone sitting around on their couch all day watching television, they will never get behind it. After all, why should someone else have to work hard at a low paying job only to have their paycheck taxed to help pay for someone who does not work. Now, if universal basic income was supported with funds from the government's sale of goods and resources, then and only then would there possibly be enough support for the idea of a universal basic income. Livingston assumes that the government has the ability and means to support a universal basic income. The government has shut down numerous times because congress cannot agree on a budget.

If the government can't agree on a budget how will they ever agree on passing a budget that would include something like universal basic income?