

No matter the color of the lash, the whip of racism remains intact

written by John Parker
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It's Black History Month. Time to reflect on, hopefully, the progress made for people of African ethnicity, especially in the U.S.

However, a brief history of repression by police attempts to kill our hope. Since the Washington Post has been taking statistics on police killings in the U.S., every year is a record-breaking year. Police disproportionately target people of color, with Black people being the number one target proportionate to our population size in the U.S.

2022, another record year for police killings, witnessed Black people being three times more likely to be killed than white people, despite being 1.3 times less likely to be armed. As of Jan. 25, with 2023 still in its infancy, [Statista.com](https://www.statista.com) reports that 79 people were shot to death by police.

The killings by cops have continued apace after Jan. 25 and include Anthony Lowe, the double amputee shot 11 times while fleeing police on Jan. 26, or the police shooting (just seven hours before writing this piece) of 56-year-old Marianne Griffiths on Feb. 5, suffering a mental health crisis while holding a BB gun.

So, for the sake of all those continuing to be killed by cops this year and the preceding years, we must never give in to hopelessness and allow the powers that be to discourage us from fighting back against this racist capitalist system, nor allow them to deny the role that racism plays in this system.

After the Tyre Nichols killing in January by mostly Black Memphis police officers, the argument has been resurrected that racism no longer plays a part in the system of policing in the U.S. This despite the overwhelming evidence of continued racist targeting of people of color.

Maybe we need to examine what racism is and where it comes from – and its reason for being.

The specter of our class still haunts them

There are two very frightening realities faced by the capitalist ruling class – their smaller numbers in relation to the majority and their inability to derive profit without exploiting human labor. Since they are the sole owners of the means of production (the factories, land, and machines) – with an essential armed force to protect that ownership – they have irreconcilable differences with the majority of people who, instead of owning those means, are exploited by them. We can't even decide how the profits created by our labor, which turns into the wealth of the nation, gets used. Only the capitalist class gets to decide that, with their bought-and-paid-for politicians in Washington.

So, the problem for the ruling class is how to hide that reality from the human labor they depend on for profit. How do you keep the majority from understanding that their misery is based on their not owning the means of production and having no role in how the wealth produced from those means is spent? Should it go toward endless wars, World War III, more police, joyrides into space? Or for health care, jobs, and housing?

And, more importantly, how do you hide from this class of people that they reside in the same boat, sharing a reality of economic exploitation, increasing with every utility gas hike, deteriorating social services, or diminishing wages?

That is the role of racism, to keep those in the boat from recognizing each other's similarities. Like a magician's use of misdirection, they hide that truth by defining our differences for us, then giving more to those who meet the preferred parameters of the ruling class. They get more in terms of quality of life, allowing them the tools and opportunities to develop a fantasy of superiority.

However, from the capitalists' point of view, even with all those benefits, the preferred in our boat are still the human labor necessary to develop surplus value,

produced from our hourly work for the capitalists. The “surplus” is the extra added value our labor gives to the products we produce, allowing those products to be sold at a profit. It is the foundation of the wealth of the capitalists. However, even our preferred occupants of that boat will continue to be exploited, having no say in how that surplus value is used. Eventually, when their privileges over others in that boat hit up against austerity – also losing their pensions, jobs, and quality of life to maintain the profits of the ruling class – even the “preferred” will be forced to protest. This is when, ironically, the wealth they produce is now used to pay for the police or military also taking aim at them.

Racism is, therefore, a tool to weaken our working class through division in general. It’s specifically used as a whip that inflicts pain on the oppressed to maintain the system of capitalism and its neocolonial relationships. To attempt to feel less of that pain, some cowardly people of color who are also victims of racism will willingly lend themselves as the lash of that whip, hoping to divert their pain onto another’s back.

They will lend themselves as mercenaries for the ruling class. Still, they must meet the higher standards of allegiance to their white masters by frequently having to prove a willingness to match the psychopathic violence of their white supremacist peers. They are traitors, for sure.

Sometimes they serve as presidents or legislators, serving their imperial masters at Lockheed, Raytheon, and the various financial and oil monopolies making up the ruling class. They willingly participate by commanding drone assassinations even on the continent of Africa. And many of them are found wearing a uniform they should never adorn – the Blue one.

But, no matter who has transformed into the lash of that whip, they are all under strict orders to aim their greatest violence toward the oppressed, wielded for a ruling class desperate to maintain and enforce the ideology of white supremacy.

The beginnings of the ideology of white supremacy

White supremacy is an ideology that had its primary beginnings in the 17th Century when it became clear that the numerous slave revolts consisting of a combination of enslaved Africans, Indigenous, and poor and indentured Europeans jeopardized not only the slave owners and the monarchy but the developing capitalist class.

To break up that unified struggle, slavery, where it had its greatest institutional development in the Americas, had to begin to be defined for an exclusive few using skin color and African and Indigenous ethnicity. However, the greatest emphasis – in maintaining a continued supply of this unfree labor – was reserved for those from the African continent. This meant that Europeans would no longer be considered for slavery (as was the case in the 17th century and earlier). And even the indentured would be morphed into overseers or slave catchers of runaway slaves, eventually given the title of police shortly after Reconstruction, targeting Black people in the South, using so-called “legality.” The Southern ruling class created laws designed to justify imprisonment to continue the slave labor to which they were economically addicted.

Racism also aims at the mental health of the oppressed. It’s used to destroy its targets from the inside with self-loathing, self-doubt, and a general belief of inferiority. This also is sometimes a motivation for Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples to put on that blood-drenched uniform of Blue: to become something different. But, even if, by ignorance, people of color join U.S. police forces, they will quickly learn the genocidal role of their employer and either quit or remain with a clear understanding that they are an enemy of their own ethnicity and class.

Those murdering cops who killed Tyre Nichols, just like their peers who killed George Floyd, knew the role they were playing in protecting, not us but the racist, murderous system of capitalism. The only color that mattered in those incidents, and the multiple incidents this year set to create another record of police killings, was

the color of their uniforms.

As the U.S. economy sinks further into a crisis of overproduction, inflation, and war economy - austerity will continue to increase and generalize the want that oppressed people in this country have always endured. This is when racism is of utmost importance, whether it's used here or in Ukraine (with different parameters - Russian ethnicity is part of the subhuman race defined by Nazi Germany and the current neo-Nazis leading a significant portion of the government and military in Ukraine).

Racism is an integral part also of fascism, and it will do us no good to deny its existence. It exists for Black and Brown people on a daily basis when we are treated horribly by those receiving more in society and when we apply for a job not meant for us or come home to communities occupied by the militarized state forces of the ruling class. How can we be told that our rage against prejudice, disrespect, and the targeting of our children by police is simply a reaction to a phantom? We cannot disconnect the gun from the bullet as if they exist independently. Capitalism and imperialism and colonialism and neocolonialism depend upon the bullet of racism - and they cannot exist for very long without each other.

