

BIG CAPITALISM AND THE “MASTER’S” GRIP ON OUR MINDSETS

THE MASTER’S TOOLS WILL NEVER DISMANTLE THE MASTER’S HOUSE —Audre Lorde

By Susan Guerra

Big Capitalism, the “Master” of our time, is my way of referring to “*capitalism-on-the-wild*”, unregulated by government and set free to accomplish what capitalism is intended to do; accumulate as much capital winning as possible. *Big Capital* is for me the other side of the term *Big Government*, which is used by conservative ideologies to indicate that it is detrimental for capitalism’s growth potential to be regulated by governmental policies and rulings. Conservative capitalist thinking wants as little as possible “meddling in business” and therefore works for austerity measures and creates the myths needed to win support for these measures. The myth of “*freedom of choice*” is necessary for people to vote for the privatization of the essential needs of a population. Essential needs like education, medical care, preventive healthcare, social security for elders and disabled people can be privatized because we believe the myth that only privately-owned businesses in competition with each other, striving for excellence rather than for equality, is what will provide the best service. My fear is that privatization will leave an unregulated price tag on providing essential services and that Big Capitalism will reward shareholders and the few who can afford these private services. Who is going to care for the 99% who live from paycheck to paycheck?

The idea of the American Dream, preys upon the insecurity which is born from the sense of an underlying discontent and a continual devaluation of self-worth. There is the myth that it is not good enough to work as a salesperson, a domestic caregiver, a garbage collector or a gardener. We are bombarded with the message that success in life is to be the best, to be on top, to be a leader. On top is the only place to be.

We are told to *Dress for Success*. And it is true, we are trapped in a world that sells the idea that human worth comes

from superficial traits: how we look; how we wear our hair, our shoes, our accessories; our homogenized version of beauty according to the ideals of sexism, racism, and white supremacy. Our survival in this western capitalistic world depends on those who offer services to keep each other improved, changed,

homogenous according to ideals which favor capitalist values. Be the best, look like this—and not like that. Too many of us are in the “*not like that*” category. This stems from the Nazi concept that Aryan traits are true traits of beauty. Just think about how even to this day in 2025, in Mexican-American families and others, the fair skinned newborn, with light colored eyes, the blondie, bring out gasps and awes with comments of “*how lucky*”, “*mira, la güerita*”! We are born into this world of entrapment through all these assumptions of *white supremacy*.

It is the colonized mind which belongs to the *master’s tool set*

which we must self-examine to de-colonize, perhaps one notion at a time. Because to transform our thinking takes long term experiential learning through practice and acting differently. How?

There is no education to support this learning for transformation, especially now that education in critical thinking is outlawed by government policies.

The government, represented by the present President, calls anyone with critical and even constructive criticism: *lunatics, radical lunatics*. What is this teaching the young?

The *MAGA* movement’s intentional use of language and policy change is deepening the colonial mindset needed to distract a nation into a scattered response mode and to hinder systematic, pragmatic changes. Let me correct myself, these tactics—using language and power—are intended for transformational change, but this transformation taking place is for transforming democracy and justice for all, to populism and injustice including, no *due process*. We are being told every



Susan Guerra in San Antonio on October 2024 at a St Phillip's College exhibit of donated artworks from Drs Ricardo and Harriet Romo that included a painting of Emiliano Zapata by Luis López (1998, oil on Canvas).

day that what is good for the stock market is good for the 99%. And any critical voice or question is called anti-American. The colonization project from the extreme right is clear. My fear is that we who want to renew democracy and justice for the 99% are losing, or have lost.

Imagination is needed for the construction of new ways to understand and change from oppressive structures to more inclusive structures. If we want to build a new home, or just improve it, we need a new framework.

Some inclusive structures may be, for example: that collaboration is preferred over competition; that equality, rather than domination is a sign of strength; that violence is unacceptable; and that education by reflection and questioning is more expansive than simple essentialisms. Today, there is a myth that good governing is based upon capitalist economic measure. *"If it makes money, it is good."*, no matter what the consequences are for the environment, or people, or nature's abundance. We must discover again what makes this planet, our country, our global family, great again.

We live under the bombardment of assumptions that governing a society is equal to a stock market item. We choose our elected officials with these assumptions infused into our brain. We have learned to accept that *money-based elections* are the only way to run elections. I do not know what the alternatives are. Alternatives can be created through organized collaborative forums, as is practiced in other countries. Chile, for example, just had a collaborative based forum to create constitutional reforms which then were elected upon through a referendum.

I wonder if we must agree to return to our *"nakedness"*, our origins as human beings in fellowship? We can try to empty our minds from present assumptions and connect with the *best of* what indigenous peoples have used as tools to survive together with the earth's creatures and elements. (I know there



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have always been wars and killing but I said, *"the best of"*.)

We must agree on some bottom-line terms, like, for example: non-competitive-ness, collaborative actions, community listening and decision-making—and, view our participation as a learning path for improved democracy and justice. In this complex world, we can

learn to rely more on questions rather than explanations to explore beyond our imagination, together.

In her essay, Audre Lorde quotes Simone de Beauvoir: "It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for living."

To dare to see the real world and the suffering, the injustice and the cruel side of human behavior—is a brave act for many of us. Acknowledging that we are powerful, but do not hold the power in that world, for me, is crushing yet also is the pivotal place from which we gain powerful knowledge about what actions we can take to hold down the cruel consequences of oppression. Our humanity allows us to care.

Right now, we live in a time when at the stroke of a very mean and selfish, *bigoted pen*—civil and human rights and policies are banished. As the 99%, we are powerful, yet we do not hold the power.

I am filled with anger. I am filled with the images of a cruel world which leaves me suffering with the thought of the pain and misery this causes too many people today, and for the future of my beloved young grandchildren and all our grandchildren across this planet.

For this reason, I do believe that respecting our anger and using its power to create something beautiful, together, for the future is possible. Even if we do not find the right tools, we can always keep trying to dismantle the master's house by redefining and rediscovering healthier and more compassionate ways to govern ourselves right now. If this does not work, then we keep on trying.

BIO: *Susan Morales Guerra, writer/facilitator from San Antonio, Texas currently resides in Norway. A mother, grandmother and spiritual humanist, her work for social justice integrates participatory methods with arts and culture. Co-founder of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center; she was also an organizer of the first International Women's Day March in San Antonio in 1983.*



The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never allow us to bring about genuine change.

— Audre Lorde —