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*Killer Mike, Ice Cube,*  
**WHY CAPITALIST  
PROGRAMS and  
BOURGEOIS  
ASPIRATIONS  
CANNOT LEAD TO  
LIBERATION  
and  
WHY WE NEED A  
REAL REVOLUTION**

**by Bob Avakian**

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## Who Is Bob Avakian?

Bob Avakian (BA) is completely different than the endless stream of bourgeois politicians who are put forward as “leaders,” whose goal is to maintain one variation or another of this system of capitalism-imperialism. BA is a revolutionary who bases himself on the scientific understanding that the capitalist-imperialist system must be overthrown and replaced with a radically new and better system aimed at overcoming all forms of oppression and exploitation. He has written the blueprint to achieve this in the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*. BA insists that the revolution’s goal must not be revenge, but the emancipation of humanity all over the world.



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## Killer Mike, Ice Cube

# WHY CAPITALIST PROGRAMS and BOURGEOIS ASPIRATIONS CANNOT LEAD TO LIBERATION

and

# WHY WE NEED A REAL REVOLUTION

by Bob Avakian

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To begin, in order to have the necessary foundation for what I am going to get into here, let’s get clear on some basic things. First, what is meant by *bourgeoisie*? It is another way of saying (it is a French word that means) the *capitalist class*. What do I mean by “class”? A “class” of people is a part of society that is defined by its position within the relations in that society, and in particular its position and role in the economy. So what is the *capitalist class*? As I pointed out in articles about exploitation, the capitalist class is a small part of society that dominates the rest of society on the basis of *exploiting* people—capitalists use the labor of *other people* to accumulate wealth for themselves.<sup>1</sup> The capitalist class rules capitalist society as a whole, as a result of its dominant role in the economy.

And then there is the *petty (or petite) bourgeoisie*. This literally means the “small” bourgeoisie, but it actually refers to the *middle class*—small-scale business people, people with degrees in higher

education, people in the arts, teachers and preachers and others who occupy a *middle position* between the big-time exploiters (the ruling capitalist class) and the *proletarians*, the mass of people *exploited* by the capitalists.<sup>2</sup>

With that as a foundation, let's get into the heart of the matter.

In a recent article, I sharply called out chains on people who desperately need to be free, including the obsessive pursuit of money, and *misogyny*—hating women and subjecting them to degradation in countless ways. I talked about how all this is “constantly promoted and pumped out in the ‘popular culture,’ including in Hip Hop.” (I also referred to how this garbage has perverted this creative art form of Hip Hop, which could be, and should be, a powerful voice for liberation, but has been turned into something else under the domination of this system of capitalism-imperialism.)<sup>3</sup>

In a guest appearance, as himself, in a recent episode of the fictional Showtime program *Billions*, the rapper and actor Killer Mike provided yet another striking example of exactly the profound problem I was pointing to. First of all, in a discussion with the character Mike Prince, a billionaire financial parasite, Killer Mike is not even ashamed to say that he “likes” strip clubs—which are a concentrated expression of the sexual degradation of women.

Then, in the same discussion with the Prince character, Killer Mike goes on to demand that Prince (who is running for president) invest in some Black banks. (Prince promises to do that, and in turn Killer Mike promises to endorse Prince.) As portrayed in this program, Killer Mike is thinking and talking like a parasitic financier himself. And, importantly, as I explained in another article, in the capitalist system *banks are institutions that make money on the basis of the exploitation of masses of people*. The following applies to banks as well as all other capitalist enterprises:

**Here is the most fundamental point: the source of the wealth that these different capitalists accumulate is the**

Africa, the Middle East and Asia. (A *parasite* lives off—and literally or in effect sucks the blood of—other living beings. American capitalism-imperialism is a highly parasitic empire, whose functioning and accumulation of wealth and power is based on viciously exploiting people all over the world, including by super-exploiting huge numbers of children in the Third World.) Everyone in this parasitic USA receives some of the “benefits” (the spoils) of this worldwide exploitation, although this is distributed among different classes of people in a highly unequal way. The Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie, because of their position within the economic and social structure of this country, receive substantially more of these spoils than the people on the bottom of society, including masses of Black people, whose conditions of systematic and brutal oppression and deprivation far outweigh any spoils they receive as a result of living in this parasitic country.

8. *A Seven Point Indictment: “WOKE” IS A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE in the political, intellectual, artistic and ethical life of society.*

9. This important point from Marx is discussed in ***Hope For Humanity On A Scientific Basis, Breaking with Individualism, Parasitism and American Chauvinism***, in the section “Particular Interests and General Interests—Differing Class Interests and the Highest Interests of Humanity.” This is available at revcom.us in the section BAs Collected Works. (The work by Marx being discussed is *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.)

## NOTES by Bob Avakian.

The following refer to articles and other works of mine (except for #8, which was written by a writing group of revcoms). These works are all available at revcom.us.

1. **“Exploitation: What It Is, *How to Put an End To It*”**; and **“Putting an End to Exploitation, and All Oppression.”**

2. There is discussion of the position and role of different sections of the petite bourgeoisie in *Breakthroughs: The Historic Breakthrough by Marx, and the Further Breakthrough with the New Communism, A Basic Summary*.

3. “State of Emergency: Chains on People Who Desperately Need to Be Free, *A message from Bob Avakian, revolutionary leader, author and architect of a whole new framework for human emancipation: the new communism.*” A video based on a recording I made of this article is also available as part of the YouTube *The RNL—Revolution, Nothing Less!—Show* (episode #164).

4. **“Exploitation: What It Is, How to Put an End to It,”** footnote 2. That footnote also makes the following important points:

Besides those who are directly involved in exploiting people in the process of producing the wealth of the capitalist system, there are also other capitalist exploiters. For example, there are the banks and other financial institutions that make profit through loans to the corporations and other businesses that directly exploit people. (These loans have to be repaid, with an additional amount of money—the “interest.”) Plus, often these financial institutions themselves invest in the corporations that are directly exploiting people. And, in turn, large-scale corporations also become involved in financial transactions. *Finance* capital becomes woven together with capital directly used to exploit people in the process of production. There are also *merchant* capitalists—for example, those who sell clothing, or food and other basic necessities. And then there are those who invest in the stock market—but that just amounts to a kind of gambling—betting on which capitalist enterprises will be more successful in exploiting people.

5. **“Exploitation: What It Is, How to Put an End to It”** (emphasis added).

6. *Breakthroughs*.

7. There is the fact that, even with the systematic discrimination and inequality that Black people as a whole are subjected to under this system, they still share, to different degrees, in the *parasitic spoils* of the American empire—the way American capitalism-imperialism feasts off the exploitation of people around the world, especially in the Third World of Latin America,

**exploitation of people who are forced to work for one or another capitalist (or capitalist corporation, etc.) in the process of producing the things that people use.**<sup>4</sup>

As opposed to what is put forward continually in this country, including through movies and television programs like *Billions*: **“It is the labor of those exploited by the capitalists—and not the ‘brilliance’ or ‘entrepreneurial genius’ of the capitalists—that actually creates the wealth that the capitalists appropriate (take for their own profit and use).”**<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, capitalism is not only based on ruthless exploitation of masses of people, but this is driven by cutthroat *competition* among the capitalists themselves. The capitalists who win out in this competition are those who most effectively and ruthlessly exploit people. They either do this, or face the prospect of being eaten up or driven under by other capitalists. And, for the masses of people exploited by the capitalists, this means that the capitalists will continually drive them harder, or throw them out on the street, in accordance with the needs of the capitalists *who are themselves driven by the relentless competition among capitalists*. This is why, despite what a few individual capitalists might want to do, there is, and there can be, *no such thing as “compassionate capitalism.”*

As Killer Mike insists, Black banks are no doubt subject to discrimination, like Black people in general—and such discrimination should be opposed—but they are nevertheless capitalist institutions, *resting on mass exploitation* and driven by the basic laws of capitalist economics.

Apparently, the idea voiced by Killer Mike is that building up Black banks (and the Black bourgeoisie overall) will somehow lead to a significant improvement for the *masses* of Black people. This is a tired-out notion, propagated by the bourgeoisie and its representatives everywhere—that promoting *its* interests will serve the interests of the people more broadly. In fact, as I will

get into further, *the interests of the bourgeoisie, of any nation, are fundamentally different than the interests of the masses of people.*

But, before getting into this overall point more fully, it is necessary to point out that the whole Atlanta Hip Hop scene, out of which Killer Mike has emerged, is a cesspool in which rap music is intertwined with drug trafficking and the degradation of women, including through strip clubs. But the problem is not limited to Killer Mike and the Atlanta Hip Hop scene. In the context of the last (2020) presidential election, the rapper/actor Ice Cube came up with a program for Black capitalism and flirted with the idea of supporting the openly, blatantly racist Donald Trump, who expressed “interest” in this capitalist scheme.

All this is a sharp illustration of the point I made in *Breakthroughs*, speaking to the situation among the masses of Black people and other oppressed people:

[T]here is the phenomenon that in the realm of culture, for example, a certain, relatively small but influential, section of people has managed to rise from within these masses to basically a bourgeois position.... [T]his includes people who have not only utilized the realm of culture but also in some cases the realm of crime to wrench out a position in which they become quite wealthy, and then they invest in lines of cosmetics and clothes, and so on—they become real bourgeois, even as many of them are part of an oppressed nation or people. And they have the corresponding outlook to a very significant degree.<sup>6</sup>

That “corresponding outlook” is not one which can lead the masses of Black people, or the masses of people overall, to get free.

### **Why Bourgeois and Petty Bourgeois Programs and Aspirations Cannot Lead to Real Liberation**

It is important to keep in mind that the Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie are classes of people not only in this country overall, but more particularly within the oppressed Black nation in this country. On the one hand, these classes of Black people are subjected, in

*overthrow* this system and bring something much better into being. Human beings are *thinking* beings, and as such people broadly can come to recognize that the only way to be rid of the madness and agony of living under this system—the only way to a future worth living for the masses of humanity, and ultimately for humanity as a whole—is to take up and carry through this revolution. But, especially given the heavy weight of this capitalist-imperialist system, and the ways it works to shape people, masses of people can be won to this *only if those who do recognize the need for this revolution wage ferocious struggle to break people broadly out of the bullshit ways that this system has conditioned them to think and act, and win them to become conscious revolutionary emancipators of humanity, aiming for nothing less than ending, and uprooting, all exploitation and oppression, all over the world.*

To sum up and conclude with this crucial point: **A truly emancipating revolution—actually aiming for the abolition of all exploitation and oppression—can only be, and must be, led by the growing ranks of revolutionary communists, representing the fundamental and largest interests of the exploited class under capitalism, the proletariat, in overthrowing this system of capitalism-imperialism and bringing into being a radically different and much better system—with a fundamentally different economic foundation (*mode of production*), and emancipating political institutions, social relations and culture—as set forth in both a sweeping and concrete way in the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America.***

and oppression—it will not and cannot do away with the situation of Black people as a whole as an oppressed people. This oppression cannot be done away with under this system for the basic reason that **white supremacy is built into this system and into every part of this country—in employment, education, housing, and so on—and all this is enforced by the ruling institutions, including the murderous police and other violent enforcers of this system.**

It is both possible and important to win significant sections of the petite bourgeoisie to the revolution that is urgently needed to do away with exploitation and all oppression—and this definitely applies to the petite bourgeoisie, and even some among the bourgeoisie, of the oppressed Black nation. But these classes, and the interests they represent as such, can never lead a revolution that will be in the interests of the masses of oppressed and exploited Black people, and oppressed and exploited people overall.

Once again this is because the spontaneous outlook, goals, aspirations and the strivings of these classes is to get a better place for themselves within *this system of capitalism-imperialism*, which is *the fundamental source and cause* of this exploitation and oppression—and *abolishing this exploitation and oppression is impossible without abolishing this system.*

At the same time, a very important point in relation to all this is that people can, and do, take up the outlook and goals that correspond to the interests of a class *other than the class to which those people belong*. Right now, for example, it is unfortunately the case that among the exploited class of proletarians (and the oppressed overall) in this country (and others), masses of people have been conditioned to take up, and have taken up, the outlook and values of this putrid system of capitalism-imperialism. On the other hand, it is also true that, while the ruling class of this system will remain determined to maintain this system, through the most murderous and destructive means, masses of people—not only among the proletariat, but among other sections of society—can be won to recognize the urgent need, and the possibility, for the revolution to

various ways, to the prejudicial and discriminatory treatment that is directed against Black people as a whole in this white supremacist society; and, despite their economic and social position, people within the Black petite bourgeoisie, and even the Black bourgeoisie, can still become the victims of brutality and murder by the police, enforcing the oppressive relations of this system as a whole. On the other hand, the Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie occupy positions above the masses of Black people—and, to varying degrees, they have privileged positions in the society overall, even with the discrimination they are subjected to—and their spontaneous outlook is fundamentally an expression of their class positions.<sup>7</sup>

Along with the promotion of Black capitalism as the supposed “salvation” for Black people, there is the widespread promotion of “wokeness,” including by sections of the Black petite bourgeoisie (for example, many Black people in academia and the media). As we revcoms (revolutionary communists) have called attention to:

“Woke” once meant righteous awareness of racial oppression but has long since morphed into fanatical lunacy and vicious mob mentality. *A bloodlust to target and tear into individuals, while cowardly ducking, and often, actively obstructing the real and needed fight against the system, especially its overthrow through an actual revolution!*

And this “wokeness” involves

Bizarre and capricious rules enforced by cancel culture threats. Puffed-up unscientific claims to “represent the marginalized.” Insisting that people “stay in their lanes” in fighting oppression. “Woke” lunacy manifests much that is harmful with the capitalist-imperialist system and its dominant culture, **furthering the nightmare of humanity!**<sup>8</sup>

This is another expression of how, today, much of the outlook, and the actions, of the supposedly “progressive” petite bourgeoisie, including much of the Black petite bourgeoisie, is actually

very harmful—opposed to and obstructing a real fight for the emancipation of Black people and all oppressed people.

In the mainstream media, through the bourgeois electoral system, and in many other ways, representatives of the Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie—and many representatives of this system of capitalism-imperialism overall—try to present things as if these more privileged classes of Black people are “role models” for Black people as a whole (and people more generally), and what these classes are striving for is supposedly the way to overcome discrimination and inequality. But the truth is this: The goals and aspirations of the Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie cannot lead to the liberation of the masses of Black people—or oppressed people in general—for this basic reason: *they do not see beyond, and are not striving to get beyond, this system of capitalism-imperialism, which mercilessly exploits and murderously oppresses masses of people, here and all over the world.* Instead they are striving to get in on and get more for themselves out of this monstrous system (even if this is sometimes accompanied by the claim that improving their position will do good for, and improve the position of, the masses of Black people). But the fact is that this will not, and cannot, change the oppressed condition of the masses of Black people, and other oppressed people. It will not even change the fact that, despite their more privileged position, the Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie, as part of the oppressed Black nation, will still be subjected to, and will not be able to fully escape, the discrimination and brutality that Black people as a whole are subjected to under this system, which has white supremacy *built into* it. To do away with all that, requires doing away with this system of capitalism-imperialism, through an actual revolution.

There is also a current among the Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie—for example, with someone like Farrakhan—to be seeking to establish a separate Black country, with themselves as the ruling class of that country. In this regard, there are important matters of understanding and principle. First, the right of self-determination of the oppressed Black nation, including the right to form a separate

country, must be upheld—and is upheld in the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*, which I have written (this Constitution is available at revcom.us). At the same time, a separate Black country ruled by a Black bourgeoisie and operating according to the principles of capitalism could only function by exploiting the masses of Black people. And, as a capitalist country in a world dominated by the system of capitalism-imperialism and the major capitalist-imperialist powers, such a Black capitalist country could only occupy a subordinate and dominated position within that overall world system.

All these are basic reasons why, despite their pretensions, the bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie, of any nation or country, cannot lead to the liberation of the masses of people, with the ending of all relations of exploitation and oppression. And, once again, the representatives of these classes are *not even aiming* to put an end to all relations of exploitation and oppression, but rather to establish, or improve, their position *within* such relations.

## Real Liberation—A Truly Emancipating Revolution

Karl Marx, the founder of communism, emphasized this very important point: The political and intellectual representatives of every class claim that the *particular* interests of the class they are part of, also represent the *general interests* of the people and the society overall. But the reality is that there is only one class whose interests—not in a narrow sense, but in the largest and most fundamental sense—represent the interests of the masses of humanity and ultimately humanity as a whole. That class is the ***proletariat***—of all races, nations and countries—the exploited class of people under this system of capitalism-imperialism, **which can only put an end to its exploited condition by abolishing this system of capitalism-imperialism and uprooting all relations of exploitation and oppression, everywhere.**<sup>9</sup>

Once more, building up the Black bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie has not, will not, and cannot do away with discrimination, inequality