

Exploitation of Labor and Black Suffering Under Capitalism

Definitions

Means of production: how goods and services are produced and distributed

Capitalism: The means of production are privately owned and operated

Ruling class: Those who control the means of production

Capitalism does not allow autonomy over labor

Because capitalism is motivated by maximizing profits, it does not facilitate the ability for workers to choose when, where, and for how long they sell their labor. What is produced and how it is produced is left to the ruling class. Capitalism requires the subordination of laborers to continue; people are required to work in order to survive and provide basic necessities like food, housing, and healthcare. This requirement of work for survival makes the threat of unemployment terrifying and life altering.

These conditions are masked as something to aspire to, like The American Dream. The ideal of the American Dream glorifies working to provide basic needs necessary to survival. It also normalizes subordination to the ruling class and creates a false belief that “hard work” is the only key to success as it is defined under capitalism.

Capitalism breeds inequality

Capitalism creates divisions that fall along racial and class lines. These systems cannot function without a ruling and impoverished class, meaning there will always be someone suffering at the bottom of the class hierarchy. Black and Indigenous Americans are the most direct victims of suffering under Capitalism.

The U.S. began as a settler colonial state, stealing land from Indigenous folks and forcing labor of enslaved Africans. This is called double theft: land and labor. Capitalist systems are white supremacist systems. This is seen with the prison industry as a tool of capitalism, described as a “growth industry”, which relies on the oppression and captivity of Black people to survive.

Assigning value to labor

The inequality under capitalism can be observed in how value is assigned to certain peoples’ labor. *Wages of whiteness* is the economic value given to white skin; and all other laborers have their value determined in relation to that. The value of property or labor (which is treated as property) is determined by its proximity to whiteness. For example, housing in predominantly white neighborhoods is valued higher than housing in predominantly Black neighborhoods.

Value is determined in relation to how others interact with the property or labor. What would people be willing to pay or spend resources on?

Monetizing human rights

Capitalist ideologies impact social and civil society. Demands for human rights from oppressed peoples (healthcare, housing, abolishing police systems including ICE) is always explained in terms of the “cost” it will have. This makes it easier to justify white supremacist beliefs that people of color and Black folks are receiving a type of underserved “gain” like Affirmative Action.

Speaking about human beings in terms of financial loss or gain warps one's concept of their personhood.

What does an anti-capitalist future look like?

People are not meant to exploit their labor for resources necessary to survive. A future free of capitalism is a future where these basic needs are provided. An anti-capitalist future gives the means of production to the people, and returns autonomy of labor to the hands of the laborers.

Capitalism removes control of material conditions from the individual, and demands a subservience to a ruling class. This cannot be solved by "trickle down economics" or more Black and oppressed communities engaging in capitalist systems. Even when Black folks take advantage of capitalist systems to get ahead, their labor is still not equitably valued. A future free of capitalism means the ability for people to dedicate their labor to creative and socially meaningful work.

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