

## **cultural landscapes: peoples, places, and power**

# **SOME DEFINITIONS**

Note: The following is incomplete. But is offered to open up these concepts and arguments around them for further study, questioning, and understanding.

## **Racism**

*Racism we see as a systematic discrimination against or exclusion, oppression of a group of people based upon an accidental quality, as in skin color, hair texture, shape and size of lips and so forth. It's systematic. It's not something that is simply random acts. Racism . . . is much more than chauvinism or prejudice. I might stand here and say that I think culturally or ethnically I'm better. I may have certain prejudices. And certainly we all do. But racism is distinguished by the fact that it is systemic and it relates to the question of power and capacity. That is to say, racism is about having the power or capacity to translate prejudices and attitudes or feelings of superiority into practice, custom, policy or law. That is a fundamental difference between simply saying, I don't like white folks, or, I don't like black folks, and the ability to in fact impose that prejudice in a way that impinges upon and thwarts the ability of a group to develop.* (Ron Daniels)

*Difficult as it now may be to imagine, society was not always divided according to racial categories. Race and racism are special products of the capitalist era. . . . Historians have shown that race hatred had to be created. It was anything but natural—instead, it had to be nurtured every step of the way.* (Brooke Haegerty & Nelson Peery, *Moving Onward*, 34)

*Our school was well integrated because it was located in a part of town with a predominantly Latino population. The culture of the school, however, was overwhelmingly Anglo and middle-class. The use of Spanish was frowned upon and occasionally punished. Any trace of an accent when speaking English would be pointed out and sarcastically mocked. This mocking persisted even though, and maybe because, some of the nuns were also "Spanish." By the age of seven, I was keenly aware that I lived in a society that had little room for those who were poor, brown, or female. I was all three. I moved between dualized worlds: private/public, Catholic/secular, poverty/privilege, Latina/Anglo.* (Margaret E. Montoya, "Mascaras, Trenzadas, y Greñas," 514)

*rac-ism 1: a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race 2: racial prejudice or discrimination* (www.m-w.com)

*A common complaint about capitalism is that "all the capitalist sees is money." Given that this is true, observe that anyone who "only cares about money," doesn't care about the color of the person where their money comes from. Capitalism is a system of individual rights—it is a necessary political condition to the banishment of racism, where it results in the violation of individual rights. The only protection a man needs from racism is the protection of his rights—specifically protection from the initiation of force, whether it be a knife held at ones throat by a Black Panther, or the noose held by a member of the KKK.* (www.capitalism.org)

*From conquest, to slavery, to colonialism and Jim Crow, racism and the system of white supremacy has been and is implicated in every breath and heartbeat of the United States. At least since the late 1600's, when whiteness as a concept and mark of automatic advantage was developed by the elite so as to divide poor whites from the people of color (black and American Indian) with whom they had substantially more in common, the battle lines have been drawn in an explicitly racial way. And today, we're still held hostage to this system.* (Tim Wise, www.timwise.org)

*From the mammies, Jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present*

*welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, the nexus of negative stereotypical images applied to African-American women has been fundamental to Black women's oppression.* (Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 10)

*I cannot understand why so many chiefs are allowed to talk in so many different ways, and promise so many different things.... I am tired of talk that comes to nothing.... There has been too much talking by men with no right to talk. Too many misrepresentations have been made, too many misunderstandings have come up between the white men about the Indians. If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indian he can live in peace. There need be no trouble. Treat all men alike. Give them all the same law. Give them all an even chance to live and grow.* (Chief Joseph, 1879)

*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.* (E. San Juan, Jr. "Marxism and the Race/Class Problematic")

*The political economy of the "New Racial Domain," by contrast, is driven and largely determined by the forces of transnational capitalism, and the public policies of state neoliberalism. From the vantage point of the most oppressed U.S. populations, the New Racial Domain rests on an unholy trinity, or deadly triad, of structural barriers to a decent life. These oppressive structures are mass unemployment, mass incarceration, and mass disfranchisement. Each factor directly feeds and accelerates the others, creating an ever-widening circle of social disadvantage, poverty, and civil death, touching the lives of tens of millions of U.S. people.* (Manning Marable, "Globalization and Racialization")

## **Capitalism**

*The bare essentials of capitalism are these: 1) Capital is the portion of a nation's wealth that is man-made and therefore reproducible. 2) Under capitalism, a society's capital equipment, its means of production, is owned by a minority of individuals who have the legal right to use this property for private gain. 3) Capitalism relies on the market system, which determines distribution, allocates resources and establishes the income levels, wages, rents and profits of different social classes. There's more to it than that. It can refer to an economic system, the society built on it and a historical stage of Western, or "First World," civilization.* (Capitalism for Beginners, 3)

*cap-i-tal-ism: an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.* (www.m-w.com)

*Once market imperatives set the terms of social reproduction, all economic actors, both appropriators and producers, even if they remain in possession, or indeed out right ownership, of the means of production—are subject to the demands of competition, increasing productivity, capital accumulation, and the intense exploitation of labor.* (Ellen Wood, *Origin of Capitalism*, 195)

*Capitalism is a free-market system built on private ownership, in particular, the idea that owners of capital have property rights that entitle them to earn a profit as a reward for putting their capital at risk in some form of economic activity. Opinion (and practice) differs considerably among capitalist countries about what role the state should play in the economy. But everyone agrees that, at the very least, for capitalism to work the state must be strong enough to guarantee property rights.* (The Economist, Economics A-Z)

*Capitalism is a social system based on the principle of individual rights.* (www.capitalism.org)

*While the enlistment of migrant labor has been integral to the history of capitalist development, with free trade, deregulation, and neoliberalism as globalization's guideposts, the diasporic flow of migrant women from peripheral formations to more affluent countries is today quite unprecedented. Our comprehension of the situation of Filipino overseas contract workers (OCWs) would be hugely aided by Petras' unflinching use of "U.S. imperialism" instead of "globalization" or even of "global capitalism."*

(Delia Aguilar, "Imperialism, Female Diaspora, and Feminism")

*The moral justification of capitalism does not lie in the altruist claim that it represents the best way to achieve 'the common good.' It is true that capitalism does—if that catch-phrase has any meaning—but this is merely a secondary consequence. The moral justification for capitalism lies in the fact that it is the only system consonant with man's rational nature, that it protects man's survival qua man, and that its ruling principle is: justice.* (Ayn Rand)

*The historical debate is over. The answer is free-market capitalism.*

(Thomas Friedman)

*In this era of privatization and free markets, money governs without intermediaries. A state that is judge and police and not much else keeps cheap labor in line and represses the dangerous legions of those without work. In many countries, social justice has been reduced to criminal justice. The state takes charge of public security; everything else is left to the market.*

(Galeano, Upside Down, 30)

## Imperialism

*I was in the East End of London (a working-class quarter) yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread! bread!' and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism.... My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.*

(Cecil Rhodes, 1895)

*The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High—the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere—its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens, and its congregation an Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling, owning no man master, but governed by God's natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood—of "peace and good will amongst men."*

(John O'Sullivan, 1844)

*im-pe-ri-al-ism 1 : imperial government, authority, or system 2 : the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas; broadly : the extension or imposition of power, authority, or influence <union imperialism> (www.m-w.com)*

*Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.*

(V.I. Lenin, Imperialism, 1916)

*Corporate globalization, or shall we call it by its real name—Imperialism—needs a press that pretends to be free. It needs courts that pretend to dispense justice. Meanwhile, the countries of the North harden their borders and stockpile weapons of mass destruction. After all they have to make sure that it's only money, goods patents, and services that are globalized. Not the free movement of people. Not a respect for human rights. Not international treaties on racial discrimination or chemical and nuclear weapons or greenhouse gas emissions or climate change or—god forbid—justice.*

(Arandati Roy, War Talk, 107)

*My conclusion is that against their intentions the colonialists brought things to India that have immeasurably enriched the lives of the descendants of colonialism. It is doubtful that non-Western countries would have acquired these good things by themselves. It was the British who, applying a universal notion of human rights, in the early nineteenth century abolished the ancient Indian institution of sati—the custom of tossing widows on the funeral pyre of their dead husbands. . . . The academy needs to shed its irrational prejudice against colonialism. By providing a more balanced perspective, scholars can help to show the foolishness of policies like reparations as well as justifications of terrorism that are based on anti-colonial myths. None of this is to say that colonialism by itself was a good thing, only that bad institutions sometimes produce good results. Colonialism, I freely acknowledge, was a harsh regime for those who lived under it. My grandfather would have a hard time giving even one cheer for colonialism. As for me, I cannot manage three, but I am quite willing to grant two. So here it is: two cheers for colonialism!*

(Dinesh D'Souza, What's So Great about America, 67)

*Imperialism is not a stage of capitalism—not even its highest stage. It has been an intrinsic part of capital expansion right from the beginning. The imperialist conquest of the planet by Europeans and their North American offspring unfolded in two phases and is now perhaps entering a third. The first phase . . . took place around the conquest of the Americas, in the framework of the mercantilist system of the Atlantic Europe of the time. It ended in the destruction of the Indian civilizations, the Hispanicization-Christianization of the Indian peoples or the straightforward genocide upon which the United States was built. . . . The second phase of imperialist devastation was built around the Industrial Revolution and manifested itself in the colonial subjugation of Asia and Africa. The opening of markets . . . and the grabbing of resources were, as everyone knows the real reason for this. . . . The collapse of the Soviet system and the Third World national populist regimes means that we now face the beginnings of a third wave of global devastation resulting from imperialist expansion. Although the conditions are new and in some respects very different from those that characterized the previous phase of imperialism, the aims of the dominant capital are the same as always: to take charge of market expansion, to pillage the earth's natural resources and to over-exploit labor reserves in the periphery. The ideological discourse designed to rally public opinion in the central Triad has been revamped to focus on a "duty to intervene" in the name of "democracy," "national rights," or "humanitarian considerations."*

(Samir Amin, Obsolescent Capitalism, 57-8)

*Imperialism—that is, the international division of labor and appropriation of economic resources benefiting First World countries at the expense of Third World societies—is thriving under new guises and by other means, such as international debt structure, "free trade," or "export processing" zones and the practices of multinational corporations, creating what Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich have called the "global factory." Most recently, it has expanded to Eastern Europe under the guise of helping emergent democracies, where a highly skilled labor force is subjected to novel-strategies of exploitation. Nor has the west abandoned direct military coercion and territorial occupation—witness the invasions of Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, the Falkland Islands, and the military occupation of parts of Iraq and Haiti.* (Theresa Ebert, Ludic Feminism, 286)