

# The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

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analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
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## **Capitalism, Red in Tooth and Claw**

**Nafsi ya Jamii**

**By Wilson Riles**

**BC Columnist**

One of the subjects you will not hear on the Presidential campaign trail is a discussion about the underlying value structure and immorality of capitalism - even that disastrous, teetering-on-collapse form of capitalism that is global. [Worldwide global capitalism started with the triangular slave trade.] Instead of discussing what the crux of our problems are, Barack and Mitt will tiptoe around the problem and talk about government instead. They will talk as if the question before the United States is how big government should be, as if the size of government has been or will be a hindrance to the growth or success of business in general. But we know that government **MAKES CAPITALISM POSSIBLE** because it not only legally charters corporations at the state level; it also sets the rules for the acquiring of profits and for various forms of capitalist exchanges, including acquiring access to markets through military might. Both candidates will talk as if capitalism is natural and sacrosanct when, in reality, it is a creation of **government** actions.

When one looks at almost all national and international corporations, one will find government actions are at the root of the growth and 'success' of our largest corporations; just look at the historical-politics around the various mining and natural resource-based corporations, look at the railroads and the very cheap land they acquired mostly from government, look at the agricultural industry with land grant colleges, subsidies for not growing certain crops, and food stamps, and look at the governments relationship with the Federal Reserve (government unnecessarily gives private bankers a stranglehold on our economy). Remember Eisenhower's warning about the military-

industrial-complex, where the war/munitions industries that once served the imperial kings and queens now stuck-up the biggest parts of the Federal budget, Pentagon spending and cleaning up from our many wars. In Oakland, Kaiser Aluminum's growth period paralleled its growing dominant influence in local politics; big Kaiser was the creature of a Congress that provided the resources to a private business to build so-called "Liberty Ships" to supply U.S. forces around the Pacific during WWII. Most of Oakland's most difficult problems date back to this period.

The natural exchanges and trading between individuals **and** between individuals and small businesses is blatantly and inexcusably being used to camouflage the human-extinction-making, immoral activity of some large corporations. Unlike corporations, none of the local community financial relationships and exchanges require any government action to be possible, or just, or successful for everyone involved. Government action has historically been essential to the growth of corporations.

There are - at least - hundreds of examples of unique economic relations and economic exchange systems that have been created out of a community's commonly-held understanding of what is just and what is fair. One could find evidence of such systems in the Bible, in archeology, in European History, and in present day evolved cultural forms like the Caribbean, Jewish, and Sharia traditional lending services that eschew interest and debt. Germany and Japan lead the world in various forms of specially targeted local exchange systems and many are supported by their enlightened governments. U.S. history and contemporary politics restricts, deplores, ostracizes, and "red baits" those who would 'take on' rapacious capitalism directly, even though that is exactly what must be done - way beyond overturning the ***Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*** Supreme Court decision.

Karl Marx first depicted capitalism "red in tooth and claw." Today, many folks see those words as a compliment for capitalism and as praise for "good" capitalists. "Red in tooth and claw" is a term that applies to an evolutionary concept of Darwin and his gang. He and many other "scientists" believed for a long time that the most powerful force driving evolution was "survival of the fittest" and the "fittest" were the predators who were "red in tooth and claw." This conception of what is "fittest" - intertwining with sexism, racism, etc. - **has leaked** into **our** standards for valuating appropriate or needed human behavior. With capitalism, mostly at the corporate level, and in some

other areas of human endeavor we keep the predators around or even honor them because we consciously and unconsciously believe that our survival as a people is dependent on their predatory nature. As long as capitalists leave almost all of the direct killing to government (and that is changing), **capitalist predators** can do almost anything they want and get no more than "a hand slap" when they cross a constantly moving ethical line.

Predators look down on their prey. That is by definition; if one felt much connection or comparability, one would have more difficulty hurting that other. There is a powerful psychological synergy in the merger of predatory capitalism, sexism, racism, and general authoritarian imperialism. There is also a psychological blindness produced by that synergy...a blindness to alternative ways of being that are just as - if not more than - important to human survival. Marx was afflicted with this blindness; maybe it was because he was a child of relatively affluent parents who were involved in the factories that were the leading edge of capitalism at the time. The examples of people-of-color economic exchange systems that functioned during his time he ignored or he called them "primitive." He was swept along by Darwin's gang to accept much of the false "survival of the fittest" theory, including its racist tendrils. He was blind to the cooperative and egalitarian forces of exchange that had more to do with authenticity and inclusion than they had to do with materialist scientific ideology. That is one of the reasons Karl Marx was surprised by the rise of socialism and communism in Old Russia. And why, with some notable exceptions, modern day socialists and communists make little headway in oppressed people-of-color communities. White Marxists have never been able to mentally process the critique of Marxism contained in the **Négritude** literary and ideological movement, developed by francophone black intellectuals, writers, and politicians such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas and in the ethos of the Harlem Renaissance.

Since Darwin's and Marx's times, evolution scientists have come to a very different understanding about the actual nature of evolution's forces. Scientists now conclude that there are many forces and types of forces that shape evolution and that *cooperation*, *co-evolution*, *symbiosis*, and *co-habitation* are forces as powerful, if not more powerful, than "survival of the fittest." Capitalists and Marxist need to bring their social and economic theories up to date with the current scientific understanding of evolution and human development. As blacks, the path before us leads in neither direction; our forefathers blazed our trail through the more authentic philosophy of **Négritude**.

For Mr. Riles, the following is an explanation of the meaning of the Swahili term "Nafsi ya Jamii":

*Nafsi ya Jamii is the Swahili phrase that translates in English to "The Soul Community". Real community is the next phase in the process of seeking individual justice through social change. To be guided by the words of Howard Thurman: "Don't ask what the world needs; ask what makes you come alive, and go do that. What the world needs is people who have come alive." Maintain a Seven Generations perspective in all that is done; honoring the generations who've come before and mindful that our actions will have an impact for the generations who come after. Additionally, recognize that all of us are cultural beings; we include deep cultural understanding and experience in all that is done.*

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