

Marxism and the Race/Class Problematic: A Re-Articulation

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The implacably zombifying domination of the Cold War for almost half a century has made almost everyone allergic to the Marxian notion of class as a social category that can explain inequalities of power and wealth in the "free world." One symptom is the mantra of "class reductionism" or "economism" as a weapon to silence anyone who calls attention to the value of one's labor power, or one's capacity to work in order to survive, if not to become human. Another way of nullifying the concept of class as an epistemological tool for understanding the dynamics of capitalist society is to equate it with status, life-style, even an entire "habitus" or pattern of behavior removed from the totality of the social relations of production in any given historical formation. Often, class is reduced to income, or to voting preference within the strict limits of the bourgeois (that is, capitalist) electoral order. Some sociologists even play at being agnostic or nominalist by claiming that class displays countless meanings and designations relative to the ideological persuasion of the theorist/researcher, hence its general uselessness as an analytic tool. This has become the orthodox view of "class" in mainstream academic discourse.

Meanwhile, with the victory of the Civil Rights struggles in the sixties (now virtually neutralized in the last two decades), progressive forces relearned the value of the strategy of alliances and coalitions of various groups. These coalitions have demonstrated the power of demanding the recognition of group rights, the efficacy of the politics of identity. Invariably, ethnic or cultural identity became the primordial point of departure for political dialogue and action. Activists learned the lesson that Stuart Hall, among others, discovered in the eighties: the presumably Gramscian view that "there is no automatic identity or correspondence between economic, political and ideological processes" (1996, 437). This has led to the gradual burgeoning of a "politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity." Nonetheless, Hall insisted that for people of color, class is often lived or experienced in the modality of race; in short, racism (racialized relations) often function as one of the factors that "overdetermine" (to use the Althusserian term) the formation of class consciousness. While this trend (still fashionable today in its version of cosmopolitanism, post-national or postcolonial criticism, eclectic transnationalism of all sorts) did not completely reject the concept of class, it rendered it superfluous by the formula of subsuming it within the putative "intersectionality" of race, gender, and class as a matrix of identity and agency.

One of the systematic ideological rationalizations of this approach is David Theo Goldberg's *Racist Culture*. Goldberg argues that class cannot be equated with race, or race collapsed into class; in short, culture cannot be dissolved into economics. That move "leaves unexplained those *cultural* relations race so often expresses, or it wrongly reduces these cultural relations to more or less veiled instantiations of class formation" (1993, 70). Race then becomes primarily an affair of race relations. It acquires an almost fetishistic valorization in this framework of elucidating social reality. A less one-sided angle may be illustrated by Amy Gutman's belief that class and race interact so intimately that we need a more nuanced calibration of the specific moments in which the racial determinant operates over and above the class determinant: "What we can say with near certainty is that if blacks who live in concentrated poverty, go to bad schools, or live in single-parent homes are also stigmatized by racial prejudice as whites are not, then even the most complex calculus of *class* is an imperfect substitute for also taking color explicitly into account" (2000, 96). What is clear in both Goldberg's and Gutman's analysis is that class (taken as a rigid phenomenal feature of identity) is only one aspect or factor in explaining any dynamic social situation, not the salient or fundamental relation. Unlike the Marxian concept of class as a relation of group antagonisms (more precisely, class conflict) that is the distinctive characteristic of the social totality in capitalism, class in current usage signifies an element of identity, a phenomenon whose meaning and value is incomplete without taking into account other factors like race, gender, locality, and so on. Neoliberal pluralism and the discourse of methodological individualism reign supreme in these legitimations of a reified world-system, what Henri Lefebvre (1971) calls "the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption."

Retrospective Mediation

To date, the standard judgment of a Marxist approach to racism and racial conflict is summed up in reflex epithets such as "economistic," "reductionist," "productivist,"

"deterministic," and cognate terms. Despite the influence of Althusser, Gramsci, and assorted neo- or post-Marxists, the majority of scholars and their graduate acolytes in the West continue this Cold War syndrome. It is probably a waste of time to dignify this silliness. However, I think it is useful insofar as it might dispel the ideological hold of the paradigm supposed to remedy the simplification: the intersection of race, class and gender. This mantra obviously commits the other error of reducing class, and for that matter race and gender, to nominal aspects of personal identity without any clear historical or materialist grounding. The solution is worse than the problem.

One recent example of the orthodox Marxist view of the race/class nexus is found in Michael Parenti's *Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America*. After a substantial account of the linkage between racism and slavery, Parenti argues that racism is functional to the preservation of capitalism: the dominant class interests use it "to discourage working-class unity and divide people from each other (1994, 133). Parenti adds: "Class power gives attitudinal racism much of its virulence. The class dimension is sometimes overlooked by the victims of racism. Rather than looking at the politico-economic system that has victimized [them], they blame an undifferentiated 'White racism.'" But he grants that "along with being an expression of class society, racism develops a momentum of its own" (1994, 137-38). One of the reasons for the habit of treating class problems as racial ones, according to Parenti, may be traced to the Supreme Court's treatment of "race" as a "suspect category," thus making race-motivated harms subject to constitutional redress.

An earlier "take" on the race/class *problematique* is found in Oliver Cromwell Cox's now classic 1948 book, *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics*. Cox rightly emphasizes the social context of race relations. For Cox, class analysis applies to race relations as social contacts "determined by a consciousness of 'racial difference'" (1972, 206). In his study of race relations, Cox focuses on "the phenomenon of the capitalist exploitation of peoples and its complementary social attitude," the latter cognized as racism or "a philosophy of racial antipathy." Racism, for Cox, is the ideology or system of rationalization that underlies racial antagonism within the framework of exploitation which can take diverse historical forms or situations.

Cox theorizes racism as a "socio-attitudinal facilitation of a particular type of labor exploitation": "The fact of crucial significance is that racial exploitation is merely one aspect of the problem of the proletarianization of labor, regardless of the color of the laborer. Hence racial antagonism is essentially political-class conflict" (1972, 208). The capitalist demonstrates his practical opportunism when he uses racial prejudice to "keep his labor and other resources freely exploitable." Race prejudice, for Cox, is not just dislike for the physical appearance or attitudes of the other person. "It rests basically upon a calculated and concerted determination of a white ruling class to keep peoples of color and their resources exploitable" (1972, 214). And this pattern of race prejudice becomes part of the social heritage so that "both exploiters and exploited for the most part are born heirs to it."

Cox, however, is not just a simple determinist addicted to the much abused, proverbial base/superstructure formula. He demonstrates scholarly sophistication in conceptualizing the historically nuanced "situations of race relations" in the U.S., describing the situation as "bipartite." The term "bipartite" refers to the fact that though both colored and white persons live in the same geographical location, whites insist that the whole society is "a white man's country" (1972, 216). Cox would differ from another scholar of race relations, Leo Kuper, who believes that class structures and racial structures constitute different systems of stratification. For Kuper, "racial differences which are societally elaborated have preceded" social interaction (1972, 95). But racial difference cannot usefully serve as a secondary hypothesis in explaining, say, national-liberation struggles. In colonial and neocolonial formations, independent class struggles emerged that were mobilized around national, ethnic and race ideologies, as shown in Latin American, South Africa, Algeria, and the Caribbean countries. But for Cox, the import of racial differentiations, alignments and antagonisms insofar as they influence class formation cannot be fully grasped unless they are situated within the process of class conflicts operating on complex levels in a historically evolving capitalist system. A recent example of this mode of "situating" the dialectic of race and class is Alex Callinicos' argument that the 1992 Los Angeles mass upheaval was a "class rebellion, not race riot," concluding his brief that "only a strategy which takes as its starting point class rather than race can provide the basis for the necessary unity of the oppressed" (1993, 57).

Inventing a New Discourse

It might be instructive, for pedagogical purposes, to re-examine the arguments of Michael Omi and Howard Winant (in their influential book *Racial Formation in the United States* [1986]) in dismissing a "class-based theory" deemed "Marxist." First of all, Omi and Winant (hereafter, O/W) conceive of the class-based paradigm as comprised of three elements: market, stratification, and class-conflict approaches. This stance immediately prejudices the conceptualization of the problem. A class system, for O/W, is based on "unequal exchange" of material resources in the marketplace, even though market relations based on exchange are distinguished from systems of stratification based on distribution--what's the difference?--and class conflict based on production. Why this postulated muddle at the outset? We can see why after we summarize their interpretation (see my initial appraisal in San Juan 1992).

In the market-relations approach deemed to be egalitarian, racial inequality results from irrational prejudice or discriminative monopolistic practices. They disrupt the equilibrating tendencies of the market. This neoclassical theory admits a limited amount of "judicious" state intervention to restore equilibrium, but the principle of individualism is the governing framework. Although the monopoly cartels impose inequalities in labor, capital, and consumption, minorities and the capitalist class (according to O/W) hold equal power. Market theories are economically deterministic, conceiving of racial inequality as located in the sphere of exchange. Why this approach is called "class-oriented," is puzzling. In contrast, the split-labor market theory of Edna Bonacich--an attempt to improve the segmented labor-market analysis of the political economy of the capitalist system--focuses on exploitation as part of the sociohistorical division of labor,

with the sale of labor power conditioned by the total political economy of specific historical periods (see Banton 1987).

In the stratification approach, we focus on the social distribution of resources. Here O/W simply conflate class and status, a view in which stratification of groups arises from unequal distribution of income/wealth. Extra-economic factors, political authority and other forms of domination, account for the status order. This clarifies William Julius Wilson's analysis of stratification in the black community (in his *The Declining Significance of Race*, 1978) oriented around "life chances." In O/W's view, Wilson's dismissal of "race" for "class" (that is, status) is mistaken: "the black middle class remains tied to the lower class precisely through racial dynamics which are structured into the US economy, culture and politics." Despite a disingenuous play on words, alternating "class" and "status" as well as "caste," O/W cannot persuade their readers that stratification theory is in some ways equivalent to, or produces the same effect as, historical-materialist class analysis.

Now, for O/W, class conflict theory derives from the Marxist concept of exploitation absent in the other two approaches. But then they postulate the following questionable interpretations: first, the Marxist view posits "the centrality of the 'social relations of production' in structuring classes and class relationships"; and, second, "class conflict theory infers racially oriented political interests from economic ones." Ultimately, however, O/W succumb to a hopeless muddle by mixing bourgeois economics (market theory) with a presumed Marxist analysis by their preoccupation with the labor market. Class is thus misconstrued as a production-relation; hence they wonder how that relation can be "specifically racial." Two tendencies in class conflict theory are discernible, according to O/W: the "divide and rule" conception resting on the notion of labor-market segmentation as "the key determinant in racially based inequalities in production relations," and second, an "exclusionist" perspective based on the idea of a split-labor market. Notwithstanding these distinctions, O/W betray an obsessive drive to misrecognize Marxism--as they interpret it in a post-structuralist or sometimes eclectic fashion--with bourgeois neoclassical economics: racial inequality results not from production relationships but from "market or exchange relationships."

For O/W, the Marxist model as far as they conceive it is flawed. It ignores subjectivity, politics and ideology. Race cannot be understood "in terms of an economically determined formula of class belonging defined as the relationship to the means of production." For them, "race and class are competing modalities by which social actors may be organized." Because ideology and politics determine the labor market, "racial categories cut across class lines." Because class formation process is complex and contingent, O/W conclude that sectoral lines of demarcation pervade production relations and, therefore, class analysis cannot adequately elucidate racial dynamics. This latter "must be understood as determinants of class relationships and indeed class identities, not as mere consequences of these relationships." It is clear that in order to correct a simplistic reduction of the racial category to an epiphenomenal superstructure, O/W redefine class formation, not to speak of class conflict, as a function or effect of the primacy of racial dynamics, that is, of ideology and politics.

To sum up O/W's singular strategy of refuting and repudiating Marxist class analysis: first, class is located in the sphere of market-exchange, then it is subsumed into status and life-chances, and finally it is located in the realm of production that is, however, decisively shaped and ultimately eclipsed by political and ideological forces (for a critique of this philosophical style, see Wood 1986). Race, or racial dynamics, is ultimately elevated as the principal explanatory instrument for comprehending social actors. In a shrewd decentering strategy, racial politics displaces the political economy of group/class antagonisms and functions as the metanarrative of postmodernity, albeit one of ambivalent or indeterminate progress, during the Reagan-Bush period. This approach easily slides into philosophical idealism, a feat achieved at the cost of distorting a dialectical-materialist theory of class struggle and refurbishing dogmas already consigned to the dustbin of Cold War history. How can this confusion be rectified?

A Return to Marx?

Let us first review what Marx said about class. As everyone knows, Marx died before completing the chapter on "class" in Volume III of *Capital*. Marx did not invent the theory of class and of class struggle as the motive force in the development of world history. What Marx as a theoretician of socialist revolution did was to analyze the origin and characteristics of classes in bourgeois society, with emphasis on how the interests of one class coincide with the development of the productive forces toward new social structures, and how other classes defend the established system for their own benefit. Class is a conceptual category designating a relationship of exploitation. It is indissociable from class conflict, from the specific historical struggle of social groups divided by unequal property relations. Marx's singular accomplishment is to show how the liberation of the proletariat implies the abolition of classes and class society, together with the exploitation of commodified labor.

In historicizing the social division of labor, Marx demonstrated that classes are specific and historically determinate. They are neither rigid nor immutable. They arise from the complex dynamics of historical development. There are not just two homogeneous classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as the *Communist Manifesto* proclaimed, but many dependent on the multiple ramifications of the division of labor and the overdetermined specificity of the modes of production as well as the historical conjunctures. For example, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx described the formation of numerous middle and intermediate strata and various coalitions that formed during the events of the 1848 revolution. He also later observed that in England "intermediate and transitional strata obscure the class boundaries" that separate the increasingly polarized bourgeoisie and the proletariat. What is crucial, however, is Marx's view that classes are formed in the process of class antagonisms. Class struggle, not the relation to the means of production, are primary in class formation and the coeval crystallization of class consciousness (from class-in-itself to class-for-itself). This modifies Lenin's doctrinal formulation of class: "Classes are large groups of people, differing from each other by the place they occupy in an historically determined system of social production, by their role in the social organization of labor and,

consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they can dispose and the mode of acquiring it" (quoted in Schmitt 1987, 128).

A fully constituted class was described by Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, (section VII): "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not form a class." In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels write: "The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors. On the other hand, the class in its turn achieves independent existence over against the individuals" (quoted in Schmitt 1987, 128). Classes, groups locked in battle, are thus not unchangeable monolithic formations; they "are forever changing, developing, differentiating themselves, while at the same time the common element always comes to the fore and integrates the individual within the class" (Fischer 1996, 77). Classes undergo a constant process of inner movement and transformation dependent on the vicissitudes of the class struggle in a historically specific configuration of the world-system as a complex dynamic whole.

We cannot grasp the dialectics of race and class by using the market as the conceptual space of cognition as well as a point of departure for crafting revolutionary political strategy. Nor the idea of exchange and money, for that matter. Marxism begins with a grasp of the social totality in its historical development. The key concept is the mode of production consisting of productive forces and of relations of production. Let us confine ourselves to capitalism as the determinate mode with its various historical stages. In industrial capitalism the *differentia specifica* is the buying and selling of labor power. Lenin states that capitalism is the system in which labor-power becomes the prime commodity. This gives rise to the working class as the group separated from the means of production, free (unlike slaves or serfs) to dispose of their labor power, to sell it to another group--the capitalist--who utilizes it to expand the unit of capital he owns. This labor process involving contracts that deal with the conditions of the sale of labor power needs to be strictly historicized. While the market for labor-power has existed since antiquity, it is only with the rise of industrial capitalism in the 18th century that a substantial class of wage-workers emerged. We need to distinguish between the production of commodities on a class basis and mercantile capitalism founded on the exchange of the surplus products of prior forms of production (Braverman 1974). In every determinate sociohistorical conjuncture, various features of different modes of production may overlap, but a dominant structure of class exploitation prevails, ascertainable through careful theoretical and empirical analysis.

What is distinctive in this mode of production is the fact that the labor process has become alienated, that is, alienation now characterizes the work situation of workers under capitalist control. This alienation of the process of production exerts a peculiar force that affects the factoring of racial, ethnic, sexual and other qualities in the struggle

between classes. Alienation, commodity fetishism, and what Georg Lukács calls "reification" mediates and adjusts the racial dynamics to the level and stage of class antagonisms in the specific social formation.

To recapitulate: Social class in a Marxist construal denotes groups of social agents defined principally but not exclusively by their place in the labor process. This process plays a crucial and necessary role in determining class, but not a sufficient one. For the political and ideological conditions provide decisive criteria in ascertaining how the economic will exert its pressure on the behavior of the class in concrete situations of struggle. Marx suggested this in *Poverty of Philosophy* (ch. 2, section 5): "Economic conditions had in the first place transformed the mass of the people into workers. The domination of capital created the common situation and common interests of this class. Thus this mass is already a class in relation to capital [class in itself], but not yet a class for itself. In the struggle, this mass unites and forms itself into a class for itself. The interests which it defends become class interests."

Nicos Poulantzas's formulation, however, rejects the distinction between the group determined by structure and the supplementary role of ideology in the process of class conflict: "A social class is defined by its *place* in the ensemble of social practices, i.e. by its place in the ensemble of the division of labor which includes political and ideological relations. This place corresponds to the *structural determination* of classes, i.e. the manner in which determination by the structure (relations of production, politico-ideological domination/subordination) operates on class practices--for classes have existence only in the class struggle" (1973, 27). Poulantzas uncannily anticipates the errors of Omi, Winant, and perhaps two generations of Cold War experts on revolutionary Marxism.

It is therefore incorrect to conceive of class as a bounded social entity endowed with a specific agency divorced from its place in the production process and the social division of labor. In the Marxist optic, class is a relational (to the means of production) and processual category. It differs from stratum or status group in the Weberian theory of stratification. Anthony Giddens (1980) correctly points out that stratification theory applies a gradation scheme to rank individuals descriptively along a measurement scale, whereas class cannot be visualized or conceptualized in this manner. Thus the distinction of groups in terms of income, prestige, etc. translates class antagonism into a jockeying of groups for higher/lower positions in the hierarchical ladder, abolishing the material and necessary contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Weber needs to be distinguished from Marx.

In 1927, Karl Kautsky argued that the class conflicts described in the *Communist Manifesto* were really conflicts between status groups and ranks. This contradicts Marx's own thesis stated in the third part of *Capital*, chapter 47, which needs to be underscored: "It is always the direct relation between the owners of the conditions of production and the direct producers which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation, of the entire social edifice."

In addition to class as defined by specific historical antagonisms within the production process, we need to examine the moment of reproduction. The labor process as an abstraction needs to be fleshed out. Goran Therborn instructs us: "Capitalist production, therefore, under its aspect of a continuous connected process, of a process of reproduction, produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capital relation; on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage-laborer" (1970, 5). In this site of reproduction of the production relations, the division of labor and the distribution of resources, we discern the intervention of "race" as a categorizing property that enables the construction of hegemony (as defined by Antonio Gramsci [1971]) and its subversion.

Remapping the Contemporary Terrain

No longer valid as a scientific instrument of classification, race today operates as a socio-political construction. Differences of language, beliefs, traditions, and so on can no longer be sanctioned by biological science as permanent, natural, and normal. Nonetheless they have become efficacious components of the racializing process, "inscribed through tropes of race, lending the sanction of God, biology, or the natural order to even presumably unbiased descriptions of cultural tendencies and differences" (Gates 1986, 5). It is evident that, as Colette Guillaumin (1995) has demonstrated, the class divisions of the feudal/tributary stage hardened and became naturalized, with blood lineage signifying pedigree, status, and rank. Industrial capital, however, destroyed kinship and caste-like affinities as a presumptive claim to wealth.

The capitalist mode of production articulated "race" with class in a peculiar way. While the stagnation of rural life imposed a racial or castelike rigidity to the peasantry, the rapid accumulation of wealth through the ever more intensifying exploitation of labor by capital could not so easily "racialize" the wage-workers of a particular nation, given the alienability of labor-power--unless certain physical or cultural characteristics can be utilized to divide the workers or render one group an outcast or pariah removed from the domain of "free labor." In the capitalist development of U.S. society, African, Mexican, and Asian bodies--more precisely, their labor power and its reproductive efficacy--were colonized and racialized; hence the idea of "internal colonialism" retains explanatory validity. "Race" is thus constructed out of raw materials furnished by class relations, the history of class conflicts, and the vicissitudes of colonial/capitalist expansion and the building of imperial hegemony. It is dialectically accented and operationalized not just to differentiate the price of wage labor within and outside the territory of the metropolitan power, but also to reproduce relations of domination-subordination invested with an aura of naturality and fatality. The refunctioning of physical or cultural traits as ideological and political signifiers of class identity reifies social relations. Such "racial" markers enter the field of the alienated labor process, concealing the artificial nature of meanings and norms, and essentializing or naturalizing historical traditions and values which are contingent on mutable circumstances.

William Julius Wilson indicated some of these changes in the role of "race" in class-divided U.S. society, though he drew mistaken conclusions. He applied stratification

theory on the mapping of black-white contacts in U.S. society configured in three major stages: first, the plantation economy with its racial-caste oppression; second, class conflict and racial oppression in the period of the end of Reconstruction up to the New Deal era; and third, the progressive transition from race inequalities to class inequalities after World War II, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Given a hierarchical model of status roles, Wilson intended to find out how "access to the means of production" (by which he means employment) can be obtained by education. His concern is with opportunities for mobility provided by a segmented labor market which generates a high-wage sector (salaried white-collar positions in government and corporation) and the underclass. "Race" disappears because all barriers for blacks are gone with affirmative action, more education, and so on. "Race" is no longer the cause of discrimination and segregation of the labor market; rather, it is class, meaning education or symbolic capital, lifestyle, consumption power, and so on. Gunnar Myrdal's American Creed has finally abolished racism only to re-inaugurate "classism," the rebarbative term of postmodern skeptics, without which the classic American moral dilemma--the opposition between "high national and Christian precepts" and sordid practices of apartheid and other institutional forms of racialized class injustice in everyday life--would be vacuous.

Unfortunately, the current debate between a class-based Affirmative Action instead of one based on race assumes that class as status (attached chiefly to income or occupational location) is the normative obstacle to eliminating racism (see Gutmann 2000). In short, racism translates into a question of social mobility and the individualist "bootstrap" ethos of competition (also known as neosocial Darwinism) in the "free market," the privileged locus of alienation and reification (Lukacs 1971). From the perspective of liberal multiculturalism, "class" becomes an aspect of identity, like race and gender susceptible of stylistic alteration. One is then reminded by Ellen Meiksins Wood: "Is it possible to imagine class differences without exploitation and domination? The 'difference' that constitutes class as an 'identity' is, by definition, a relationship of inequality and power, in a way that sexual or cultural 'difference' need not be" (1995, 258).

It seems obvious that racism cannot be dissolved by instances of status mobility when sociohistorical circumstances change gradually or are transformed by unforeseen interventions. The black bourgeoisie continues to be harassed and stigmatized by liberal or multiculturalist practices of racism, not because they drive Porsches or conspicuously flaunt all the indices of wealth. Class exploitation cannot replace or stand for racism because it is the condition of possibility for it. It is what enables the racializing of selected markers, whether physiological or cultural, to maintain, deepen and reinforce alienation, mystifying reality by modes of commodification, fetishism, and reification characterizing the routine of quotidian life. Race and class are dialectically conjoined in the reproduction of capitalist relations of exploitation and domination.

Reconstructing Historical Materialism

We might take a passage from Marx as a source of guidelines for developing a historical-materialist theory of racism which is not empiricist but dialectical in aiming for theorizing conceptual concreteness as a multiplicity of historically informed and

configured determinations. This passage comes from a letter dated 9 April 1870 to Meyer and Vogt in which Marx explains why the Irish struggle for autonomy was of crucial significance for the British proletariat:

. . . Every industrial and commercial center in England possesses a working class *divided* into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the *ruling* nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the 'poor whites' to the 'niggers' in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and stupid tool of the *English rule in Ireland*.

This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This *antagonism* is the *secret of the impotence of the English working class*, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it (quoted in Callinicos 1993).

Here Marx sketches three parameters for the sustained viability of racism in modern capitalist society. First, the economic competition among workers is dictated by the distribution of labor power in the labor-market via differential wage rates. The distinction between skilled and unskilled labor is contextualized in differing national origins, languages and traditions of workers, which can be manipulated into racial antagonisms. Second, the appeal of racist ideology to white workers, with their identification as members of the "ruling nation" affording--in W.E.B. DuBois's words--"public and psychological wage" or compensation. Like religion, white-supremacist nationalism provides the illusory resolution to the real contradictions of life for the working majority of citizens. Third, the ruling class reinforces and maintains these racial divisions for the sake of capital accumulation within the framework of its ideological/political hegemony in the metropolis and worldwide.

Racism and nationalism are thus modalities in which class struggles articulate themselves at strategic points in history. No doubt social conflicts in recent times have involved not only classes but also national, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as feminist, ecological, antinuclear social movements (Bottomore 1983). The concept of "internal colonialism" (popular in the seventies) that subjugates national minorities, as well as the principle of self-determination for oppressed or "submerged" nations espoused by Lenin, exemplify dialectical attempts to historicize the collective agency for socialist transformation. Within the framework of the global division of labor between metropolitan center and colonized periphery, a Marxist program of national liberation is

meant to take into account the extraction of surplus value from colonized peoples through unequal exchange as well as through direct colonial exploitation in "Free Trade Zones," illegal traffic in prostitution, mail-order brides, and contractual domestics (at present, the Philippines provides the bulk of the latter, about ten million persons and growing). National oppression has a concrete reality not entirely reducible to class exploitation but incomprehensible apart from it; that is, it cannot be adequately understood without the domination of the racialized peoples in the dependent formations by the colonizing/imperialist power, with the imperial nation-state acting as the exploiting class, as it were (see San Juan 1998; 2002).

Racism arose with the creation and expansion of the capitalist world economy (Wolf 1982; Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991). Solidarities conceived as racial or ethnic groups acquire meaning and value in terms of their place within the social organization of production and reproduction of the ideological-political order; ideologies of racism as collective social evaluation of solidarities arise to reinforce structural constraints which preserve the exploited and oppressed position of these "racial" solidarities. Such patterns of economic and political segmentation mutate in response to the impact of changing economic and political relationships (Geshwender and Levine 1994). Overall, there is no denying the fact that national-liberation movements and indigenous groups fighting for sovereignty, together with heterogeneous alliances and coalitions, cannot be fully understood without a critical analysis of the production of surplus value and its expropriation by the propertied class--that is, capital accumulation. As John Rex noted,

different ethnic groups are placed in relations of cooperation, symbiosis or conflict by the fact that as groups they have different economic and political functions. Within this changing class order of [colonial societies], the language of racial difference frequently becomes the means whereby men allocate each other to different social and economic positions. What the type of analysis used here suggests is that the exploitation of clearly marked groups in a variety of different ways is integral to capitalism and that ethnic groups unite and act together because they have been subjected to distinct and differentiated types of exploitation. Race relations and racial conflict are necessarily structured by political and economic factors of a more generalized sort (1983, 403-05, 407).

Hence race relations and race conflict are necessarily structured by the larger totality of the political economy of a given society, as well as by modifications in the structure of the world economy. Corporate profit-making via class exploitation on an international/globalized scale, at bottom, still remains the logic of the world system of finance capitalism based on historically changing structures and retooled practices of domination and subordination.

Class structure, to be sure, is much more complex and ambiguous in advanced industrial social formations (Giddens 1973; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Because of the comprehensive state regulation of contemporary social life, some have replaced ownership or control of the means of production with control of the state apparatus as a

more decisive criterion of social development. In 1899 Eduard Bernstein dismissed class struggle because of the growing middle class, socialized welfare reforms, liberalization, and so on. In the sixties C. Wright Mills also rejected fundamental class conflict as part of a "labor metaphysic," while Herbert Marcuse bewailed the incorporation of the working class into advanced capitalist society. However, the production and distribution of the social surplus cannot be ignored. This despite empiricist arguments that "class interest" is now viewed not only as defined positivistically in relation to the means of production but as constructed from the interactions of everyday life and attendant interpretations. Notwithstanding such formal and technical shifts of subject-positions, classes and their historical transformation as the principal agents of change, in particular, the transition to a socialist "classless" society, remain valid in conceptualizing realistic prospects of change in capitalism conceived as a global economic and political system under the current post-9/11 hegemony--contested and precarious, given the irresolvable contradictions of its crisis--of the United States.

A recent translation of Albert Memmi's magisterial book entitled *Racism* reminds us that any understanding of the complex network of ideas and practices classified by that term will always lead us to the foundational bedrock of class relations. Memmi defines racism as "the generalized and final assigning of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at his victim's expense, in order to justify the former's own privileges or aggression" (2000, 169). The underlying frame of intelligibility for this process of assigning values cannot be anything else but the existence of class-divided societies and nation-states with unequal allocations of power and resources. Both motivation and consequences can be adequately explained by the logic of class oppression and its entailments. In our epoch of globalization, inequality between propertied nation-states (where transnational corporate powers are based) and the rest of the world has become universalized and threatens the welfare of humanity and the planet.

At this present conjuncture, however, what becomes more urgent is the application of a Marxist perspective on the destructive mechanisms of corporate globalization, at present led by the hegemonic military might of the United States and its racializing crusade of an endless "war on terrorism." It might be superfluous to recapitulate the debate between traditional Marxist-Leninists and neo-Marxists such as Immanuel Wallerstein--that would require in itself a separate inquiry. Suffice it to cite one witness to recent international developments. Reflecting on the recent World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, immediately before September 11, 2001, Eric Mann noted that to launch the most effective intervention to change history, it is necessary to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the imperialist system: "Right now the U.S. is financing its war against the world by super-exploiting the entire world, subjecting more than three billion people to abject poverty. In that racism and imperialism are at the heart of the U.S. ideological framework, antiracism and anti-imperialism are the central ideological concepts of contestation, the essence of counterhegemonic political education work" (2002, 220-23). This essay is an attempt to contribute to that revolutionary pedagogical enterprise.

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