

July 2009

Volume 18, #7



## THE SOCIAL FACE OF AMERICAN UNEMPLOYMENT

After more than a decade of economic expansion, beginning with the Clinton administration in 1992, the typical American consumer outlook coming into the 21st century was optimistic, to say the least. Except for the slowdown that followed the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001, the American economy seemed to be unstoppable. Average, everyday working-class people were making thousands of dollars through their ever-growing investments. Young, inexperienced recent college students were getting rich with new businesses, especially on the Internet. In some parts of the country (certainly in Florida) there were two SUV's in every driveway outside a brand-new house with a bonus room in addition to three bedrooms and three baths. The family inside took a cruise vacation every six months, ate dinner out 3 or 4 times a week, and bought pricey clothes for the entire family, including the teenagers who modeled Kate Spade purses and Prada shoes.

During these years, it came to pass that credit cards were handed out like chocolate bars; later, mortgages were handed out the same way. Financial regulations seemed to barely exist; financial institutions sprang up overnight; nearly anyone with access to enough capital could start a bank or a brokerage. If you were not getting rich (or at least buying luxuries such as very large houses (McMansions), cars, condominiums, boats, clothes, cruises, etc.) you were looked at askance by your family and neighbors, as if you were a poor sport or antisocial. As one of my friends said, this was the age of the Yuppies—as in, “yup, I’ll buy it.”

Then everything changed. For people whose jobs are sensitive to economic conditions (contractors, architects, real estate developers), the indications of the change were already evident in 2006 and 2007. But for the rest of us, the average Joe, the financial crisis hit like a tsunami in 2008. And many people are still reeling from the impact.

### WHO IS OUT OF WORK? WHERE?

The current U.S. unemployment rate is around 10%, though in some states it’s significantly higher (15.2% in Michigan; 14% in California). What’s most interesting, though, is the composition of the pool of unemployed workers. *To p. 2*

By Sara Tusek

INTERNATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE  
PUBLISHING HOUSE  
announces August 2009  
publication of  
21ST CENTURY JOBS

Written as a basic handbook for the job seeker (or job-changer) in the 21st century, this book offers everything you need to be ready to find the job you can enjoy and do best.

From self-analysis exercises, through finding out “where the jobs are” right now (and will be in the near future), *21st Century Jobs* can help you get your first job, overcome career obstacles or enter an entirely new career. The skills and strategies taught in *21st Century Jobs* will last you for a

### The International Leadership Institute

- WAS FOUNDED IN 1985 IN PRINCETON, NJ
- REMAINS DEDICATED TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
- HAS RUN MORE THAN 50 EXECUTIVE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE US, FOR EUROPEAN CLIENTS
- HAS PARTNERED WITH THE US DEPARTMENT OF STATE, THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA, THE JACKSONVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND MORE THAN 700 OTHER BUSINESSES, UNIVERSITIES, RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, PRIVATE CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

# Leaders to Follow

Sara Tusek, Editor  
830-13 A1A North, #317, Ponte Vedra Beach FL 32082  
Tel/Fax: 904.992.8729; tusek@fdn.com; www.ili.cc



---

## *SOCIAL FACE OF UNEMPLOYMENT* from p. 1

---

### *WHO IS OUT OF WORK?*

Historically, men have been favored over women in the workforce for a multitude of reasons. Yet current news stories indicate that educated, highly-skilled mid-career men are suffering more than their female counterparts, in terms of being fired or laid off, and not being able to find a new job at their level of professional experience and expertise.

This makes sense, as the majority of high-level executives and managers in the U.S. are male; when their firms collapsed, were shaken by complete restructuring, or shrunk violently after the enormous downturn in financial markets, these men (with their high salaries, generous benefits and significant pension plans) were just too expensive to keep on as employees.

This social aspect of unemployment has created a large group of successful, well-educated and talented professionals, predominantly male, who suddenly have no job. They have lost their jobs, in most cases, not by their own choice or due to any personal incompetence.

Often, these men are at a loss to know what to do next. Accustomed to privilege and power, many of them are bewildered if not shocked by the speed of their removal. They may feel shame at having failed in keeping their jobs, and they may feel as though they have been judged and found inadequate as breadwinners. These feelings are not rational, but exert a strong influence and make it far more difficult for these unemployed professionals to plan for their economic future.

It's been shown in many surveys that women earn about 75% of what a man earns in a similar job in the U.S, with similar qualifications (education, experience, etc.) Ironically, this salary disparity now works in favor of women as they can do complex work more cheaply than men.

*The 21st Century Jobs seminars are designed to help job-seekers do the necessary self-analysis of skills, abilities and career goals; write and effectively use resumes; interview in a way that gets to the heart of the job-matching process; and succeed in the job of their dreams.*

*For more information on these seminars, including costs and dates for Spring 2009, please email us at tusek@fdn.com.*

*You can visit our website, at [www.ili.cc](http://www.ili.cc), for more information on Institute programs, services and publications.*

### *WHERE IS UNEMPLOYMENT HIGH?*

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in June 2009 ranged from a high of 15.2% in Michigan to a low of 4.2% in North Dakota. Here in Florida the rate was 10.6%. This is quite a shock to Floridians, who've been the growth machine for the U.S. economy in the Southeast for at least a decade.

Some Florida officials say that since the mid-90's, people have moved into Florida at the rate of 1000 a day! That's unprecedented growth, even for a "frontier state" like Florida, which was part of Spain till 1819, didn't become a state till 1821 and wasn't extensively settled till after WWII, when air conditioning and mosquito control made living here possible.

These newcomers bring talent, skills, money and know-how to Florida. They buy homes, providing jobs for contractors, real estate agents and developers. They often start small businesses (lawn care, insurance, animal grooming, restaurants, and so on) that provide jobs to Floridians and sales tax revenue to the state. The state uses the money to build roads and bridges, providing new jobs.

But without the stimulus of tourists (who don't have an extra thousand or two for a vacation during an on-going recession), newcomers (who are afraid to leave home in a time of economic uncertainty) and construction, Florida has hit the wall of high unemployment. Maybe it's time for the state to reexamine its economic policies and priorities and its vision for the state of Florida.

### *REAL CHANGE*

Regardless of how any American felt about Obama's campaign slogan on "change you can believe in," it's obvious that change is here. The social face of unemployment is this: new people getting new opportunities in the midst of changing ideas about how society can and should be run.