
I grew up in Saint Albans VT. After working a series of dead end jobs, I packed up everything, flew to Florida and enrolled in a trade school at 22. After completing my degree I've worked consistently and yet every month, the 430\$ monster rears its head, holds my wife (who's education will also cost us close to 500\$ a month when she finishes) and I from starting our life. We live in a 600\$ apartment and barely (and I mean in the truest sense) make ends meet. We are told consistently by everyone who's ever been in a position of authority that without college you won't make enough to survive today, yet with a degree, the "extra" money you earn is eaten by loans paid mostly to companies that have no ones best interest in mind but their own. We could have put a substantial down payment on a car, land and home by now, boosting and renewing our local economy and instead those payments go to pay for what we were told was our "futures". The only future we can see is 20 years of 7.2% interest paid to banks we most likely bailed out. The rich continue to get richer and middle class has never looked so far away though we made the "right chooses". Most of the rest of the developed world is qui July outpacing us in almost all regards because we are simply too greedy to give folks a chance. I humbly propose Mr. Sanders, lets take a giant chunk of these private loans out of the hands of those out to make a profit and let the government do what it is intended to, care for its people. This type of situation is not unique to my wife and I, it's an affliction of our generation and we will suffer it for a very long time unless some kind of common sense and decency is injected back into our culture. Or we can just stop going to college, work in factories and mills.....somewhere where those still exist, china perhaps.

Thank you Mr. Sanders,
Your one of the good ones,
Liam Malone

I am a combat veteran. I have a BS in Accounting and cannot find a job because I am "overqualified". So now I am substitute teaching wishing and hoping that an opening will come up. My life is on hold until I can afford to have my "American Dream". I have been in and out of minimum wage jobs since I graduated in June 2011. It seems as though employers favor generation X.

I have searched through many different sources after completing my PhD in biochemistry. I am happy to report that I did finally find a postdoc, but only after having been unemployed for several months and having had many other positions evaporate due to funding situations. The research finance situation is so bad right now that even labs at Harvard and MIT are closing due to financial constraints, which only increases the problem. It is a terrible situation to face right now, this is the longest I have been unemployed in many years. I applied to nearly 30 different positions before I was offered a job; only five of which lead to phone and/or in-person interviews.

I have a Bachelor of Science in History and Sociology, and a Master of Arts in Women's Studies, but after not being able to find a job in a related field for several years (and working in a deli) I decided to go back to school. I went to law school, and months before I graduated I had started searching for jobs. Now it has been two years since graduation and the only employment I've had is an unpaid part-time internship. I have applied for hundreds of jobs and in almost three years I have only had one interview. I am educated, I am skilled, but I can't even get a chance to prove

myself. I don't want to give up the internship because it gives me something current for my resume, but I desperately need a paycheck if I am ever going to pay my student loans.

I'm not unemployed, but I'm being crushed under a mountain of educational debt. I'm a lifelong public servant and will likely never be able to pay off my debt. I issue and administer land use permits under Act 250 - it's a great job.

But, VSAC wants approximately 50% of my salary per month. My paycheck is usually \$1300 every two weeks - and VSAC wants \$1200 per month. This is unsustainable. Please help me.

Cap student loan interest rates; allow discharge through bankruptcy.

I'm unable to qualify for public service loan forgiveness because you have to make 120 full payments - \$1200 each. I've never been able to pay the full payment.

I am no longer unemployed but have now joined the ranks of the America's silently struggling underemployed class after joining a company that will not give me more than 28 hours. I've heard upper-level managers joke that it's "Because of Obama" but I write ads for a national corporation that surely makes a decent profit off my talent. I won't mention names but I used to be employed as a small town journalist with a salary of \$34,000. When I was laid off a few years ago, I was unemployed for nearly a year before I got a part-time job in ad copy writing. I now make less than \$16,000 a year (I'm still getting supplemental unemployment) but few employers want to hire a part-time employee with the limited hours I have available. My student loans are in perpetual deferment.

Hello Senator Sanders,

I am reaching out to you on behalf of the young adults I work with on a daily basis. I work for the Orangewood Children's Foundation, which is a private, non-profit organization based out of Orange County, CA. We offer support services and programs to current and former foster youth. I have worked closely with our former (emancipated) foster youth by helping them navigate through life as an independent adult, no longer in the custody and care of the county social services; while foster youth experience unique challenges compared to the general population, in my experience, the biggest challenge is not being able to find employment. Young people now are competing against adults with years of work experience, and in most cases college degrees, for minimum wage jobs. Without a basic job young people are not able to learn the importance of HOW to work. It's takes a toll on the youth, the community, and the nation at large. Thank you for your dedication to young people, senior citizens, the working class, the environment, and our country. You are a true patriot, Mr. Sanders and I admire your passion.

Actually, I am not 26, my daughter Siobhan is. She has a MA from the University of Pittsburgh in International Affairs and is about \$70,000 in debt. She graduated in May of 2012 and was constantly told that there were not jobs for her without field experience. Believe me, she applied to many organizations and relief agencies. So, she has joined the Peace Corps and is now in Gambia for the next two years. Don't get me wrong, I am proud of my daughter. While applying for jobs in DC, she volunteered at the Red Cross and was deployed to Hurricane Sandy and other disasters...all without pay.

I have another son, who is 20. Because of the huge debt his sister has, he is attending the community college and lives at home. However, he wonders what the future holds for him.

Sincerely, Noreen Dempsey

I graduated from high school and went directly into the work force. After toiling for several years in retail, and several more painting houses for low wages, I went into business for myself as a handyman. I read extensively on subjects (free from the library or online) and became versed in framing (including all associated algebra and trigonometry), wiring, foundations, logging and more.

After doing a job for a local business owner who was impressed with my work ethic, I was hired for his small commercial construction company. I recently became a partner, and continue to bust my ass (and knuckles) every day, and handle onsite current and future logistics after hours, for considerable compensation.

Because I chose not to enter into a contract taking on thousands of dollars of student loans, and because my money is earned daily in sweat, blood and stress, I question why Senator Sanders feels that I should take it upon myself to "forgive" the loans of those persons, some of whom I know personally, who opted to get art degrees so that they can sit in air-conditioned comfort and find themselves through sculpture, all the while complaining about the lack of job openings available for their bought-on-credit "profession". I am not bitter about their choice, but I do not feel that it is fair or reasonable to hold me accountable for the bills others incur for decisions they made which I chose to forgo. I sweat and bleed for myself and the people I care about, not for the Church Street hipsters.

Hello Senator Sanders, I'm sorry I couldn't send in a video, but I don't have a camera. I can't afford a camera, you see. I have a degree from Louisiana State University, and I'm unemployed. Right now, I live off of the charity of my roommate, he is being kind to me for now. Eventually, his kindness will wear thin, and I will be homeless. I have put out hundreds of applications and resumes while looking for jobs, and have gotten few calls back. I am going to an interview at Walmart, for a position unloading trucks. I will probably not get this job.

My story is simple. I have tried, so hard, to make life work the way conservatives say it should. I work incredibly hard, and I'm by no means unintelligent. My goal is to raise \$3000 so I can get a second degree. This has been my goal for three years now. I have been, and it seems I will be, unable to reach this goal. Hundreds of applications and resumes, and nobody wants to even offer me \$10 an hour.

There just seems to be no way for someone to succeed from this position.

Although I am currently employed, I feel my story is still an important part of this. I am a 29 year old social worker that graduated in 2010 with a bachelors degree. I have \$40,000 of debt from my degree, and I making \$33,000 a year, working full time. I am making less a year than I have in my student loan debt. I am working a high stress, under appreciated job, while drowning in my student loan payments. Each payment doesn't even make a dent in my interest, and my "27 year plan" will most likely end up as my "50 year plan" as I have to continue to put myself under the "Income contingent plan," as that is all I can afford. I live with two roommates, have a car I had to glue back together after I got in an accident because I couldn't pay for the repairs, and most of my clothes come from the thrift store. I have \$10,000 of more debt on a credit card because of being a student and trying to make it on my own. I had to borrow \$5,000 from my mom to pay off my car loan before my student loan payments kicked in, because it was either that, or my car be repossessed, because I couldn't pay both. I have yet to be able to send my mom a monthly

repayment check. I am more than grateful that I have a job, and that I can at least pay my bills each month, and buy myself food, even if it's pay check to pay check, and sometimes I have to eat another bowl of rice, as I wait until the next Tuesday to get paid again. I understand there are so many other people who are unable to find any kind of work. However, my story is still one of struggle; one of stagnant wages and outstanding debt.

I am not unemployed, but have been underemployed for the passed 8 years in Illinois. I work part-time in a public library with no benefits. I decided to pay my own health insurance and still have to live at home. I wasn't able to finish a Bachelor's degree and went back to school at College of DuPage (community college). I first went through all the Travel and Tourism course, but never enjoyed working in that field. Secondly, I went back to College of DuPage and took all the Library courses and completed a practicum for free. My career goal was to become employed in a public elementary school assisting the school librarian. Sometimes those jobs are referred to as Library Technical Assistant, but too many of them are either already filled or are extremely part-time.

I feel like I'm just wasting my life and not grown up enough. I should already be independent and living in my own place. In the near future, I'm going to see if I can publish my children poetry and story ideas for income. I desire to quit my library job and engage in more adult and meaningful means of employment. I have much to offer America, but wonder when it will be my time to shine. I want to contribute to society too.

I've been unemployed since December 2012, I had the fantastic opportunity to work on a political campaign after graduating from college and have now spent the better part of 6 months job searching. I'm finding that either I don't have "experience" for jobs in which are suited towards my degree and interests or that I'm "over qualified" for jobs in the service industry (such as Starbucks, Target etc...). It's ludicrous that cuts are made to people's unemployment because Congress can't stop and help those in need, but instead keep taking consistent breaks. I'm a college graduate, who went to school to better my life and now I'm in debt, unemployed and trying to find a job, but I need my unemployment to keep me barely afloat. Please continue to work hard and help us Sen. Sanders, tell the GOP our stories and lets get American working again!

I haven't been to find a full time job since I graduated from San Jose State University in 2005 with a BA in History. I did get a part time job at a non profit San Jose Jazz from 2009 to 2011. In the last couple of years I have been applying for jobs online by e-mail and by filling out applications. I have gotten two interviews, but they hired somebody else. I keep applying and looking for jobs, but the companies I apply for don't call back and find somebody else.
Senator Sanders,

First, thank you so much for the work you do! You are one of the very few who actually speaks for the American people in congress and I just want you to know you are very much appreciated!

I'll try to keep this fairly short. Basically in 2008 I was winding down an online company I tried to get off the ground (an online magazine) and I decided I should try to utilize my experience to find work in New York. So I moved to NY and tried to get an entry-level position in a film-related job (editing, film festivals, film non-profits, film production, etc...).

Before I go on, I should make it clear that I do have experience in these areas. I have a background which includes experience in a number of creative areas including graphic design, advertising art director, photography and filmmaking. I have worked on major clients like Levis, PlayStation, Microsoft, CapitalOne, Amazon etc... I've also made a number of my own short films plus, I've worked on set of film productions in NY.

So naturally, I thought it would be fairly easy to get an entry-level position. But here's the thing, I believe these are the same issues which effect young unemployment, because of the current "war-on-labor" environment, entry-level jobs aren't what they used to be. But it goes even deeper, so I'll just try to itemize the issues:

1. Entry-level jobs: entry level used to mean "no experience". Now, entry-level means 3-5 years of experience. So you go to school for four years and graduate, but how do you get that experience? WHICH leads me to the next issue...

2. Unpaid internships: internships used to be a way that entry-level workers could get some experience over a short period of time in order to prepare them for a entry-level job. Now, internships have become nothing more than slave labor. First, there is no long any expectation that you'll actually get hired after taking an internship. Second, a lot of internships (specifically in Advertising, Film, Fashion etc..) no longer teach interns a profession, now interns are used to get coffee, run errands, take out trash and other menial tasks which do nothing to support the growth of a career. So interns are left for 3-5 years working menial tasks, which will not help them get jobs, and they have to do this all for free.... this is modern day corporate slave labor and it has to stop.

3. The US Labor Board has been gutted: a lot of these issues could be helped if the US Labor Board actually had someone running it. If US labor laws were enforced... but Republicans have been sabotaging this effort for what, like 3 years now?

All this leads to an even bigger point which is the current war on labor. Every legislation being passed is an effort to drive down wages, remove labor protections, protect profits and send jobs overseas or import cheap high-end labor via H1B1 visas.

I sincerely hope that with your determination and cooperation with the few Senators we have left (Wyden, Warren) we can turn this trend around. Our country is no longer the land of opportunity, it's becoming the land of slaves.

Thank you for your service,

Mike Cerda

I graduated from the University of Minnesota in May 2011. I feel that I worked hard, completing two bachelor's degrees in a four-year span while also working a part-time job. However, over the past two years I've had no luck finding employment related to my education; I've been working part-time as a gas station clerk back in my hometown while living with my parents. My lack of success in the job search has been humiliating and makes me question whether or not my education was anything more than a waste of time and money. I've been contemplating going back for graduate school but I fear that I'll just rack up more student debt and still not find any work.

To Senator Sanders,

My name is Joel Gangl. Don't let my name fool you. I am actually from South Korea. I was one of millions of lucky South Koreans adopted by an American family. But enough about my name and

my past, as I understand you wanted people to send in stories about being unemployed and looking for work.

Before you dismiss my letter (and I am deeply sorry for the deception) but while I am employed, I am looking for still looking for work. Like many people I know, many young people are being woefully under employed. We are taking jobs that are below our skill sets, our education and our abilities, simply to make end's meet. And while I understand that your focus and attention is on those that are currently seeking employment, I must implore you to also consider those that are barely hanging by. Many of us could not afford to go without some sort of job because of health care issues, having a family, or simply finding a place to live. So, we took the jobs available to us, even though they offer nothing for our future. You have millions of young Americans underutilized and have a large pool of skilled workers not being used properly because of the recession.

I, myself, have looked to going back to school simply to acquire a different skill set to try and make a better living for myself. And while I am scared of the future, I believe that by continuing my education, that I may have a better chance at a stronger future and utilizing those underused skills to better my fellow man.

But I plead with you to not forget about us. Those that are just above the bottom but below the middle.

Thank you sir,

Joel. M Gangl
Senator Sanders,

I am currently underemployed in NYC. I graduated from a great city university in the CUNY system (Queens College) and began substitute teaching in the NYC public school system. Unfortunately, a hiring freeze was enacted while I was subbing in the 2008-2009 school year, so I lost hope of being hired for a FT teaching position with that system. With my school loans totaling approximately \$23,000 I was forced to take a forbearance until I could find more steady employment.

Fast forward three years, I went back to school for a teaching certificate in another field of Education so I could enhance my job prospects within an industry that makes me truly happy. I had to take out another school loan to help me with my expenses while in school.

I'm currently at approximately \$34,000 in school loan debt and by the time I finish with school this summer the government will be raising everyone's loan rates to 6.8%. This doesn't affect me greatly because unfortunately graduate students can only borrow at this rate. And being that in NYS all teachers are required to have a master's degree, I had no other choice.

However, I worry about my younger brothers and cousins. They must all take out school loans to receive a great education in this country. My brother is already at approximately \$18,000 of school loan debt and he only just finished his sophomore year last month.

I commend you Senator Sanders for your commitment to help us students and the many senior citizens that rely on Social Security, like my grandparents. I also commend you for your courage to counter the many politicians & ideals that are standing in the way of common sense policies and programs that will help our middle class rebound from the current economical situation.

I only wish we had many more politicians like you- those who know what's right and fight for it!

Sincerely, Jessica Castellón

I start with the premise that being a student is being first and foremost unemployed. To the extent that we are employed it is to fulfill our most basic needs without going into debt. I have avoided debt mostly, with the exception of one semester of graduate school in which the course I was supposed to teach was cancelled for lack of enrollment. This was the last semester graduate students could take out subsidized stafford loans, and I knew I could take the money out, work hard for the next three years and pay off what I dipped into for those six months. I have thus far been able to save enough that I could pay off the loan, but would then have no money in savings to cover emergencies. Thus, I will sit on this loan and pay it off in a lump sum once I have secured employment and before it accrues interest.

As a graduate student (especially those of us who are taking out loans and paying interest while in still), I am chronically under-employed, and always looking for more/higher paid work to pay the bills and keep my skills current while still taking classes, doing my own research, and thinking seriously about marriage.

To look for work on campus, I have contacted literally every department that has even an introductory course I could teach with a week's head start on the students. I have ended up teaching Molecular and Cellular Biology, Ecology, Introductory Biology, and Writing and Rhetoric. I will teach courses in Environmental Studies before I graduate. I have added value to my teaching by going to professional development workshops and trainings, leading to a certificate in college teaching. This earns me \$4,900 per class, a tuition remission of 6 units per class I teach, and 70% health insurance coverage (they cover about \$1100) so long as I teach just one class a semester.

I have also taken a position for \$150/mo as the graduate student government co-senator, where I write legislation and represent graduate students in the broader university student government. I have tutored for the university's writing center and for the athletic department (writing, biology, energy and the environment). I have also found summer work-study as an hourly (\$19-21/hr, 0-20/hrs week) research assistant at three different research centers around campus (WWA, CIREs, IBS). I have leveraged this research to become part of my academic studies in order to maximize my use of time and money.

I have considered high school substitute teaching and coaching (I am a former All-Conference NCAA Division 1 Cross Country team captain) and I have also considered free-lance consulting or journalism as side-efforts.

All this earns me about \$25,000 per year, not including tuition and the 70% health insurance. Students also pour their money into their training and tools - I spend thousands per year on computer equipment and software, transportation to and from research sites, and attending conferences. Living in Boulder, CO means that my cost of living is significantly higher than most locations, as well - a studio apartment costs \$900/mo before internet and utilities.

I am a graduate of the University at Buffalo (UB) – I graduated from undergraduate with a BS in Environmental Science in 1996; I worked low paying, laborious jobs for two years after graduating, and then went back and completed the 3.5-year Master's of Architecture (M.Arch) program. I graduated in 2001, and although this was long before the recession of 2008, there were still limited jobs in architectural practice. I stayed at the University at Buffalo and worked on a research project and taught several classes for four more years. When all was said and done, I spent 12 years at UB, ended up with close to 250 college credits (112 at the graduate level), and racked up over \$60,000 in student loans.

When the funding on the grant I was working on was depleted, I ended up taking an administrative job at the University of Vermont. The salary is barely enough to live on relative to the high cost of living in Vermont. I am in the income-based repayment program; however, the program does not factor in the cost of living relative to where you live. I do not qualify for economic hardship, and I maxed-out my deferment and forbearance periods. My loans are currently in default and are up to over \$72,000 with interest; this has affected my credit rating and my ability to obtain future funding for further education, a home, or for setting up a small business. I have worked several part-time jobs over the past 8 years to supplement my full-time job at UVM, but it doesn't even put a dent in my expenses...and I by no means live a lavish lifestyle. Below is a list of my itemized expenses taken from February 2013:

Monthly Net Salary: 2395

Rent: 1000.00

Gas: 130.25

Electric: 105.72

Cable/Internet: 101.50 (I have since disconnected these to save money)

Phone: 68.09

Car Insurance: 77.43

Car Payment: 290.67

Student Loan: 265.57

Credit Card: 126.00

As you can see, this does not leave much in pot for food, gas, medicine, or any other charges that might come up...and the last I checked, food and gas prices in Vermont are among the highest in the nation. Why did I spend 8-years in higher education?

To add insult to injury, the degree I earned (M.Arch) now qualifies as a Doctor of Architecture as defined by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). However, the NAAB, nor any of the other agencies that regulate architecture (American Institute of Architects, Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, American Institute of Architecture Students), will mandate a retroactive title change for those who meet the new requirements. The retroactive change would give alumni a title that is more commensurate with the amount of time, money and energy invested and thus yield higher earning potentials that can better satisfy our loan payments. I actually recently applied to a PhD program to better my credentials, but was denied funding because my credit is bad from the outstanding amount I owe for the M.Arch degree. Why these agencies or schools of architecture will not help alumni is beyond me...especially given the fact that fields centered on the built environment were amongst the hardest hit as a result of the 2008 recession.

So in my case, here are some potential solutions that might help:

1. The FAFSA income based repayment program needs to be adjusted to factor in the cost of living relative to specific metropolitan areas. The average salary to cost of living ratio should also be examined, since salaries in Vermont are not commensurate with the cost of living.
2. Larger subsidies toward student loans need to be applied for those who work in the public sector – especially those who work in public higher education.
3. In terms of Vermont, either the cost of living needs to come down or the salaries need to go up (or both). The current ratio is simply not sustainable. This is obviously a loaded issue with several other factors involved, including job creation and affordable housing to name a few, but it still needs to be stated.
4. The United States Department of Education needs to examine degree programs to make sure there is parity among disciplines for the amount of time it takes to complete specific degrees. This investigation would reveal that no master's degree program should take 3.5 years to complete. My whole financial distress could have potentially been avoided if I actually earned a degree title that was commensurate with the time I put into my education. Students are spending

too much time in school for degrees that do not have the earning potential to pay off the investment. European countries instituted the Bologna Process to examine such inequities and to establish standard time frames as to what constitutes a bachelor's, master's and doctorate.

Thank you for hearing me out...at this point, I really do not know what else to do to solve my current financial crisis.

I don't mind paying back the 70,000 I borrowed to go back to school to get my doctorate, not one bit. But with interest rates of 8.5% and 6.8%, watching the interest eat away my savings every month is hard to swallow. To the point where we are not saving any money because we put anything extra towards my loans so we can pay them back ASAP. This is putting our plans for having a family on hold- because we want to have our finances in better order before doing so. I went back to school so I could make a better living- and I do, and I love my career, so glad I did. (Graduated 2009 from UVM physical therapy.)But the high interest rates make it feel like we are running in mud- not moving forward- because I can't stand watching so much money go towards interest. Our lives would be so much better if the interest rates were more manageable and didn't require so much extra money each month. We could build savings, and afford day care. But- I am very thankful I can afford to pay extra towards my loans every month to try and pay them off in less than 10 years. Raising the interest rates on future students is not a good answer. We don't mind paying back the principle, some interest to say thank you- but I feel like I'm being robbed on a monthly basis. Come on- my mortgage rate is 4%, my car loan is 2.99%. Government can do better for our future, especially because there are so many going to school, less jobs to fill. They don't need to be the ones taking on the burden of high interest rates on student loans. It will only make the start of their adult lives that much more challenging, filled with bitter resentment.

I've taken out loans to help cover the cost of my graduate degree (despite having 80% of my credits covered through a scholarship, the cost of living is just too high in Vermont). I've been fortunate that my total loan burden is well below the national average, but I am dismayed at the high interest rates; for grad students we're already at 6.8%, and we do not qualify for subsidized loans, so interest is accruing as we speak..

This is frustrating to me when I hear the interest rates my peers are paying for cars, homes and other consumer goods. Recently a friend took out a car loan with a 1% interest rate! This is ridiculous that there is more financial incentive to buy a new car instead of educating yourself and strengthening the quality of our workforce. I'd like to see student interest rates come down for all students; the federal government should not be making this much money off our backs. But especially, don't let interest rates double for undergraduates, it's just not fair for these young kids, that often don't know just what they are getting themselves into signing up for those loans at age 18.

At 35, going back to school to finish my degree was not an easy decision. I had to leave Vermont to find a job that would support me. I ended up in New Orleans, a city I have come to love dearly. After many long years of tending bar in the French Quarter, I made the decision to go back to school full time. I did not want to be 50+ years old and still behind a bar. I have achieved straight A's since enrolling at the University of New Orleans and hope to graduate next fall. I will owe about \$35,000 when I finish my degree

As a first generation student, I borrowed my way through college since I did not qualify for grants, scholarships, or other kind of aid. I borrowed nearly 100,000 dollars over a six year period to attend college. If these loans did not include compounding and capitalizing interest, I could pay this amount easily in 6 to 7 years. However, since they do contain compounding and capitalizing interest, my loans have ballooned. I live in a world where I am not in control of my life. I will never own a house, have a family, afford to save for retirement, or do anything that my parents were able to do. My life is a life where I live to pay the bank. I am an indentured servant simply scraping to get by and anything more than just living goes to a servicer to pay for the debt. The debt continues to grow each day and my original principal has already doubled with additional interest being added onto it. Of course, bankruptcy to get a clean start isn't an option considering all protections were removed in 2005. This all said to say high college costs and student loans affect me because I forfeited my life to get a college degree and be the first in my family to go to college. It's just unfortunate that an 18 who was naive and gullible enough to believe that the only ticket to life was a college degree was allowed by institutions to take out loans that they couldn't ever repay.

I think these higher rates are uncalled for and it's actually very scary for us college students. Now a days you need to further your education in order to get a decent job. But with these higher rates, it will be even harder to pay off these loans. I am your average American. I work everyday and can never get ahead. I go to college so I can live a better life afterwards but it seems to be getting harder and harder. These interest rates need to be looked at again so that an average American is able to pay back the money without worrying about their family and other bills. I'm trying to better my life for myself and my family, just like many more Americans out there. I just don't understand how us college students have to go through this torture. As it is, I'm worried that I will not be able to find a job after I graduate due to the economy, taxes and now these rates. Please fight for us Bernie.

I am the oldest of four children. My parents have never had much money. They have been middle class for my entire life, but are finding it harder to make ends meet since the financial crash of '08. I have finished my undergrad education at a small, private, liberal arts college in Iowa. When I started in 2009, total cost was a staggering 32,400 dollars a year. With the financial aid I received, it seemed to be a manageable burden. I started working when I was 11 to save for college, and had a job in the kitchen of a nursing home and later cleaning public bathrooms at a hotel to cover my costs after federal loans. After my first year, the ugly reality of higher education in the U.S. surfaced. The tuition rose to 34,000 dollars a year for my second year, and continued to rise to a whopping 40,000 dollars a year by the start of my fourth and final year. To make matters more frustrating and worse, the college is experiencing financial struggles. These struggles "caused" the college to raise costs over 40,000 dollars for the 2013-2014 year after repeated promises to the contrary. I am glad that I graduated on time. I could not afford any more time at Central College. I spent a total of 144,000 in four years just on my undergrad. I have a total of 41,000 in debt, not including the interest. I am continuing on and will start law school in a few months, so my debt burden will become infinitely worse in the next three years. I have to think first of my debt, and what I would like to do with my talents and interests second. I am not in control of my future. My debt is in control. Congress is in control through lack of comprehensive reform to address the crippling burden of college. My generation has been told that we need higher education to compete for jobs, but then rack up debt that crushes us, and struggle to find jobs as a result of "lack of experience". We participate in unpaid internships to try to gain experience, and yet nothing changes. I want to see real change, not because I believe I am entitled, but because I want a fighting chance like my parents had, and all of the people in Congress had.

I recently fulfilled my dream of becoming a doctor and I'm starting my career working with low income patients at a public hospital. I understand that the cost of training a physician is great, but I wouldn't have to put my life on hold if the interest rates were not so high. My fiance (also a physician) and I have both moved back in with our respective parents and put off getting married because our combined student loan debt exceeds \$700,000 and our resident salaries aren't even enough to cover the accruing interest, let alone the monthly repayment at the standard 10 year repayment rate.

My loans are currently in forbearance because I'm an AmeriCorps VISTA, and if they weren't in forbearance I would be in serious trouble. My first payment for just my Perkins loans (which is due in October) will be around \$300, and that's the loan with the lower balance. With my current take-home pay of around \$800 a month, there's no way I could pay that now and still survive. One of the reasons I took the AmeriCorps job, even though the pay is terrible, is because there was a year of loan forbearance, AmeriCorps pays the interest accrued, and they provide an education award at the end of the year that I can use to pay down my loans. If I hadn't had these loans to worry about, I could have held out for a job that pays better and get my life started. I feel trapped by these loans, and before my grace period had even expired after graduation they were already making my career decisions for me. I know there are income-based payment options so if I end up without a job after AmeriCorps I won't fall into financial ruin, but that just means my interest will accrue faster than I can pay it, my principal will increase and my payment period will be extended, possibly to more than 20 years. I don't want to have this hanging around my neck for 20 years! Help!

Hi Bernie,

First of all I would like to thank you for speaking up for those with overwhelming student loan debt. Since I graduated from college in 2007 I have been struggling non stop to pay my loans. The combined monthly minimum due (some federal, some private) comes to \$400 a month. Add in my rent, groceries, and ever-rising gas prices, and I have almost nothing left. I've had to defer them when I was laid off and some companies won't even let you defer them!!! And if you don't pay, your credit is ruined. I went to college with dreams of a future where I would have a great career and be able to live within my means-have MORE opportunity, not less!

I recently graduated with a BFA in art education. Going back to college as a "non traditional" student I was driven to create a better life for myself and to make a bigger contribution to society. I am excitedly expecting my first child , but this excitement is over shadowed by the fear of the enormous debt that I will have to pay off. I not only have to worry about how I will survive, but now I worry how I am going to offer my child a fair chance at life. My husband and I will be paying off my student loans at the same time my child will be preparing to go to college. I am still looking for work and have been offered jobs that do not pay nearly enough for me to pay my loans and support my family. Everyone is hurting because of the economy, except the top 1% they just get richer as the rest of us suffer. Pick on someone who can afford the interest rate increase. People who have chosen to get a higher education in order to make a better life for themselves do not deserve to "pay the price" for their decision.

I was born and raised in Norwood, Massachusetts with my mother, father, older brother, and sister. I am a first generation college student on behalf of my family attending the University of Massachusetts Boston. I am a lead poison survivor since I was an infant; I am also autistic as one of the effects from it. I am majoring in Theatre Arts and minoring in Economics. My GPA is in the high 3s range. I have received subsidized and un-subsidized loans from the U.S. government as well as certain grants from my state. I try to do well in my classes and attending them as much as

possible to be successful in my own right and stay afloat financially. I value everything I have ever learned. I have to pay out of the pocket for the train since I commute to the university, which is almost 900 dollars per semester. I cannot assume I am well off with my tuition being paid for from the various sources I mentioned earlier. My family has its own fair share of health problems, which takes up a significant amount of income; fortunately, I am healthy enough, but the rest of my family needs to pay for important medications they need. Everyone in my family works. For example, my father works multiple jobs and he gives every amount of effort to them as he can. One other example I will give is my mother works at a nursing home and her employers treat her as well as other workers horribly not to mention the working conditions are just as horrendous; my mother gives care to all the patients as much as she can. I do not want society leaving me behind to suffer, especially those who hold political office and do not demonstrate leadership. I am a human being and a body of the universe above all; not a loan. I believe education is critical to human development and in this case, mine, and it should concern everyone else equally. Antagonisms shall not be in the way of progress. I want to show how learned I am no matter where I go and what I do. The future must not be extinguished. I do not want the rest of my fellow classmates and students everywhere else losing their chances to be wherever they want to be and do. I do not want to suffer so much later in life. Currently, I am attending my hopefully final year as an undergraduate and I am very close to finishing what I have started. Thank you. I have a great credit score but due to my student loan debt and the fact that a college degree doesn't necessarily land you a good paying job, I have a horrible income to debt ratio. This has prevented me from buying a home. I'm trying to get into a masters program but the one I want is very competitive. My current degree in biology and it does nothing for me. I've been lied to. My student loans are an unnecessary burden while I'm adjusting to life as an adult. They come into play with every decision made- purchasing a car or even the smallest purchases like food. \$180 a month is a lot to pay when very little of that payment helps decrease my student loan. Please do something about this. We need an educated nation!

I am autistic and transgender, and have never been able to find permanent work. I have lived in poverty my entire adult life, Never making more than \$10, 000 a year. Even so, I've succeeded in getting through community college and into a state school. I work 3 jobs while going to school full time and still need to take out loans to pay for my rent and food. I'm a straight A student but have gotten almost no scholarships. I'm exhausted all the time, and never have time to spend with friends or the money to visit my family. If I can't get a good job after graduation, I don't know how I'll go on with no savings or hope for a better life.

Dear Bernie, I was headhunted to attend a prestigious private college in California. Sold the prospects of getting help and a job after graduation, I found out that the situation was entirely different. Student protests broke out at the school over tuition costs, the building was coming apart, there was even a department that didn't even exist that was receiving money earmarked for students- it was a nightmare. When I had regrets about how much I was in debt, other students would say, "I'm this much in debt. Don't worry about it." Later it was a matter of that I had already committed so far in and couldn't quit, -still with the idea that a job might be waiting on the other side. I graduated my final term from the school with all forms of loans exhausted. I teacher assisted on the side, was involved with student government, and received an award for being a student leader at my graduation. I never found a job from my school. The only interview I went to, the person on the other side of the table started the interview by telling me, "I went to your school. I haven't spoken to anyone there in xx years." (I did not get the job.) In the end I was forced to leave California and move back in with my parents, who had cosigned on a private loan, pressured by me, so that I could finish my education. With mounting debt day by day, I have sometimes have thoughts about guilt and suicide, -walking out in front of a truck or bus, - just horrible things. It hurts a lot. Another idea I've had is to flee the country. When it's so hopeless, that I feel that I have to leave my homeland- arguably, the best country in the world, over nearly insurmountable student loans, what do you expect me to do, when I can't even file for bankruptcy to remove them? There's no way I can pay off 160k+ in student loans with a BFA in any realistic way in the 10 years they ask, especially on a 9.00 an hour job. I'm already in financial lock down. I

don't have the extra income to afford anything other than my bills. Every paycheck is tight. A friend of mine got me a job in an industry I wanted to be in years ago, but ironically because of my crippling debt from education, it's made it impossible for me to stay long term, even though my prospects are decent to move up into a position that might relate to something I got my degree in. I'm not a deadbeat. I don't feel entitled. At the beginning of the century, I was a stockbroker. I understand money, BUT nothing could prepare me to understand the student loan system, the complexities of scholarship systems, the financial mismanagement of some of the higher education institutions, I've been asked, "Why don't you sue your school over these issues? These issues seem pretty flagrant." The problem is there are so many graduates spread out around the world in my field, I'd be torn to shreds as somebody who just didn't try hard enough and be blackballed by them. It's so ironic, because now, I'm back in school at my Community College, getting further education, - paid for by my already cash strapped elderly parents, to continue the loan deferments on debt that just keeps getting larger. At this point, it's an eternal holding pattern, but I'm tired though Bernie. If I can help other students not make my mistake, if you need to elaborate on this further, to educate other members of Congress, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can not, have any more financial burdens hoisted upon me, when I can not even be a contributing member of the economic institution. Thank-you for your time and reading my letter.

My brother has outstanding student loans to pay off. He has had a hard time finding a job since graduating 2 years ago. Please help him.

My father pushed me into college. He promised to pay any debt I incurred, but left me hanging halfway through when I didn't get enough in grants. I managed to pull through myself through, though it took me twice as long as a normal student. Now I have a degree that's worthless without grad school I can't afford, just enough income to cover my loans, too much education for menial employment, "not enough" work experience for the same menial employment... and a \$7000 loan hanging over my head, which has been chipped down from \$8500 over ten years I've had these loans. And, looking around, I'm one of the lucky ones.

I accrued over \$30,000 in student loans during my undergraduate career. I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to finance an undergraduate education that has opened so many doors to me in the field of environmental education, however, as wonderful as the experience has been serving youth and the environment, I have not been able to pay my loans. My family has been very supportive during my times of need, something I know not every graduate has the luxury of experiencing. I have been conflicted personally, knowing that the education that has afforded me so many opportunities is not affordable to everyone, and also knowing that my family is not rich, that my parents will be retiring soon, and that the education award I will receive from the federal program sponsoring my position right now will not be enough to pay off my loans and pay for a graduate education that would bring me closer to a livable wage.

I graduated from university after five years of study in December of 2012. I have since been reminded continuously of the debt I owe and it takes a serious toll on my mental and emotional health. I have been unable to secure a job that would allow me to pay off this debt, even though I have my degree in engineering. The amount of debt I face for my student loans, combined with that of my parents', leads me to believe that none of us will ever actually pay off this debt. If something doesn't change and doesn't change soon, this may very well be the end of my life.

I am crippled by my student loans. They are all federal or institutional (zero-interest), but I am unable to buy a home or really move forward in my life while I am burdened by them. I went to grad school and earned an MA, and I have found much better work with my advanced degree, but I am still struggling as a single parent to make ends meet. I often feel despair about my financial situation. My parents don't understand how much things have changed from the time they were my age. I think my generation is being compared to the baby boomers (I am 40) and there is so much pressure on women, especially, to do everything ---work, raise healthy kids, be fulfilled. Students loans cast a shadow over everything for me. Thanks for asking folks about this. Thanks for all you do. Blessings. MB

I have about 10000 in student loans that i know i will never be able to pay. i think many people are misinformed when it comes to college and are lured in by this delightful sounding false lie that they qualified for financial aid but are never told they have to pay it back. in other countries higher education is free and a right not a privilege. in my opinion everyones student loans should be forgiven especially in cases like mine where i was misinformed that this was not free money.

I am a single parent. My daughter is entering her junior year of high school, and is just starting to explore her options for college. I am currently enrolled in college trying to finish my undergraduate degree before she finishes high school. I have two years left before I graduate. By the time she and I both complete college, the debt will be extremely high. I am relying on low interest rates and scholarship/grant programs to make our educations possible without completely burying myself under debt. I am committed to quality education for both of us, but I have no idea how I will pay for it when the time comes.

I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and a spinal cord injury. I am a single mother with four teenage sons. I am a survivor of domestic violence, but one still at risk of physical harm because my ex-husband is still stalking me. I want to tell you what it means to me that I can return to college at the age of 36, with the help of grants and low interest loans, to improve my future. It means I can learn new skills for employment, instead of filing for disability income or public assistance. It means pride in myself and my accomplishments. It means showing my children not to let obstacles in life keep you from reaching your goals. It means showing my children how important education is to your future. It means watching my kids dream for their future and go after what they want, such as my 16 year old who wants to be a veterinarian. It means being able to take online classes, so I can still work and support my family. It means the difference between being a depressed victim and a confident member of society. Without the funding I receive, I could not attend school or make ends meet. I'm still poor, but I know that is not the legacy I will leave for my children because I'm learning skills to improve my employability, while at the same time showing my children to work hard and go after your dreams.

As someone who chose to become a social worker versus, say, an investment banker, I have been haunted by this decision all of my adult life, as my undergraduate & graduate student loans have prevented me from attaining financial stability, buying a house, saving for retirement, etc. Since I finished graduate school in 1999 with my MSW, I have never been without employment, and I have worked hard to make minimum payments on my loans- in fact, for my federal loans I have actually paid off as much as I originally borrowed, yet I still owe almost the entire initial balance still because of interest. And now with the actions of Republicans in Congress, I suppose I'll be paying off my loans for many more years.

My name is Ahleya, in 2008 I went away to a four year college to study biology in Massachusetts. I went to the second smallest four year school in Mass and after a year transferred to a neighboring community college. I obtained my associates degree and then moved to a different state in hopes of a new start and with every intention of continuing my education. Unfortunately I was unable to pursue a bachelors because I did not have the funding in my new state. I struggled to get by in north Carolina until I gave up and moved back to a state that I felt suited my standards better.

Now it has been three years since my last college course and although I would very much like to go back to school I simply cannot afford it.

I havr been struggling to get by, I currently havr three jobs and havr not been able to make payments to my loans, they are now in default and because of that I cannot receive any additional funding to return to school.

All I want is to go back to school so I can get my BA in biology and work with animals at the San Diego Zoo and live comfortably on the west coast in a home with my future family.

I graduated college years ago, when student loans were an exception, not the rule. I was able to graduate with a manageable loan amount because I qualified for need based and merit based grants (like CAL grants). I am now a college professor and am shocked and angry that students in my classes often work 2 or 3 jobs AND take out private loans in order to fund their education. Private loans--and their increasingly mercenary interest rates--have replaced grants that previously allowed students to experience college FULLY. Now, because of the pressure of student loan debts students choose majors--not because they are interested in the topic--but rather driven solely by monetary considerations. Instead of choosing college to learn critical thinking skills that are VALUABLE and transferrable skills to multiple professions, students take classes that lead to a 'job' that will pay for loans.

In order to communicate to students that this country is invested in their future, we need to increase grants and decouple student loans from the free market ethos that has burdened students with excessive debt.

I feel less able to work for Community Economic Development- my M.S. via Southern New Hampshire University- when I am already owing so much more to the Government that should be doing more for people in need. Also, for now, I am a disabled student, so this is especially stressful. Congress: Please act! Thanks in advance, Bernie.

My husband and I went back to school when we were 28 years old - a huge sacrifice to live off of one full time income for nearly a decade. We both now have Master's Degrees and a \$70K plus VSAC bill each. We thought we were going to get great jobs and college was going to net a large return. I now work for the state of Vermont and I am in a three year salary freeze. Before that I was employed at the Vermont State Colleges for seven years and for the last three years I did not receive a raise. My VSAC loans have suffered and my wages are now being garnished \$400 a month because I cannot afford the payments. I cannot refinance my house, because even though my cars, home, and credit cards are perfect on my credit score our debt to income is too high because of our student loans. My husband has currently cut a deal with VSAC and we pay \$300 a month on his loans until August and then they want \$800 a month, in addition to the \$400 they

take from me. I have no idea how we are going to do that with a young child to care for and our normal bills. We seriously have considered selling our home and moving out of state. We just cannot afford our student loans! It would be nice if someone would approve our home refinance and perhaps we could afford some of this education debt - the catch 22 of our lives!

I worked full-time in high school to save up for college, and paid my first semester outright because I worked VERY hard to save. Because of my income, I received no financial aid whatsoever, and was forced to start taking student loans out my second semester - but also had to continue working, because I abhor debt. Because I worked, my grades suffered, and even though I was part time, I still made "too much" to get anything but Stafford loans, while others who have never worked a day in their life get full rides for free. I'm now having to take a break from school to convince another school to accept me so I can actually take courses while working, and I now have quite a bit to pay back. It's an endless, helpless cycle to those of us who ACTUALLY work, and end up with these costs. All I want to do is finish my degree, but being forced to work to cover expenses has ruined my GPA - making it even less likely I will EVER reach my dream.

I went to a for-profit school, a branch of the Art Institutes, and basically majored in debt. I have a worthless degree and can't seem to even land part time customer service jobs with a BFA. Going to college and taking out student loans I didn't know a thing about was the biggest mistake of my life and I will be paying for it until I'm 50, unable to start a family, own a home, or even save for retirement.

The student loan system is highly predatory. There is no risk to lenders so they can lend asinine amounts to unemployed students who don't know the difference between federal and private loans or truly grasp what they're getting in to. The risk must be restored by returning bankruptcy protections for all student loans. Also implementing a similar 10/10 repayment plan as HR1330 suggests would help reduce the burden of those of us scammed by the system. The forgiven amount should not be considered taxable income as that just transfers the debt from the hands of lenders to the IRS.

I have been caught between a rock and a hard place with my parents having financial hardships with layoffs and a natural disaster. I have had to pray each semester that I can be allowed to stay in college or get a loan. This will start my senior year and I still do not know if I can get a loan although I am a "B" student. My parents pay huge taxes and get little if anything in return. We are just a simple working family and I only want to complete college and find a good job without losing my future.

It's manageable to pay the payments, but the interest is already so high- I feel like it will take forever to pay back. \$10k is in principal and \$5k in interest.

If interest rates double, that is very sad and the government should be ashamed of themselves. It's already hard enough to get by. Education should be free!!

I attended a small liberal arts college in VT (Sterling) with many generous grants, but still had to take loans. I also actually did find an excellent job coming out of college, but soon after my employer suffered economic setback and had to lay off several employees. My loans have been repeatedly deferred as I have bounced in and out of unemployment, taking whatever jobs I can. Mostly it has been seasonal work that lasts long enough to cover what I've fallen behind on since the last.

If the US government is trying to recoup funds, making student loans more unpayable than they already are is doubtful to produce any more immediate income and further strain citizens' ability to contribute to their local economies.

I am a family medicine intern at Mercy Medical Center in Redding, CA. I graduated medical school in June and I start my residency on Monday July 1st. I will make \$44,500. per year

I have been in undergraduate and graduate school for the past 8 years. Consequently, I have \$65,000 in private student loans and about \$385,000 in federally funded loans. I will not be able to consolidate and refinance my loans until the grace period has ended at which time I will go into income based repayment for the next 25 years. At the peak of my payments they will be approximately \$4000 per month. If interest rates increase between now and when I consolidate my loans they may be as high as \$5000 per month.

I will be a family physician in a rural community. While the stereo type about rich doctors may be true for specialists it is not true for family doctors. Chances are I will not be able to save for my own daughter's education and saving for retirement will also be very difficult.

With the increasing pressure on the medical community we have seen reimbursements for physicians go down and the cost of medical education go up dramatically. If we want our best minds to continue to go into medicine we need to do something about the crippling level of debt they will have when they actually begin their careers.

When I was 21 years old I attended West wood College an online school. My tuition covered the 1st semester but not my 2nd semester. I hesitantly took out a student loan only to be denied. My dad cosigned on a loan for me so I could continue to attend school, I was again denied. Because I couldn't pay for my 2nd semester I was forced to drop out. I was living with my parents making minimum wage and couldn't afford to pay back the school what I owed. A few years later I decided to go back to school and tried to attend a community college in my area. I got enrolled only to learn that I had a college loan that was defaulted in my name for Sallie Mae the same loan I got denied! I told the school there had to be a mistake that I never got accepted for the loan that it was denied. I contacted my old school only to find out my loan for \$10,000 that I had taken out not only wasn't denied but the money was sent to my school to pay for what was owed. I never received any confirmation from the school or Sallie Mae and didn't find this out until I tried to continue my education. I finally was able to work with Sallie Mae through their "recovery program" to make monthly payments. I am working a better job so I am able to make the monthly payments and try to over pay when I can. This usually means working overtime so my check will still be enough to pay for my necessities. Because I didn't find out about my loan until years later there is interest on my loan that has accrued. I feel like if I was notified that I had a loan earlier I wouldn't owe them as much as I do, and I'd also have been able to go back to school and and continue my education. I sometimes feel like maybe my situation isn't as bad as most because I have heard of some people my age being over \$100,000 in debt but I still don't think its fair for anyone to have to go through this.

While studying in graduate school, paying rent and buying food got to where all of my American classmates were working multiple jobs or living with family. I couldn't get a job, and students no longer automatically qualify for food stamps. My school didn't distribute financial aid until well into the summer, and my family could not get any money to me. So I had to go to school whilst starving and sick from malnourishment, and during part of the year, while living in a shelter. Then, living in the mens shelter got me so sick that I had eye and respiratory infections, as well as the flu. Beyond that, the grade I earned, while dying in the shelter, was so low, that I was not allowed to continue, despite citing extenuating circumstances, since I had to go to the ER to be treated for pneumonia.

Students like I was wouldn't have to worry our families and friends, and spend time and energy for nothing, if students once again had access to food stamps, being encouraged to buy from local CSAs like Isidore foods in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and if students were able to afford rent and not have to live in shelters in order to simply survive being a student.

I didn't spend my student aid on binge drinking and fun. I let it sit in the bank, because rent was so high. And that is how a great many students use their funds: paying rent, and buying food, living with friends or family, if they can. Those who binge and smoke their money away, thinking that's what college is supposed to be, also often have family money or a job, and they flunk out. So when you do nothing to help deal with student aid, or generalize what students are like, you're punishing people like me, who work harder with more adversity than is due, and who hunger to graduate more than we do for food and comfort.

All 3 of my credit scores are perfect. Due to my debt to income ratio I can't get my own car loan and I sure won't get a home loan. I never miss a payment and nor will I ever miss a payment. Private loans have ruined my life. If I would have known better, I probably would have become a plumber just like the Mayor of NY said. Oh, that also goes to show that people in power don't want the middle class to succeed.

My views on higher education are on a bit of the controversial side. As a disclaimer: I am not against higher education and believe everyone should be able to have an education if they're not already educating themselves via free resources such as MOOCs and the local library.

I just want to point out, that as a student, this was my employment. Educators tell us being a student is our job; to get an education is our job. Well, I don't get paid to do this job. In fact, I am paying to have this job. Twenty years later (or perhaps ten now with Obama's student loan relief, if it indeed exists) when I have my student loans paid off I will still be wondering "Was it worth it?" It's a great question to ask.

Is a piece of paper that says we're educated from a higher education institute worth the debt? Does it help in the long run to have a degree? Are people being educated enough, gaining both knowledge and experience in their chosen field, while learning how to go about working in their chosen field? I can't say I think so. Students are no longer really students, they are customers. Even higher education facilities that are not-for-profit still run as businesses. Education is in dire need of reform. Education should be free, but I do realize money is required to run an institution. Unfortunately, nearly every student young and old, is piled with debt.

I pose these questions as well as pertinent ones. It's never easy to talk about these things and there's always going to be two sides to a coin, (unless someone is cleverly counting the flat side between the two sides) even if both sides look the same.

Here are some things to consider:

Retaining information – There is too much information to absorb within a short period of time and too little time to retain it all.

How can I effectively learn a subject when only a little over an hour is spent on the lectures each class period? Most of what I learn is from the book in the first place, so what is the instructor going to say that I haven't already heard of before?

Tuition – It's too high even at the cheapest institutions.

Financial Aide – It's too low.

These two cause easy money problems.

Expectations – There are a lot of them.

Having several classes and assignments while also trying to have a life is difficult. This puts a student under pressure and can lead to depression or other self-destructive elements.

Relationships – Can they be stable when most of a person's time requires study. Obviously most people are supportive of one obtaining an education.

Employment – Have to pay the bills right? So where do we fit in study time? This is especially difficult for nontraditional students.

Professors – They're often prone to favoritism and bias.

Who among the educators will really help everyone achieve regardless of the hundred(s) of students they have to take care of.

Real World Readiness – Is there enough knowledge and training provided in one's education to help them attain employment in their chosen field?

Do I need to continue my education and further my debt while I get a masters or higher degree before I can actually start a career and begin making an income that will support me?

Socratic Method – One of the most common forms of teaching, but to what extent does it work and when should it actually be used?

Multimedia – How effective is using multimedia in lessons?

I.e. Will a student really learn something, based on the lesson, by watching a YouTube video that is far more entertaining than thought-provoking?

All in all a student should be able to learn their chosen field efficiently without having to worry too much about its cost and finding employment afterward. It seems to me there is plenty of work available out there. This is a catch-22. I can't find a job because employers feel I don't have enough experience and I can't get experience because nobody will hire me to help me attain it. Even some entry-level positions tend to require experience of some sort before they'll even let a foot in the door. So what could I do with this degree now if I received it? What is the point if I can't even make enough income to feed myself? I'm unemployed because nobody will hire me, even though I am capable of working and have an education. I can't even get an unemployment check. I donate plasma so I have \$75 a week to live off of, which is incredibly difficult. I see no way of paying off student loans now or ever due to unrealistic principles. If you want to learn the future of education, I'll be happy to write you an essay.

I have two children, work 2 jobs, currently in a graduate program and barely able to pay the bills now. I realized after graduating with my bachelor's degree it was not enough to qualify for the current job openings.. I chose to continue on and enter into the master's program. I have two associate degrees, a bachelor's degree and currently working on a master's. It seems no matter how much education one may receive it is not enough to find a job to cover the cost of the education. What will happen to my home, vehicle, children,etc.?? If I am not able to afford my education loans and daily living expenses???

My wife and I both have \$50K-\$60K of loan debt each. We both have good jobs, but a large percentage of our income is used to pay back student loans. There are no low interest consolidation options available. If there were, that would also help. The education process should be rewarding and create opportunities. For my wife and I it did the opposite. This is a major issue for my generation and those younger than me. Thanks for pursuing it.

I have no savings, no 401k. I had to move in with my parents just so I could afford to pay student loans. I have nothing saved for my son. I cannot buy a car. I cannot buy or rent a home thanks to more horrible credit and debt to income ratio. There is no relief in site.

When I graduated from high school in 2005 we didn't know much about the financial crisis that was headed our way. I bet many people did, but we were 17/18 years old, and looking ahead to college, getting a good paying job, and smooth sailing. VSAC was giving great assistance and I was able to graduate a private liberal arts college in 2009 with about \$18,000 of loan to pay back. Considering the cost of the school etc, I was very lucky. When my sister went to school VSAC wasn't able to give as much assistance (2008 she started) and she had much better grades than I had, she was valedictorian of her class. I'm now looking at getting my Master's since a BSW in Social Work doesn't leave you qualified for as many jobs as you would hope. I am hoping to start this fall, further adding to my school debt over the next two years. I am currently serving as an AmeriCorps member, so my loans are deferred right now. It is a real aggravation when jobs say you need to have a higher level of education and the assistance isn't there to help. Without a college education, how much can you be expected to contribute back into society? Both monetarily and professionally. We need to invest in the future, if we want that future to be better. Thank you for all your hard work Bernie, we really appreciate it.

Dear Senator Sanders:

I write to tell you how student loans affect my life.

I was born in a small Pennsylvania town. My father was disabled and my mother worked at a mom and pop insurance agency. They did not have money for my college education.

When it was time to go to college, I chose the cheap state school even though I got into much more prestigious, expensive institutions. At 18, I recognized that choosing the more expensive option would have me making loan payments into my 50's.

During college I borrowed only enough for tuition. I worked full time to pay for an apartment and living expenses. Unlike most of my classmates, I never borrowed a dime for a pizza or beer.

During my college summers, I interned at a large corporation in Baltimore. They offered me a job after my graduation. I graduated in 2009. The corporation also filed for bankruptcy in 2009, and my job offer was rescinded. After this misfortune, I chose to attend law school.

I attended the evening program at the University of Baltimore School of Law so that I could work full time. Work full time I did. I worked at a moving company until, after my 1L year, I was able to obtain employment as a law clerk at a local law firm. As I did while obtaining my undergraduate degree, I only borrowed the cost of tuition. I paid my living expenses out of my own pocket.

I graduated from law school this year, and I am currently studying for the bar examination. The total bill for my education exceeds \$180,000. Of this amount, \$70,000 are private loans.

I am aware of the various repayment plans offered (IBR, ICR) for the federal loans. However, this does not help me on the loans I have taken out from private institutions. I have a job offer for \$50,000. After taxes my take home pay will be \$1,500 every two weeks.

Compare this salary with my student loan payments. Under the IBR plan, my payments will be roughly \$450 a month. This is currently not enough to even cover the interest of those loans. These loans will balloon even more. As for the private loans, on a 15 year repayment plan, my monthly payment will be roughly \$750. This means I must live in the Washington, DC metro area on \$1,500 a month. While not impossible, there is no room for unexpected expenses.

Since the majority of my salary will be used to pay for student loans, I must forgo some things. I must forgo asking my girlfriend of two years to marry me. If we were to marry, she would be burdened with my debt, and my IBR payments would rise because her salary would be taken into account. This is something neither of us can afford as she has her own student loans.

Further, it looks as though I will never be able to purchase a home. With no extra money, I cannot save.

Finally, the biggest of my worries. I fear that I will never be able to have children. Bringing a child into this world in my current financial situation is just irresponsible. I will barely be able to support myself, let alone a child.

I was a kid from a small Pennsylvania town chasing the American Dream. Unfortunately, I think I found it. Whether we admit it or not, the new American Dream is working to pay off astronomical student loan debt. I am living the American Dream.

-John Lupfer

My wife and I have a household income near \$100,000/year, but you wouldn't know it. We can only afford one car, a small apartment, and basic essentials like food for the two of us. We are frugal with our money but we can't qualify for a house or graduate school because our monthly payments from our undergraduate student loans is about 30% of our monthly bills (and our payments increase per month each year). It totals around \$100,000.

It has destroyed my credit preventing me from becoming financially stable. My student loans are 40% Fed and the rest are private. The private loans are ruthless and unrelenting in their practice of charging fees and outrageous interest. I cannot stay above water and it is heartbreaking to think this is all happening because I wanted a higher education. I feel punished and really a second-class citizen. Something must change or this generation will fail and the repercussion will last for generations. What is done now is crucial for the future. PLEASE HELP!

I earned my bachelor's degree in 2011 and also acquired just over \$50,000 in federal loan debt over those four years. I would ideally love to go on and earn a masters degree, as that is now seemingly the minimum education required for any job that would pay enough to allow me to pay off my student loans in this lifetime. However, with the insanely high tuition costs, that still continue to rise, as well as the interest rates, going back to school is no longer an option for me. I must stick with my \$45k/year job as long as I can and just make ends meet. I have even considered not having children because there is no way I could afford to have them only earning that much. Especially since my significant other is over \$100k in debt with private loans as he was scammed into them at the age of 19 (now he is 31 and has monthly payments that are equal to half of his monthly income). He would claim bankruptcy in a heartbeat if he could, but alas, since they are private loans he can not. There appears to be no end in sight for his financial misery, brought on by heartless private loan companies who took advantage of a young man simply eager to attend college and earn a good living for himself.

I owe \$240 a month for federal, \$65 to AES, and Sallie mae wants \$1,500 a month. My interest rates on my private loans are as high as 13%. I dont have co-signers-thankfully. I cant afford my payments. I pay my federal and AES, but then I need to worry about food, shelter and transportation. I am doing what I can but its not enough. Please help to restore basic consumer protections to all student loans. Please dont forget about me for I fear changes for the better will only benefit current students. I just wanted an education and now I feel it was the worst decision I have ever made in my life.

I'm unable to pay off even the interest on my loans because I can't find full-time work in my field, Library Science. Librarians are hired part-time or their position is split into 2 paraprofessional positions to avoid paying a decent salary and/or so they don't have to provide health insurance. It's a disgrace. Everyone said going to college gave you better employment opportunities. I've yet to see them.

I'm trying to start a photography business and am sorely lacking in funds. I need about \$10,000 to buy equipment, which would allow me to expand my business significantly, but I can't save that with all of my debt. I am paying over \$600 a month on my loans and barely making a dent! I'd be putting that amount into the functional economy if I wasn't sending it all to my loans. How I am going to afford to buy health insurance, I have no idea. Finances are stretched as tight as they will go. My husband and I also tried to buy a house as that would lower our cost of living, but were rejected due to the size of my debt, so must continue renting when it would be cheaper to buy. We're putting off starting a family until the loans are under control...

I owe \$92,000 Dollars in private loans, where the monthly rates keep rising with the interest rate. I'm about to have to start paying my Federal loans, which I'm unsure of how I will do this on my current income. The fact that I cannot claim bankruptcy on my current loans, or refinance is a crime. How is it not criminal or predatory lending to give a 19 year old in community college \$30,000? And that was just the beginning of giving large amounts of money to someone who had no business receiving it. I'm currently a community health nurse, with no hope or dream of paying off my loans. I feel like my life is a waste with this much debt and have no conceivable way in which to pay it off. I'm planning my eventual default. Not because I want it. I just know that my current payment that increases every year is unsustainable. College was a waste of my time with

my current financial predicament. We need help but instead we are bickering about increased interest rates. The problem surpassed that a long time ago. Help us please.

The high cost of college and student loans has an affect on every decision I make - short and long term. With near \$200,000 in student debt, mostly private loans, I can forget about buying a car, or a house, and maybe even starting a family. I received a bachelor of arts five years ago and I am not even working in the field I got my degree in. Going to college is turning out to be one of the biggest mistakes of my life. In retrospect, I should have been a lot more careful about the decision to go to a for-profit college, but I was young, excited about a new opportunity, and did not realize the impact this would have on my life financially. If I could make the decision all over again, I would most likely opt out of going to college all together.

In 2011 I completed graduate school with roughly \$58,000 in student loans. As a first generation college student I was always taught that education was the only way to succeed and society has peddled that same mantra, convincing me to believe that the higher my level of education, the higher my chances of success. Little did I know that my family instilled a marketing scheme in me that only profits the BUSINESS of education. You can have all the degrees in the world, but without the proper experience you start out at the bottom of the barrel like everyone else and it is at the bottom that I find myself economically as I hold to these two worthless pieces of paper in a fickle job-market and price gauging society. As a single-parent with a Masters degree I have had to return home to my mother due to my inability to adequately provide for my daughter (as a government employee I have also been furloughed for the past 6-7 years), while repaying more in student loan payments than I do for monthly childcare. I am unable to adequately save for us a home and now with interest rates, home prices and student loan rates all rising simultaneously while jobs are scarce and wages are low, I may never achieve the dream of homeownership for my daughter and I. Emotionally and mentally I am taxed as I think about how today's hike serves as another setback and I see no end to repaying my debt. While I take full responsibility for taking out these loans, I don't think that it's fair that everyone gets a bail out besides those of us who's hardwork this country benefits from. Why do banks fair better on interest rates than citizens and then they are allowed to put us in the position we are in today? I should not be forced to live a lower quality of life than those welfare recipients I take care of via my hard earned taxed dollars. Something needs to be done about the increasing price of education and the detriment it is causing to families and society. Keeping rates low is a place to start.

My personal student loan crisis manifests itself in ways that are only tangentially connected to the process of receiving an education. I search for jobs by weeding out the ones that won't pay enough to satisfy my loans, or whose hours make a 2nd job impossible, putting internships out of the question and making a career I'm actually interested in even harder to come by. To add to the entitled millennial stereotype, I feel confronted with a minimum wage job market I went to school to avoid. I pass over minimum wage work because of my arrogant I'm-better-than-that attitude, sure, but I was told going to college would make that true. I feel my generation is being punished for listening to that advice from our elders and graduating high school during a financial crisis while those same elders kept raising tuition costs and offering us low paying jobs. No amount of blame-shifting will change my situation, I know, but for a country thirsty for well-educated individuals our messaging sure needs work. We explicitly tell kids to stay in school while implicitly expressing it isn't financially worth it for many people and many major subjects. We need that

situation to change, either by being honest about for whom college is meant or by lowering the costs, or both. The experiences I had in college are priceless, but the most priceless are hardly related to education. After compounding interests rates fully take effect, and assuming I pay the minimum amount each month, my loans will have nearly doubled the price of my education. Instead of paying \$50/hr of classroom time, I will have paid nearly 90\$/hr. For the sticker price of my diploma, I could have made similar memories many times over. The kind of knowledge I would have would certainly be different, but the knowledge I paid for and currently have hasn't gotten me as far, I believe, as the social/cultural knowledge I could have attained by other means. And the real issue, I could have done all that while contributing more to the economy. A possible long-term downshift in my personal quality of life doesn't mean much to the elders now in charge, but when that same downshift is felt by millions of people, it's a downshift for the country. I don't have plans to ever buy a house. A new car is a figment of my imagination. I don't go out to eat. I don't go shopping for anything outside a grocery store. I don't go anywhere, really, as gas has reached such precious existence in my life that it's almost only burned to take me to the job I do have and anyplace that might lead me to a job. My situation is not great, but I can't imagine what it's like for someone who went to school without the benefits I have received, like the support from my family and a partial scholarship, which I feel is a situation more common than my own. In short, college has had the opposite of its intended effect. I feel my life has been limited due to financial constrains and my prospects are not what they were promised to be. This weight is felt by millions across the country, compounding the situation like the interest rates that, with each pound, remind us that the poor decisions we made in college may never leave us. I may have just vented into a computer screen for an hour, but thanks for having the option to let us share.

the cost of college is very hard for me. I am 34 and am trying to "change my stars" as it were by getting a degree in Computer Science Information Technology. I have read books that say don't work while in school and you will avoid debt. Well, those books I guess are for people whose parents are very well off. Mine are not, I am paying for this alone, so I have to work. But do I work more now so that my grades suffer and it takes longer to graduate thus racking even more student loans costing the government more. or do I drop out and work with out a degree if i can find a job or go on well fare since most employers are not seeking high school grads with some college. what to do.

I have a Master's degree in Social Work and the loans that were required for me to earn that degree - a degree I need to do the work that I do - are higher than the salaries for most social work jobs. Knowing I have this huge debt hanging over my head affects me on a near-daily basis. I would love to go back to school for my Phd, but I simply can't afford to do so. I'm currently on track for the public service loan forgiveness program, but I still have about 8 years left and those 8 eight years must be in full-time employment. So if/when my husband and I decide to have children, we'll both be working full-time so that I can continue making qualifying loan payments. We have no family, though, to reach out to for free child care so we'll be burning through cash to pay child care expenses just so I can stay at a job that will qualify me for loan forgiveness in 8 years. We have to file our taxes separately so that my payments aren't affected. And if anything happens to the loan forgiveness program or my eligibility for it, then I would barely have any hope of ever paying the loan off. I might end up with the loan still over my head when I'm trying to send my own children to college. The work I do is important, vital even, to this country. It might sound cocky to say, but this country needs social workers like me. So if you want to keep us around, you need to keep social work a viable option for people and it's not right now with soaring tuition costs and rising loan interest rates.

I went to a wonderful graduate school in New York City for two years. Now, I am hostage to student loan debt that I feel I may never be able to repay due to the current job market and ballooning interest rates.

Please restore all of the very basic consumer bankruptcy protections and statutes of limitations for both private and federal student loans.

Thank you for all that you do concerning this matter. My entire generation depends on it.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Stehling

As a result of wishing to better myself through higher education, I have found myself struggling to survive independently as a 25 year old with a Master's Degree. Yes I have achieved a degree, of which I am proud, but I have also accumulated an immense amount of debt that will likely haunt me for the majority of my life. As a result of my daunting loan payments I find myself barely surviving on an income that should easily support a small family. Yes I have a job that I love, but at what cost? Our state alone pays thousands of dollars for individuals who do not work and do not have the goals that I have set for myself. They sit pretty, leisure time abundant, while I must sacrifice what little spare time I have working a second job, completely unrelated to the degree I worked so hard for, just to be able to pay my bills and keep food in my fridge. At what point do we say that enough is enough? What are we teaching future generations about education? That it is a poor decision because it will only lead to insurmountable debt? That they should not bother with education because it does not actually help you to better your life in the long run? If someone had told me, prior to my 5 ½ years of education, that I would be facing a debt that appears almost impossible to overcome after working so hard for my degree, I would likely not have chosen the path of continued education. It is beyond frustrating to think that I have worked so hard, only to find myself in a more difficult place financially; and I know that I am not alone in this. I would like to think that common sense would strike those who are actually in the position to assist people with educational debt and help them to decide to do what they can for people like me to decrease our debt and relieve this burden. Increasing interest rates on student loans is a poor decision and not one deserved by those who will be affected. I would like to think that our government would be able to realize that students, scholars, educated people working hard on a day to day basis should not be the target of further financial suffering.

I'm 40, still paying student loans after 14 years and have no retirement started. My student loan debt means I may not get to retire.

I received a BFA from Mass. College of Art in 1999. I still have not paid off my student load debt. I worked full-time during school so I had no life, but I graduated with only 22,000 in debt, that debt has prevented me from saving for retirement. I would love to go back and get my masters degree, or another bachelors, but I can't justify the loans I would have to take out again.

I graduated in 2011 and immediately got a job in Japan that paid roughly \$40k/year. This should have allowed me to save up and plan for my future, but instead I paid about \$2000 every single month to my student loans. I managed to nearly cut them in half within a year and a half, but still owe about \$25,000. The job has ended and as I look for work, I constantly feel this amount, at an average interest rate of about 5%, weighing me down. Education is free in many countries. This is a disgrace.

The high cost of my loans is ruining my life, and my retired parents' lives as well. The only way I can get rid of my debt to Sallie Mae involves my parents having to take out a home equity loan. Please restore all of the very basic consumer bankruptcy protections and statutes of limitations for

both private and federal student loans.

I received a B.S. in Sociology in 2009 and have not been able to find a job that utilizes the strong areas of my degree and life-experiences. It seems like the only available career options are: sales, medical, accounting, and I.T.... None of these fields are what I signed up for.

It seems like my B.S. degree is simply that: BS!

I defaulted on my loans in 2005, due to life situations. In 2007, I received help from my family to finish my degree. Not a single payment has been made because I simply cannot afford payments - if I made a good salary, then I would pay the government back on my own terms instead of them garnishing my wages or taking my tax returns. (By the way, the state of IL has taken a few of my hefty tax returns, only to say that I still owe the same amount... What the hell is that about???)

If Congress decides to raise the interest rates on student loans, you should ask:

- 1) If there's no type of job placement/market available for recent graduates, then how will the students pay off their loans? A minimum wage salary does not support both the cost of living and payments on student loans.
- 2) How are you going to make money from increasing student loan interest if you may never get it back? Also, consider how much longer it will take to pay off a student loan and how this will probably deter people from going to college.
- 3) What effect will this have on our social structure, primarily our economy?

America used to be #1 at almost everything, a leader.. now we're slowly rotting away, waiting to become a follower of other nations... this is truly a sad Independence Day.

Sen. Sanders, I appreciate all that you are doing and wished that you represented my state. In the future, I hope to see more Senators/Representatives like you.

I have been unable to buy a car or seriously look into owning a home since the size of my student loans is essentially a home mortgage.

Dear Bernie,

I am grateful for the years of education that I received and funded through various sources-- grants, scholarships, loans and part-time work. I have a Bachelor's degree and some eight years later I received my Master's degree. I was fortunate to have parents who wholeheartedly supported my endeavors in spirit, but who financially could not provide for my education.

I moved to Vermont about four years ago. Besides a brief stint in Madison, WI, I have come to call Vermont home. Unfortunately, I was laid off this spring and it has been extremely difficult to find adequate positions in rural Vermont for a women with a decade of both work and educational experience. I have found that Vermont is by far and wide the hardest place to seek adequate employment for a mid to senior-level position. The labor market is very undercut by entry-level graduates or even professionals who have little experience and will work for the same. The geography of Vermont, although charming, also does not allow for economic growth in rural areas. I've found that if I don't live near Burlington, I have little chance of finding a good position. Currently, I'm commuting almost two hours to a part-time consultant job in Burlington. This cannot sustain me, although I'd definitely grateful to have some work in the area where my passions lay.

The biggest challenge I have with my student loans is that I cannot take advantage of a lower

interest rate. My loans were consolidated both in 2001 and then again after Graduate School. So my rate is fixed at 6.25%. You can imagine the shock of the interest that just keeps pushing my loan balance higher and higher. I cannot make payments on my loans while underemployed and unemployed. To be honest I don't have a lot of sympathy for students right now who are able and were able to take advantage of the 3% interest rates. From the attempts that I've made, I have been told by the Dept. of Education that I will never be able to refinance my rates for a lower rate. That is a shame. I believe this is a horrible oversight on the U.S. Government. I did not know when I was a student that I would be choosing between a student loan payment (when I can make it) or perhaps a house payment. At this point owning a house is not on my radar and even staying in Vermont does not seem possible with the state of job creation and the high cost of living. To me student loans have become the modern day definition of servitude. I feel that I will forever be indentured to the U.S. Government and they in return continue to impress upon its citizens that education is the only way.

Bernie, if you could find or research additional solutions for individuals like me who have accumulated student loans but cannot now 'refinance' them within the Government system for the lower rates, I would be incredibly grateful.

Warm regards,
Sarah Heidebrecht