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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Hi, Chuck — Congratulations on the new book! After working on the op-ed your colleague sent, I went back to the longer piece on Inequality.org, mentioned at the end of the contribution. I think it's so much better than the shortened version, which felt more press-release-y. I'm assuming from the Creative Commons license mark that you won't mind if I take this approach, and I'd be grateful if you let me know anything you'd like me to change in my adaptation for the newspaper. I'd love to consider it for Wednesday's paper, so please let me know ASAP if you see anything. Thanks so much, and all the best, Jeff

**HEADLINE ELEMENTS:**

#####BEGIN HED#####

1 Ten ways you are being burned by billionaires

#####END HED#####

#####BEGIN SUBHED#####

2 Wealth concentration affects your life, whether you  
3 realize it or not. You also can take action.

#####END SUBHED#####

4 TEXT BODY:

#####BEGIN TEXT#####

5 As a CO-EDITOR of a website that tracks news and views  
6 about the effects of inequality, I get a lot of fan mail (and a few  
7 complaints).

8 "None of my problems exist as a result of someone else  
9 being a billionaire," wrote one reader, Greg.

10 My response: "An economy rigged to funnel so much  
11 wealth and power to the billionaire class is bad for you and  
12 everyone else. It undermines your life in some major ways."

13 I wrote my new book, *Burned by Billionaires: How*  
14 *Concentrated Wealth and Power are Ruining Our Lives and*  
15 *Planet*, for folks like Greg to talk about how extreme wealth  
16 inequality disrupts our daily lives.

17 My analysis doesn't focus on the behavior of individual  
18 billionaires, though some are gnarly ones. (A handful show signs  
19 of decency.) The problem is the system of laws, rules, and  
20 regulations tipped in favor of big-asset owners at the expense of  
21 wage earners and working folks.

22 When I'm talking about billionaires, I'm thinking of more  
23 people than the 905 U.S. billionaires who together control about  
24 \$7.8 trillion in wealth. I include the top one-tenth of 1% of  
25 households that have over \$40 million on up in my definition of  
26 the billionaire class.

27 People with wealth north of \$40 or \$50 million have  
28 every need and desire met and easily accumulate power. They're  
29 not just buying mansions and private jets; they are also  
30 lawmakers, and they own media outlets.

31 That's when we need to sound the alarm about "the  
32 billionaires."

33 \* \* \*

34 HERE, FROM MY BOOK, are 10 of the ways you are  
35 personally getting burned by billionaires:

36 1. *The billionaires stick you with their tax bill.* By opting  
37 out of their tax obligations, the billionaire class is shifting  
38 responsibility on to you to pay for everything from infrastructure  
39 to national defense to veterans services.

40           2. *They rob you of your voice and vote.* With the  
41   billionaire capture of the government, what you think barely  
42   matters.

43           Your vote might still make a difference, but only in  
44   marginal situations where the billionaires haven't dominated  
45   candidate selection, campaign finance, and policy priorities. The  
46   billionaires love gridlock and government shutdowns because  
47   they can block popular legislation from happening.

48           3. *The billionaires supercharge the housing crisis — and  
49   profit from it.* Billionaire demand for luxury housing is driving up  
50   the cost of land and housing construction, amping up the already  
51   existing housing crisis. Billionaire speculators are buying up  
52   rental housing, single-family homes, and mobile home parks to  
53   squeeze more money out of the housing shortage.

54           Global billionaires are also coming to "[tax haven USA](#)"  
55   to park their money in U.S. farmland, timber and housing.

56           4. *They inflame existing divisions in society.* The  
57   billionaires don't want you to understand how they are picking  
58   your pocket. So they invest heavily — pouring millions into  
59   partisan media organizations and divisive politicians — to deflect  
60   our attention away from their harmful behavior.

61           Their divisive policy and social agenda drives down  
62   wages, worsens the historic racial wealth divide, and scapegoats  
63   immigrants.

64           5. *They are trashing your environment.* The billionaires  
65   are the superpolluters and carbon emitters, burning up the Earth  
66   with their excessive consumption through yachts, private jets, and  
67   multiple mansions. While you're recycling and walking, they are  
68   zooming around in private jets and yachts with the carbon  
69   emissions and pollution of small nation states.

70           While we all need to do our part, the billionaires make  
71   us feel like chumps for making ecological choices and sacrifices.

72           6. *They are making you sick.* Billionaire backed private-  
73   equity funds are buying up hospitals and health specialties —

74 along with big-pharma drug companies — with the aim of  
75 squeezing more out of health-care consumers.

76 Health outcomes in societies with extreme disparities in  
77 wealth are worse for everyone, even the rich, than societies with  
78 less inequality.

79 *7. They are blocking timely action on climate change.*

80 Fossil-fuel billionaires spend millions to block the transition to a  
81 healthy future. They fund politicians to declare a bogus energy  
82 emergency to keep their coal plants open and shut down  
83 competing wind projects. They are literally running out the clock  
84 for our governments to take action to avert the worst impacts of  
85 climate disruption.

86 *8. They are coming for your pets.* Billionaire private  
87 equity funds know we love our pets like family members and are  
88 sometimes willing to go into debt for their health care. To  
89 squeeze more money out of us, the billionaires are buying up  
90 veterinary care, medical specialties, and pet food and supply  
91 businesses — even pet care services like [Rover.com](https://www.rover.com).

92 *9. They are dictating what's on your dinner plate.* The  
93 food barons — the billionaires who monopolize almost every  
94 sector of the food economy — are dictating the price,  
95 ingredients, and supply of most foodstuffs.

96 *10. They are corrupting charity and philanthropy.*

97 Billionaire philanthropy has become a taxpayer-subsidized form  
98 of private power and influence. As philanthropy gets more top-  
99 heavy — with most charity dollars flowing from the ultra-wealthy  
100 — it distorts and warps the independence of the nonprofit sector.

101 *And a bonus (No. 11): They are buying up and hijacking  
102 the media.* The billionaires are buying up broadcast, social  
103 media, news outlets. We need more news and social media  
104 outlets that are independent of billionaires!

105 \* \* \*

106 IN *Burned by Billionaires*, I talk a lot about what we can  
107 do together to fight the billionaire hijacking of our society and

108 democracy. It isn't another gloom-and-doom book. Here are a  
109 few action steps you can undertake today:

110 1. *Talk to your neighbors.* Organize a discussion group of

111 *Burned by Billionaires* and talk about these 10 ways they are  
112 feeling the billionaire burn. Don't act alone. Join with others.

113 2. *Advocate for taxing the rich and ensuring that*

114 *billionaires pay their fair share.* When your neighbor  
115 understandably complains about local and state taxes, explain  
116 how the billionaire class has lobbied for tax law changes — to  
117 shift taxes off the wealthy and onto everyone else, to shift federal  
118 tax systems onto local ones, to remove taxes on income from  
119 wealth and increase taxes on wages.

120 3. *Game-changing campaigns.* Advocate for policies that

121 tax billionaire wealth and invest in housing, educational  
122 opportunity, and the energy transition away from Earth-cooking  
123 fossil fuels.

124 If federal changes are blocked by the billionaires, work at  
125 the state and local level. Tax luxury real estate transfers to fund  
126 affordable housing. Tax private jet fuel, and fund green transit. Tax  
127 billionaire inheritances, and fund debt-free higher education and  
128 job training.

129 4. *Join the satirical resistance: Trillionaires For Trump!* We

130 see the power of comedians and late-night talk-show hosts. You  
131 can join a new comic resistance effort at [trillionairesfortrump.org](http://trillionairesfortrump.org)  
132 Have fun while imitating and parodying these powerful  
133 billionaires and join their new health campaign, "[Go Fund](#)  
134 [Yourself!](#)"

135 If you haven't already done so, check out [Inequality.org](#),  
136 the website I co-edit. Every week we lift up action campaigns and  
137 heroic "faces on the frontline" of people working to reverse  
138 extreme wealth inequality. And you can read every week to see  
139 how people are taking action.

140 If this intrigues you, I hope you'll buy the book.

#####END TEXT#####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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141       **CHUCK COLLINS** is a researcher, campaigner, and  
142       storyteller based at the Institute for Policy Studies, where he  
143       directs the Program on Inequality and the Common Good and  
144       co-edits [Inequality.org](#). He is the author of 10 books about the  
145       impact of inequality on our lives, including *The Wealth  
146       Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions, Born on  
147       Third Base*, and (with Bill Gates Sr.) *Wealth and Our  
148       Commonwealth*.

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LINKS:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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