

George Floyd Is the Spark but Systemic Issues Are the Fuel

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*As a European growing up in the Cold War with the image of America as the land of liberty and freedom the scenes of carnage that we see today are truly saddening. Superficially this is a problem of racial discrimination within the backdrop of a failed COVID-19 response and rising unemployment. However, although riots have been sparked by the death of African American **George Floyd** at the hands of police, the fuel that continues to kindle this blaze is systemic in nature.*

Two acute meta-problems have matured and coalesced to bring the U.S. to the state it is in now. Firstly, there is the problem of the ordinary citizen who is indoctrinated with the dogma of 'market-fundamentalism'. Secondly, there exists the true state of economic affairs which is 'corporate-welfarism'.

Market-fundamentalism is a belief that only the free-market can solve social-economic problems. Here everything from infrastructure, transport, healthcare, and even prisons must fall into the realm of private-capital who act in the interests of maximizing profits rather than overall social good. Under this ideology, poverty is blamed on the poor who in the Darwinian market struggle deserve their poverty due to their inherent deficiencies.

In the U.S. questioning this market-fundamentalism is heresy. The public has been conditioned to believe in the famous **Margaret Thatcher** maxim that, "there is no alternative". However, whether one believes this or not, the deeper underlying problem is that this ideology does not actually reflect the true nature of the U.S.'s political-economic system which is one based on corporate-welfare. Consequently, by not even recognizing the facts as they are, transformation and development becomes arduous if not impossible.

Corporate-welfarism is when private-enterprises, which run on the motive of delivering capital to shareholders, are given huge tax breaks, subsidies, and grants. This creates a parasitical class who remain detached from the imperative of providing comprehensive economic development while also remaining outside the disciplining force of the market. Martin Luther King Jr termed this system of corporate-welfare, "socialism for the rich and free enterprise for the poor". This is because losses incurred are socialized and profits are privatized.

The 2008 recession provides a textbook example of this systemic inequality. The banking subprime mortgage scam led to millions of foreclosures on U.S. properties. Statistics by Attom data solutions show that U.S. foreclosures in both 2009 and 2010 reached almost 3 million. Despite the well-known fraud **President Barack Obama** tragically bailed out the private banks to the tune of over \$700 billion dollars. He sided with the banking elites over

the masses.

As the first president with African roots, it was hoped Obama would understand the developmental rights of the American poor whose ranks are over-represented by black Americans. However, he was a servant for entrenched banking interests. For example, **Goldman Sachs** was one of Obama's biggest donors. A WikiLeaks document revealed that Citigroup bank had given him a list of preferred candidates for cabinet positions, one month before his presidential election of 2008, which corresponded almost exactly to the eventual composition of Obama's cabinet. After his presidency, Obama made \$1.2 million from just three speeches to Wall Street firms.

When ideology no longer reflects lived experience propaganda becomes glaringly obvious and social tensions ensue. America prides itself as being 'number one'. It markets itself as the land of the just, the land of the free and the land of the plenty. However, increasingly for many whose lives are becoming progressively difficult, they can't relate to this narrative and refuse to blame themselves for their poverty. At the same time, they realize their dilemma does not stem from the oft evoked foreign 'bogeyman' that U.S. elites so often call upon.

Despite all the abundance that exists in America, infrastructure is in decay. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness reveals that the US has roughly 563,000 homeless people, more than any other developed nation. As shown by World Prison Brief, America has the highest prison population in the world of whom 33% are African-American. Combined with these stark figures the U.S. has a health system controlled by private-capital that is not fit for an advanced country. On the other hand, while there is not enough money for socialized health care, America has more than enough finances to fund several ongoing conflicts and hundreds of military bases around the world.

During the riots, there was a recognition by U.S. citizens that these systemic inequalities, combined with a mediated view that does not match lived experience, exists. This was clearly shown with the destruction of the CNN Atlanta Headquarters that was attacked by crowds recently. There have also been numerous targeted offensives on banks during the midst of the riots.

Nevertheless, America is still a great nation that has great potential to thrive and improve. The U.S. is a country rich in resources; it has brought to the world incredible technological innovations and ideas, and its population is hardworking and entrepreneurial. As such it has the basis to bring greater benefit to its citizens and the whole world rather than just Wall Street. However, to do so America must address its own internal contradictions and dogma rather than resorting to its usual knee jerk reaction of blaming country 'x'.

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