

Hillary's (rich) folks just like us

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

"Dead broke?" As Inego Montoya memorably phrased it: "You keep using that word. I don't think that word means what you think it means." But "dead broke" was how Hillary Clinton described herself as to ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer during an interview ironically hosted in Clinton's \$5 million Washington, D.C., mansion. Later, she told the British newspaper Guardian that she and her husband "weren't truly well off."

Of course not. Their net worth is only about \$100 million. Making rent must be quite a struggle.

Besides, they had filled their money bin "through dint of hard work," as she phrased it.

Of course it's hard work. Why, just recently she had to hire a ghostwriter for a tiny fraction of her \$14 million book advance. That book, by the way, is selling at a pace that is just a fraction of that set by Sarah Palin's memoirs a few years ago.

Roughly 13 years ago, after establishing her residence in New York state by purchasing a \$1.7 million home in Chappaqua, N.Y., Hillary initiated her campaign for that state's U.S. Senate seat with what she called a "listening tour." I think that we may now conclude that she was listening with a tin ear.

Wealth is awkward for Hillary and her supporters. After all, just two years ago her party made Mitt Romney's wealth an issue. With his fortune, how could he understand the struggles of the little people? But the Clintons' estimated wealth is roughly similar to Romney's and was accumulated much faster.

Romney earned his fortune by creating and reviving businesses. The Clintons made their money mostly by giving speeches. Mrs. Clinton demands about \$200,000 per speech. She recently charged the University of Nevada, Las Vegas \$225,000. Coincidentally, UNLV just increased tuition by 4 percent. Mrs. Clinton's husband rakes in three times that much for opening his mouth. He recently charged \$700,000 to deliver a speech in Nigeria.

NBC News pays their daughter \$600,000 per year for doing essentially nothing.

Now, I have no problem with the Clintons or anybody else getting rich. Most of the time, when people get rich, they do so in the course of creating wealth for others. That certainly describes how Romney made his money. Although it's beyond my economic understanding how listening to anything coming out of the mouths of either of the Clintons generates a net gain in wealth.

The problem is that, after making the case that Romney's wealth disqualified him from the office of the president, the Democrats will have to make the case that the same rules don't apply to the Clintons. They're just like normal people.

Hillary's just like the rest of us, except that she hasn't touched the wheel of a car in two decades or so. It has probably been longer than that since she has poured her own cup of coffee. She flies around the country in a private jet, carbon footprint be damned. And who can forget her husband's lament in January 2001, when he admitted that he didn't know how to place a phone call for himself and that he found the prospect of dialing for himself daunting?

Not content with sticking her foot into her mouth, Hillary told Britain's premier left-wing newspaper, The Guardian, that she understands the middle class because, unlike so many rich people, she and her husband pay taxes.

Except that she doesn't. At least not if she can avoid them. Although both Bill and Hillary have both advocated estate taxes as a means of preventing the inherited concentration of wealth, they have put much of their own wealth into a trust that allows them to evade such taxes when they pass away.

The lawyer fees required to set up something like that certainly exceeds the net worth of the people whom Hillary claims to share common experience with.

Oh, and by the way, when their daughter Chelsea was married in 2010, Bill and Hillary spent \$3 million on the event, including \$200,000 for flowers, \$30,000 for booze, \$125,000 for food and \$600,000 for tents. All of this was put together by the wedding planner they hired for \$200,000.

No one should begrudge the Clintons and their wealth, but the Clintons should not insult the people who actually work for a living by claiming brotherhood with those who genuinely do struggle to make ends meet.

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