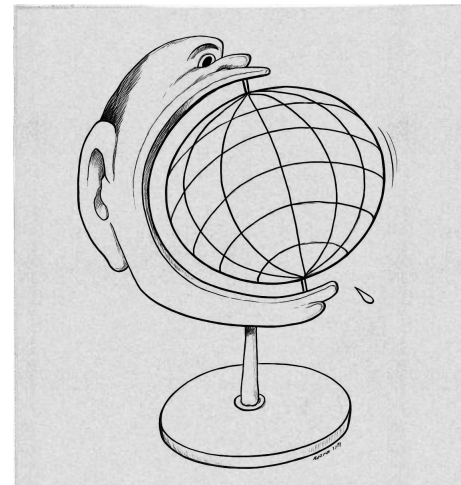


Understanding Racial Capitalism (Why It's So Hard to “Eat the Rich”)



“Kapitalizm” by Ercan Baysal

Racial Capitalism is the roots of our society—a social construct built on inequality, exploitation, and racism

In this system, *Capitalists*—wealthy people who are overwhelmingly white—obtain their money and power from the exploitation and oppression of *The People*—working class and poor people of all races, but especially Black people and other people of color.

This system is applied and upheld through *The State*: institutions, policies, and cultural practices that facilitate the accumulation of wealth and power for the *Capitalists* and suppress the desires and ability of *The People* to live freely (Figure 1).

As consequences of this system playing out, our society today is deeply in crisis and the natural environment is suffering greatly. The worst of Racial Capitalism is powerful and destructive, but when we understand

Racial Capitalism is not inevitable!

While these systems feel all-powerful, they are not natural—people created them and people will transform them. But we’ll only be able to do that by getting organized together.

Link up with your friends, your neighbors, a local group, a formal organization, (just start *somewhere!*) to continue learning.

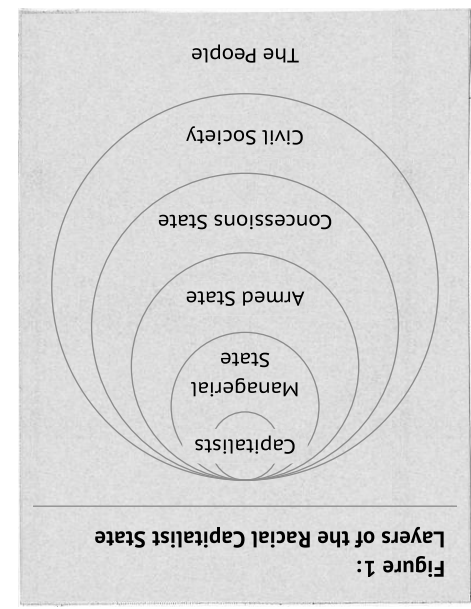
Another society is possible, but we must imagine it and reach for it for ourselves.

How are people already rethinking the structures of Racial Capitalism?

There is a long history of people struggling against these forces. Let’s learn from them how to build our collective power!

Recommended readings

Change Everything: Racial Capitalism and the Case for Abolition • Ruth Wilson Gilmore
Cooperation Jackson: Making Every Yard a Farm and Every Garage a Factory • Kali Akuno



how its systems work, we can recognize the ways it harms us, and begin to build towards a more sustainable, loving, and just society.

Civil Society

Churches, non-profits, popular music, Hollywood ...

Ideas, beliefs, values, and culture that shape how we see ourselves, each other, and the wealthy. Although *Civil Society* is not controlled by *The State*, the institutions that constitute it are heavily influenced by the ideologies and forces of Racial Capitalism.

Many non-profits rely on grant funding from Capitalists’ charitable foundations. The rich even dictate how poor people can be helped.

The People

You, me, our neighbors, the workers of the world ...

The humans whose labor Racial Capitalism exploits. When *The People* come together with a shared understanding of their conditions, they can build the power needed to transform the systems they live under.

We far outnumber the Capitalists.

Capitalists
The heads of Big Oil, Big Tech, Big Bank, VC firms ...
The very small ruling class upon whose interests and competition the system is based. Their massive wealths are obtained through profiting off other people’s labor.
In 2023, Jeff Bezos’ net worth increased by \$70 billion, or about ~\$8 million/hour. The average Amazon employee makes \$15/hour.

Managerial State
The Federal Reserve, IRS, World Trade Organization ...
The structures in place to maintain the functioning of *The State* and to protect it from economic crises, often caused by *Capitalists* acting in self-interested ways.
The federal government bailed out failing banks after the 2008 financial crisis but left many of The People to poverty.

Concessions State

Social security, public education, civil rights ...

Reforms to the system made by *The State* in response to the demands of *The People*.

While crucial to improving the lives and conditions of the *The People*, reforms that don’t challenge the nature of the system are often co-opted to make Racial Capitalism feel more acceptable and friendly without fundamentally changing its power dynamics.

The government conceded a minimum wage to the workers movements of the 1930s but has since allowed wages to stagnate while Capitalist wealth has continued to increase inordinately.

The *Concessions State* also prescribes the only legitimate avenues to express dissent (voting and emailing your representatives) and suppresses and vilifies all others (organized labor strikes or squatting).

Armed State

The police, the military, the prison system, ICE ...
Violent force used by *The State* to maintain its power. Under Racial Capitalism, *The State* is the sole entity justified in using violence, violence it uses to dispossess *The People* of their land, resources, and labor to protect and serve the interests of the *Capitalists*.
The *Armed State* promotes and relies on racist ideology to demonize and criminalize people of color in order to enforce a racial division of labor. Such divisions allow for the extreme exploitation of selected groups’ labor and keep *The People* turned against one another.

Our food systems are predicated on the exploitation of migrant workers. The constant threat of being deported by ICE puts people into vulnerable positions that the system is eager to profit from.