

**RACIAL OPPRESSION  
*CAN BE ENDED—  
BUT NOT  
UNDER THIS SYSTEM***

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**by Bob Avakian**



## END NOTES

1. The text and video of this speech by Bob Avakian (*Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*) is available at [revcom.us](http://revcom.us).

2. The statement quoted in this part of this article is from *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*.

3. *Bob Avakian On Police Brutality And Murder: Consent Decrees Won't Stop This—We Need A Revolution!* This excerpt from a Question and Answer Session with Bob Avakian, after his presentation in 2018 in Chicago of the speech *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*, is also available at [revcom.us](http://revcom.us).

4. This statement is contained in *Breakthroughs: The Historic Breakthrough by Marx, and the Further Breakthrough with the New Communism, A Basic Summary*, by Bob Avakian, which is available at [revcom.us](http://revcom.us). It originally appeared in the book by Bob Avakian, *The New Communism: The science, the strategy, the leadership for an actual revolution, and a radically new society on the road to real emancipation*, Insight Press, 2016. Italics in the original.

5. *The Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*, authored by Bob Avakian, is also available at [revcom.us](http://revcom.us).

# RACIAL OPPRESSION CAN BE ENDED—BUT NOT UNDER THIS SYSTEM

by Bob Avakian

Everywhere we go, and in everything we do, we revcoms boldly put forward: **REVOLUTION—NOTHING LESS!**

This is not just a slogan—though it is a very good and very important slogan. It is the concentrated statement of a very profound truth, which is also captured in our slogan: *This System Cannot Be Reformed—It Must Be **Overthrown!***

But what do we mean in saying that this system cannot be reformed, and *why* is that true? In *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*, I speak to the “5 STOPS”—deep and defining contradictions of this system—and all the terrible suffering to which this system of *capitalism-imperialism* subjects the masses of humanity, and why all this cannot be ended under this system.<sup>1</sup> Here I am going to focus on the systematic and murderous oppression of

Black people, and racial oppression overall—which has been sharply exposed with the outpouring of outrage sparked by the murder of George Floyd—and discuss the basic reasons why this oppression cannot be eliminated under this system, but can (only) be ended through revolution.

The continuing terror and murder carried out by the police particularly against Black people (as well as Latinos and Native Americans) is *not fundamentally* because the police are racist—although, speaking of the police overall, that is certainly true. The fact that the police are racist is itself an expression and a function of the fact that terror and murder against Black people (and other people of color) is *required by this system*—is necessary in order to maintain the “order” of this all-around oppressive system—and this would be much more difficult to carry out if the police were *not* racist.

## The Fundamental Causes of This Oppression

But, going deeper, why is this terror and murder *necessary* for this system, in order to ensure its “order” and its ongoing functioning? The answer is that, from the beginning of this country, white supremacy has been *poured into the foundation and built into the institutions and the ongoing functioning* of this system. Specifically with regard to Black people, the centuries of oppression they have suffered—from slavery days to the days of Jim Crow segregation and Ku Klux Klan terror, to the present time, with the continuing systematic discrimination against Black people, in every part of society (employment, housing, education, health care, and on and on)—all this has resulted in a situation where masses of Black people today, and in particular youth, have been robbed of a means for a decent life, with many maintained in conditions of

go along with this mode of production and contribute to its continual development, opening the way to finally eliminating all oppression and exploitation.<sup>5</sup> And in *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution* (as well as other works of mine) the basic strategy is spelled out for carrying out the revolution that will make it possible to apply this Constitution in working to bring about a world free of all the unnecessary suffering and madness to which the masses of humanity are subjected under the domination of this system of capitalism-imperialism.

This is why, and this is how, racial oppression, and all the oppression, which is *built into this* system of capitalism-imperialism, *can* be ended—but only through a revolution to *abolish* this system.

This is why we continue to emphasize this basic truth: we have two choices: either, live with all this—and condemn future generations to the same, or worse, if they have a future at all—or, ***make revolution!***

This is why we continue to boldly raise the slogan:  
**REVOLUTION—NOTHING LESS!**

can be waged on favorable ground, and can finally succeed in overcoming all this. The following from my work *Breakthroughs* speaks to this key relation and process:

*Ultimately, the mode of production sets the foundation and the limits of change, in terms of how you address any social problem, such as the oppression of women, or the oppression of Black people or Latinos, or the contradiction between mental work and manual work, or the situation with the environment, or the situation of immigrants, and so on. While all those things have reality and dynamics in their own right, and aren't reducible to the economic system, they all take place within the framework and within the fundamental dynamics of that economic system; and that economic system, that mode of production, sets the foundation and the ultimate limits of change in regard to all those social questions. So, if you want to get rid of all these different forms of oppression, you have to address them in their own right, but you also have to fundamentally change the economic system to give you the ability to be able to carry through those changes in fundamental terms. To put it another way: You have to have an economic system that doesn't prevent you from making those changes, and instead not only allows but provides a favorable foundation for making those changes.<sup>4</sup>*

The *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America* provides a sweeping vision and concrete blueprint for such a radically different economic system, and for government institutions, laws and a legal system, as well as an approach to education, science, art and culture that

desperate poverty and deprivation. This, again, is not simply because those who are in the seats of power and deciding government policy are racist (though that is true of most of them). It is fundamentally because of the nature of the system itself and the historically-evolved requirements and dynamics of this system of capitalism-imperialism.

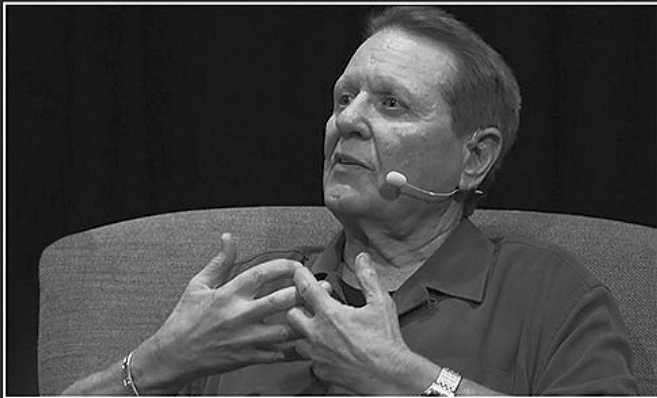
Now, that is a big mouthful (“the nature of the system itself and the historically-evolved requirements and dynamics of this system of capitalism-imperialism”), so let's break it down. This country was founded on the enslavement of masses of African people, as well as the genocidal subjugation of Native Americans and theft of their land (and its further development involved the conquest of huge parts of Mexico, reducing people of Mexican origin to second-class status as well). This required the propagation of racism to “justify” all the horrific oppression. Then, when the Civil War broke out over the question of slavery, and even when slavery was abolished as a result of that Civil War, given that white supremacy had been, and remained, such a crucial part of the “glue” holding the country together, the only way to “put it back together,” on the foundation of the capitalist system, was to once again forcefully assert white supremacy. That is why, very soon after the end of the Civil War, Black people were subjected to the system of Jim Crow segregation (backed up by systematic terror, punctuated by repeated lynchings), while the genocidal aggression against and theft of the land of Native Americans was stepped up, and immigrants from Mexico were subjected to ongoing discrimination and violence by the enforcers of this system.

Generations later, during World War 2, because of the needs of the rulers of this country in waging that war, large numbers

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—Bob Avakian

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### There IS a Solution:

#### ***Revolution and a Radically New and Different World***

It is for all these reasons that racist oppression will continue so long as people are living under the domination of this system of capitalism-imperialism. It is not only right but crucially important to rise up and wage a determined fight against this, but it is also crucial to recognize that this racist oppression will never be, can never be, eliminated *under this system*—and, to finally put an end to it, we need a *radically different system*.

We need a radically different *economic* system—a *socialist* economic system (*mode of production*) that is geared to and proceeds by developing and utilizing the means of production collectively, to meet the needs of the masses of people, materially (for employment, food, housing, health care, and so on) as well as their needs intellectually and culturally, and to provide them with the means not only to live a life worthy of human beings, but also to scientifically understand the basis and need, and to more and more consciously take part in, carrying forward the transformation of society to finally and completely eliminate all relations of oppression and exploitation, and to support that struggle throughout the world. And, as one of its highest priorities and goals, this will involve the determined struggle to overcome and finally eliminate racial oppression in every aspect of society.

The radically different socialist economy (mode of production) will provide the foundation on which the ongoing process of uprooting racial oppression, and all oppression,

# CONSTITUTION

## For The New Socialist Republic In North America (Draft Proposal)

Authored by Bob Avakian  
Adopted by the Central Committee of the  
Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

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of Black people were able to migrate to the North and get jobs in industries that served the war effort. And then, largely as a result of the fact that the U.S. was on the winning side of that war—and the fact that the war was not fought on its territory and it experienced no damage to its industrial facilities and infrastructure—there was an expansion of the economy in this country after the war. In this situation, significant numbers of Black people were able to continue getting employment in large numbers, including some better-paying jobs in factories (making steel, cars, and so on).

But, at the same time, because of the white supremacy built into the system over centuries—and the fact that really moving to overcome this would tear apart the fabric of the system and crack its very foundation—Black people continued to be subjected to systematic discrimination, including in employment (with “last hired and first fired” an accurate description of the situation of Black people with regard to employment). To cite another ugly example, *government policy with regard to housing involved conscious, deliberate discrimination*: after World War 2, loans were given to white people to enable them to buy their own homes, and increasingly move to the suburbs, while this was denied to Black veterans (and others) and instead Black people were piled into segregated housing projects in the inner cities. And this was part of the continuing systematic segregation and discrimination to which Black people were subjected.

As a result of the Civil Rights movement and then the more radical Black liberation movement in the 1960s, some concessions were made, and there has been an increase in the number of “Black faces in high places” and a growth of the Black middle class, although their situation is far more

precarious than that of white middle class people (something which was cruelly demonstrated in the 2008 crisis, which resulted in large numbers of Black people losing their homes and much, if not all, of any savings they had). And, in more recent times, huge numbers of factories and other sources of jobs for people in the inner city have closed down, often moving their operations elsewhere—particularly to countries in the Third World (Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia) where the desperate situation of masses of people, including children, has left them vulnerable to being super-exploited, at near-starvation wages.

All this, together with increased automation and “cybernation” of production, when combined with the ongoing segregation and discrimination built into this system, has led to a situation where huge numbers of Black people, and especially youth, have, for generations now, not only been unemployed but are left with no prospect of meaningful employment in the regular (“formal”) economy.

## The “Toxic Combination” of Capitalism and Racism

Here we see the “toxic combination” of *systematic, historically-evolved segregation and discrimination, enforced with brutal violence by the powers-that-be*, together with *the basic functioning and requirements of the capitalist economy*—which involves the greater and greater concentration not just of wealth, but of the *means of production* (technology, factories and other physical structures, sources of raw materials, and so on) in the possession and under the control of *large-scale capitalist enterprises and financial institutions*, which are locked in cut-throat competition with each other, not just within a particular country but increasingly on a global scale,

oppression cannot be abolished under this system is not a reason for giving up in despair—it is a compelling reason why **this system must be and can be *abolished***—and it is **the fundamental basis for why people can be won to wage the revolutionary struggle to finally bring it down!**

All this is why there will not be any real and meaningful move by the powers-that-be (and any of its politicians and political parties) to overcome the centuries-long experience and legacy of brutal racist oppression and the situation it has led to today, where millions and millions of Black youth and other youth of color have no prospect of a decent future—*under this system*.

As I have pointed out before: “So what does this system do with youth that have no future and no prospects? It contains them.... contains them violently.”<sup>3</sup>

And all this is why there is systemic and systematic police terror directed at Black people and other people of color. It is why this is brought down not only on the youth (and others) in the inner cities, but why it can and does lead to harassment, brutality and murder of any Black person, anywhere, even those with more education and status in society. If the system needs the police to “violently contain” the masses of people in the inner cities—and it does—then this is bound to “spill over” and be applied to Black people, and other people of color, more generally. The police have neither the interests, nor the ability, nor the will to make distinctions between “good” ..... (fill in the blank as to what racist terms they use) and “bad” ones. And, beyond that, the “random” nature of the brutality and murder makes it all the more effective in terrorizing people—making everyone, even the “better off,” feel, correctly, that they could be a target of this.



society, to try to really and fully undo and overcome the reality and effects of centuries of racist oppression—**under this system.**

This most definitely and emphatically is NOT an argument for holding back from struggling against every form of discrimination, inequality and oppression in every part of society. Fighting back against oppression, and wrenching concessions from the powers-that-be, is very important—in enabling masses of people to feel their own strength in standing up and standing together in opposing oppression, and drawing people from all parts of society to join in this struggle—rather than feeling isolated, beaten down and hopeless. And it is important in contributing to the ability of masses of people to gain the understanding and build up the organization necessary for the final all-out struggle to bring down the whole oppressive system. But that is just the point—as important as these mass struggles are, if they are *not* built toward, and do not finally get to the point of, taking on the whole system, with the aim of bringing it down, and bringing something much better into being, then, as I have emphasized before, even where concessions are won, “so long as this system remains in power, there will be powerful forces who will move to attack and undermine, and seek to reverse, even these partial gains,” and people will remain oppressed and once more weighed down with a feeling of demoralization, as they are once again divided and pitted against each other.<sup>2</sup>

The basic and crucial point is that the fight against racial oppression (and all oppression) must *not remain confined within the limits of this system*, and instead must be carried out and carried forward as part of the overall struggle toward the goal of *abolishing* this system. The fact that this

and are therefore driven to ruthlessly exploit people and constantly search for ways to even more viciously super-exploit large numbers of desperate people, including children, in a worldwide network of sweatshops. (For example, cell phones and computers depend on the mineral coltan which is mined under horrific conditions by people, including large numbers of children, in the Congo in Africa; and a large part of the clothes that are bought in the U.S. are produced by huge numbers of women working in horrific conditions in the Asian country of Bangladesh.)

In this situation, and especially with the growth of the international drug trade, and its deep penetration into the U.S., many of those, in particular youth, who found themselves locked out of the “formal economy,” have turned to drug-dealing, as well as other criminal activity—something which has been encouraged by government policy that has actually resulted in the movement of large amounts of drugs into the inner city, even as the authorities seize on this situation to carry out systematic repression against the youth in particular, with such things as “stop and frisk.” The result of all this has been a huge increase in mass incarceration, as well as the continual murder of large numbers of “minority” youth by police.

At the same time, the way that the U.S. has continued to dominate Mexico, as well as other parts of Latin America, and to distort the economies, corrupt the governments and bring ruin to the social relations among the people in those countries—all this has resulted in large numbers of people being forced to flee those countries and migrate to the U.S., where they are vulnerable to being viciously exploited in factories and farmlands, and other parts of the economy of

this country. And large numbers of the younger generations of these immigrants have also formed (or joined existing) gangs and become involved in the drug trade and related crime.

More recently, however, in at least many of the inner-city neighborhoods, for a number of reasons—including the fact that the “crack epidemic” had taken a terrible toll on people—there has been a decrease in the trade in cocaine and the high profits this brought for the relatively small number of “higher-ups” in the drug trade hierarchy. For a period, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, given their desolation and desperation, the drug trade was a “major employer” of youth in the inner cities, female as well as male, and a major source of at least a basic income for many (even if the promise of “getting rich” remained an illusion for most). Now, even this source of employment and income—as perverse and harmful as it is—has dried up or greatly diminished for many. This has further added to the miserable situation of massive numbers of inner-city youth in particular who have no future—under this system—no future but prison, an early death or a life of desperate hustling, in one form or another, in the attempt to survive and care for loved ones.

All this cannot be changed—cannot be transformed and overcome—within the confines of this system. Despite what any politician (“liberal” or outright fascist like Trump) may say, there is no way that this system could “reverse itself,” bring large parts of industry back to the inner city and provide meaningful employment, with “a living wage” for all those it is now *depriving* of this. Even if the government had the “political will” to try to do this, doing so (with the employment of millions of formerly unemployed or “underemployed” people at a “living wage”) would seriously undermine the competitive positions

of American capitalists in the global economy. And, if they attempted to do this while at the same time trying to seriously overcome the whole historically-evolved relations of white supremacy, this would completely disrupt the social “cohesion” that “holds this country together,” with white supremacy a crucial part of this.

It is one thing for “good-hearted people”—and in particular many white people—to say (and sincerely mean) that it is wrong for the police to just wantonly, cruelly murder people, and to mobilize in protest against this. But imagine what would happen if, *under this system and with the way its economy functions*, the government tried to adopt policies that would deal with the long-term unemployment of Black people in the inner cities, who have not only been denied jobs but also the training for the jobs that do exist—imagine what the reaction would be of many white people who would in fact lose their better-off positions as a result of these policies. Imagine what would happen if these kinds of policies were applied not just to employment, but to education, and on down the line. (We have already seen the “backlash” that was fostered in response to even minimal efforts to implement “affirmative action” programs in employment and education.)

Again, this is not simply a matter that “white people are racist.” Many are racist, although many do not want to be. But the deeper problem is that given the basic way the capitalist economy works, and how everyone is encouraged to be “out for yourself”—and, more fundamentally, the fact that people *are actually driven and compelled to compete with each other in every significant part of life*, including employment and education—it would actually create destructive chaos and conflict among the people, and tear apart the “cohesion” of the