

CAPITALISM

Capitalism, as a way of organizing economic and social relations, has always depended on assertions about human inequality and valorization (including racism) that have been enforced through localities, states, and empires. It has not been the only economic system in human history to do so, but capitalism's very definition and possibility relies on the exploitation of one or more groups by others, as Karl Marx pointed out during the rise of global, free-market capitalism in concert with European colonialism and imperialism. Marx, as a journalist, was a thorough chronicler of capitalism in nineteenth-century Europe, and his analysis in *Das Kapital*, completed in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, remains key to understanding the logic of capitalism.

Marx and Engels argued that capitalist relations necessitate the alienation of workers from the products they make, so that both the workers' labor and what they produce become commodities circulating in an expanding market. Once laborers are seen as interchangeable workers (rather than artisans connected inextricably to what they make), it is in the interest of capitalists (those who invest in everything necessary to produce a product, including labor) to have low-wage or non-wage workers. In that way, capitalists can create surplus money from their initial investments as the commodities they have invested in circulate in the market. This surplus can be reinvested in the production of more commodities, with the capitalists (rarely the workers) making the decisions about what commodities—ranging from goods to services—to sell and how to convince consumers they need to exchange money for the commodities.

While capitalism seems to have begun in the fields, markets, and farm-related factories of England, it was a system that thrived through investment ventures such as the English East India Company and the Dutch East India Company, which linked commodities new to Europeans with low-wage labor and sources of raw material extracted with the backing of colonial guns and legislation. As Sydney Mintz documents in *Sweetness and Power* (1986), underpaid workers in England, urged by factory managers into the consumption of new commodities such as tea and sugar, were more tied than they knew to underpaid workers on the tea and sugar plantations in the Caribbean and South Asia, whose labor made empire-building possible. The commodity most vital to the success of early capitalism was human beings. For example, enslaved workers were shipped between colonial locations to facilitate monocropping on large plantations and to provide labor for constructing colonial cities like New York. As St. Clair Drake put it, "Commerce in black bodies rapidly became big business" (Drake 1990, p. 275).

Eric Williams, who was prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago from 1962 to 1981, pointed out the diver-

sity of sources of enslaved labor across the colonial landscape. He noted, "Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery. Unfree labor in the New World was brown, white, black, and yellow; Catholic, Protestant and pagan." (Williams 1994 [1944], p. 7) His terms are not those one would choose in the early twenty-first century, but his point is a significant one: Capitalists in the colonial era relied not on a single strategy for securing indentured and enslaved labor, but rather on a complex and global strategy. The overwhelming similarity, though, was the ability to view humans as commodities whose value floated with other commodities on the whimsical seas of the market. They were not seen as individuals with agency who had been ripped from their social networks. In his book *Capitalism and Slavery*, Williams argued that capitalists supported or renounced slavery according to its economic viability more often than in answer to a moral compass. Morality has certainly been important to the development of capitalism. As Max Weber documented in 1926, Protestant Christianity, and particularly Calvinism, was well suited to the managerial ideology of capitalists, because the predestination doctrine of Calvinists necessitated the worldly performance of good stewardship of resources.

From the outset, capitalists—or those investing in commodities and benefiting from surpluses by reinvesting them to become richer—have tended to be from the global North, white, and in control of the social apparatuses necessary to secure further profits—particularly states, militaries, and colonial authorities. While the low-wage or non-wage workers making capitalism possible have been more diverse, there has been an ideology, (described by theorists beginning with Marx and continuing actively in the early 2000s) or logic, facilitating capitalism that naturalizes the inequitable position between capitalists and the workers from whose labor they profit. This can be thought of as "strategic alterity," or the "practice of shifting between strategic assertions of inclusion and exclusion (or the marking and unmarking of 'selves' and 'others') to both devalue a set of people and to mask that very process of strategic devalorization" (Kingsolver 2001, p. 110).

The labor forces on which capitalist arrangements have rested have been diverse, as Williams pointed out, but they have always been marked as different from the capitalists, and naturalized as inferior to them, meriting lower earnings in a polarized economy. Capitalism—in all its many forms and relationships—always ensures that polarization. The naturalization of differently valued actors in a capitalist economy most often happens through the lens of racism, but it also occurs through related distinctions, including sexism, nativism, ageism, and ethnic prejudice. One of the things that makes capitalism so flexible and enduring is that the lens can shift, but the justification remains, in capitalist logic, for what Étienne

Balibar calls “class racism,” or “the institutionalized racialization of manual labor” (Balibar 1999, p. 327). In an article titled “Global Capitalism: What’s Race Got to Do with It?,” Karen Brodtkin examines the shifting lenses used in exploitation. She concludes that “race in the United States has historically been a key relationship to the means of capitalist production, and gender constructions are what has made race corporeal, material, and visible” (Brodtkin 2000, p. 239). Various kinds of institutionalized inequality—such as sexist, racist, and anti-immigrant legislation and social practice—have served capitalist formations by facilitating the rationalization and naturalization of non- and low-wage labor.

Colonized peoples were not passive in accepting the imposition of capitalism, whether it was in the shifting of massive numbers of people around the globe against their will to provide capitalist labor, or in the uncompensated extraction of raw materials that fueled the Industrial Revolution in Europe (and that, as Andre Gunder Frank has pointed out, resulted in ongoing North-South economic inequalities). The social and infrastructural damage done to colonized nations through colonial and capitalist extraction was foreseen and resisted by colonized peoples, in examples as wide-ranging as the Haitian Revolution in the 1790s and the Gandhian protests at the salt mines in India in 1930. These movements were fundamentally threatening to both colonialism and capitalism, which is why colonizing nations that were otherwise competitors in the global capitalist market closed ranks to blockade Haiti after its independence in 1804. Agency to resist the imposition of capitalist structures and their accompanying violent inequalities was diverse in its expressions across colonized nations. Kathryn Ward, for example, describes the Igbo Women’s War of 1929 in Nigeria as resistance to “incorporation into the capitalist world system.” Igbo women’s demands, as they occupied the British government buildings, were: “women should occupy one-half of the administrative units, and all white men should return from whence they came” (Ward 1988, p. 121–122).

Just as racism is intertwined with paternalism (constructing colonized people and low-wage workers as child-like), colonialism and neocolonialism have been intertwined with the creation and enforcement of economic and social dependence of nations of the South on nations of the North, with some exceptions. The colonial strategy of monocropping, as many have pointed out, made it impossible for a single colony to support itself, thus reinforcing dependence on the colonial trade system for basic commodities. Scientific-racist stories about inferior merit, evidenced by inferior performance in schools, workplaces, and markets, have been paralleled by just-so stories about Third World poverty. Critiques of both specious arguments have been based on close examinations of structural violence (see

Harrison 1997) and the ways that, over time, racism and the infrastructural inequalities persisting from colonialism (referred to as “neocolonial relations”) have assaulted the possibilities of individuals and groups to thrive in the same ways as those who have consistently benefited from capitalist social and economic organization. While class relations, North-South relations, and racialized relations are compounded and confounded in myriad individual ways, they are nonetheless powerfully persistent and may be seen as responsible for a continually widening gap between rich and poor.

The partnership between capitalism and colonialism did not end with the widespread independence movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Those in globalized Northern countries have often, though not always, maintained neocolonial control of resources, markets, and infrastructure (e.g., transportation and educational systems) through ongoing control of debt relations. The post-World War II transnational economic organizations, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), have allowed the United States and some European countries (the dominant voices in those bodies) to continue controlling the infrastructure of nations of the South through dictating the terms of loans. In the film *Life and Debt* (2001), for example, Michael Manley, the former prime minister of Jamaica, describes the difficulties faced by his country (particularly the local farmers and garment workers) when structural adjustment policies were imposed externally as part of a loan repayment plan, along with the enforced importation of U.S. agricultural goods and workers from other countries in the foreign trade zones.

With new forms of capitalism come new forms of racism, as Carter A. Wilson pointed out in *Racism: From Slavery to Advanced Capitalism* (1996). Workers in various countries are concerned about job restructuring and employers moving jobs to other regions or employing transnational migrant workforces. Unemployment-related anxieties can lead to xenophobic expressions, as documented in 1997 by Patricia Zavella in California, and new forms of racism that serve to rationalize both symbolic and physical violence. As Manning Marable notes in *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (1983), violence in current forms of capitalism is not only anti-immigrant, it is recurrently aimed at racialized minorities within states. The forced migration associated with colonialism, which was both impelled by and led to racist economic inequalities, was the antecedent to the persistent global North-South economic inequalities of the early twenty-first century. South-North migration has often been met with waves of racist, anti-immigrant sentiment, rather than any acknowledgment of the dependence of the North on the material and labor contributions of the South for its



Antiglobalization Protest. A Korean activist takes part in a protest during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on January 31, 2005. The large banner behind him reads “Our World is Not for Sale.” The annual World Social Forum began in 2001 as a protest against globalization and in opposition to the World Economic Forum, held annually in Davos, Switzerland. JEFFERSON BERNARDES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES.

“developed” status, long noted by Andre Gunder Frank and others.

These causal connections have been exposed clearly in the coalitions that are often labeled “antiglobalization,” but that are discussed in venues such as the World Social Forum, the complex relationship between racialized, gender, and other forms of social inequity and the organization and local expressions of global capitalism. One of the strategies within capitalist logic has been to divide class-based, antiracist, gender-based, and other forms of organizing by framing them as unrelated. Widespread coalitions critical of the current rapidly increasing polarization (and often white control) of wealth are forming analyses that view the bases of inequality—and the possibilities for economic equality—in a single, though still complex, frame (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1997). One of the most promising avenues for addressing the intertwined inequalities resulting from capitalism, colonialism, and racism is global South-South networking, which can

create an economic infrastructure free of colonial and neo-colonial Northern control of financial investment, transportation, and markets. At the fifth Pan-African congress in 1945, alternatives to capitalism and imperialism—and associated racist oppression—were discussed. Proposals for a New International Economic Order—as raised in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and strengthened at the South-South dialogue convened in New Delhi in 1982—have led, decades later, to South-South trade agreements that use forms of capitalist strategies (combined with more democratic decision making than in the WTO) to try to address North-South with inequities resulting from capitalist practices reflecting paternalism and racism.

SEE ALSO *African Economic Development*.

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CARIBBEAN IMMIGRATION

Immigration from the Caribbean can take a number of forms, including refugees fleeing political turmoil in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic; economic migrants from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Puerto Rico; and others who migrate for family reunification purposes. Caribbean

immigration to the United States significantly increased after World War II due to the repeal of Jim Crow laws and the slow dismantling of the institutional architecture of racial discrimination. This immigration peaked in the post–civil rights era, as more people sought to emigrate because of employment opportunities, political upheaval at home, and for family reunification. Due to their nonwhite ethnicity (e.g., African, Hispanic, East Indian, Chinese, Jewish, Lebanese), when Caribbean immigrants were incorporated into the U.S. social system, they were typically ascribed minority status, in line with the color code in American society. The concept of "race at the gate," referring to U.S. immigration officials who decided whether or not to let people in depending on the racial group they belonged to, influenced the trajectory of these immigrants' journeys through the American social and political landscape.

First-generation immigrants from the Caribbean often experience a shift in racial ideology, because the continuum of "black-mulatto-white" they were accustomed to is condensed in the United States into a "black-white" spectrum. Thus, some Caribbean immigrants find their racial identity and status changed from somewhere between black and white into the subaltern African-American group, which often views them with suspicion and ambivalence. The Caribbean immigrant population in the United States is estimated by observers and activists to be approximately ten to fifteen million people, with strong concentrations on the East Coast—including the New York and Miami metropolitan areas—and with vibrant enclaves in Jersey City, Boston, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles.

Some of these Caribbean immigrants have distinguished themselves with their lasting contributions to American society through the arts, politics, education, sports, and other professions and institutions. In the process, many have become household names, including Harry Belafonte, Stokely Carmichael, Shirley Chisholm, Kenneth Clark, Celia Cruz, Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R), Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R), St. Clair Drake, Marcus Garvey, Alexander Hamilton, Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D), Leroi Jones, June Jordan, Elizabeth Lange, Jose Martí, Sen. Mel Martínez (R), Rep. Robert Menendez (D), Homer Plessy, Sydney Poitier, Colin Powell, Arthur Schomburg, Rep. Jose Serrano (D), Sammy Sosa, Cicely Tyson, Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R), Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D), and Malcolm X.

IDEOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS FOR CARIBBEAN IMMIGRATION

Historically, social conditions that led to Caribbean emigration to the United States have differed from island to