

## Basic Income and the Revolt of the Caring Classes

As the saying goes, history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes. Echoing Karl Polanyi's classic work, we are living in the midst of a great transformation, both in terms of geo-politics and the structure of the economy. The Corona crisis has been only but the catalyzer. The neoliberal regime has started to break down, just as its liberal predecessor did during the dawn of the 20th century, bringing down the gold-standard, World War 1 and the rise of fascism internationally.

This time around, the crisis of capitalism carries with it the real threat of mass extinction for all forms of life. The series of unfortunate events that follow will impact the lives of the most vulnerable all over the planet. The consequences of this social morphology, of the change in the structure of society, remains to be seen. One thing is for sure: the world has changed. Only our actions will determine the shape of the future.

It has been two years since I started serving as social outreach for the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN). Over the last decade, there has been a growing surge of interest and popularity in universal basic income. Pilot experiments performed all over the world have proven to science that giving people money unconditionally and universally is holistically more beneficial than targeted, conditional programs and their corresponding bureaucracies.

All over the world, basic income networks have risen up to the challenge of our times, with researchers, advocates, activists and communities organising together in order to claim the right for an unconditional income. The struggle is for dignity in a world filled with injustice and inequality. The challenge is not just to get the current political powers to accept and implement the paradigm shift of values which a basic income carries with it, but to politicise the issue in peoples' minds and to truly democratise the institutions of our day.

We must go beyond the work-ethic that has destroyed the planet for the sake of private profit. The current crisis has demonstrated that non-paid care work is foundational to the making of society everywhere. The United States has now a brewing income movement which sprung about after Andrew Yang's candidacy in 2019. This movement reflects on the social necessity of basic income as a response to the neoliberal reforms of the last decades. From South Africa to Brasil, the precarious caring classes have shown that life cannot be automated away. Despite the circumstances, people continue to care for their next of kin and their communities.

But basic income is already happening. The city of Marica in Brasil, also known as the city of Utopias, now provides about one third of its citizens (about 42,000 people) with a basic income given in Mumbucas, the social currency of the city. The region of Gyeonggi in Korea has been following suit, being one of the most innovative places where basic income lives today. Albeit only focusing on a specific age group (24 years old), Gyeonggi is the second biggest region in the world providing people with a basic income in a local currency, amounting to a total of 175,000 recipients to date. More real life experiments are coming.

If the economy is ultimately about people, then why does the current system only care about profit? The abolition of wage-labor is but a moment in a set of moments towards human liberation. Basic income is the beginning of a transition towards other systems that are possible, enabling both freedom and equality without the need for false binaries.

As a messenger of BIEN, I am only a facilitator among many in this global historical process of transformation, connecting people and bringing the message to as many people as possible. There are many people like me, working tirelessly behind the screen, going to countless meetings and doing a lot of unpaid work, all to spread the word in their communities, put basic income on the map or to organise the yearly basic income marches in their respecting cities and countries, bringing world wide attention to the idea. I would like to thank those people. Without you, basic income would not be where it is. Our work is only beginning. Once basic income becomes a reality for all, the real struggle begins.

As my late mentor and friend David Graeber used to say, there has been a war waged on the human imagination for the last few decades, where we were taught that there is no alternative. Basic income is the imagination fighting back.

What are we waiting for?