

Important Articles By Bob Avakian Opposing “Woke” Distractions and Obstructions

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What we were grappling with was *how to radically change the world in an emancipating way*—not how to carve out a “niche” for ourselves, or how to tear down some other people and climb over them to get a better position for ourselves, in this terrible world as it is, under the domination of this system of capitalism-imperialism.

This is what everyone who cares about the oppressed of the earth and the future of humanity should be grappling with, on the basis of principle and integrity—not the hucksterism and hustling of those seeking to turn “identity” into capital.

A SERIOUS FIGHT AGAINST INJUSTICE— NOT A PETTY HUSTLE FOR “OWNERSHIP”

by Bob Avakian

June 18, 2022

Today, there are some people and groups that identify as “progressive” or “woke” but have become so influenced by capitalist notions of property relations that they actually believe that they “own” the fight against injustice and the public spaces, and even whole cities and areas, where this fight needs to be waged. This has come up, for example, in the fight waged by RiseUp4AbortionRights.org to prevent the fascist majority on the Supreme Court from ripping away the right to abortion by overturning *Roe v. Wade*. “Rise Up” has consistently sought to build the broadest possible unity, uniting all who can be united, in this fight. Unfortunately, however, some of these would be “owners,” instead of doing what they should be doing—enthusiastically welcoming, actively joining in and calling on others to become part of the determined fight waged by “Rise Up” to defend the right to abortion—have instead attacked “Rise Up” because it did not “ask permission” to come into “their space” in waging this fight.

Well, it is necessary to disabuse these people of their delusions. They do not “own” the fight against injustice. Nor do

they “own” any of these public spaces (let alone whole cities or areas): If anybody “owns” this “property” now, it is the ruling class of this capitalist-imperialist system—which, under this system, has dominion and exercises dictatorship over society as a whole. Anyone, any group, any movement, seeking to fight against the injustices perpetrated by this system should *never ask the permission of this ruling class* to wage this fight, or allow this ruling class to dictate how, on what grounds, this fight should be waged. And, as it would be terribly wrong to seek this kind of permission from the ruling class, it would be *ridiculous to think that “permission” should be asked of opportunists seeking to impose on reality their petty delusions of “ownership.”*

Instead of standing on the sidelines—or, worse yet, attacking RiseUp4AbortionRights—everyone who recognizes the importance of defending the fundamental right to abortion should be actively joining with “Rise Up” in determined non-violent resistance to prevent this right from being ripped away.

And all those who are disgusted with capitalist relations of ownership—and the exploitation and oppression that is built into these relations, as well as the putrid ideas and culture that go along with this—should become part of the movement for a revolution to sweep away this system of capitalism-imperialism, to do away with all the terrible, and needless, suffering it imposes not just on masses of people in this country, but on the masses of humanity as a whole, including the half of humanity that is female.

WORKING WITH BLACK PANTHERS, WORKING FOR REVOLUTION— NOT “WOKE IDENTITY” BULLSHIT

by Bob Avakian

May 25, 2022

During the years when I worked closely with the Black Panther Party and its leadership, in its revolutionary days in the 1960s, when there were discussions, and at times disagreements, they did not say to me: “Who are you, as a white man, to talk about the liberation of Black people and revolution—who are you to disagree with us about this?” No—*things were never based on “identity,” but on what was true and not true.* That’s what we were all trying to figure out.

This was the case when I first encountered Huey Newton, at an African-American cultural program in Oakland (he approached me and said, “Who are you, Socrates?”—and this led to a back-and-forth about revolution: was it needed, and could this revolution actually be made?). The same was true of later discussions I had with Huey, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and other leaders of the Black Panther Party: always the basis and standard was what was true and not true, never what “identity” someone was.

I am not here to argue about what pronouns people use—but I am here to argue about what people’s *priorities* should be: focusing on things like pronouns, *or* becoming part of a serious revolutionary struggle to transform the world so that the monstrous system of capitalism-imperialism, all the very real horrors it imposes on the masses of humanity, and the very real threat it poses to the future of humanity, will be swept away.

BIPOC LEADERSHIP: THERE IS NO SUCH THING

The Fight Against Oppression and the Leadership That Is Needed

by Bob Avakian

June 18, 2022

These days we hear a lot, from certain quarters, about how it is necessary to follow the leadership of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). But, in reality, there is no such thing as “BIPOC Leadership”—and no such thing as BIPOC, as some kind of uniform and unified social force.

Of course, there are Black people, indigenous people, and other people of color, and all of these peoples are subjected to various forms of discrimination and oppression. But there are very real differences within each of these peoples and between them. Each has their own particular history, and present circumstances, in relation to the historical development and present reality of this country and the system that rules in this country (and dominates in the world as a whole): the system of *capitalism-imperialism*. And within each of these peoples there are different classes, and social groups, and people with different—in some cases radically different—ideological and political viewpoints and goals.

The point is *not* that there is no basis for uniting the masses of people of these different groups. But a unity that will lead to actually putting an end to their oppression—and all oppression—will not, and cannot, be developed by following the notion that some supposedly uniform “BIPOC” must and will lead.

In this regard, here are some relevant questions: Is the fascist Supreme Court “justice” Clarence Thomas part of the BIPOC whose leadership should be followed? Was the *repeat offender war criminal* Colin Powell part of BIPOC while he was alive? What about Barack Obama—himself also guilty of terrible war crimes and crimes against humanity? How about the indigenous “leaders” who collaborated with the FBI to violently suppress the Wounded Knee uprising led by AIM (the American Indian Movement) in the 1970s, and similar types of reactionary indigenous “leaders” today? Or those fascist-minded Cubans and Venezuelans in South Florida? Or the Latino Catholic Church officials who are vigorously opposing the right to abortion? Or what about Elaine Chao, Secretary of Transportation in the Trump cabinet (and wife of Republican leader in the Senate, Mitch McConnell)? All these individuals are “people of color”—but should anybody be following them?

If, in answer to this, the argument is, “Of course, people like that are not part of the BIPOC whose leadership should be followed,” then that only raises this very relevant question: Who decides that people like that are not part of this BIPOC? If the answer to that is something along the lines that “BIPOC people” are those who are themselves oppressed (or “marginalized”) and represent the real interests of the “marginalized,” then this only begs yet other questions: Who decides this? Which people—among the different “BIPOC” groups (and sub-groups), with very different ideas and objectives—get to decide what are the real interests of the

PRONOUNS AND STARVING CHILDREN

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I have previously pointed to this horrific fact:

in the period of slightly more than 75 years since the end of World War 2, **because of the way the world is dominated by the system of capitalism-imperialism, at least 350 million children in the Third World have needlessly died because of starvation and preventable disease—a number greater than the entire population of this country!**

And this terrible reality of what amounts to mass extermination of children is just one of the truly horrendous atrocities which this system of capitalism-imperialism imposes on humanity.

Do you think that any of these children—or their loved ones helplessly watching them die these terrible deaths—cared anything about what pronouns people use to describe themselves?

* See “Imperialist Parasitism and ‘Democracy’: Why So Many Liberals and Progressives Are Shameless Supporters of ‘Their’ Imperialism,” and “In Light of the Urgency Spoken to in ‘Something Terrible, Or Something Truly Emancipating’: A Renewed Challenge: Searching For An Honest Liberal Or Progressive.” These articles by Bob Avakian are available at revcom.us.

“marginalized”? Who decides which people make up “the authentic BIPOC,” which in turn decides who can be part of BIPOC with the “right” to exercise “BIPOC Leadership”?

And so it goes, round and round in a narrow circle, never escaping the conceptual *cul-de-sac*—the dead-end notion—of “BIPOC Leadership.”

The whole idea of “BIPOC Leadership” is based on the idealized notion that, just because people are part of a group that is oppressed, that in itself endows them with some kind of “righteous essence,” automatically shielding them from the influence of the dominant bullshit in society, or that they have some kind of inherent “special ability” to identify the cause of oppression and what is necessary to put an end to it. This is not only wrong, it is actually very harmful. Of course, people who are oppressed have a lot to say about the effects of that oppression, and that is obviously important. But understanding where the oppression comes from, and what to do to about it, requires most fundamentally taking up and applying a *scientific* method and approach—to dig down to the underlying causes of things—and it is that scientific method and approach that will enable people (whatever their “identity”) to lead things where they need to go.

Truth Is Not Determined by “Identity”— and Neither Is the Leadership That Is Needed

All this points to this crucial fact. **What is really of decisive importance is not what “identity” people may be part of, but what is the content of their ideas and programs, and if those ideas are followed and those programs are implemented, what would this lead to?**

As I have emphasized previously:

The truth of something does not depend on who says it, **or how it makes you feel.** *Because something*

comes from a source you like does not make it true; and because something comes from a source you do not like does not make it untrue. And truth is not a “popularity contest.” Because a lot of people believe something does not make it true; and because only a few people believe something does not make it untrue.

Truth is objective—which means: **Whether something is true or not depends on whether it corresponds to actual reality.***

And:

While due weight needs to be given to the whole history and present reality of horrific oppression, and the experience of people directly subjected to such oppression, if the goal is actually to abolish and uproot oppression, the standard against which anyone’s (or any group’s) ideas and proposals need to be evaluated is: objective reality—and specifically what is the nature of the particular problem (or form of oppression) people are up against, what is the source and cause of this, how does this relate to the fundamental problem (the whole system), and how to correctly handle the relation between the more particular and the fundamental, in order to move toward achieving the actual solution. (And, no, objective reality is not a white supremacist or male supremacist “construct”—it is...objective reality.)*

This is the standard that should be applied—this is the basis for determining which ideas and programs should be taken up and acted on, and which leadership should be followed.

* The passages quoted here are from the article by Bob Avakian “I’m So Sick of this Whole ‘Identity Politics’ and ‘Woke’ Thing: Revolution and Emancipation—Not Petty Reform and Revenge: On Movements, Principles, Methods, Means and Ends.” This article is available at revcom.us.

And it is worth emphasizing it again: Truth, including the truth of where different ideas and programs will lead, is not determined “subjectively” (according to who says something, or whether you like something or somebody) but in accordance with objective reality—by scientifically examining the evidence—weighing ideas and programs against the actual objective reality and, on that basis, determining where they will lead, and whether they should be followed, or not.

One final point: The notions of “leadership based on marginalized identity” not only will give openings to some negative (even very negative) forces to use “identity” as a means to mislead things, but can also provide a “convenient cop-out”—a rationalization—for those who are *not* part of “marginalized groups” to hold back from really, fully committing themselves to the struggle against oppression and injustice. **NO. Everyone who cares about the state and the fate of humanity has the responsibility not only to take part in actively fighting against the oppression, plunder and destruction caused by this system, but also the responsibility to take up and apply a scientific method and approach to determining what is the fundamental problem and what is the actual solution, and how the fight can be most effectively waged toward the goal of actually ending that oppression, plunder and destruction.**