

## ***"The Great Reimagining"***

January 30, 2022

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I remember starting to hear about “The Great Resignation” sometime in the time warp that is pandemic life and not really understanding what it meant. It has the ring of doom and dustbowls, of things falling apart. Perhaps there’s some truth in that, but I think we need to be specific about what is falling apart, about who - or what - is feeling the pressure.

This is the best explanation I have found and helped me to understand this paradigm shift that’s occurring.

Kurt Eichenwald wrote this in a series of tweets on November 1st of 2021. He’s a journalist and author who is widely published and has written for the New York Times since 1986. This is a portion of what Eichenwald wrote and I want to encourage that we look for the ways power is being renegotiated here:

“The Great Resignation is not about people not wanting to work. It is about a dawning recognition that, for a larger and larger portion of this country, the American dream is dead, and with it, the inspiration of working toward a better future for oneself. Instead, work becomes not the means towards reaching an aspiration - a spouse, children, a home, vacations, personal growth, a retirement.

Instead, the greed culture has turned work for millions into just a means of survival, with wages stagnant, healthcare unaffordable, insurance treated as a luxury, paid free time an impossibility, children unaffordable, homes a dream. Yes, work is important - but not without the promise of a future. Many young people see nothing but 40 years of the same, further enriching the obscenely rich.

This system has taught people how to survive without, because they don’t believe they will ever have. If they reasonably don’t believe they will ever be able to afford a house or to raise children, and never will have group insurance or a paid vacation, and can make it living with their parents, and have already been taught by [McDonalds] and Walmart how to apply for food stamps and Medicaid because those multibillion dollar corporations know they don’t pay enough for their employees to survive, and are already getting those benefits, and have the choice of just saying ‘forget it. I’m going to work on my painting or sewing or whatever, I am tired of being abused by

my supervisor. I am tired of being screamed at by customers for things out of my control, I am tired of watching adults throw temper tantrums and then being called out by my company because I could have handled it better. I can survive without all of this. I can be happier without all of this. I am paid so little, my life won't be that different.' That is why we have the Great Resignation."

And as NPR pointed out in their article this week, this phenomenon extends far beyond low wage jobs and encompasses a whopping 33 million Americans who have quit their jobs. Across the board, people are leaving jobs in the hopes of finding better pay, a better work-life balance, or a restart from a job that had become untenable. It's not that people don't want to work, it's that the old way is no longer tolerable.

I wonder how you have felt this paradigm in your own lives, or seen it in the younger people in your lives - I can say for one that this rings very true to me. Not the desire to resign, but the systemic problems that are being exposed.

Just this week I attended a webinar that the UUA had advertised about Public Service Loan Forgiveness. It is a government program created in 2007 to help address the reality that people going into public service professions like teaching, working for nonprofits, and the like, were required to obtain levels of education that they would not be able to pay off with their work income. It's an impossible set up. Go into debt to be eligible for work that does not pay enough to cover the debt.

And it wasn't until August of 2020 that the government changed their rules and made people working for religious institutions eligible for student loan forgiveness.

The Great Resignation is not some futuristic scene with empty offices and great laziness, it's a culture shift, an act of non-compliance, a refusal to cooperate with an economic system that is built on unjust labor practices and extraordinary greed.

I can't square the fact that the interest rate on my car loan is half the interest rate on my federal student loans. The loans that I had to take out to pay for the education to be eligible for the job that makes me able to pay the loans. That's not laziness or mismanagement or too much avocado toast, it's a set up, it's a system that squeezes the vulnerable and rewards the greedy.

Read this way, The Great Resignation is not about doom or despair, it's about empowerment, it's about knowing that a system of extraction does not work and is not the only way. It's about choosing to live by a different set of ideals, because the ideals Capitalism has been selling have proven themselves to be false idols.

Doesn't that sound hopeful? Maybe not for massive extractive corporations, but certainly for people, for community, for owning our capacity to build a different world centered on a different set of values.

For this we pray. Amen.

<https://twitter.com/kurteichenwald/status/1455295152461918208>

[https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2022/01/25/1075115539/the-great-resignation-more-like-the-great-renegotiation?utm\\_campaign=npr&utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_term=nprnews&fbclid=IwAR0hWxZUxEsEvyXeYIPZvHI\\_u89tPhNuLjA1z-qBFBIVmSxBTyXMvkwQwdk](https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2022/01/25/1075115539/the-great-resignation-more-like-the-great-renegotiation?utm_campaign=npr&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_term=nprnews&fbclid=IwAR0hWxZUxEsEvyXeYIPZvHI_u89tPhNuLjA1z-qBFBIVmSxBTyXMvkwQwdk)