

Detroit and Iraq: Plundered by the Same Bandits

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The Race to the Bottom under global, militarized capitalism creates communities of shared misery. Increasingly, it is almost as dangerous to be inside U.S. borders as on the outside. "Iraq was invaded with soldiers, guns and bombs. Detroit was invaded by the corporate 'suits' who made a fast buck for themselves." Both are plundered by the same bandits.

"All of former mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's incompetence could not have created the ongoing occupation of Detroit by the thieves in high places."

The ugly face of empire and disaster capitalism is visible all over the world. Detroit, Michigan, was once a thriving city but was sent into a tailspin by the deindustrialization of the United States, white flight, and institutional racism which blamed black people who were in fact the victims of catastrophe. The coup de grace was delivered by big banks like UBS, Bank of America and Barclays, which sold risky derivatives schemes to [corrupt Detroit politicians](#). When the financial deal inevitably headed south, the banks were the creditors first in line for a payout.

Far back in that line were the workers and people of Detroit. The emergency manager, Kevyn Orr, whose very position they had voted against establishing, rules the city. The new mayor is a figurehead and the people have no representation as the Republican governor and emergency manager remake the city for capital and the gentrifying settler class.

A world away in Iraq, a nation is crumbling under the weight of eleven years of violent occupation by the United States. The once developing nation is now a ruin, with all of its infrastructure and systems from health care to education destroyed by western avarice. The prime minister who was chosen with America's blessing, [Nouri al-Maliki](#), has now become an inconvenience and faces a bleak fate.

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The Bush administration and now the Obama team determined that promoting one side in sectarian political disputes would make for a smooth running and profitable occupation. Instead they brought war between Sunni and Shia and with goal of knocking down more dominoes, continued to [fund jihadists](#) who always upset their plans. Now Maliki is being told to get out of office if he wants help in crushing the enemies that America made for his country.

Just as Iraq's infrastructure has been destroyed, Detroit residents now live without basic services which ought to be regarded as the right of every human being. In the United States, a country which boasts of its high level of advancement, residents of a major city must

plead to the international community for the right to access water.

In a city already on the brink, the powers that be chose to pressure struggling people to pay increased fees for water. They have also used harsh and sometimes improper methods to deprive even those who have paid their bills. No one can survive at all without water to drink, and one cannot survive very well without water for cooking, cleaning and sanitation. Very powerful people in boardrooms and government offices made decisions that turned Detroit into an Iraq in America's midst and now sneer at pleas for mercy.

Desperate Detroiters represented by the Blue Planet Project, the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, Food & Water Watch and the Detroit People's Water Board, have made their case to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water. They issued [a report](#) which outlines the latest scheme to destroy Detroit as a city and as a home to poor and working people. The plan will ultimately privatize the water system and make Detroit another location for prime real estate and riches for the few.

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President Obama and his cohorts in the Democratic and Republican parties will go to any lengths to prop up the empire, but do little to help people in need. American allies in Ukraine or Iraq and other countries receive astronomical sums of money in order to help maintain Manifest Destiny. Poor people in Detroit and the rest of the country are not so lucky. They are seen only as obstacles to putting the rule of capital firmly in place.

Iraq was invaded with soldiers, guns and bombs. Detroit was invaded by the corporate “suits” who made a fast buck for themselves. The end result is the same for Michiganders and Iraqis alike. They end up suffering in a plundered society while other people make out like the bandits that they really are.

The organizations which reached out to the U.N. took an important step in changing the Detroit narrative. Politicians and the corporate media dismiss the city's troubles as the fault of incompetent black people. All of former mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's incompetence could not have created the ongoing occupation of Detroit by the thieves in high places. The outreach to the United Nations is important for another reason. It points out that millions of Americans live an existence far from the myth of the great country. They are struggling to survive just like millions in the so-called third world. It is the gangsters who run the show in Baghdad and in Michigan too.

Margaret Kimberley's Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well as at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>.

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