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History Says This Is What Happens After Extreme Inequality Splits A Country

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Over the century to mid-20th century, the Gilded Age was a period of "blistering inequality" (where and when the wealthiest people in the world accumulated an unprecedented share of the wealth). Photo: Library of Congress, Wikimedia, also pub.

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Occupy Wall Street has brought about the conversation about inequality in America, and the Occupy Movement has spawned similar protests around the world. Inequality has become a hot issue in the political agenda. What made you pay attention to the issue?

Kevin Kelleher: I started discussing the issue with Richard Gilbert in 2007. At that time, a number of prominent economists were discussing the issue of inequality. Robert Reich was talking about it, Joseph Stiglitz was talking about it, Paul Krugman was talking about it, and so forth. They all were talking about it because the late Democratic Senator Paul Wellstone was talking about it. Wellstone was the last Democrat who was talking about it.

In the 1970s, I took a master's program in what Suzanne Gluck calls inequality studies. It was a program in Sociology. I was at an Ivy League school, and the program was organized around the idea of inequality. Gluck's program, which was organized around the idea of inequality, began with political economy, core gender and racial studies, and then moved into the study of inequality.

Gluck, such a big part of America, went on to be Supervisor for the Environmental Protection Agency under the Obama Administration. Gluck's program was very, very, very,