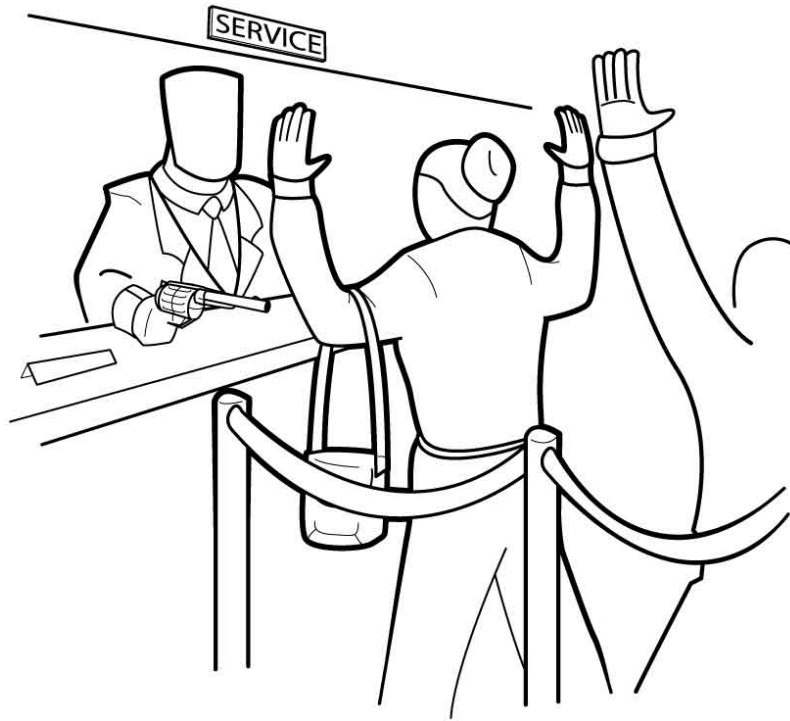


THE PLAYERS



The first panacea for a misguided nation is inflation of the currency; the second is war. Both bring a temporary prosperity; both bring a permanent ruin. But both are the refuge of political and economic opportunists.

-Ernest Hemingway

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If you would be wealthy, think of saving as well as getting.
-Benjamin Franklin

Someone once said, “Steer your destiny by the light of the stars rather than the lights from passing ships.” Ships pass in the night. But even with ships that have “promise and opportunity” as their cargo, their lights are not a very steady gauge for setting one’s sights. The stars on the other hand are immutable. The following section contains individuals and institutions we encounter in our everyday lives. Some are the passing lights of pirates; some are illusory stars; while others are undercharged beacons of hope whose brightest days lie ahead.

The difference in these lights might determine whether you are temporarily distracted, significantly sidetracked, or if you are simply "Played in Full."

Four Different Types of Players

All Players are not created equal, nor do they wear a big “P” branded on their foreheads. They basically fall into four main groups. The primary differences between the groups are 1) the intent, 2) the obvious nature of the harm, and 3) the duration of the damage.

Pathological Incurable Malevolent Player (PIMP)

The Players in this group are aggressive, fanatical, and ruthless in their pursuit of wealth and capital. There is no trick too low or risk too high for the Players in this group. They know that the attaining of wealth is part and parcel of the American dream and sanctioned at practically every level by every institution. This rationale has provided the impetus for these wolfish sociopaths to do whatever it takes to make that dream come true, even if in the process they rain nightmares on those in their wake. The more people they play, use and exploit, the more they stand to gain. Even though their tactics are somewhat depraved in nature, long-term damage is usually not their goal, because by nature, this Player seeks quick and easy capture versus lasting rewards. The damage is terrible and swift, but most of the victims eventually recover. These Players usually cause their own undoing. Because of their unmitigated greed they will eventually run afoul of the law and land in jail... or worse.

Passive Opportunistic Player (POP)

This group is the most popular and constitutes the largest number of Players. They don't actively set out with a goal of preying on the vulnerable and unsuspecting; rather, they are Players of opportunity. Due to their stature, access, timing, and other factors, many dubious enterprises avail themselves to this group. They are often introduced to the Player lifestyle by others and often become their pawns. Rather than refusing the opportunity and favoring the greater good, members of this group often enrich themselves, often to the detriment of others. In their quest for enrichment, they might even justify their deeds by doing some short-term good along the way; however the good is negligible and the overall results of their actions are negative and self-serving. This group stands the greatest likelihood of being both the Player and the Playee. There is a very high turnover in this group. After a forced revelation, most leave the Player life and go on to lead normal and productive lives.

Philanthropic Accidental Player (PAP)

The third group of Players is incidental in nature. Their objective is usually not to enrich themselves by harming others. In fact, they are often unaware that their actions are doing harm. Whether by conditioning, indoctrination, or misinformation, they have usually inherited their tactics from those who preceded them. Even though the intent of this group is generally honorable, their actions can be quite detrimental. A small number of these Players often change their ways after a self-enlightenment; however, due to a firmly entrenched belief that their actions are beneficial, most refuse to change, entertain the thought of change, or may even ostracize those who suggest change. An even smaller number of this group may go on to become PIMP's or POP's, but, more so than any other, this group has several lifetime members. Not surprisingly, those under the influence of this group endure the most long-term and pandemic repercussions.

Positive Enlightened Player (PEP)

Finally, there is a rare group of Players that actually offset the effects of the previous three groups. Some of the members in this group are reformed members of the other less-benign Player groups. The same skills they acquired during their greedy days are now used for the good of the community. They are devout in their efforts and don't hesitate to use chicanery, subterfuge and other borderline tactics, but in an ironic twist, they use it to undo some of the very wrongs they committed in the past. These modern-day Robin Hoods often turn their Player skills on the members of the other Player groups and selflessly return the spoils back to the community.