The deserving rich

EDITOR: Once again, columnist David Brooks' wisdom and insights have set the 95 percent of us financially illiterate citizens on the straight and narrow ("Income Inequality Debate Muddies Issue," Sunday). I had no idea that the growing wealth of the top 5 percent was because of their tremendous work ethic and their mating habits. Up to now, I wrongly believed it was due to a rigged tax code, corrupt politicians and giving $85 billion in taxpayer dollars each month to bail out financial terrorists.

I will be sure to start pondering "the morally fraught social and cultural roots of the problem," as Brooks suggests we all do. I will begin with such mind-numbing puzzles as why Wal-Mart and McDonald's workers qualify for food stamps while their CEOs receive millions, or how the CEO of United Healthcare earned $1.7 billion in executive pay, to better grasp the complexity of this global wealth transfer.

I look forward to these top-notch journalists keeping us all up-to-date on who will win this race to accumulate the most wealth. According to a recent Oxfam report, the world's wealthiest 85 people now have as much money as the poorest 3.5 billion people, so it shouldn't be too long now.

To suggest that sharing "beautiful Bennett Valley" with them will somehow spoil it is insulting. On top of every other disadvantage these kids have endured, to stigmatize them like this is heartless.

JOHN MASTICK
Sebastopol

A healing path?

EDITOR: I was inspired by Phyllis Rosenfield's vision for counteracting prejudice and disunity through the old-fashioned art of listening ("Cloverdale Kiosk Offers a View into Others' Lives," Jan. 13). Inter-generational community projects aren't uncommon, but Listening for a Change seems to re-imagine a typically artificial exchange and make it profound and something worth sharing with the community.

I believe this project lends itself to the growing community divide following the tragic death of Andy Lopez. Whether justice — however one may define it — is ever found in this case, the number of young people feeling dissociated from representatives and law enforcement doesn't posit a hopeful or productive future. Listening for a Change seems to offer an alternative form of activism that paves the way for reconciliation and healing.

ANDREW JOPSON
Cloverdale

Someone's cousin or crony has been collecting interest on these bonds for 23 years, and only about 40 percent of the principle has been retired.

Will you warn voters about exorbitant interest charges or wasteful spending for new school bonds or how much more we have to pay on the old ones?

Will you comment on the fiscal irresponsibility of Mayor Scott Bartley? You reported that he hired a psychologist to conduct city employee performance reviews, but he admits that he is clueless as to what this is costing.

It isn't entirely pension costs that have caused the deterioration of public services. The Press Democrat should better inform us about wasteful spending on projects of little value.

JANN EDWARDS
Santa Rosa

Kristar's sale

EDITOR: I read the article about the sale of Kristar Enterprises and was very pleased and proud to see that the name Kristar and the employees will remain ("SR Drain Maker Kristar Sold," Friday).

However, I would like to set the record straight. I was the founder of Kristar Enterprises. I started the business in 1993 and was the CEO and marketing director from 1993 until 2003. In 1996, Kristar became a California corporation and a 100 percent woman-