

Reimagining a World where Justice is Possible

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The real looters are the 1 %, not those who have been robbed of their livelihood. The real thugs are the ruling elites who habitually associate looting and violence with the victims.

It is typical of oppressive social systems to not only deprive the oppressed from a dignified life but also criminalize them at the same time. As long as domination exists, looting and violence will continue to be committed legally and on a large scale. The victims will continue to be accused of the very crimes committed against them. When they protest, more violence is committed in their name to justify the use of more violence against them.

It is misleading to act as if the problem is a moral one, or that the solution lies in the moral invalidation of particular acts. The oppressed groups have been forced into the position of constant explanation for using every means at their disposal to call for justice. They have explained the injustices millions of times rationally, creatively, artistically, scientifically, and politically.

Did not Martin Luther King Jr. argue for justice in the clearest and the most persuasive possible ways to all Americans? Does not America proudly celebrate his anniversary? Yet more than half a century after his murder, his famous dream remains the dream of every George Floyd struggling to breathe.

It was none other Martin Luther King Jr. who said, “injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere.” We live in a world where robbing entire classes and societies; manufacturing and trading ever deadlier weapons; poisoning the air, earth, and water; torturing or wiping out entire species; etc. etc. are the alphabet of power. The justice of such power cannot be anything but a hellish nightmare for the those who are born into the margins. Such a world will always be racist, regardless of the humanist sentiments of the majority.

It has always been futile to explain to an oppressive system that it is unjust. At the end of the day, justice is not isolated from social relations. Rather, it merely reflects the same social privileges and inequalities, only in idealized, moralized, and eternalized forms. Even when we demand justice for a particular victim of the system’s own undisputable brutality, we are forced to further legitimize it as a system of justice because we implicitly reaffirm its self-proclaimed essence and role. All dominant systems define and carry out justice by associating immorality and crime with its victims, to the point where even the dominated end up perceiving the world and themselves in the same way.

The dominant make us feel guilty for looting and violence we have never committed. Even at the very moment of barbaric violence committed against us in public space, we are unable to escape the guilt. We are made to believe that justice is the norm for the ruling system, which might commit mistakes once in a while, while crime is the culture of the marginalized, above which only a small number of individuals could ascend.

We play by the rules of a world where stealing the fruits of others' labor and robbing their basic life conditions are not only normalized but also admired as the very example of individual success. The rewards of such success exceed generations, both symbolically and materially. The privileges include every aspect of life, from food and shelter to education and political influence. The members of privileged do not need to prove anything to anyone. Truth, goodness, and beauty are measured according to their way of life, judgement, and perception. The state, religion, and laws in turn reflect their totalitarian crafting of reality.

On the other hand, being born into a social group robbed for generations is a crime for which the person will be punished throughout her life. A member of the oppressed is doomed to constantly justify her existence, which can only be done by perpetually proving her usefulness to the dominant order. She must work, speak, and feel according to what is predetermined by the dominant. She must continually apologize for breathing and prove that her existence is a peaceful one. It is too rebellious if, in the face of such an irrational order, she says her life matters. In the end, the dominant system has the power to choose to understand or misunderstand, approve or disapprove, reward or punish. Ultimately, those who own everything also have the power to determine truth, goodness, and beauty.

In such a world, justice can never be just, and a truly just justice will never be more than a dream of the silenced. In such a world, the legal is criminal, moral is unethical, and actual is irrational.

Inequality and human exploitation must be ended in order for justice to be possible.

A world that does not have a place for black people is too small, too stupid, and too violent to be fixed. Instead, it must be reimagined and reconstructed.

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