

Notes on the Genesis and Functions of Racism—From Columbus to the Present

A Case Study of United States

Folks/Guys/People:

Please read these instructions **super carefully**, before you go any further:

- You must study and digest everything in this reading: the text, footnotes, textboxes, images, etc. Warning: Do Not screw up on the images! ← **Read this note again.**
- The purpose of this reading is to acquaint you with a very important aspect of U.S. history: the **organic** connection between **capitalism**, **race**, and **law** from the perspective of **procedural** and **authentic** democracy. It is not enough to show that racism continues to exist; *we have to go beyond that* to show **why**, and what can be done about it.
- This reading is NOT responsible for what happened in history. If you have complaints about this history, please text God. :)
- If you do not know the meaning of certain words, look them up in the online COURSE GLOSSARY available [here](#), and/or any online dictionary, such as <https://www.dictionary.com/>
- The **bibliographic sources** on which this document is based are the readings in PART A accessible via the copyright page [here](#). While you are NOT required to go through these sources, it is nevertheless highly recommended that you get a taste by glancing through them.

- 1.** About eight hundred years ago, in the twelfth century in medieval Europe (a very small geographic area on the Western edge of the Eurasian landmass) a *conjunction of **fortuitously propitious** historical factors* leads to the beginnings of **merchant capitalism**¹. However, as an economic system, merchant capitalism, compared to the very brutal *industrial capitalism* to come, is not (and will never be) the dominant economic system for most parts of Europe.

Fortuitously Propitious Historical Factors

These factors would include: the birth of the Islamic Empire; the **Great East to West Diffusion**; the Crusades; the Renaissance; *nationalism*; the Protestant Reformation; invention of the joint-stock company; development of banking; and the planetary presence of **atmospheric winds** that make oceans navigable.

¹ This is capitalism based primarily on trade in luxury commodities and not industrial manufacturing by a very tiny group of people, the *merchant class*.

- 2.** About three hundred years later, merchant capitalism evolves to produce the **Great West to East European Maritime Project** (the quest for a commercial sea route to the **riches of the east**—e.g. the *Columbian Project*) to circumnavigate the **Islamic Empire**, which stretches all the way from China in the East to Spain (until 1492) in the West. It leads to a **tragic, tragic inadvertent** European encounter with the indigenous peoples of the Americas whose lands the Europeans claim they have “discovered”—**fake news!** In fact, in an infamous 1823 U.S. Supreme Court case *Johnson v. M'Intosh* [McIntosh], the Court in a unanimous decision, establishes the bogus principle of the “Doctrine of Discovery” (which held that all Native American lands belonged to the Federal government as the representative of the European colonists who had “discovered” these lands—regardless of the fact that the original inhabitants, Native Americans, were still living there), in direct contravention of the **natural law of prior claim**².
- 3.** The Columbian Project³, which is launched in 1492, is also a **racialized project** arising out of a racialized European mindset that emerged through the centuries-long conflict between the Christian Roman Empire and the Islamic Empire; from the perspective of Native Americans, it leads to **illegal** European **settler colonization** of the Americas⁴.

² This is a universal law in the Aristotelian sense, as ancient as the planet itself, derived from the condition of being human (in contrast to the sources of *positive law*) that postulates that those who have occupied a particular territory *before all others* are naturally entitled to that territory; consequently, they have prior claims over it *against all interlopers*. The concept of citizenship by birth, known as *jus soli*, for instance, derives its legitimacy from this law. As may be surmised, the abrogation of this law is only possible under conditions of violence. The profound and sobering implications of this law can be deduced from the following thought experiment: What if, tomorrow, Native Americans were to acquire the power sufficient to propel them to the headship (in all senses of the word, political, military, etc.) of the Americas? How would citizenship of the present descendants of all those who have migrated into the Americas over the centuries, literally at the point of the gun, be now defined? A taste of the answer—however repugnant it may be to all those who believe in the desirability of a multicultural democracy in that country, and anywhere else for that matter—is to be found today in the ongoing events in Zimbabwe (Will South Africa be next?) where the moral claims to citizenship by its white residents have been proven to have rested all along on armed political power that slipped out of their hands with independence in the 1980s. In other words, regardless of how one wishes to prevaricate on this matter: citizenship in lands that were colonized by Europeans, *where the original inhabitants are still present today*, ultimately resides in monopoly over power, and not moral claims.

³ The Columbian Project, whose historical antecedents lay in the early phase of the European Renaissance and involving three small ships the *Santa María*, the *Pinta*, and the *Niña* sailing from the Spanish port of Palos on August 3, 1492—the same year in which, not coincidentally, the centuries-long *Reconquista* launched by various European kingdoms to retake the steadily weakening nearly 800-year old Islamic Iberia culminated in the reluctant but peaceful transfer of the last Muslim stronghold of Granada in Spain to the Spanish monarchy—inadvertently linked together, for both good and ill, the three continents of Africa, the Americas, and Eurasia in a process that historians call the **Columbian Exchange**.

⁴ Wrong! The Native Americans to whom the Americas belonged never gave the Europeans permission to come and settle in their lands—regardless of all the turkeys and apple pies you consume on Thanksgiving Day, which many Native Americans correctly refer to as the **Day of Mourning**.

4. In the Americas (and elsewhere too—e.g. South Africa), European **settler colonization** leads to the **genocide** of the indigenous peoples and the **enslavement** of Africans via the emergence of the *Atlantic slave trade*, as, initially, the marriage between *cane sugar production* and African enslaved labor, developed through trial and error in places like Spain, is imported into the Caribbean and South America⁵. These horrendously unjust perpetrations are justified through the **ideology of the "Other"**—specifically **racism**, which is *institutionalized* through custom and **law** (e.g. the **Slave Codes**), against the backdrop of a perverted racialized interpretation of Biblical teachings (e.g. the *Hamitic Theory*)⁶, and later, **pseudo-scientific racism** (e.g. *craniometry*).

Race and the Columbian Project

From a macrohistorical perspective, the Columbian Project incorporated within it not simply the ambitions of one person and the monarchy that backed him but was also driven by three European-inspired sub-projects that had evolved within the crucible of the roughly 800-year long blood-soaked crusade against the Muslims, the “racial project” (enslavement, dispossession, and colonization of other peoples and lands), the “capitalist project” (merchant capitalism), and a “religious project” (Christian proselytism), and the execution of which, over time, would effectively render the Americas a geographic, economic, and cultural extension of the European peninsula and thereby laying the groundwork for the economic domination to come of the planet by a hitherto historically marginal and ethnically diverse peoples, the Europeans.

⁵ Later, other commercial crops, also taken from other cultures outside Europe, would be added to **plantation agriculture**, such as cotton (originally from India—though Native Americans had also grown indigenously derived cotton before the arrival of Europeans), rice (originally from China), tobacco (originally from within the Americas), and indigo (originally from Peru). Note: the sugar cane plant is originally from New Guinea, but the technology of cane sugar production was developed in India.

⁶ Those familiar with the Bible will recall that in it there are two versions of Noah, the righteous and blameless patriarch who is saved from the Great Flood by a prior warning from God that involves the construction of an ark by Noah (Genesis 6: 11–9: 19); and the drunken Noah of Genesis 9: 20–9: 27 who inflicts a curse on one of his three sons, Ham. It is the latter version that is of relevance here. Here is how the story goes in the King James version of the Bible:

20. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21. And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. 22. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. 23. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. 24. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. 25. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. 26. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. 27. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

Thus was born the Biblical curse of Ham (which in reality was a curse on his son Canaan). Initially, in the period of Latin Christianity of the Middle Ages, the curse of Ham was used as a justification for the existence of slavery in a generic sense; that is, without reference to skin color. Considering that slavery during this period encompassed all manner of European ethnicities and was not restricted to people of African descent alone, this is not surprising. However, by the time one arrives in the seventeenth-century when the enslavement of Africans is now well underway in the Americas, the curse of Ham becomes the justification for this enslavement; that is Ham and his progeny have been transformed into an accursed black people ordained by God to be slaves of white people (the

5. In United States, the development of a slave-based agricultural economy in the seventeenth century leads to **class formation** comprising four main classes: the white *ruling elite* (the planter aristocracy); the *yeomanry* (smallholder land-owning whites, and therefore not rich enough to own slaves); *land-less whites* (too poor to own land, let alone slaves); and the enslaved Africans. However, class formation does not necessarily lead to strong **class-consciousness** among two of the four classes: the enslaved African-Americans, and the land-less whites. While the landless whites do **not** have a common economic and cultural interest with the other whites, their weak class-consciousness is overpowered by "**race-consciousness**," meaning their concept of **whiteness**—fueled by the **ideology of racism** propounded by the ruling elites, **together with racist laws**—helps to bind them to the other whites. Among the enslaved, a major political and "lifestyle" division emerges between those who work in the fields and those who work directly for the master (e.g. servants and overseers).

The Slave Codes

Between 1680-1682, the State of Virginia adopts the *Slave Codes* (rules governing the conduct of the enslaved), patterned on the slave codes in the Caribbean where the colonial exploitation of slave labor is already more than a century old, that would be the template for slave codes to come in other states. Note also that Virginia legislatively adopts the doctrine of *Partus sequitur ventrem* (from Roman civil law), thereby establishing the rule that if a mother was an enslaved person then so were all her children.

6. In the Atlantic world, by means of a marriage between **labor** stolen from Africa, **land-based resources** stolen from Native Americans, and self-developed European capitalist entrepreneurship, enough capital is generated in Europe (specifically England) to finance the **industrial revolution**, which gets underway in England in the mid-seventeenth century on the basis of a crop produced primarily through slave labor: **cotton** (the raw material for the textile industry).

7. Soon the Americas become, *in economic terms*, a geographic extension of Europe (though separated by a navigable ocean), thereby producing a divided world of two: the **Euro-American ecumene**, versus the **Afro-Asian ecumene**—where the first, over a period of several centuries, would eventually overtake and subjugate the other militarily, economically, and politically by means of **empire-building** (involving a blood-soaked armed aggression and conquest and manifest by such forms as settler colonialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism). This capitalist-driven development is justified by means of the **ideology of the "Other,"** in the form of racism/ethnicism and *Christian proselytism*.

Industrial Capitalism

Industrial capitalism refers to an economic **ideology** and **practice** based on *limitless accumulation* of wealth *for its own sake* (that is, it is not connected to human needs), by a select few, the *capitalist class*, through **monopolization** and **exploitation** of land, labor, and capital, which is made possible, at first, by **armed duress**—aided and abetted by the **ruling elites** (comprising the capitalist class *and* its political allies).

progeny of Japheth) in perpetuity. (How this racist transformation takes place, is a story in itself, and for those who want to pursue it, it is available under the term "Hamitic Theory" [here](#).)

8. The onset of the industrial revolution and its arrival in United States toward the end of the eighteenth century begins the process of the abolition of slavery in the North (roughly a hundred years before the abolition of slavery throughout the country following the Civil War), where plantation agriculture, because of climate, is not possible. However, even in the emerging non-slave based states of the North, the mindset of **whiteness** blunts **class divisions** between the white ruling elite and the rest of the whites who begin to morph into a distinct **working class**. They cooperate with the maintenance of **racial segregation** between *free blacks* and whites, as slavery is phased out.



Louisiana Purchase

In 1803, the French sold to the U.S. a vast colonial territory (as if it was theirs in the first place; it belonged to Native Americans) spanning from the Canadian border in the north to Louisiana in the South, following France's abandonment of the idea of building a French colonial empire in the Americas upon their great defeat in the *Haitian Revolution* in the same year. Hence, one can argue here that *indirectly* black people in Haiti helped to kickstart the U.S. Civil War.

9. As the United States develops economically, the colonial ruling elites enter into competition with the British ruling elites, which, eventually, give rise to grievances against British colonial rule. Now, even though the British (at an enormously great financial and human cost to itself had defeated the French in the *Seven Year War* (also known as the *French and Indian War*), 1754-1763, the colonial ruling elites express their gratitude by declaring independence from Britain just a few years later, who they hypocritically charge with "enslaving" them because of British colonial taxation policies and other rules and regulations. However, the straw that breaks the camel's back, from the perspective of the colonists, is, arguably, the **Royal Proclamation of 1763** that forbids the colonists from taking over the lands of Native Americans west of the Appalachian Mountains and who also are now declared to be under the protection of the British Crown.

10. In the preamble to the *U.S. Declaration of Independence*, issued on July 4, 1776 by the then thirteen colonies, the colonial ruling elites strike a revolutionary blow against the dictatorship of monarchies when they state in the preamble: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all [persons] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." However, they do not have in mind the enslaved **African Americans**, or **Native Americans**, or **women**, when they write these powerful words. (In fact, in the Preamble, Native Americans are labeled as "merciless Indian Savages," and are considered the source of one more grievance among the many listed by the document against the British Crown. The War of Independence in reality is a disaster for Native Americans.) Even the **Constitution** that is adopted in 1788 after the *War of Independence* (1776-1783) had been won, with French help no less, excludes all these groups—they would have to fight their own battles for democratic inclusion in decades to come.

11. The industrial revolution is accompanied by the rise of **industrial capitalism** as the *dominant* economic system; *eventually*, all other forms are marginalized. European industrial capitalism depends on the **monopolization** and **exploitation** of internal and external economic resources by the **ruling elites** (which comprise the **capitalist class** and its **political allies**) through **plunder**, entrepreneurship, and capital—initially generated during the merchant capitalism phase. With respect to the European masses, it is also justified by means of the ideology of the “Other” (in this case, **classism**—the ideology of the *supremacy of the rich*—and **pseudo-meritocracy**). Over the course of about a hundred years, European societies *in their entirety* are now forced by ruling elites (also known as the **bourgeoisie**) to participate in this new economic system, as the feudal system is dismantled; it is a brutal process and it would give rise to millions upon millions of **European refugees** emigrating to other lands: Australia, Argentina, Canada, South Africa, the United States, and so on.

12. In United States, an economic division arises between a fast-growing slave-free *abolitionist-oriented* industrializing North and a slave-based industrially backward **agricultural** South, which eventually leads to a brutal war, the **Civil War** (1861-1865)—it is a brutal war because for the first time in human history weaponry, *but not military tactics*, enter the industrial age with devastating results. (More soldiers died in the Civil War than in all the wars *combined* that the U.S. has ever fought to date. Think about that.) At the beginning, the key issue for the North is *secession* by the South from the Union (not slavery per se), however, for the South the key issue is slavery—especially with regard to the new states that are being admitted into the Union that are being carved out of the remaining **Native American lands** in the period 1803 to 1854, acquired through conquest (*Mexican-American War*, a U.S.-instigated war of aggression against Mexico, 1846-1848) and “purchase”—the *Louisiana Purchase*. By the time the War ends, however, slavery has become an issue for all sides, leading to the adoption of the **Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments** (known as the *Reconstruction Amendments*)—aimed at restoring the rights of African Americans as human beings and

The American Revolution

The War of Independence is a revolutionary war, but it is a revolution led from above (the colonial bourgeoisie), not from below (the masses). This is a very important point to note because for all its power and majesty, the U.S. Constitution that emerges on the backs of the people who fought and died in this war is *not* a people’s document; it is a bourgeoisie’s document. If it had been a people’s document, it would have gone beyond **procedural democracy** to include also *specific provisions* in support of that phrase in the Preamble, “*the pursuit of Happiness*,” that would have guaranteed and protected the rights of the people to **authentic democracy in a capitalist society**. Authentic democracy, in essence, is about **equitably** securing access for *all* human beings to the four fundamental needs: *food, shelter, health, and security*. (Consider: Of what use is freedom of speech if you are about to starve to death, for example?)

The Fourteenth Amendment

In addition to the *Bill of Rights*, from the perspective of building a democratic country, the Fourteenth Amendment is one of the most powerful amendments to the Constitution. Notice that it comes out of the struggles of African Americans for freedom. However, it must also be pointed out that this Amendment did *not* apply to those Native Americans who retained connections with their reservations (a majority of them at that time) and who therefore did not pay taxes. Native Americans were granted citizenship *in their own land* by the descendants of the colonists in 1924 by means of the Snyder Act, formally known as the *Indian Citizenship Act*. Question: why are Native Americans referred to as “Indians”—they are not originally from India, are they? (Fake news)

as U.S. citizens, which they have been denied since they were first forcibly brought into the country beginning some two hundred and fifty years earlier.

13. The *Fourteenth Amendment* (1868), is a response to an infamous Supreme Court case, *Dredd Scott v. Sanford* (1857), involving an enslaved African American by the name of *Dred Scott* who was seeking freedom on grounds that he and his family had been taken by their master to live in states that forbade slavery (Illinois and Wisconsin), and therefore were now free. In a majority opinion, the Court had denied them their freedom and even went further by stating that the Scotts had no right to sue their master, or anyone else, in any court of law because *as persons of African descent they were not citizens of United States*. It did not matter that enslaved African Americans, like the Scotts, were technically citizens by birth. In that one ruling, the Court declared, in effect, that the more than two centuries of African American presence in United States was of no consequence when it came to the matter of citizenship—*all African Americans, free or unfree, were stateless*. The Court went even further; it declared that Congress did not have the power to prohibit slavery in the new states that were emerging. What the Fourteenth Amendment does is that it restores the right of citizenship to not only African Americans, but to **all persons** “*born or naturalized in the United States*.” (Citizenship Clause—follows the principle of *jus soli*, derived from English common law) However, the Amendment does not stop here, it also forbids any state from passing/enforcing laws that in any way abrogates any of the rights and protections of citizens enshrined in the constitution, e.g. the **Bill of Rights** (Privileges or Immunities Clause); or denies **any person** the *due process of law* (Due Process Clause); or nullifies for **any person** *equal protection before the law* (Equal Protection Clause).

Radical Reconstruction

The period of *Radical Reconstruction* was instituted, via the *Reconstruction Acts* of 1867-68, by the same people in the U.S. Congress who had pushed for the abolition of slavery via the Thirteenth Amendment; that is, people such as Pennsylvania Representative *Thaddens Stevens* and Massachusetts Senator *Charles Sumner* who represented the most progressive section (termed *Radicals*) of the nascent Republican Party of that period. The fundamental purpose of Radical Reconstruction was to make sure that the newly emancipated African Americans were given the same rights as those enjoyed by white Americans. President Andrew Johnson, an ineffectual president and a racist to boot who succeeded President Abraham Lincoln, was opposed to the Reconstruction Acts. Spearheaded by the Radical Republicans, the House **impeached** him—the first time in U.S. history this had ever happened—but they failed to remove him from office because of lack of sufficient votes in the Senate. (Guys, can you think of any other president in recent times who has been the subject of an impeachment effort that has gone nowhere?)

14. The *Fifteenth Amendment* (1870) gives African American males the right to vote, which, however, within a few years is nullified in practice through **racist discriminatory devices**, including the routine use of violence and terror (e.g. **lynchings**). The reason for preventing them from voting is to ensure that the supremacy of the former slave-owning white ruling elites who had ruled the South before the Civil War is restored. In a democracy, the only way you can get rid of tyranny is through the ballot box; and African American voters know that. However, many of them pay with their lives for attempting to exercise their right to vote. In the end, with the termination of what is known as the period of **Radical Reconstruction** (1867-1877) by the ruling elites in Washington, as they politically compromise for power, via the secret **Compromise of 1877**, by sacrificing Radical Reconstruction (which the Southern ruling elites hated with a passion)—comes to be known as the **Great Betrayal**—they are powerless to defeat the white

ruling elites at the polls because of their inability to exercise their right to vote, due to the concerted armed violence and terror perpetrated by the KKK and other terrorist groups. Additionally, the U.S. Supreme Court also does its dastardly bit in **voter suppression** via its ruling in **United States v. Reese** (1876), in which the Court's majority erroneously state that the Fifteenth Amendment does not automatically confer the right to vote on African American males.

The Great Migration

The racist terrorism of the Jim Crow South, combined with other events—such as, the First World War (1914-1918); the deleterious consequences of the *Great Depression* (1929-1939) in agriculture in the South; and the Second World War (1939-1945)—leads to the mass migration of African Americans from the South to the North, known as the **Great Migration**. It is estimated that in the period 1916 to 1970 some six million African Americans moved to the North, thereby becoming an *urban* people (whereas before they had been a predominantly *rural* people). From the perspective of mounting a struggle against Jim Crow, the Great Migration is a fortuitously propitious event because it is easier to organize politically an urbanized people, compared to a rural people.

15. With the ending of Radical Reconstruction, and with the use of widespread terror directed at both black and white Republicans, the former white ruling elites of the South (represented by the Democratic Party) come back into power. They quickly move to reinstitute a version of the *Slave Codes* that come to be known as the **Black Codes** or **Jim Crow** laws that institutionalize racial segregation in all aspects of society. Here, the Supreme Court also moves in to do its dastardly part in the racial oppression of all peoples of color with its ruling in another infamous case known as **Plessy v. Ferguson** (1896) in which the majority opinion of the Court nullifies the *Equal Protection Clause* of the Fourteenth Amendment by coming up with the bogus doctrine of "**separate but equal**." At the same time, African Americans lose their right to vote through chicanery and violence throughout the South. The white ruling elites are now free to exploit African American labor once again, albeit by using a modified version of slavery called "share-cropping," which involves **debt-bondage**. Violence, e.g. through **lynchings** (murders of African Americans and others by white mobs in public), also continues apace to make sure that there is no resistance by African Americans to racial segregation⁷. Racial segregation, however, is not restricted only to the South, it spreads to other parts of the country as well⁸. Racial segregation continues today, but mainly in the form of **residential segregation**.

⁷ Even the U.S. Congress refuses, as in an earlier effort (the 1922 *Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill*), to pass the 1934 *Wagner-Connigan Anti-Lynching Bill* because of opposition from some conservative Senators. In the end, Congress never enacted an anti-Lynching bill, and even when it apologized for this gross infamy in 2005, believe it or not, there were some conservative Congresspersons who refused to sign on to the apology—the fact that words are cheap was still not enough to propel them to join their colleagues who had signed on.

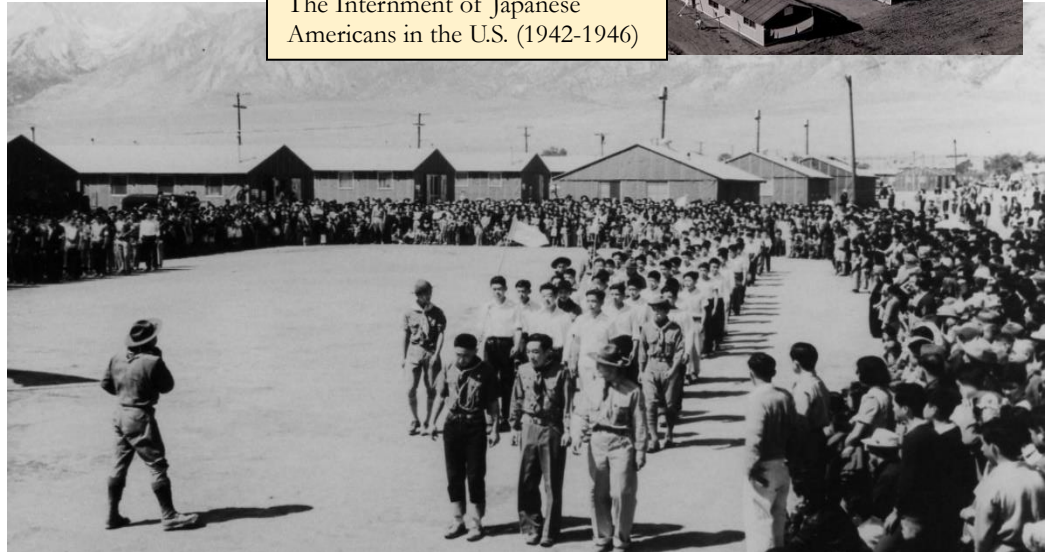
⁸ It must also be pointed out that the white racism did not affect only African Americans; all people of color across the country, to varying degrees, were targets in one way or another over the centuries (and up to the present). Consider, for example, legislation/court rulings such as these: in 1830, the **Indian [Native American] Removal Act** is passed by Congress, which leads to the infamous **ethnic cleansing** of 1838-39 known as the "**Trail of Tears**"; in 1850, California legislates the **Indenture Act** (euphemistically titled *An Act for the Government and Protection of the Indian*) that allows for the semi-enslavement of Native American children for a period up to the age of eighteen; in 1854, the California Supreme Court decides **The People of the State of California v. George W. Hall**, an appealed murder case, ruling that Chinese Americans and Immigrants could not testify against Euro-Americans (this case involved the murder of a Chinese American by a Euro-American—the decision would

16. Racial segregation benefits the capitalist class in another way: it allows them to sow divisions among the working classes so that they can keep each other in check in their overall struggles with the capitalist classes. A classic example is the use of African Americans and other minorities to break up labor strikes of Euro-American workers, as well as the refusal by white labor unions to allow people of color from joining them.

17. The launch of the *Niagara Movement* in Niagara Falls by the African American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois and others in 1905, that in turn serves as a precursor to the formation in 1909 of the NAACP, a civil society organization formed to champion civil rights for African Americans and other minorities; the massive urbanization of



The Internment of Japanese Americans in the U.S. (1942-1946)



effectively legitimate Euro-American race riots targeting Asian Americans); in 1882, the **Chinese Exclusion Act** is adopted by Congress prohibiting Chinese immigration and maintains Chinese exclusion from U.S. citizenship for those who were already living in United States; in 1927, in **Gong Lum v. Rice**, the Supreme Court moves to undermine the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment by stating that children of racial minorities (in this case a Chinese American, Martha Lum) could be excluded on racial grounds from schools designated by their localities for Euro-Americans; in 1944, the Supreme Court issues its decision in **Korematsu v. United States** siding with the government in its blatantly racist and unconstitutional strategy of rounding up thousands of Japanese American citizens and immigrants and imprisoning them in concentration camps—popularly supported by the Euro-American citizenry, especially on the West Coast—during the Second World War. Note, however, that this fate does not befall Italian Americans or German Americans whose ancestral countries are also at war with United States. At the same time, while the internment in the concentration camps is legitimated on grounds that the Japanese Americans cannot be trusted to be loyal citizens, in a classic case of major hypocrisy, those of military service age among them are called upon by the U.S. government to volunteer to serve in the armed forces overseas—and believe it or not, many of them do while their families are languishing back home in the concentration camps. What is more, they are placed in segregated units (as in the case of African American soldiers), but even that fails to undermine their resolve to fight with valor, for which they would receive many medals. (So, guys, a question for you to ponder: who among the white citizenry would have opposed a decision, if it had been made, to simply murder the Japanese Americans after they had been rounded up?)

African Americans (even in the South); the exemplary participation of African Americans in the First and Second World Wars, as well as in the Korean War (1950-1953); the beginnings of the Cold War (1945-1990); the formation of the United Nations (1945); the achievement of political independence by many African countries in the 1950s and 1960s; the nullification of the fraudulent doctrine of "separate but equal" by the Supreme Court (in one of those hitherto rare instances where it was on the side of justice) in its unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954); and the passage of the 1957 *Civil Rights Act*, together represent a *conjuncture of fortuitously propitious historical factors* that conspire to produce **civic engagement** on a large scale⁹, taking the form of the U.S. *Civil Rights Movement* (late 1940s to late 1960s), which in turn leads to the passage of what may be called the *LBJ Civil Rights Legislation*, which is legislation supported and signed into law by President Lyndon Baines Johnson (a formerly racist southern Democrat). This legislation, which includes the 1964 **Civil Rights Act**; the 1965 **Voting Rights Act**; the 1965 **Immigration and Nationality Act**; and the 1968 **Civil Rights Act** (which includes Titles VIII through IX, and is often referred to as the **Fair Housing Act**), brings to an end, *for the most part*, de jure Jim Crow segregation¹⁰. However, the struggle for civil rights represented by the Civil Rights Movement, is

Racism, Working Class Disunity, and Class Struggle

Historically, and up to the present, racism has been one of the most important tools used in this country to deflecting class struggle by "buying" the allegiance of white workers by the capitalist class. By allowing white workers to exchange their **whiteness** for a few privileges, the capitalist classes have kept *all working classes* from demanding a fundamental change to the *entire* political and economic system *for the benefit of all* (authentic democracy). Racism creates an "us and them" mentality, whereas genuine progress in a society is only possible under conditions of cooperation and mutual respect. Yes, to be sure, the white working class is generally able to maintain a short-term advantage relative to the black/brown working classes in terms of better employment opportunities (relative to the black/brown working classes), but in the long-run the fact that it is not united with the black/brown working classes prevents it from demanding a greater share of the total profits generated from its labor but kept by the capitalist class. At the same time, working-class disunity prevents it from mounting successful struggles in increasing the **public wage** (which takes such forms as unemployment insurance, life-long medical insurance, public schooling, environmental protection measures, the social safety net, and so on). Racism therefore serves as an additional factor, besides the workings of impersonal "market forces," in hiding the exploitation of all working classes by the capitalist class—an exploitation that many workers in this society deny because of their ignorance of the workings of the capitalist system.

⁹ In a democracy, one of the most important responsibilities of the citizenry is to participate in political activities aimed at institutionalizing, maintaining, and strengthening that democracy—which includes being vigilant against anti-democratic forces that are always waiting in the wings. We call that **civic engagement**, which itself is the foundation for building a vibrant **civil society**, without which democracy cannot survive. So, for example, after you have finished marching, protesting, and demonstrating for justice, the next step is to change the laws and that is where civil society comes into play. The NAACP is a good example of a civil society organization.

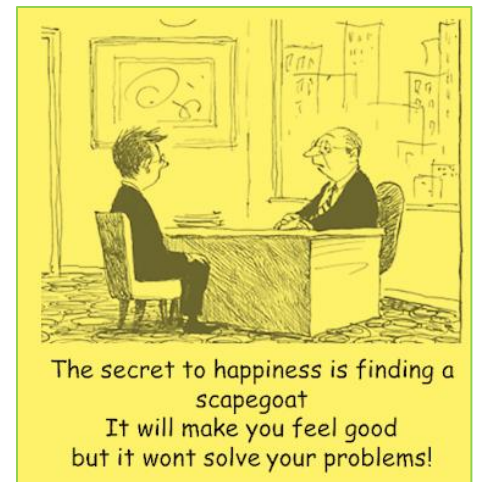
¹⁰ One of the tangible fruits of the *LBJ Civil Rights Legislation* becomes evident forty years later, when in the presidential elections of 2008 a person of color is elected, for the first time in U.S. history, to be the 44th President of United States, and he would serve the maximum constitutionally allotted two terms. He is a Democrat, an eloquent and successful Harvard-trained law professor and politician, and an African American of mixed parentage; his name is **Barack Hussein Obama II**. His electoral victory is made possible by an electoral alliance of a larger than usual turnout of a majority of eligible voters among *all people of color* together with a substantial (but less than a

also accompanied by despicable assassinations of important political figures who either supported the civil rights struggle or were key participants in it: **Medgar Evers** (June 12, 1963); President **John F. Kennedy** (November 22, 1963); **El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz** (popularly known as Malcolm X, February 21, 1965; **Martin Luther King, Jr.** (April 4, 1968); and Senator **Robert F. Kennedy** (June 6, 1968).

18. The *de jure* ending of Jim Crow segregation does not necessarily mean the end of **institutionalized racism** (or even **interpersonal racism**) in United States. Instead, it is replaced by *de facto* segregation, *especially in the area of residential housing* (facilitated by the production of the assembly-line automobile and the growth of suburbanization on one hand, and on the other the invention of the mortgage loan) leading to **residential racial segregation** and all that flows from it for those living in predominantly black/brown neighborhoods: sub-par housing; poorly resourced re-segregated schools; fewer employment opportunities; endemic police harassment; sub-par amenities and infrastructural facilities; environmental degradation; discriminatory banking and housing-related lending services; a racially-biased justice system; and so on. What accounts for this terribly unjust circumstance, more than a half century following the passage of the LBJ Civil Rights legislation?¹¹ To answer this question, we have to begin by returning to the point that this document began with: the inadvertent arrival of *industrial capitalism* on the stage of human history. While there is absolutely no question that over the centuries up to the present industrial capitalism has brought **material** benefits to millions of people across the planet by raising their standards of living, the benefits have been felt not only unevenly but have been accompanied by horrendous costs for millions more: in terms ranging from genocide to environmental pollution; from massive economic exploitation, including enslavement, to, now, climate change; and from relentless political tyranny to pervasive and ever deepening economic inequality (arrived at through outright corruption and naked **political capture** far more so than via the “normal” operation of the capitalist system) in favor of the ruling elites (the bourgeoisie). From the perspective of the current circumstances of United States specifically, the problem of deepening inequality has become especially severe where a tiny percentage of the population now owns the vast majority of the wealth; the consequences of which are felt in

Assassinations

President Abraham Lincoln pays with his life at the hands of an assassin on April 14, 1865 for championing the Thirteenth Amendment that abolishes slavery throughout the country, following its ratification on December 6, 1865. A tragic echo of this dastardly deed would be the assassination of the African American leader of the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., about a hundred years later, in 1968. Undoubtedly, this country loves violence.



majority) of the white voters. The racists in the U.S. Congress, however, would do everything they can to thwart his legislative agenda to strengthen authentic democracy, and to a considerable degree they would succeed—especially during his second term—when they come to dominate both houses of Congress.

¹¹ Plus, what about the *Fair Housing Act*? By means of all kinds of subterfuge, the racists discover that it is not difficult to circumvent it at all.

such terms as a declining standard of living for the majority, political alienation, and *easy susceptibility of the majority to political manipulations of the worst kind by the bourgeoisie*.

The second point is to look at the role performed by racist ideologies in societies, such as this one, which is that it assists the capitalist classes in doing three main things, two of which we have already encountered in the preceding pages: first, it permits the direct exploitation of victims through measures such as dispossession of their lands, enslavement, low wages, etc.; and second, it allows for a disunity among the working classes so that they can keep each other in check in their overall struggles with the capitalist classes for better wages and working conditions. The third function, which in the face of rising inequality has increasingly become very important (not just in United States, but elsewhere across the world too) is **racial scapegoating**. The bourgeoisie and its allies have come to realize that they can achieve political and economic stability by using racial/ethnic minorities as **scapegoats** for the severe problems that their political capture of state machinery in the service of their bottomless greed is producing. Racism helps to deflect resistance and rebellion of the masses away from the capitalist class and the capitalist system¹².

The Concept of the Other

A key concept foundational to all ideologies of oppression, including racism is the concept of the *Other*. Although the concept of the Other can be approached from a variety of perspectives (philosophical, psychological, political, sociological, anthropological, etc.), of particular relevance here is the sociological where, at its core, the concept refers to the product of a process called *othering*; that is the construction of an invidious dichotomous hierarchic boundary between social groupings as represented by phrases such as “us” versus “them;” or “citizen” versus “alien;” or “we belong” versus “you don’t belong;” and so on. Simply put, the Other refers to any group of human beings demarcated by any one or more of axes of difference (such as skin color, or gender, or class, or nationality, or culture, or political beliefs, or religion, etc.) who are consistently portrayed/treated as inferior beings, by the group with the power to do so, in order to *dehumanize* them—so as to legitimate their “erasure” or exclusion from the mainstream of society (marginalization) for the purposes of exploitation; or dispossession; or the political expediency of *scapegoating*, the extreme form of which can even culminate in genocide. In the manufacture of the Other, the device of choice is *essentialism* which refers to the fallacy that there is a basket of characteristics—often taking the form of malignant stereotypes—that constitutes the “essence” of those marked as the Other because these characteristics are supposedly genetically inherent to them and therefore immutable. (Incidentally, the concept of the Other denies the validity of *cultural relativism*—the view that cultures, *on balance*, should be judged on their own terms and not from the standpoint of one’s own culture—without which harmony and respect between human groupings is simply not possible.) Question: so what comes first: the exploitation/oppression or the othering? Both—in the sense of a bidirectional influence between both (that is there is a dialectical relationship between both). However, some may want to insist that it’s the exploitation/oppression that comes first because of the supposed tendency of human beings to develop their attitudinal approach on the heels of their actual behavior (for instance, in this case deliberately manufacturing a hatred of those one is *already* exploiting or oppressing; instead of developing the hatred because one *intends* to exploit).

19. Another very importing function of racial scapegoating is that *it allows the ruling elites to win elections*. By blaming black/brown people for problems created by the activities of the elites

¹² In the absence of race, other ideologies of oppression become salient: sexism, classism, etc.

themselves (unemployment, inequality, pollution, lack of services, and so on), an alienated and frustrated but racially-inclined electorate will vote for racist politicians who represent the interests of the ruling elites. In a capitalist system, for a working-class people to believe, erroneously, that their economic interests are the same as those of racist billionaires is an indication of the power of racial scapegoating.

20. It is not only at the domestic level, however, that overt and covert racial scapegoating is deployed to *bind the Euro-American lower classes to the bourgeoisie*. At the *foreign policy* level too, racism/ethnicism (usually masquerading as patriotism) becomes one of the subtexts of foreign policy decisions with the result that **war-mongering** becomes the usual solution for all major foreign policy "difficulties" connected with

The U.S. Military Budget and the Military Industrial Complex

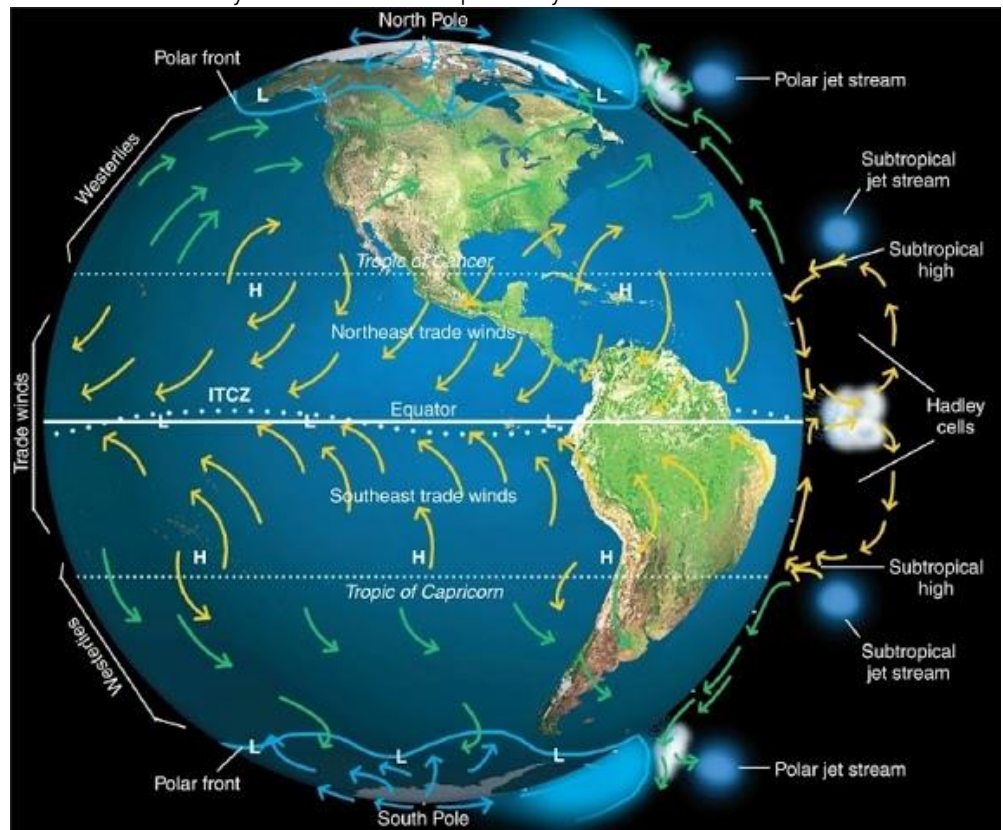
The U.S. military budget totals more than the *combined* military budgets of the next 5 or 6 top spenders in the world. Domestically, both the military and intelligence budgets considered together equals about 50% of the *entire* federal budget!



Painting of Columbus presenting kidnapped Native Americans to the sponsor of his voyage, Queen Isabella of Spain

making the world safe for Western capitalism—especially in places where people of color happen to be the majority and are unwilling to go along with “the program”—which in turn of course leads to further aggrandizement of an already bloated **military industrial complex** at the expense of authentic democracy. War is, therefore, not only another source of profit for the capitalist class, while the children of the lower classes do most of the dying in this enterprise,

but a source of generating **pseudo-consciousness** among the lower classes¹³. Given the racialization of U.S. foreign policy, however, the lower classes are usually more than willing partners in this effort. Support of the military industrial complex by the lower classes (which often implies putting their lives on the line) is also an outcome, for many, of the lack of access to employment/education opportunities—especially for those who are people of color who are proportionally overrepresented in the U.S. armed forces—yet, notice that that itself is, in part, a function of the gargantuan military budget which consumes so much of the federal budget, leaving many important social amenities and services, (constituting public wages), starved for funds.



21. We can conclude this document by emphasizing that **Ideologies of oppression**, such as racism/ethnicism, *do not just emerge out of nowhere*; that is, a social group does not one day simply decide to sit down and concoct an ideology of oppression to foist on an unsuspecting people. They emerge out of long drawn out historical processes that eventually translate into exploitation/oppression at the immediate *behavioral* level (e.g. colonization, enslavement, segregation, etc.) and the *simultaneous* necessity for the legitimation of such behavior in the eyes of *both*, the victims *and* the oppressors, at the *ideological* level. Concerning the latter: why is there this necessity? Why not just rely on the brute force of armed physical coercion that facilitates the exploitation/oppression in the first place? For two reasons: to ease the task of physical coercion over the course of time by obtaining the relative acquiescence of the oppressed through a form of “brainwashing” aimed at the cultivation of an inferiority complex—where they are made to believe that their oppression is their own fault arising out of some innate flaw in their cognitive abilities and character as human beings. At the same time, from the perspective of the oppressors, it eases the burden placed on their conscience for not treating fellow human beings the way they treat each other. (About the matter of conscience, here is an illustrative example: for one moment a person would be in church for religious services, but at another moment he returns to his *official* job—repeat: *official* job—at a concentration camp of murdering people by the thousands by gassing them and then disposing off their bodies in crematoria.) In

¹³ Pseudo-consciousness refers to the belief that one knows what is going on (in terms of one’s real interests regarding authentic democracy), whereas this is not true because of manipulation of information by the ruling elites—e.g. via right wing media and think tanks.

other words, because human beings are genetically programmed to be kind and altruistic toward fellow humans, they need ideologies of oppression to disrupt this programming. With the exception of dysfunctional families, every human baby begins its life in an affective



The Columbian Project and its Aftermath: A Native American Perspective

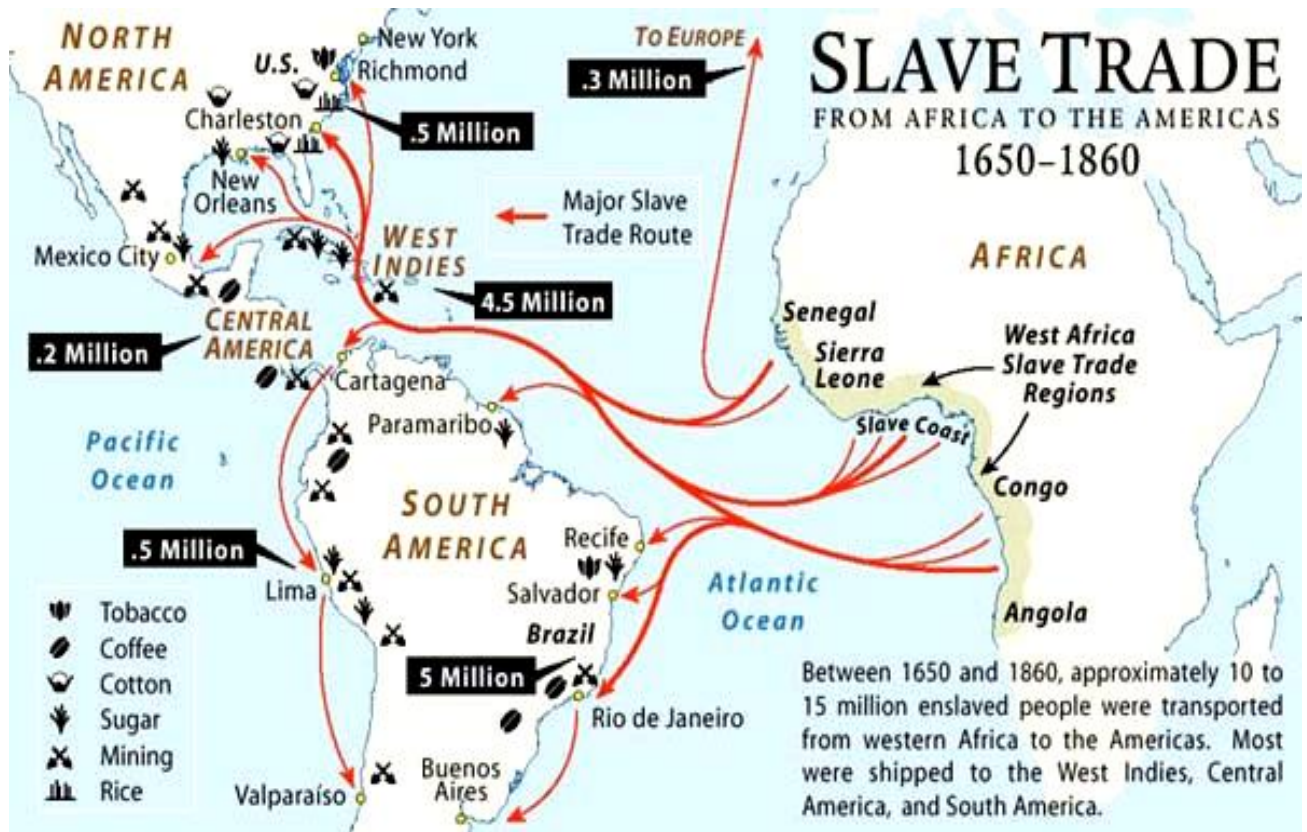
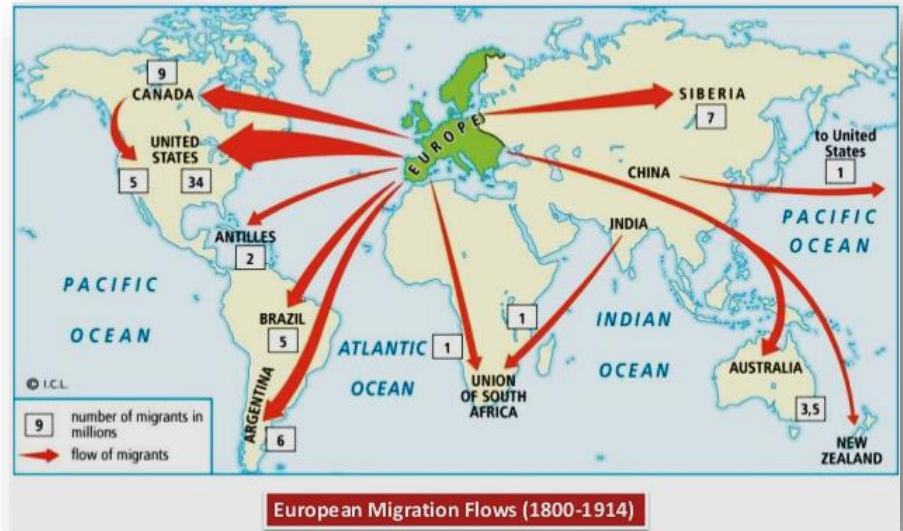
environment of love not hate (created for it by parents, siblings, relatives, and, sometimes, even strangers). Moreover, this need for such a loving environment is so strong, that its absence can leave it permanently scarred; even if all its other biological needs are met effectively. Therefore, in describing the **origins** of the **ideology** of racism in North America (and in other places where the Europeans settled across the world) we have to begin by going back into European history and unearthing the relevant antecedents; and as we have seen, of these, three have been particularly apropos: Learning to deploy the concept of the **Other** (and its corollary, *othering*) **with the aid of religion**; the development of **scientific racism**; and the manufacture of a mythology of racial superiority on the basis of deliberately engineered historical amnesia and the use of **law**. However, the overall **purpose** of deploying the ideology of racism has been the unrelenting and unending **capitalist aggrandizement** (also known as accumulation of surplus) *for the benefit of the bourgeoisie*.

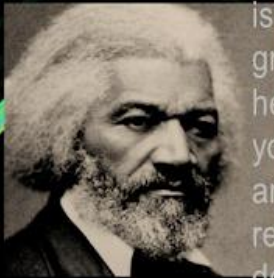
22. **Question;** But how does the *institutionalization* of racism *through law* eventually translate into everyday **interpersonal racism** at the level of individuals? This is a complex process, however, the pyramidal chart below explains how this happens.

23. Another important question: Does this mean racism is permanent in this country? Answer: Is capitalism permanent in this country? In other words, even though racist discrimination is, for the most part, illegal here in United States, because of the political and/or economic functions it performs at the *institutional* level, the possibility of eradicating it completely, for millions of people targeted by it, for all practical purposes, is--to put it bluntly--zero! Consider, black

people have been in this country for about 400 years; yet, they continue to face massive institutional racial discrimination despite all their struggles against it. And let's not even talk about the awful circumstances of the real owners of this land, Native Americans.

24. While eliminating institutionalized racism, in practice, is not possible (especially in a capitalist society), at the level of *interpersonal* racism/ethnicism it is a different matter--especially in a democracy. Interpersonal racism/ethnicism can be overcome but it depends solely on chance where enlightened individuals because of decency decide to deliberately eschew it. See the film the *Big Sick*—class version via the *Film List* page, which provides examples.





"This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, [is] inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony.... What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

Frederick Douglass

(Escaped African American slave, Abolitionist, Writer, and Orator)
From an address delivered on July 5, 1852, in Rochester, New York



Glimpses of Jim Crow

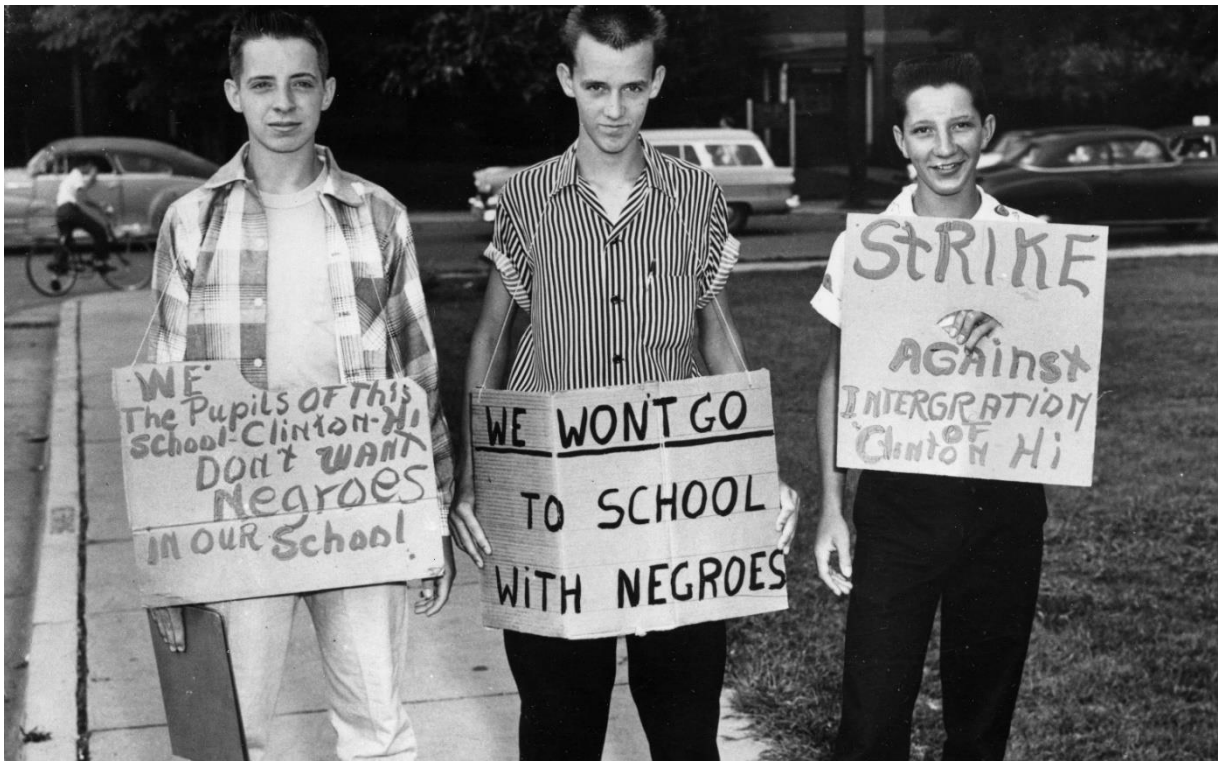


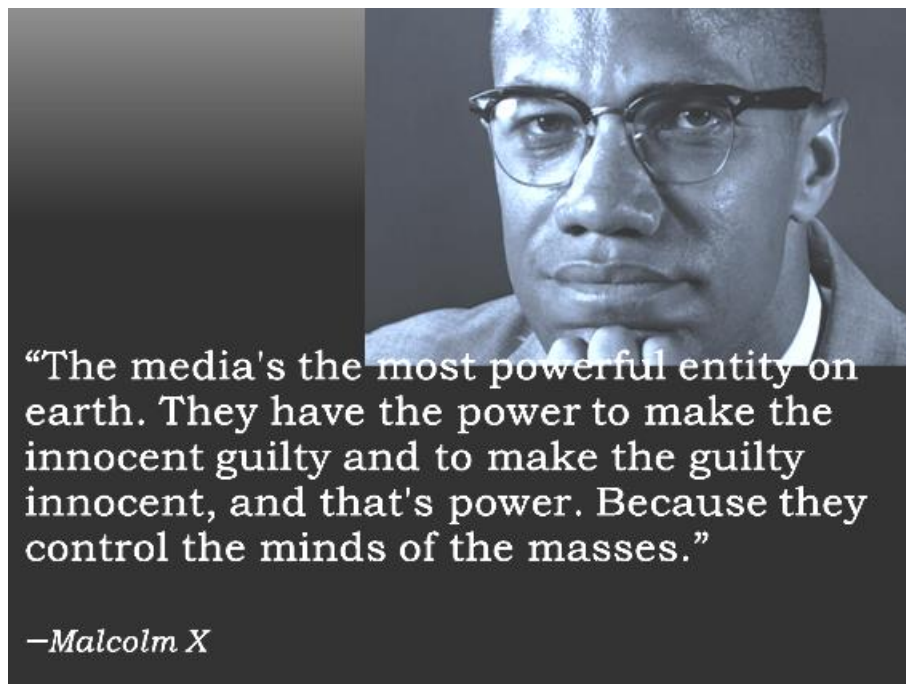
ACKNOWLEDGING

RACIALIZATION

“Race continues to play a defining role in one’s life trajectory and outcomes. A complex system of racial bias and inequities is at play, deeply rooted in our country’s history, culture and institutions. This system of racialization — which routinely confers advantage and disadvantage based on skin color and other characteristics — must be clearly understood, directly challenged and fundamentally transformed. If our nation is to live up to its democratic ideals — that all people are created equal and treated fairly — then racial equity and inclusion must be at the forefront of how we shape our institutions, policies and culture.”

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, United States. *Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide*, 2014, p. 2.





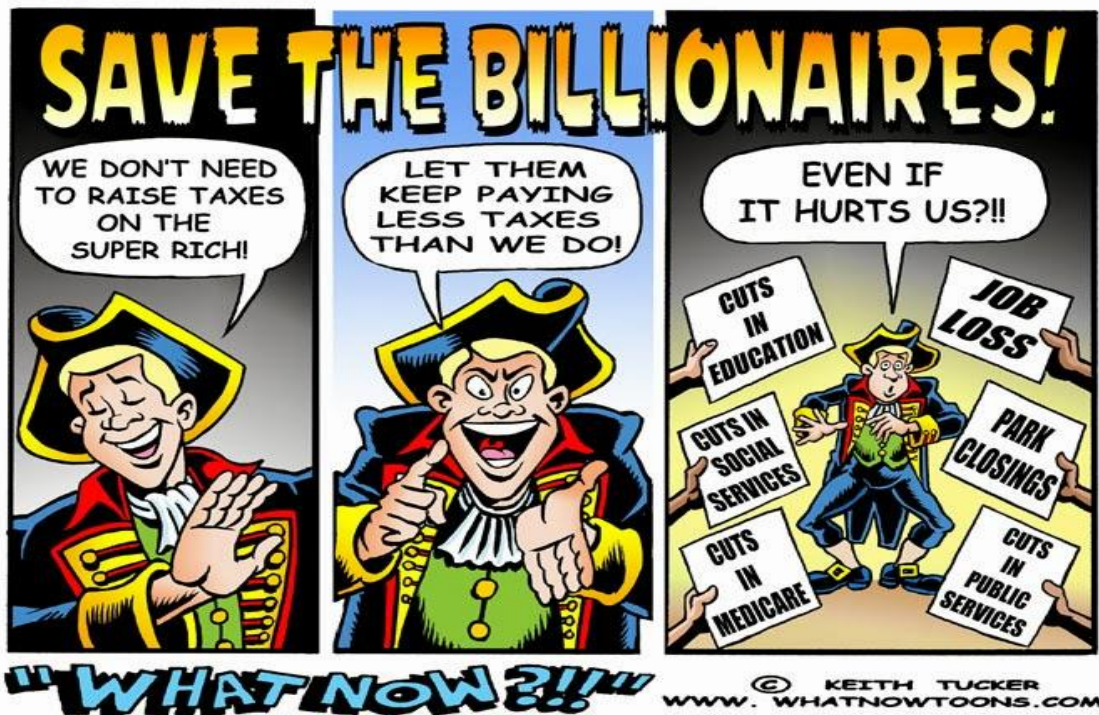
"The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses."

—Malcolm X



Capitalist exploitation of child labor during the early 1900s in the U.S.

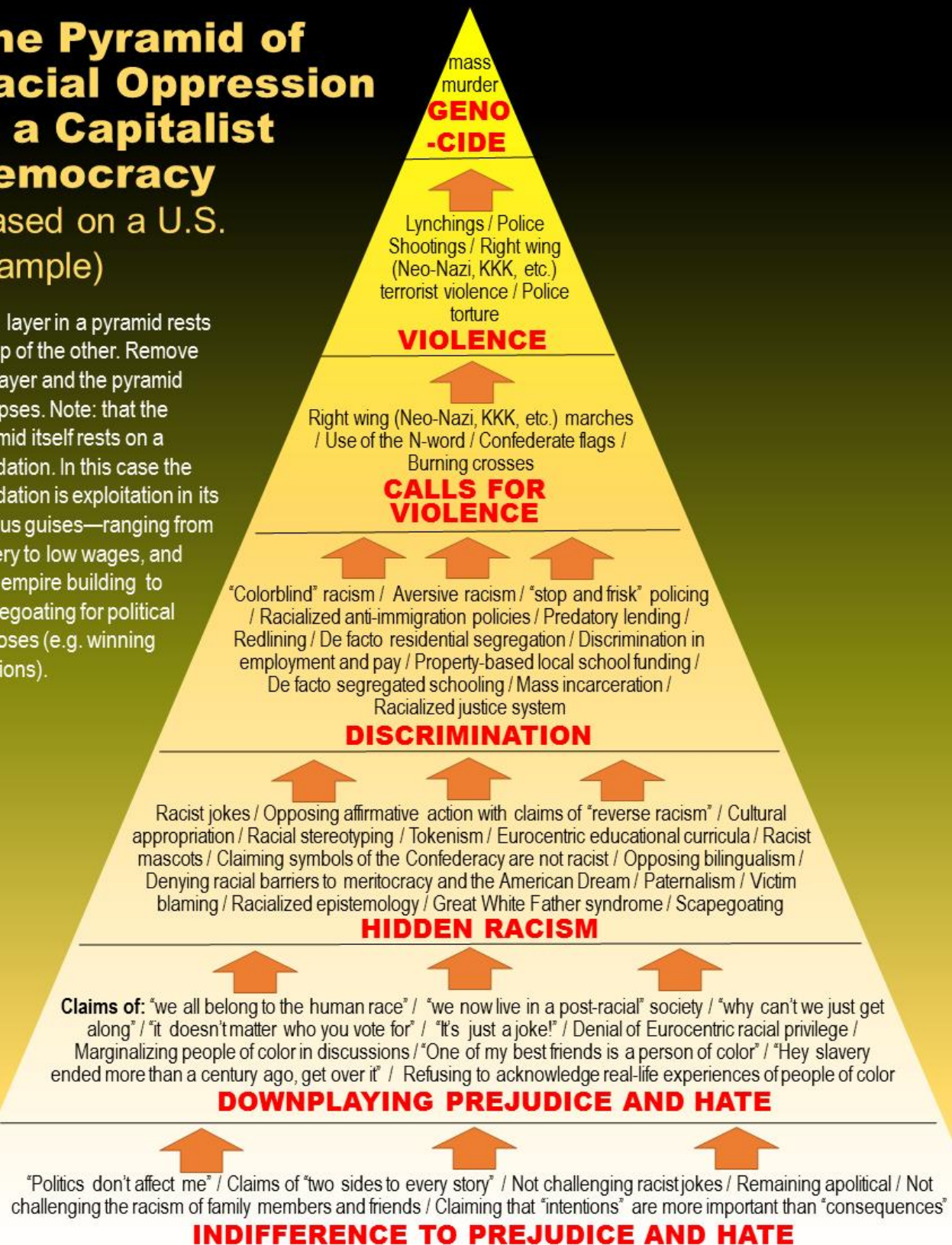




The Pyramid of Racial Oppression in a Capitalist Democracy

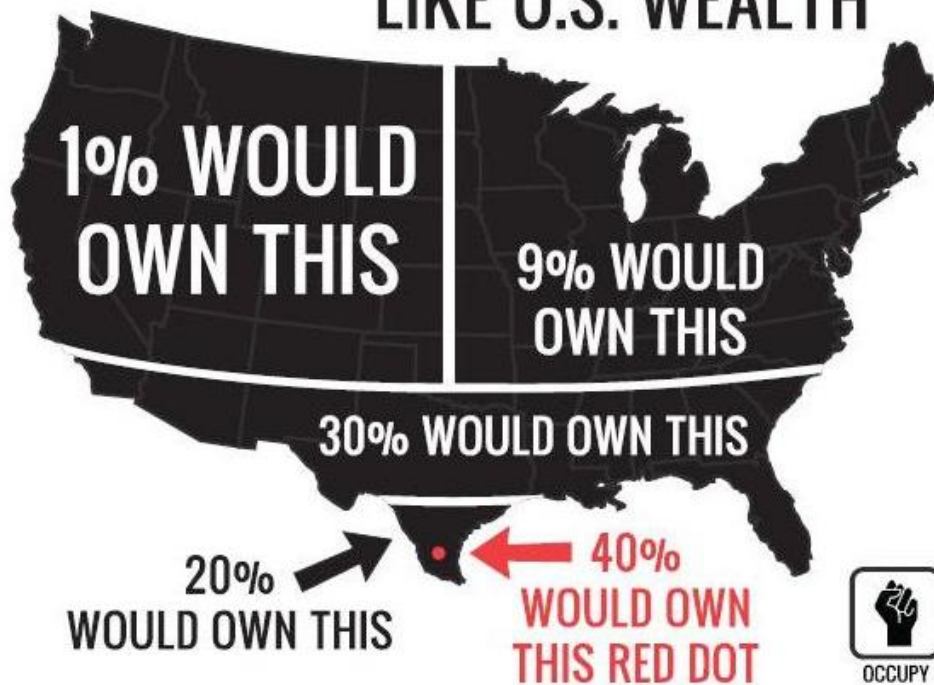
(based on a U.S. Example)

Each layer in a pyramid rests on top of the other. Remove any layer and the pyramid collapses. Note: that the pyramid itself rests on a foundation. In this case the foundation is exploitation in its various guises—ranging from slavery to low wages, and from empire building to scapegoating for political purposes (e.g. winning elections).



Adapted from the diagram by Ellen Tuzzolo and Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence

IF U.S. LAND MASS WERE DIVIDED LIKE U.S. WEALTH



WORKING FOR THE FEW

Political capture and economic inequality

Economic inequality is rapidly increasing in the majority of countries. The wealth of the world is divided in two: almost half going to the richest one percent; the other half to the remaining 99 percent. The World Economic Forum has identified this as a major risk to human progress. Extreme economic inequality and political capture are too often interdependent. Left unchecked, political institutions become undermined and governments overwhelmingly serve the interests of economic elites to the detriment of ordinary people. Extreme inequality is not inevitable, and it can and must be reversed quickly....

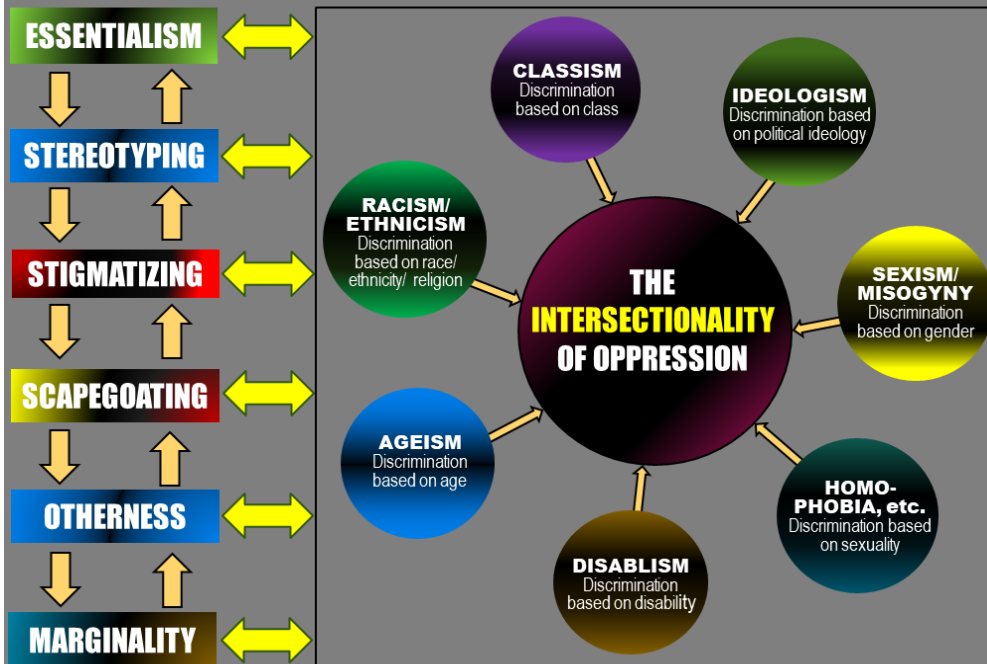
- Almost half of the world's wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population.
- The wealth of the one percent richest people in the world amounts to \$110 trillion. That's 65 times the total wealth of the bottom half of the world's population.
- The bottom half of the world's population owns the same as the richest 85 people in the world.
- Seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years.
- The richest one percent increased their share of income in 24 out of 26 countries for which we have data between 1980 and 2012.
- In the US, the wealthiest one percent captured 95 percent of post-financial crisis growth since 2009, while the bottom 90 percent became poorer.

Source: Oxfam Report, 2014. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/working-few>





THE INGENUITY OF THE IDEOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF OPPRESSION



“Human beings are sufficiently altruistic, intelligent, and rational to preclude oppression solely for the sake of oppression. In other words, at the root of all forms of oppression (classism, disablism, ethnicism, racism, sexism, etc.) is exploitation for purposes that range from maximizing profits to scapegoating to land grabs to empire-building.

What is Democracy?



“WE hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all [Persons] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

—Preamble to the U.S. Declaration of Independence

There are two types of democracy: *Interpersonal* Democracy and *Institutional* Democracy. At the same time, the latter in its true sense, has two related halves: the *procedural* and the *authentic* (or substantive).

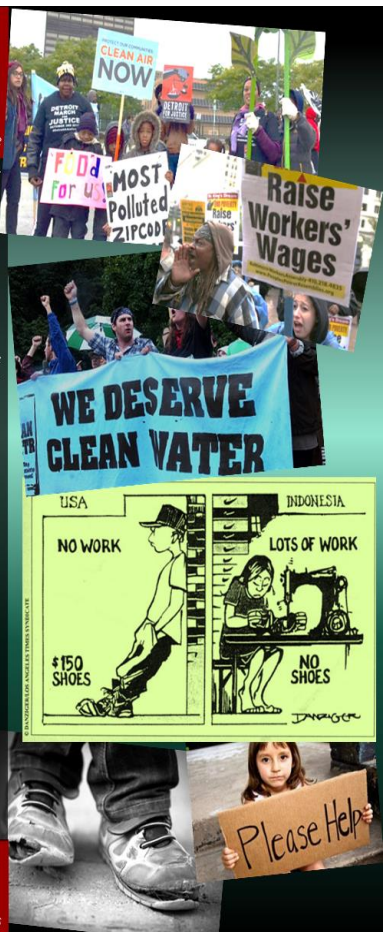
The first half, *procedural* democracy, refers to “majority rule” (but qualified by a *bill of rights* that protects minorities) and the accompanying institutional processes of universal suffrage, elections, term-limits, legislative representation, the *rule of law*, separation of powers, etc.

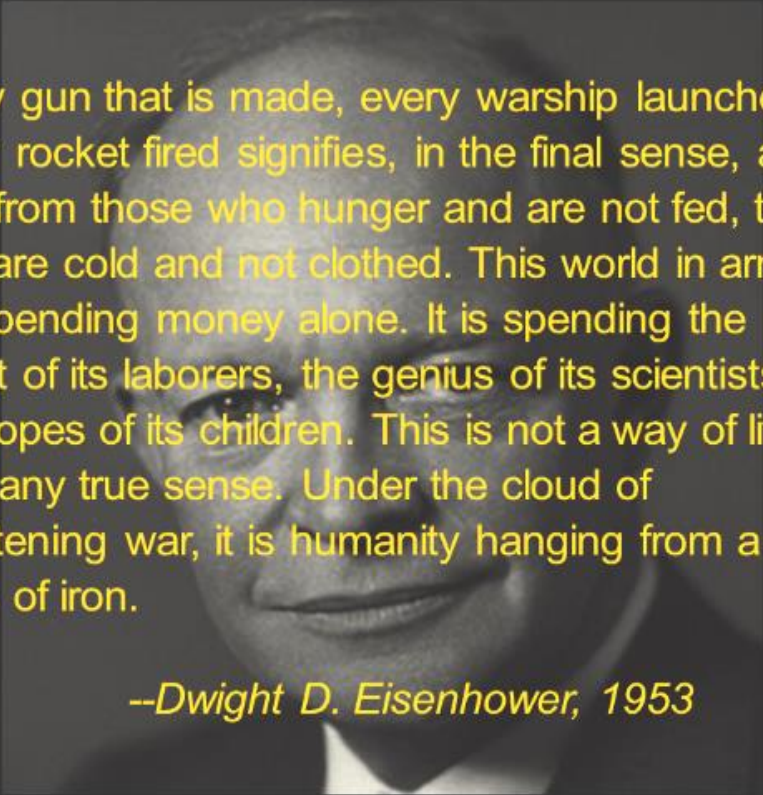
On the other hand, *authentic* democracy refers to equitably securing access for all human beings to the four fundamental *existential* needs: food, shelter, health, and security. Therefore, the purpose of procedural democracy is to guarantee authentic democracy. In other words, the former is a means to the latter!

Interpersonal Democracy refers to interpersonal relations among individuals in a society that are governed by the principle of equality of opportunity for respect, acceptance, and non-discrimination—regardless of age, class, color, ethnicity, gender, and other similar social structural markers.

“...government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

—President Abraham Lincoln, the Gettysburg Address





Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

--Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953

What is Civic Engagement?

What is Civic Engagement?

It is engagement in altruistic activities outside of the arenas of the state, the family, and the corporate marketplace that are aimed at advancing the common good; thereby enhancing the quality of life for all. Examples of civic engagement include:

- **Political participation** (e.g. voting and standing for public office)
- **Community advocacy** (e.g. demanding better schools)
- **Social activism** (e.g. protesting for social justice)
- **Volunteerism and community service** (e.g. helping to run food banks)
- **Public scholarship** (researching and writing to promote causes and activities for the common good)
- **Philanthropy** (e.g. donating for disaster relief).... and so on.



What is Interpersonal Democracy?

It refers to interpersonal relations among individuals in a society that are governed by the principle of equality of opportunity for respect, acceptance, and non-discrimination—regardless of age, class, color, ethnicity, gender, and other similar social structural markers.



Yes, I am old school. I have good manners. I show respect and I always help those who need me — regardless of their skin color, their gender, their age, their disability, or anything else that has no bearing on their humanity.
No. It is not because I am old fashioned.
It's because I was raised properly! —Anonymous

"I offer you peace.
I offer you love.
I offer you friendship.
I see your beauty.
I hear your need.
I feel your feelings.
My wisdom flows from the Highest Source.
I salute that Source in you.
Let us work together. For unity and peace."
—Mahatma Gandhi

What is Civil Society?

What is Civil Society?

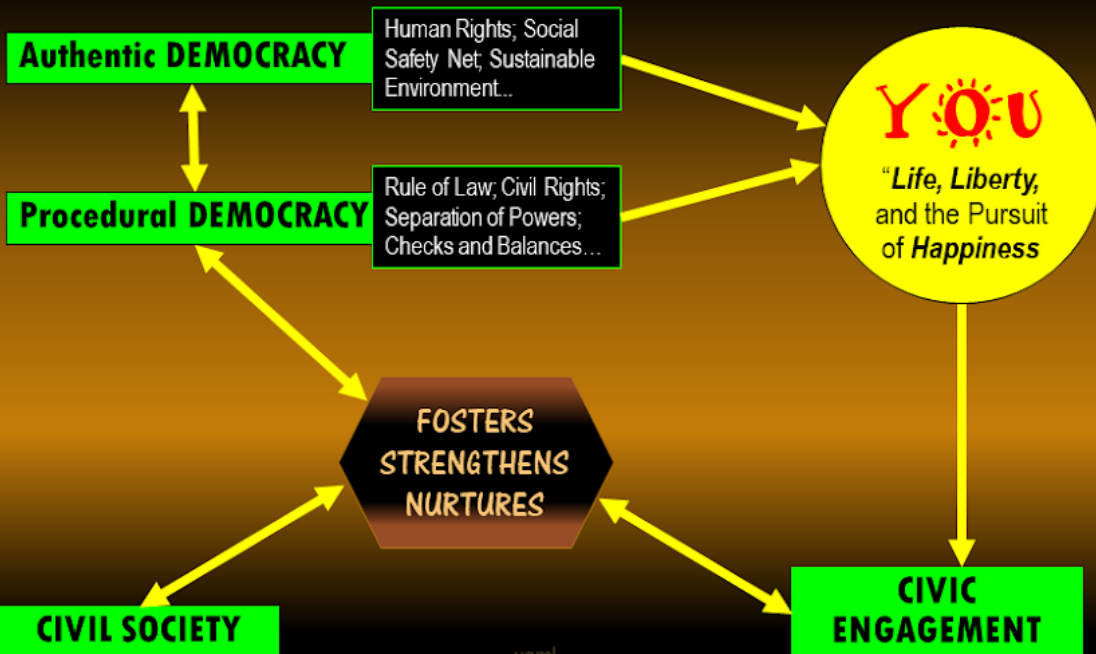
It is that nebulous public sphere—outside of the arenas of the state, the family, and the corporate marketplace—constituting the lifeblood of a true democracy, where the citizenry *voluntarily* come together for a variety of purposes and in a variety of forms, such as:

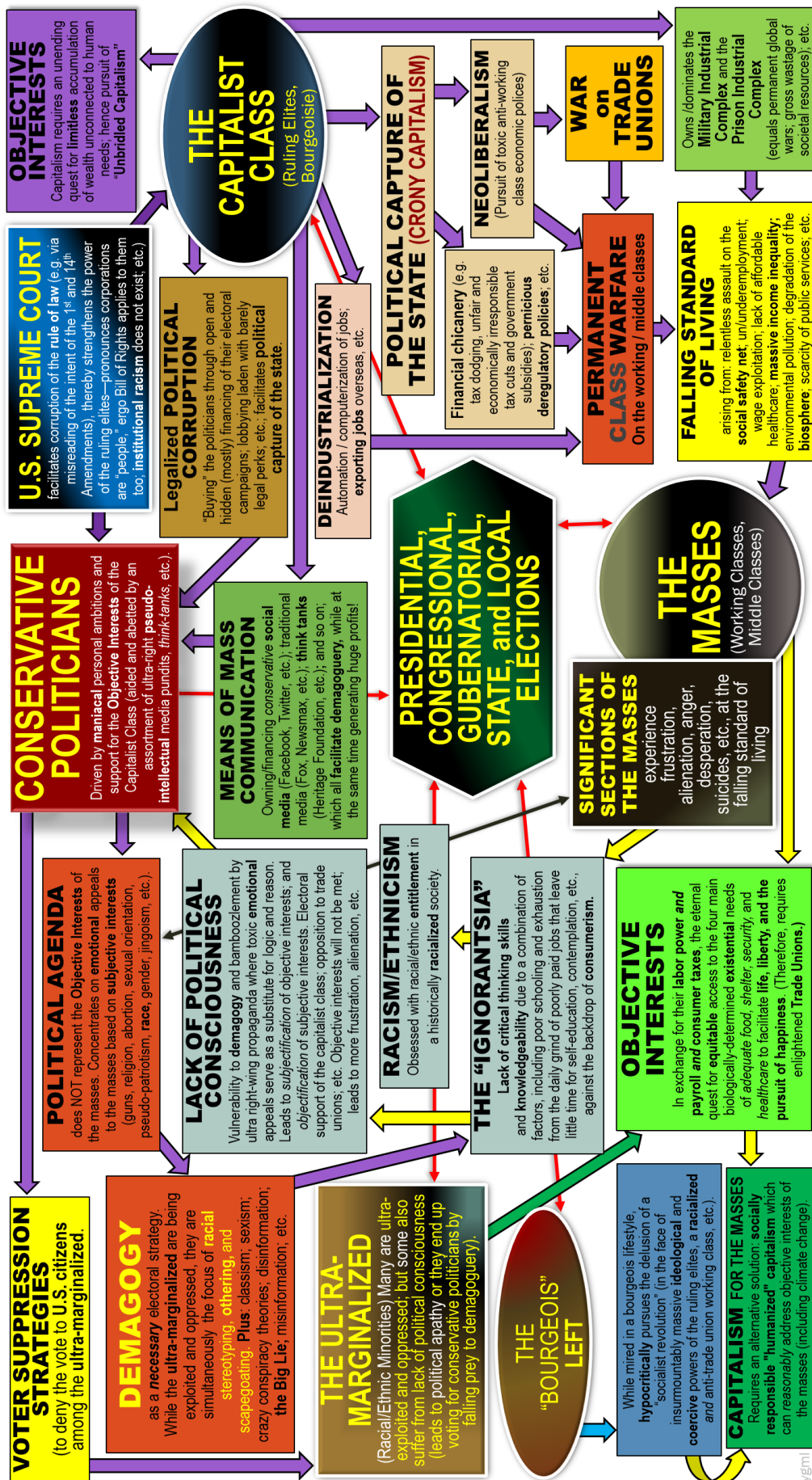
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Non-governmental socio-economic/political organizations
- Women's organizations
- Professional associations
- Community groups/organizations
- Block clubs
- Cultural clubs/organizations
- Social/political movements
- Not-for-profit businesses
- Non-governmental sports organizations
- Think-tanks and private research institutes
- Not-for-profit media (cinema, radio, TV, the press, etc.)
- Not-for-profit private educational institutions
- Labor unions
- Protest movements
- Philanthropic organizations
- Business associations
- Student organizations
- Religious institutions.... and so on.



DEMOCRACY and YOU

Everything is connected; therefore, **you** must do your part!





THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CLASS, RACE, AND DEMAGOGY IN A CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY (U.S. Example)

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