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"Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil" – Gandhi ("Capitalism Quotes.")

Although I agree with Louis Brandeis's statement in light of the current political issues of America, I cannot help but notice the contradiction it presents the basic principles of this country. If wealth were equally distributed to all, this would imply complete government control of the economy and essentially destroy our capitalist system. Even if the distribution of wealth were to lead to a fairer democracy, it is important to remember that capitalism and a free market economy is what has been a distinguishing factor of America since its founding, and continues to make America one of the leading countries in innovation. In addition, a free market economy is what makes the concept of the "American dream" so appealing. Many immigrants like my parents, who emigrated from China, come to America because they see the opportunity to get paid not according to what the state mandates, but for their abilities and work ethic. The ability to gain wealth has always been one of the freedoms Americans have been proud to possess. This drive for success is what attracts thousands of scientists, artists, mathematicians, and other bright minds to our country every year.

However, it is rarely disputed that money does yield political power. In fact, there have been so many instances of politicians taking bribes in United States history, that the image of the politician in America has become tainted with one associated with corruption. Examples such as Rod Blagojevich, who tried to sell the Senate seat vacated by then-President-elect Barack Obama, and Randy "Duke" Cunningham, who accepted bribes of over 2.4 million dollars, are examples of figures who have contributed this stereotype ("Ten Most Corrupt Politicians in U.S. History"). Even though these politicians may have taken bribery to an extreme level, many other politicians acknowledge the small differences money can make. Thomas Downey, a former US Congressman, remarks in the novel *Speaking Freely: Former Members of Congress Talk about Money in Politics*, "Money doesn't buy...a position. But it will definitely buy you some access so you can make your case" (Schram 50).

With money playing such an integral role in politics, it is hard to deny that the existence of great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few can threaten democracy. However, I do not believe that the existence of great wealth must be abolished in order for democracy to exist. Although the wealthy are able to offer bribes to politicians, these politicians do not have to accept these bribes. Although politicians can submit to greed, we, as informed citizens, can decide to vote against them. What America needs to improve its democracy are more morally responsible politicians and politically engaged voters, not the complete destruction of its capitalist spirit. As for the wealthy few, I would advise them with Gandhi's words I mentioned in the beginning - "Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil".

Works Cited

"Capitalism Quotes." LibertyQuotes. Web. 07 Mar. 2012.  
<<http://quotes.libertytree.ca/quotes/capitalism>>.