

Henk Klijn

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Marlon Kuzmick

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Short Article / Summary

The Plan to Halt the Student Debt Drain

Bernie Sanders, the senator from Vermont with a decorator on speed dial just in case he has to remove residual orange stains from the White House, has thoughts on the paralyzing student debt balloon. In a July 2019 commentary piece on [fortune.com](https://www.fortune.com) Sanders in characteristic style points out that the crisis is our doing while extracting ourselves will equally be of our election. Literally.

He reminds the reader of the enormous dissonance between student debt in the aftermath of the 2008 crash and Wall Street's slinking away. Sanders scratches his head at the shift to self-enrichment when considering that the G.I. Bill guaranteed free education to those who served, laying a foundation for a middle-class expansion, the girth of which was a modern wonder.

Sanders reminds us that tuition was gratis from the 1940s until the 1970s while generous grants to the tune of 80% of college costs prepared the leaders of the world of tomorrow. Today however, costs have exploded with the highest Pell Grants covering a mere 30% of the same expenses. Some face a lifetime of debt and juggling multiple jobs in service to that debt.

The cost to the economy is devastating with negative effects on first-home buyers and entrepreneurs. Proposing that public education be free to learners, Sanders wants it to be paid for by taxing Wall Street vultures, emulating the education models of economies which we admire when they don't threaten pocketbooks.

He points out that the number of citizens saddled with student debt is now at 3.2 million, with seizure of Social Security benefits the prospect for some. Moscow Mitch may want to consider this cash-stuffed cookie jar before he obliterates it as a "costly entitlement."

Let's put this another way. We value how our pearly whites dazzle on a date. Student debt means that you are one un-popped kernel away from a hole where your Fortune500 grin was. Student debt forces people, often financially compromised, to make hard decisions. Catch-22 decisions. Rent or car payment? EpiPen or a stocked fridge? That popcorn-annihilated front tooth or a deposit on a better home?

As usual, under threat of "gimme-liberty-or-gimme-death" kvetching, we peel back a new American way: finding ways to make 'em pay and make the man rich. And while you're at it, burden the poor and hustle people of color to pay a lot more. Because money is speech and corporations are people. Just like Orwell said.