

# CAST AWAY

*For These Reasons*

ECONOMIC  
JIHAD

JO M. SEKIMONYO

Lambert Timothy James

**Cast Away : For These Reasons**

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

**James L.**

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"If you are going to tell people the truth, you'd better make them laugh. Otherwise, they'll kill you."

Human

## Letter to Mama Vincent

"There is a common tendency to ignore the poor or to develop some rationalization for the good fortune of the fortunate."## John Kenneth Galbraith

Dear Mama Vincent,

If this letter comes as a surprise to you, then you have no idea of the profound impression that our encounter with you has had in our lives since that day. Putting faces to the global malaise has kept my wife and me from sailing conscience-free around the ocean of the abstract. I sincerely commend you for taking full responsibility for the bad decisions you have made in your life, but I would be foolish to believe that your slip-ups are all there is to the story. In reality, from your birth, the odds were already stacked against you, and I know how this part of the world is merciless to single illiterate mothers. Vincent could have easily been me if I had landed in my mother's hands.

Dear, under your beautiful smile and joyful laugh, I saw an excruciating pain. You still have your life ahead of you. You shouldn't be a nameless figure, giving up on your big dreams and aspirations just yet. Then again, holding Vincent in my arms, under roaming eyes of law enforcement agents passing by, I for a moment shared your agony and despair.

It is touching the way you come to describe your son Vincent as your reason to live. Most of the young people your age uses such poignant statements to refer to the cute boy or girl they come to believe are their soul mates, the same person they will eventually dump for some blasphemous reason with little if any remorse. Even worse, it is revolting to overhear grownups reduce life's meaning into the ephemeral passing of emotions. Still, I cannot ignore that your reality in Kenya is far different than people in my current world.

You confessed to us that, at times, you feel hopeless, a pariah creeping through the streets in the vibrant city of Nairobi, which has decided to criminalize poverty. It is not a surprise that Nairobi's zero tolerance on the deprived has created the largest landfill of the poor in the whole Eastern region of Africa, the slum of Kibera. Yet, it breaks my heart to say there are other Kiberas and worse around this suffocating blue planet, which is not comforting to you either. From my travels, I have seen countless young mothers with their children panhandling all over the Democratic Republic of Congo and on every corner in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, and men in faded uniforms begging for coins on main streets in crumbling cities across the United States of America.

I have been on an investigative journey dissecting the hardships endured by Brazilians living in the City of God, the inhabitants of Cite' Jalousie in Port-au-Prince, Haiti before and after the devastating earthquake, the Romanians in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, Russians clustered in the Ghetto of Tver City, Chased in Khayelitsha, South Africa, and the poor in Kowloon Walled City, Hong Kong, China. I have been surprised by the residents' resilience of crime and poverty infected cities such as Detroit, U.S. and San Salvador, capital of El Salvador. And it is sad to say that around the world there are billions of people just like you who will go their whole lives experiencing poverty, famine, homelessness, and abuse that will most likely occur in the hands of law enforcement agents.

Tara and I are well aware that the few Kenyan shilling bills we gave you equated to scarce meals and shelter for only a couple of days. After what you and Vincent probably had to do to survive, is getting back on Nairobi's mean streets, at the mercy of other compassionate souls. We are deeply sorry that we couldn't rescue you and others from this nightmare.

After walking by, giving my spare change to people blinded and asphyxiated by misery, I asked myself repeatedly, what else can I do?! Stories about inequality have been told on and on. Nevertheless, I decided to stir the debate into a new path that could give Vincent and other innocent children like him a chance to a decent life. My mantra is that Vincent should have not just a roof over his head but a home, not just water but clean drinks, not just food but healthy meals, not just a classroom but quality education. And all these factors should eventually lead him to not just a job

but at least a universal living recompense for his skills and abilities. Anything less would be regarded as humanity's failure and continuing tragedy!!!

Sincerely,

Jo M. Sekimonyo

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jo M. Sekimonyo', written over a horizontal line.



## **Preface**

Maharishi's impersonators have pigeonholed Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism as economic contrivances. These pompous pranksters' exhaustive melodramatic economic tÃ¢te-Ã - tÃ¢tes have been nothing more than suckers' fodder. This book harks back to the real essence of Capitalism, Socialism, or Communism, an embodiment of a social, commerce and trade, and political creed.

## Acknowledgments

"If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write."â## Martin Luther King Jr.

Tara and I met in Tampa Florida; she had embarked on a great career that requires long hours on her feet but provided the financial security that her parents, Haitian immigrants, have dreamed of. In contrast, I was a hippy lunatic idealist, which the old man found outlandish. Somehow, I was able to convince her to parachute out of her stable and bright quotidian life to join me on the dark side. What got into her head to gamble on me and graduate school prospects? As diabolic speculations gained traction, we relocated to the north-eastern part of United States; what a relief.

Our first snow day was interesting, to say the least. It was the first time Tara gave me the "serial killer look," holding a sharp knife, and didn't say a word for a minute. Bear in mind that even in my sleep, I would throw a tantrum denouncing the increasing gap between the "have a lot" and the "have squat" all over the globe. Little did I know, my lovely wife was fed up with my homilies and wailings of the global social, commerce and trade, and political malaise, and more-so of my plans to present to the world what I believe is the remedy. Sure, I jotted down notes on gazillions of papers that laid like dead leaves on our office floor but stopping short of mustering the energy and discipline to complete a manuscript. A family friend even suggested that I put my ideas into a book so that I can amass followers. Build a cult? A preposterous idea, at the time. As much as it pains me to admit it, Tara was right. I had talked the talk for years, it was about time that I walked the walk, or in this case, written the write.

Why is the title of this book not "Economics Codex Gigas?" Well, Nassau Senior beat me to writing the economic devil's bible. Economic Jihad? Your slothful mind could be rushing to an inevitable conclusion right now. Chill pills will be handy on this journey; this book excavates long-standing challenges that generations of indolent economists and their groupies have suppressed or pointed in the wrong direction for two centuries. It is neither a clandestine parody nor a callous demonstration of prowess, but a genuine and provocative dissection of our world and the economic discipline.

Other than my anger and anxiety, I have to thank people that happen to sit next to me in greyhound buses during my frequent exhausting commutes, and with whom I had some of the most memorable discussions of my existence. Among them, a head of a University who had really harsh words for the Nobel Prize economist, Milton Friedman, for coming from a humble Jewish family beginning in New York City and "turning into an asshole" (his words). To my special sauce of ingredients, friends, and foes who have been driven by the insatiable appetite of proving my ideas were crazy; you have helped me strengthen my arguments and conviction. I love you, ladies and gentlemen.

Most of all, I am more than thankful for my wife, my partner in crime, for her excessive but effective tactics instrumental for me to undertake the daunting task of writing this book.

## **Foreword**

The relevance of heterodox economics is more than ever before threatened. Already, a number of heterodox economic programs have been disbanded. If the institutions that are immersed in this school of economic thought stay on the same track and don't adjust their goal from producing economists who aspire to become successful theoreticians, thinkers, to whom are going to become accomplished pragmatists, reasoning humans, their role in this global competitive academia will become obsolete. The end of heterodox economics might also be the best thing for the revival of institutionalism or even better, institutions' adoption and dissemination of Ethosism, a more lucid and relevant moral stream.

### **I**

## Interlude I

*"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's for everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."*

This inspiring quote by Marianne Williamson is from her book *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles*, Harper Collins, 1992. From Chapter 7, Section 3 (Pg. 190-191). Even though Nelson Mandela never uttered this quote in his 1994 inaugural speech, for my generation, it is forever attached to the man. If something has to be objectively said about his one term as the President of South Africa, his cowardly rainbow approach on dissolving apartheid had made him the white South African bourgeois champion. And, of course, if one simply tries to look at him within the context of a man who spent twenty-seven years in prison without begging his masters for a pardon or cracking the skull of another inmate, he, in essence, deserves to be held as one of the mythical figures of the power of conviction who exemplifies the strength of character required in the struggle against social, commerce and trade, and political inequality. *What other better way to limp into the next phase of this expedition?*

# 1

## Introduction



"Art is an attempt to integrate evil."### Simone de Beauvoir

I do not listen to compact discs. I play old tunes on vinyl. Perusing through thrift stores in search of a Sam Cooke, a Wendo Kolosoy, a Thelonious Monk, an Eduardo Sanchez de Fuentes, a Jimmie Rodgers, a Notorious B.I.G, a Mikhail Glinka, a Mariam Makeba, a Nana Mouskouri, a Fela Kuti, a Claude Debussy, or a Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev is as soothing as yoga. I treasure authentic Peruvian folklore music beats and Mongolian musical instruments more than a pop artist funk or tarnished and unusual twisted spoons' exhibition. Any form of expression that ceases to be an experience and becomes an art form loses its glowing divinity. In the same spirit, this book is an experience, not an artistic acrobatic exercise meant for viewing to remind you that it exists.

I have been excommunicated from a long list of tea shops and bars on the bogus charge of being the or Ferdinand Lassalle embodiment. The general public wrongly ties together an economic status quo examination with anti-Capitalism bravura based on an acute paranoia of the Karl Marx book "Das Kapital." It is difficult to talk about socialism in any constructive way. If you don't believe me, try to turn the light on the ugliest Capitalism facets, and bam, you get ostracized from the society as a Communist. Prompting a conversation on a new robust alternative to the free-market will only get you frightened looks from self-proclaimed Marx reincarnations. The terms, thoughts, precepts, concepts, practices and personalities have all been vilified on the one hand, or lionized on the other, that most people have an instant disdain for anything you might say once one of the lexicons of its vocabulary comes out of your mouth.

What can you say about the boring cock-fights between Capitalism deities of our time? You should be as disgusted as I am of these clown shows that chip away the substance of economic disparity dialogues. My rants can turn into a tsunami, but there are events in our lives, which, though small, prove to be very significant.

In transit at the Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya, waiting for my flight back to the United States, I was once asked what I wanted to be when I grow up. The man was sitting right across my table. He could have been in his late sixties. I could tell by his features and accent that he was from Rwanda, a nation that watchdog organizations reports have pointed at being the mastermind of my home country's political and social horrors. You can understand my rage after I was briefed on how Rwanda provided financial and military support to sadistic bandit groups, and, in return, Rwanda directly plundered Congolese natural resources and indirectly became a hub for mineral trade<sup>1</sup>.

On that day, I was haunted by one question; how many blows and lives lost would the Democratic Republic of Congo have to endure before the world says enough? With an angry tone, my reply to his question was audacious and straightforward: "I want to become a leader in the Democratic Republic of Congo." While struggling to suppress his mirth, he asked what my solutions would be for the DRC.

After all, my home country has been through more than half a century of economic and social chaos. At first, I lightheartedly laid down my ideas. He pulled his glasses back and asked me to elaborate more on my plan. Needless to say, the more I talked, the more naïve and dumb I sounded. In the end, I was not able to articulate my vision for the reason that I never seriously thought about it in detail. My entire scheme could not stand any scrutiny. The casual conversation turned into a humiliating and humbling experience.

This book emanates from the economic disciplines hijacked by escape artists and mathematicians, for more than two centuries. For all the wrong reasons, economists have blasted into a million small pieces the Holy Grails of the classical Labor Theory of Value and stripped away the humanism and the real world from theoretical foundations. Then they took the pain of stitching some of the pieces back, using pathetic assumptions as Band-Aids.

There is some truth in the quarantined Marxist Fred Moseley's charge that the economic academia system has been built to reward folks who stick with the mainstream. This good man is the Shoichi Yokoi of economics, deprived of fame and fortune, hiding in the jungles of South Hadley in Massachusetts. He firmly believed his former comrades would one day return for him, and together they would launch a final assault on Capitalism. Alas, merely castigating orthodoxy for the ineptness of their theory can neither restore the classical vision of an efficient market nor get us to the Promised Land.

I kick-started this book on a personal note with a letter to a young teenage single mother who is called Mama Vincent. She is a panhandler that my wife and I met in downtown Nairobi, Kenya. At one point, I had to hold young Vincent in my arms to keep law enforcement agents away. My tourist eminence in Kenya shielded Vincent and his mother from police harassment. The city of Nairobi has passed an ordinance criminalizing pandhandling, or shall I say, poverty. I asked then and do so again, "What then is the poor to do?"

Excess in government is spent on the elite in government, and their favored patrons, not on waging a war against the root causes that perpetuate endemic poverty. This modern era apartheid doesn't call any attention because the oppressed and oppressors have the same skin color. Many more cities are taking the same insane approach and have been getting away with it as long as the line drawn doesn't desecrate the burial of race or ethnic disputes.

In my childhood, I was ingrained with the notion that social, commerce and trade, and political disparity was dictated by law of nature; somebody had to be poor to be a servant of the rich! In the mid-90s, wealthy Congolese sought refuge to the west from the civil war. I stand as a witness to how, in a blink of an eye, most of these families lost their accustomed lifestyle of luxury. After living for close to two decades in exile, even the most powerful generals and the former President's inner circle gradually succumbed to the crippling misery. Not surprisingly, a number of the barons and crusaders of the former regime have crawled back home and are vigorously active in the new parasite system. My wise South African friend referenced a law of nature to explain this cycle: "Once a snake, always a snake!"

The personal testimony is to show the damning universal truth that people, as well as nations, are more concerned about themselves until their luck changes. In the dot com collapse of 1995-2000, and the Great Recession beginning in 2008 we saw many Americans were shaken out of their dream of a house with a picket fence. Ordinary hard-working Americans saw their pensions completely wiped out by a few greedy capitalist insiders. In the latter event housing prices fell by over 31%, greater than in the Great Depression of the 1930s. Non-farm employment was higher than in the

Great Depression, and lingered longer. The capitalists' stimulative move, The Gramm-Rudman Act, actually precipitated the catastrophe by allowing trading in speculative derivatives that were mortgage backed securities entirely unsupported and by default, worthless<sup>2</sup>.

Another caustic example is the small group of the Russian oligarchs who have since fallen out of Vladimir Putin's favor, who cannot help but preach justice and equality from their golden exile in London. What is there to say about European countries juggling with mind-blowing debt higher than their worth (Gross Domestic Product)? Add to this picture Brazil, Russia, India, and China, the BRIC countries who are steam-rolling their economic growth at Mother Nature's peril<sup>3</sup>. Added to this gumbo the Arab Facebook generation, who are no longer content with the tiny slice of their national wealth while a minority splurges with the rest, are attempting to shift cards.

These recent bubbling volcanoes should awaken our sense that preemptive measures should be sought to break the status quo. In the twenty-first century, the sluggish economists' speech "We will be fine as long as we stay on the current course and tweak the old Capitalism wheel a little bit more," has long lost its potency and relevance. It is more than ever imperative to initiate a cultural revolution and to develop a real alternative to the prevailing brutal and primitive social, commerce and trade, and political system, which is Capitalism.

The loud medley in my mind bubbled out of the ordinary challenge facing every nation on this dying planet: social, commerce and trade, and political injustice (disparity for any punks). It is a result of a painful crusade to uncover a pragmatic way of making the gap negligible. Don't pull your wig out just yet; I am not totally out of my mind, advocating to jump back on the saddle of any of the two dead horses. Socialism and Communism have failed, but now Capitalism is failing us.

There are many elaborate dark labyrinths this book will be taking you through. I firmly believe that economists should leave to religion and medicine the principal goal of uncovering mysteries of the unnatural and natural while consoling or abusing us on the way. Economics' responsibility is to find remedies for or to level out, glut and hoarding before any cerebral vagabondage. Instead, it has been reduced to glorifying socio-economic skewness.

I have noted the skepticism about whether any social, commerce and trade, and political form other than Capitalism would ever work. Nowadays, people fail to realize that Capitalism was part of paradigms based on barbaric social norms and practices. It is probably true when a social arrangement dominates a field for so long as Capitalism has, it becomes easier to forget that other models, which address different goals and questions, exist or could be constructed. After we all begin to believe that there is only one way of doing things, it is the most dangerous lure of all.

Where is the magic book to find out how to break the spell? Like a raging bull, to the disbelief of friends and colleagues, I abruptly interrupted my promising intellectual prostitution career and jumped on what had seemed to be academic vagabondage. My initial objective was to trace the whole commerce system from accounting, finance, management, and end up in economics.

As I was delving into the planned last leg of my journey, I was nauseated by economic "gurus" who spent more time claiming incidental correlation to impress the public instead of explaining in a clear and concise way the social, commerce and trade, and political mechanisms and remedies to global economic troubles. Regrettably, the laziness of these orators has thwarted the audience's viewpoint. What I can share from my experience with any of you guys who are thinking about questioning today's dominant form of commerce and trade, Capitalism, don't expect an effusive welcome; you should be ready to face the furor of delusional McCarthyists, as I usually do.

From that experience it has become my life ambition to hunt down the answer to those questions of what my solutions would be. In my search, I determined that those remedies ought not be relevant only to the United States of America, the Mongolian People's Republic, or the Democratic Republic of the Congo but have to be applicable and relevant to any fatherland or motherland. The *theos* of society in general would have to change and given a permanent solution. The status quo of belief here

today and gone tomorrow regarding the social compact had to stabilize into one that was permanent, fair, equal, right (as versus wrong) and just.

The solution first and foremost is not found in the idiotic catch phrases of one political party, or system, or another. It is found within the home of each citizen of every nation, indeed, the world. Looking at society as the makeup of individual citizens one must ask: what is right, good and fair for that one person, one couple, one family. It can hardly be found in the ever-shifting sands of political systems, or even religious systems, theory or thought. It can only be found in that which is most important to the individual and his or her family, the ability to survive. The ability to survive is based upon economics.

I have left to the class of sloppy cerebral sloths of lumpen-intellectuals and politicians to tiptoe around pressing issues. Instead, you, the reader, and I will be swimming against the current torrent. Chapter one through six is exhibits of the case against the current social, commerce and trade, and political status quo - Capitalism. If I see you on the other side of chapter seven, please hold my hand tightly from chapter eight through ten where I wreck from the subliminal fundamentals of Capitalism. Take your time to digest chapter eleven and get yourself prepared for a big slap in the face. On the closing argument, chapter twelve follows through James Tobin's recommendation: "Good papers in economics contain surprises and stimulate further work."

What else? I made this book easier to read than fat torching. Each chapter debuts with quotes giving you a clue of what to expect and have interjected "interludes" between batches to awaken young readers with short attention spans, and to add a zest of a novelty for the literary enthusiasts. I shall confess to folks who expect colorful charts and numbers and to economists addicted to ketamine (mathematical models), I am sincerely sorry that I have let you down. One thing is for sure, at no time I did pull my punches. Oh yeah, and I did not waste my energy on the discourse of twentieth-century economists. You do not need to sample manure to confirm it is manure; the stench of falsehoods is sufficient to discern it as such.

The idea of writing a book is equated with getting butt naked in front of a large audience. I never had a problem doing that. But my constant inner battles through this experience consisted of synchronizing my heart with my mind. I had to overcome the temptation of being guided solely by either passion or vision. Both intensity and accuracy are essential in this enterprise to birth out a new concept. Remember, in life, passion without vision is a waste of energy, and vision without passion is a dead-end.

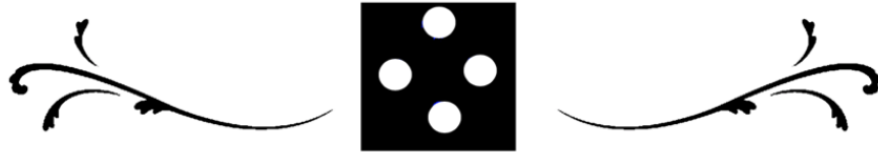
One brilliant soul, Swami Vivekananda, often chanted so eloquently: "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success."

The world might one day know the magnitude of sacrifices I made to cultivate this idea I genuinely care about, a solution to the severe global social, commerce and trade, and political injustice. The anchor of this book would be in vain without providing a full-bodied alternative to Capitalism, a remedy that might justly mend the social democrat economist mind. It is about time that we bring back dialogic analysis without channeling old economic demons. Above all, I hope this document will stimulate a number of people to discuss and further the solution proposed in this book or creatively to give life to another path away from Capitalism. *And may William Godwin rest, at last, in peace.*



## 2

### Kamikaze



"I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is I know nothing."## Socrates

A few years back, while I was walking down a cluttered and depressing street of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, the sight of a frail teenage mother and a sleeping filthy child wrapped on her back with a little piece of cloth instantly transported my mind back to my intellectual "Waterloo" defeat at Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi. It was then that it hit me - Eureka! Still, on that day, I was far from years of an investigative roller coaster ride to articulate a cure for social classes' decomposition tormenting every society.

After that, I invested time, money, and energy to get a real sense of the problems people face around the globe. To that end, Tara and I traveled as much as we could afford, read abundantly, and glued ourselves for hours to the television screen watching documentaries. One of my crusades took us across the Sub-Saharan and Eastern region of Africa (SSEA), and we were astonished by the region's many challenges, which transcend geographical boundaries. The overriding feature of the SSEA is an exotic mamba with two heads: corruption and repression. You can blame the region's dysfunctional governments, which are essentially being used as an apparatus to consolidate power and wealth within a few ruling families. In short, public services across this region are a disastrous joke.

There are many fingers to be pointed at the SSEA's organized chaos; these abysmal management practices are either of the SSEA nations' design or imposed on them from the outside, as I suspect, to impede both internal and regional development. While touring different cities in the western hemisphere, I noted the same gangrene as I find in African or Latin American countries. Seriously, you would think that the state of Illinois was in Nigeria when the former Governor Rod Blagojevich was sent behind bars for trying to sell the forty-fourth President of United States, Barack Obama, his former senatorial seat. The BRIC reported scandals are of epic proportion. I am not a big fan of fãºtbol, but I expected Brazilian contractors to make a mockery of the 2014 soccer World Cup, with overpriced stadiums and bridges that crumbled before and during the sacred festivity. What to say about the scandal in China's southern city of Hengyang that triggered the resignation of almost the entire city's People's Congress leaders? The prevalence of resource mismanagement and leaders' self-indulgence have resulted in globally unprecedented levels of financial waste.

"A casual stroll through the lunatic asylum shows that faith doesn't prove anything."## Wilhelm Nietzsche

On my tour du poor monde, I met dedicated westerner students who were on or getting ready for, mission trips to spice up their resumes or to boost up their chances to be admitted in a

prestigious higher learning institution. I have caught myself glazing over by beautiful pictures of A-listed celebrities, or a charity spokesperson, who profoundly wanted to "save the people" (though sometimes the animals more than the people). The madness is nothing compared to graduate classes on public engagement or economic development that I have taken on the better side of the globe, where I found naïve characters who see themselves as miracle laborers and benefactors of third world countries. As talented as these individuals might be, the flaws in their conceptual approach is the bigoted view of less developed nations' challenges and needs. They base their models of development on the deep-rooted passion for Capitalism and sense of cultural superiority. This mindset reminded me of the aphorism "if the only tool you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail."

What is more hazardous to poor nations than smart ass westerners? Immigrants from god forgotten countries; self-enslaved and adoring conformists, with the little access to modern amenities and western taste that they have acquired, who dare vocalize that living on a dollar a day is "just how it is" in their home countries. I have found a high concentration of these stupid individuals in England, where Engel's account of the living conditions only a century ago sent chills down my spine.

In the United States, which was not too long ago a shit hole with a putrid stench of racism, sexism, and bigotry (the stench still lingers in the air). Lastly, if you are one of those monkeys from a repressive authoritarian regime which is walking down lit up streets in the west, delighted from the addictive sense of protection and freedom and yet has a firm conviction that developing nations need a "strong man" for peace and development. Before you read the rest of the book, repent.

It has to be noted that, throughout time, a dominant society has always knighted itself the prestigious "exceptionalism" status. I would applaud this gut and bravura if their economists took on the leadership responsibilities of dissecting the world around accurately and, accordingly, prescribe effective interventions that would lift us all up.

The intent of both socialist and capitalist nations has been to globalize its influence and inclusive reach. Socialism in the political militaristic fashion, while Capitalism choose to do it through business hegemony. Globalization has no more benefitted the socialist enterprise than the capitalist endeavor. For the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics neighborhoods received their first sewer systems and running water, 100 years after the great socialist victory in St. Petersburg. In shocking similarity large areas of capitalist nations in the western hemispheres both north and south have large populations in not so dissimilar situation. This while St. Petersburg and Moscow enjoy gold encrusted bathroom fixtures to be rivaled only by those in Paris, London, New York and Los Angeles.

While socialist athletes enjoy all the benefits of stardom and wealth their western counter parts do, the western athletes rising up from shoeless beginnings bed themselves in palaces that pale those of African, Asian, and Caribbean national palaces.

What do we have right now? A total fuming global mess where Cost-effectiveness and Gross Domestic Product (an insane way to gauge citizens' life betterment) are at the center of leading initiatives. I have to underline the overused excuse, "globalization," since it has added elements of scope and speed into the mix. What to say about humankind when, time and time again, leading nations turn a blind eye to the imposition of inhumane practices, which was slavery in past centuries and now Self-deprecating is added to the load, as long as it benefits them?

I get angry when westerners are surprised that development programs, which are shoved down the throats of problematic countries, do not lead to prophesied outcomes. I become angrier when solutions for inhabitants' needs can be addressed in an integrated way. Instead, from their desks in Washington, DC, economic druids clean the data up and develop simplified models, which abstract from the complexity of observable reality.

Time and time again, critical studies conducted by no other than the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank insiders have poured out evidence of the leading international financial institutions' programs effectiveness<sup>1</sup>. These guilty consciences decry how a country economically faint is treated as a coma, rushed into an international organization emergency room,

locked into unplugged financial incubators, and knocked out by an addictive overdose of aid, is then molested and gangbanged by frantic necrophiliacs and is used as a testing ground for irrational experimental reform programs. God forbid, a vegetated nation shows any sign of life after these unnecessary open-heart surgeries as what the Argentine Republic did; it will be at the mercy of ferocious vultures who would try to pull its eyeballs and intestines out.

## **The Failed State Solutions of the UN**

What is the standard antidote injected into a nation once deemed as a "failed state?" Let's look at Haiti after Hurricane Sandy blasted through this voodoo nation that was already socio-politico-economically wobbling for a century. First, it was quarantined and put under the supervision of spooky eyes of international trusteeship. After what powerful nations imposed via *douceur* (democratic elections) to millions of illiterates, a charismatic buffoon whose brightest idea was to organize carnival celebrations all over the smaller portion of the island of Hispaniola, while serious decisions were taken solely by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund emissaries. The social, commerce and trade, and political crimes committed in Haiti are far from being an isolated case; international assistance funds have been used by predator nations to extract that sort of concessions from the crippled nations, which often are not willing to offer in healthy times.

What we have seen in Haiti and in other black holes where those same approaches were taken is that remedies produced a worse net result than the problem itself ever did. Primarily because these nations' kleptomaniacs and technical "partners" often implement contradictory dogmas and reforms that cause poor countries to fall further behind. I should not be the first one to tell you that John Maynard Keynes and Harry Dexter White offsprings and other international financial institutions act at the whim of their backers and backers' backers' interests. This, in turn, leads to another round of despicable resource waste and mismanagement. If you are craving to get a sense of the magnitude of this mess, please take a tour of Cite' Jalousie, Port au Prince, Haiti, and compare it to villas rented by United Nations "peacemakers" a few miles away.

It matters little, socialism, or capitalism, greed is greed, avarice is contagious with power and the political pathway to the ability to have it makes little difference. The end result is the glorification of heroes—feet be they in the athletic shoes of Nike or the Wingtips of a politician. The result is the continued suffering under a disparate economic system that consistently shells out to the privileged few and discriminates against the disadvantaged many. What to say about humankind when, time and time again, national leaders turn a blind eye to the continuance of inhumane practices. Slavery still exists. It isn't as open, there are no ships full of black or brown retched incarcerated humanity, now days they are transported in containers aboard ships freely traveling the high seas finding homes in the most fashionable cities of the world.

"I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men."—Richard Baxter

Nowadays, economists claim that a theory can't be developed except in a purely numb way; any phenomenon that can't be reconstructed in a mathematical model is deemed illogical and trashed. If in a sense, nothing is explained unless everything is stated in a mind-bending equation frame, this book is read as a suicidal letter. I am not depressed enough either to jump in front of a subway train or to make a journey to a Buddhist monk temple. I have to thank the classical and prodigal political economists who were not inclined to this constraint and who aesthetically birthed essential principles and, unfortunately in most cases, robust diabolic treatises.

In third world countries, the contrast between the misery and despair of the many and the level of opulence and waste of the few is not a complex abstract, but rather an observable reality on an insane scale amounting to a moral abomination.

Western revered revisionists under the umbrella of international organizations such as UNDP (United Nations Development Program) are suggesting that third world countries nightmares have nothing to do with colonization. The pathetic excuse is held as the truth even when we see post-colonial social layers mirroring the caste system inherited from colonization's ruthless exploitive social construct. Little has it done, other than imposing a maniac head of state, to help the marginalized evade a bleak future. Social, commerce and trade, and political anthropophagy

(Capitalism) is an exogenous concept proven not fitting for developing countries' realities and potentials.

In the global Capitalism arena, a nation's ability to race against others of at least the same size predetermines its prospect for growth and development. The Republic of Burundi and the Kingdom of Belgium, two countries of roughly the same size and population, cannot be further apart economically. Burundi's GDP is half of one percent that of Belgium. Other than racking debt higher than the tiny Kingdom's GDP, how else did Belgium achieve this prowess?

The historians tell the story of Belgium's comparative advantage over Burundi beginning in the 19th century. Belgium's King Leopold II<sup>2</sup> applied the well-traveled path of, "if you don't have resources, go grab some." Through this, just like The Netherlands, Britain, France, Italy and Germany they were able to amass personal and national wealth. Colonization was not a self-defeating drain on the domestic economy. Quite the opposite.

While Germans were decimating Burundi's socio-cultural structures, from 1887 to 1965, King Leopold II of Belgium, and subsequently Belgium as a nation, was quietly plundering the natural resources from a territory eighty times its size, known today as the Democratic Republic of Congo. After World War II, Burundi was wrenched from Germany's grip and given to Belgium by the League of Nations for enduring the temporary hardships of war by their big neighbor.

Developing countries are not the sole sources of evidence of the global malfeasance by politicians and their economist stooges. On the one hand, centralized economies have failed by imposing a uniform basket of needs for the ninety-nine percent of the population at the bottom. The defunct Soviet Union implemented Communism by plundering the wealth of the ruling class and then ate the middle class when the wealthy were extinguished. The intelligentsia filled Gulags who knew how to run a nation and economy no matter how poorly, or who quickly deserted the nation of their birth for France, England, Germany and America. This left the Soviet Union with management at every level with no knowledge of how to run a nation let alone a war-torn bankrupt economy.

Whereas on the other hand, the free market is failing us with a morally bankrupt rules of survival of the fittest, catering to the new investor classes of fractional class elite. The defunct Soviet Union implemented Communism correctly until it hit a wall, literally. Whereas on the other hand, the free market is failing us with an unethical rule of the survival of the fittest, catering to a small group of the one percent at the top. The only time, in recent memories, The United States Congress came together in bipartisan fashion was to bail out numerous "too big to fail" U.S. banks and insurance companies. In contrast, in 2013, the same Congress slashed billions of dollars from the food stamp program that had kept a chunk of The United States population noses above the poverty level<sup>3</sup>.

When you pay attention to the global financial transactions' postcard, you should be able to see how the Capitalism model has confined lucrative international financial flows within the same economies. Other countries are reduced to mere providers of raw material and cheaper labor. However, the fat lady is about to stop singing very soon; she is getting too plump to stand on her feet. In 2010, General Motors shut down their plant in Antwerp, Belgium, because of the excess capacity in the European car industry. Subsequently, other plants across different industries in Europe and North America have since closed their doors.

"Koketsu ni irazunba koji wo ezu." Japanese Wisdom

Although by respective economic doctrine, the Republic of Cuba and England are recklessly doing right. At the assessment of the two existing economic lines of attacks (poverty, pollution, war, etc.) suggests to our sense of humanity that neither approaches are the right thing to do. I had a glimmer of hope when the former Soviet Union and China decided to go cold turkey, breaking out from the communist penitentiary institution, until they ran straight into the psychiatric Capitalism facility, which is a pure form of insanity!

Currently, the world lacks full-bodied alternatives and, after multiple frantic financial crises, acknowledging Capitalism's barbarism and flaws should not be a mortal sin. In the light of recurrent

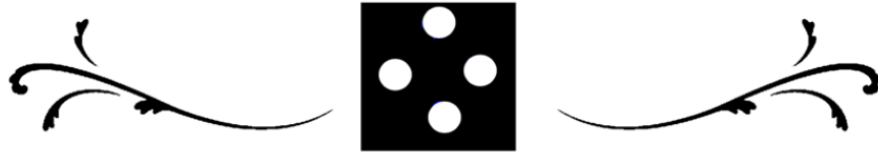
facts, financial cataclysms' austerity and spending have shown not to be sustainable solutions, but rather a lampooning of the struggling class. I allow myself here to say in the most simplistic way, new markets need to be promoted to rejuvenate the global economic system, but in doing so, new trends need to be developed to avoid the final cataclysm. This change requires applying the appropriate social, commerce and trade, and political form that will not only move "poor" countries into the international trade system, as to say from exploited bystanders to active producers and buyers but also break current markets' affairs from the old order and the New World Order.

Creative as humans are, I used to wait on the side for a superwoman to save us all. Then I learned that in 1945 when American and British battleships and aircraft carriers were getting close to the Japanese mainland, ordinary young people were asked to make the ultimate sacrifice to save the empire of the rising sun - their lives. The pitch of victimhood built on the atomic attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki romanticized these young men's fearlessness. I took an offense when called a kamikaze for my attacks on Capitalism only after I learned about the Nanjing Massacre, and women forced into sex slavery for the Japanese military.

Tired of waiting for a whistle that will halt our deliberate destruction, I am not going to bore you with the same crybaby wailing that you have come to associate with critics of Capitalism or social, commerce and trade, and political injustices. To burst your bubble, the solution is neither increasing the minimum wage, give a dog a bone, nor building up tax barracks, Nezumi kozo. These two are nothing more than economic palliative remedies. To your delight or indignation, I am going to expose your few remaining neurons to a new social, commerce and trade, and political form that potentially transposes general notions by propelling the ninety-nine percent to the top and take care of the one percent less fortunate at the bottom. *And Caesar, ahem, you the reader, would have to decide my fate!*

### 3

## I see poor people



"In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of."## Confucius

In my view, by far the creepiest social site out there is the one dedicated to M. Night Shyamalan by one of his diehard followers. For an Indian-American to achieve such a high level of success as a screenwriter, film producer, director, and A-listed star of Hollywood without relying on the clich d dancing and chanting in Bollywood cinematographic format is impressive. I am, myself, a huge fan of his breakthrough and most celebrated movie *The Sixth Sense* (1999). This movie's box office gross suggests that there are not many homo-sapiens who have not watched it. For the rest of you who were still living in cages around that time, the superb plot is around a boy, Cole, who has the ability to communicate with spirits that don't know they are dead. He seeks the help of a depressed child psychologist, a role superbly played by one of Hollywood's biggest stars at the time, Bruce Willis. The movie's good bumping moment comes when the camera slowly zooms to the boy's face, then-unknown child actor, Haley Joel Osment, and he whispers, "I see dead people," turning the line instantly into one of the most used catchphrases of that time.

It has been quite some time since I found myself entangled in a dilemma similar to Cole's. No doubt that the crusade I have embarked on has drawn me to experience life as I never thought I would. Let me assure you, the life of a hermit monk has not sounded appealing to me, yet. I have to say that the emotional expedition has broken my myopic life lenses, which forced me to observe my surroundings, relying on all of my senses, and upped my state of consciousness. After enlisting new priorities in my daily life, nowadays, I have a hard time sleeping all through the night. My mind fly miles away in the middle of dull seminars and conversations. When you have voices nagging in your head, pointing left and right, life becomes a wild roller coaster ride. I came to wonder when the devil had possessed me? I cannot afford to hire my own disheartened shrink, even less so Bruce Willis (I tried). In the goal of exorcising my demons, I hope that pinning down critical events in my ordinary life will help me trace the original trigger that led to my obsession with caring for the less fortunate. I cannot stop seeing poor people!

Tara's parents, Haitian immigrants, ran away from the hard knock life of New York City to raise their newly born child in The United States retirement epicenter in South Florida. From the time Tara and I met, she was boiling to reverse her parents' migration cycle and talked my ears off about the "Big Apple." When you add my wife's inducement strategy to the list of egotistic New Yorkers I had met in Florida, you start imagining the city as if it was the land of milk and honey; a nirvana

where opportunities and excitement are waiting on every corner. It came as a huge disappointment to my wife that we did not move to her dream city, but rather into a quaint little town in Massachusetts. Ironically, I commuted routinely to New York City for school. The graduate program I matriculated into was situated smack dab in Manhattan, right in the mix of historic skyscrapers and not far from the around-the-clock and year-long tourist-infected Times Square. Learning from my experience, I have to caution folks out there dying to get a large bite of the "Big Apple," before moving up north, to scrutinize the madness diligently older and rich folks are running away from.

New York City is home to the world's boldest financial delinquents: the New York Stock Exchange, NASDAQ, and the most mismanaged international organization headquarters, the United Nations. New York has an estimated Gross Domestic Product higher than Saudi Arabia, and almost twice that of Switzerland. It has had a billionaire as a mayor, Michael Bloomberg, and larger than life unofficial multi-millionaire mayor of the blacks in the city, Sean John Combs aka Puff Daddy. Everything is glamorously portrayed in vivid 4k, except such things as the city's rodent problem and crime ridden bloodbaths in Brownsville, Brooklyn. The poor exist everywhere and the rich are hardly there, and hardly better off. They exist among the towers in self-delusion that living higher up the concrete structure in a gilded cage with fingerprint ID for entry makes them better off somehow. Why is the city not able to take care of the poor?

As I pushed amongst the crowds, the seemingly too busy to stay still, what I kept bumping into on every corner were the beleaguered faces of the poor. It is a constant draconian knot to my mind how a city awash in capital is not able to find a humane solution to the disparities of its inhabitants. Some walk in ragged shoes while other leap off the top of the skyscrapers in helicopters only to land at private airports and fly away in private jets to private islands to do private things if known would bring scorn and reproach upon their heads. Is this not poverty? Poverty of the mind, the soul, the flesh-eating disease from within that consumes them along with the physical diseases they keep contracting that only their wealth allows them to fight with antibiotics. If the trickle-down theory can ever be successful it must surely begin as dew, or rain, and start at the top would find minds less consumed with tower living, helicopters and private jets.

I find it torturous walking out of the New York City central station, dodging the overlooked mentally ill, and avoiding eye contact with those who are laying on the floor. This morose spectacle has turned me into a good priest passing the Eucharist or in my case, my lunch money. When winter came, I realized that there were fewer and fewer beggars around my usual crucifixion path. At last, I could get a decent meal without the burning guilty sentiment lodged in my gut. I was unable to silence my suspicions for long and questioned where the lava of homeless had gone that I had become accustomed to. In reality, no miracle had happened - just the weather. As ol'man winter makes its grim appearance, the homeless try to find warm shelters and, inevitably, have to retreat into invisibility.

In 2013, alarming news emerged of the spike in the number of homeless arriving at shelters, and due to housing's limited capacities, adults and children alike had to be turned away every night. What to say about the number of the United States veterans who are homeless? If the United States, currently ranked as the wealthiest nation on Earth, doesn't move Heaven and Earth to care for those who have answered the call to honorably serve the country and abandon noble beings who have put their life at risk to protect the nation, I can't think about anyone else it can show empathy to.

Not to pick on the United States alone the World Bank estimates that more than half of Mumbai residents live in slums that are otherwise by any standard unsafe and uninhabitable, and yet 11 million souls exist day to day<sup>1</sup>. The "Slumdog Millionaire" is how most people of the western world got a sense of life in Mumbai, and several scenes from the movie were recorded there. Mumbai is a city of contrasts, which is home to some of the country's wealthiest businessmen and Bollywood film stars. I cannot help but wonder if the archaic caste system and deep-rooted religious faith have made the common Indian susceptible to accept disparity in their society as a work of divine force: destiny.



I could not find any public outcry against the Indian space program's (I.S.R.O) budget that gradually boosted up to 1.3 billion dollars in 2013. The I.S.R.O. budget figures triggered countries such as India's former colonial power, the United Kingdom, and one of the nation's best buddies, the United States, to cut aid fund to India. The amount is evidently small compared to the I.S.R.O budget, but it was a huge hit taken by diverse programs that provide needed services to an estimated 421 million of poor Indians. This number is higher than in the twenty-six poorest African nations. What was India's response to the aid cut? "We do not really need the aid," said Palaniappan Chidambaram, India's finance minister at the time.

In November 2013, my Indian-American friends celebrated when India's space program confirmed that the Mars Orbiter had debuted the planned ten-month journey. The Indian Mars probe has raised some of my most profound suspicions. It was orbiting the Earth for some time. I imagine that Indian scientists got depressed looking at the Indian slums and decided to turn their telescopes away. Is the mission's real goal to find a new hide-out for the Indian elite or a dump/final solution for the poor inhabiting places like the slums of Mumbai? If it happens to be the latter, the few clauses on the ratified agreement between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and India about space programs regarding slums scattered around Abuja should be fascinating!

Now try to Google the most expensive house in the world's history. Surprisingly, it is not located in Manhattan or anywhere in Paris, but it is in Mumbai, India, and is valued at more than one billion USD! The twenty-seven-story skyscraper has six underground parking levels, one level dedicated to a health center and requires about six hundred staff for its maintenance. This gargantuan residence is home to the Indian billionaire, Mukesh Ambani, his wife, his two sons and one daughter. It does not pain me as much that in a nation where many children go hungry and live in slums as much as he chose to spend a billion dollars building his residence on land owned previously by an orphanage. The land was allocated to educate underprivileged children. I guess that he wanted to have a beautiful view of the city, and its slums.

Talking about a beautiful view, the Gulf of Florida has some of the most immaculate beaches on the planet. Anyone who desires an urban lifestyle and quick access to splendid beaches, the city of Tampa is the right place to live, because of its proximity to the coastal city of Saint Petersburg. Now, any tourist is going to have a lovely time wandering around under the caressing sun, tasting some authentically fattening American gourmet food at the center of the town and stopping by the beach for ice cream.

Once the sun goes down, it is advisable for any caring soul to avoid venturing into the vicinity of the city center. I have found myself downtown late at night, waiting for the Greyhound bus to take me back to Tampa. I swear criminality is not what people have to worry about. The upsurge of homeless laying their boxes down, trying to find shelter around the imposing local Catholic Church building and the central park is heartbreaking. Adding to that humiliation, the homeless are constantly being harassed by the police on patrol, enforcing what I call a zero-tolerance of the poor decree passed by the local council. As a tactic to get rid of the poor, once arrested and released, they are given a Greyhound ticket out of Saint Petersburg to any destination of their choice, which is usually Tampa. I do think it is one of the most creative and diabolic measures taken with the goal of safeguarding the city's quixotic image.

When somebody says quixotic image, for some reason my mind centers on the city of Burma, officially the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. My enchanting depiction was, for a long time, the result of a leaked video of the General Than Shwe's<sup>2</sup> daughter wedding in 2006. There were strings of diamonds and tons of champagne bottles on display. It was estimated that she received tens of millions of dollars' worth of gifts, including luxury cars and houses. I can remember being so envious of the groom, watching him pouring champagne over a cascade of glasses and helping his bride slice into a huge wedding cake. At the news of Aung San Suu Kyi being released from house arrest in November 2010, I took a second look at the video and did some research. In the video, the smiling

guests, wrapped in the finest clothing and expensive jewels, were all part of a brutal and sanguinary military leadership who had an ironclad grip on the country. This opulent party was happening while Burma's level of poverty and military repression continued to rise.

The military junta has since then gone through a strategic renovation. The surgical changes are noticeable; these tigers have adopted formal civilian outfits. Their sincerity is questionable. The ruling elite members are still the same. I do not see them relinquishing control over the Burmese military forces, which is unmistakably the source of their control over the country and its vast resources. So far, the offensive charm appears to be working. Yangon International Airport is busy yet again rolling out a red carpet on the step of world power brokers and their squads of financial crooks' jets. No doubt in my mind that parties will go on for some time again, although in secret.

The event got me wondering, what has happened to the most exhilarating party in the United States that was no secret by any means? In 2003, getting "fresh off of the boat" as many of my American compadres would label the Caribbean and African newcomer like myself, I came across a brochure of "Mardi Gras" events in New Orleans, Louisiana, jam-packed with images of young folks partying and with delightful praises of bayou gastronomy. A couple of friends and I could not wait to cash in a bunch of coupons stacked in the booklet. Needless to say, we drove down to the "Big Easy" as fast and drunk as we could. Miraculously, we did not end up on some chain-gang in Mississippi. The food and the hospitality on Bourbon Street were outstanding. Only few party musketeers could boast that every one of their notorious Bourbon Street rituals was a triumph. Let's just say that each time we left the hotel with hundreds of beads, following the festivities' sacrosanct tradition, we stumbled back to our room with empty hands... Wink, wink!

On our way back to Florida, with our minds still floating up in the sky, we missed the ramp to the Hale Boggs Bridge over the Mississippi River. Anyone who has been to New Orleans knows that the bridge is the only way of getting out of the city. There was no need to panic until we realized why the hotel concierge instructions were to avoid, at any cost, venturing outside the touristic parameter, which is roughly around the French Quarter. Oh, Lord! For the first time on our sojourn in New Orleans, the dÃ©cor was of concern. We all sobered up fast. It is not far-fetched to say, if the police had tried to pull us over, they would have had to follow us back to Bourbon Street. We were not about to make any stop in the middle of that jungle.

To get an idea of our ragtag group, we were raised watching the black family in the Cosby show series, scenes of New York City in Eddie Murphy's comedy hit "Coming to America" was too surreal to be true for us. In other words, we were from predominantly affluent families that got more than a proper share of wealth in the "Ã l'Africaine" Capitalism system. Even though we had a considerable number of black American acquaintances back in Tallahassee, Florida, which is a classic college town and a serene state capital, those Negroes in N'awlins and the surrounding projects scared the hell out of all of us! We should have known that something was fishy about this city. New Orleans produced one of the most prolific rap groups that we loved at the time, and the "Hot Boyz" is one of them. Their creative rap prose, raw style, and catchphrases cannot naturally come from a place of joy and kumbaya; instead, it is a sanctuary of pain and desperation. If that red flag was not visible enough, the group's initial low budget music videos gave a tour of their world, a cornucopia of poor dirt-ass people in front of poorly maintained public housing blocks.

Sadly, these days, some opt to ignore or chose to forget the fact that way before the devastating hurricane Katrina<sup>3</sup> swept through the city, New Orleans had some of the shittiest places in the United States comparable to parts of third world countries I have traveled to. As my friends and I came to find out, those shameful pockets of the "Big Easy" were superbly tucked away, out of the view of the drunken college students and other tourists. Hurricane Katrina only flushed out the city's dirty secret, and the entire United States pretended to be surprised. Really, what else do you expect when the city sanitary sewers overflow? And now that the chocolate city, as it was called by the New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin (sentenced ten years in prison for bribery, money laundering, and other corruption), is

rebuilding, it probably is praying for its problems to never come back, wishing it could declare a section of its former persona non-grata residents.

"Persona non-grata" might not be stated in the city of New Orleans' Christmas wish list; but it has been Teodoro Nguema Obiang, the son of Equatorial Guinea President, status in France and most civilized nations. France got exasperated by the Negro Prince's opulence, and in 2012, it was reported that the French police suddenly decided to act on a past lawsuit brought by different activist organizations and took away a couple of Obiang Jr.'s toys. The subsequent viewing of all the baubles pictured in French magazines surpassed my imagined folie de grandeur, which included eleven luxury cars (two Bugatti Veyrons, a Maybach, an Aston Martin, a Ferrari Enzo, a Ferrari 599 GTO, a Rolls-Royce Phantom, and a Maserati MC12), some bottles of Chateau Pateau (among the world's most expensive wines), and a 3.7 million dollars clock.

Not one to be outdone by the French, the Americans attempted to put a bigger dent in Obiang Jr.'s fortune. The public got blitzed with the news that the United States Justice Department filed a 70 million dollars forfeiture action against Obiang Jr. And voilà, another list that included a Gulfstream jet, Michael Jackson's infamous gloves, and a villa in Malibu, California. Wait a minute! The kid was still allowed to parade around vast amounts of money in the United States after the scandal that forced the Riggs Bank to shut down? Somehow, the United States Justice Department never troubled the bank's largest single depositor at the time, with over 700 million dollars. What is there to make of all of this juicy story? By no stretch of the imagination, the very young Teodoro Nguema Obiang has presumably amassed all of that uncovered fortune while earning a salary of less than 100,000 dollars per year as Equatorial Guinea's minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

What can be said about Equatorial Guinea to put everything in perspective? The country is among the most repressed countries in West Africa, and if we take the proportion of its people living on less than a dollar a day. This nation of just 700,000 people is at the same time poverty-stricken and oil-rich, a contrast of epic proportions. There are pictures on social media sites of glassy high rises and presidential mansions next to rusted shacks. As one visits the country's capital Malabo, there are sightings of people riding in flashy Mercedes Benzes through the slums and trying to miss the city's zillions of potholes and of the country's Chief of Police, who is related to the president, bragging that his uniforms are tailored by none other than the French celebrated designer - Yves Saint Laurent. From the fancy room's window of the brand-new hotel he stayed in, he could see families crammed in small and tin-roofed shacks.

And while I was digging out more facts, like one out five children dies before reaching the age of five years old and less than fifty percent of them have access to clean drinkable water, I was stunned to learn that the Commissioner of Police of a tiny country located right in the center of Mandela's Rainbow nation, was presenting, on behalf of his greedy and perverted absolute monarch, a sincere apology for two million Euros stolen, strangely in a briefcase, during a party in Obiang Jr.'s villa in Swaziland. If anyone is wondering, what about Teodoro Nguema Obiang's punishment for exhibiting such extravagance and tarnishing Equatorial Guinea's image? Well, let's just say that it fits with a son of one of Africa's longest-ruling dictators, a shrinking elite group. His father has since made him Second Vice President of Equatorial Guinea. The highly regarded and guarded position, shielding him from any eventual international prosecution.

"I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion about the means. I think the best way of doing good to the poor is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it."## Benjamin Franklin

Noah was a good man, but he is to blame for spoiling my childhood's unique way of escaping abuses at home. After a neighboring kid's dramatic incident in our home's backyard, I got terrified to play Rambo camping out by myself. I have long suspected that Noah had something to do with my tactic fiasco; the detail of his exploit brought up irrefutable evidence of his guilt. I have read different versions of Noah's Ark story, and it all boiled down to the same specifics: Noah saved himself, his

family, and a remnant of all the world's animals when God decided to flood the world and destroy it, because of humanity's evil deeds. As a child, I found this so reprehensible that the unsupervised Noah chose among other animals, to also allow on board vultures, rats, crocodiles, and particularly the biblical source of Adam and Eve's demise and my childhood summer's long caging - I am talking about snakes.

Parallel to Noah's Ark story, Mandela was a good man. He ruined something so dear to me. I have dreamed of spending my golden age in the wealthiest and most inspiring African country, South Africa or "SA," a plausible way of enjoying my retirement amongst prosperous black Africans. In the past couple of years, I could not quite figure out Mandela's responsibility in my fading dream. Ultimately when I set aside the fact that he spent 27 years in a labor camp for his part in the struggle against Apartheid and then critically assessed his one term as President of South Africa, it got crystal clear.

I consider myself a member of the tiny bold group navigating through uncharted territories, and whose voices should have preferably been louder before "Madiba's" death. Do we dare denounce that the "compromised negotiations perpetuated South Africa's social, commerce and trade, and political woes?" There is no doubt in my mind that Mandela got a great deal for himself, ANC & Co., and the small affluent white society when F.W. de Klerk who, in my view, bears some resemblance to God, and is a white old man and an undertone racist, was pressed to bring an end to Apartheid by white South African middle class and big businesses burgeoning dissatisfactions in the 1990s.

I have succumbed to my grandparents' mantra that people should be judged solely by their actions; two real facts put into question Mandela's strength of character. The unchecked "Madiba" went too far to accommodate the Apartheid establishment by striking a deal with racist judges, some of the worst human rights violators, the Afrikaner squads of kidnappers and murderers and exclusively the ones who sponsored the entire cruel Apartheid system and who have become the new safeguard of the rainbow elite. I am pointing at the mining and financial corporations. And what's to say about a man who in an interview with the Australian reporter, John Pilger, expressed a total disregard toward Indonesia's three decades of brutal dictatorship and other people struggling alike, who went on to justify the rewarding in 1997 of the Butcher of Jakarta, General Suharto, with the Order of Good Hope, which is South Africa's highest honor that could be bestowed on a foreigner?

I cannot reconcile the fact that The African National Congress (ANC), South Africa's national liberation movement and their allies have won all of the South African presidential elections since the end of the Apartheid. The de facto economic Apartheid remains intact. South African blacks remain horrifically poor in absolute and relative terms. To my eyes, the ANC has abused the trust of black people who are still cramped in slums like Dimbaza and Alexandria, and these violent townships are beginning to bear the brunt of widespread frustration. In contrast, there is plenty of evidence that the ANC has been good for the whites. In exchange for including a few ANC black operatives in their glamorous closed circle (a scheme used to funnel money back into affluent party members' pockets), whites in SA have been allowed to enjoy discreetly behind massive barricades the wealth extracted and amassed from the inhumane exploitation of blacks in SA during the Apartheid. Another way to say it is when the South African Apartheid was choked, their leaders realized that all they had to do was to bring black leaders to the business of distributing wealth and welfare, and the explosive greed disintegrated the ability of Negroes and Indians to collaborate across neighborhoods and ghettos.

I once asked myself how Mandela & Co. planned to lead or drive black South Africans out of poverty? One would find that the ANC set an excellent map plan to that end, stating unmistakably in a segment of the Party's Freedom Charter:

"The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people; the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; all other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people..."

This section of the ANC Freedom Charter is inconsistent with concessions that they made such as the late 1992 "sunset clauses." It paved the way for a Government of National Unity (dictators' favorite method to blend wolves and lambs and to diffuse popular demand for a change) and for the absurd job guarantees that protect all Apartheid-era civil servants.

If one wonders in the post-Apartheid era what happens when poor blacks take it upon themselves and demand an adequate share of the nation's wealth? The awful truth is that the response has been the same as it was under Apartheid: they get gunned down like rabid dogs. The footage that circulated of the Marikana Massacre of miners in 2013 was no different from the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960. Only this time, the images were in color and colored police officers did the inhuman job. Adding to the insult, the world was stunned to learn that two hundred and seventy miners were arrested and charged for murder from the doctrine of "common purpose," the same doctrine set, used, and abused under the Apartheid. Due to the outcry of human rights watch groups and international pressure, the bizarre charge was dropped, and all imprisoned miners were released.

Mandela's life and ANC ascension should be a cautionary tale for aspiring freedom fighters and individuals haunted by the belief of equality around the globe; power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely as Lord Acton fittingly surmised. It pains me to see in SA that, with time, the gap between the whites and blacks "have none" has reached the highest level. Indeed in 2009, SA sidelined Brazil as the most skewed society in the world. Nonetheless, I took great pleasure in watching the SA President, Jacob Zuma, getting humiliated in front of foreign dignitaries during none other than Mandela's memorial. People's expression of their discontent with the ANC! It was so moving.

## Self-made Deserts

In 2013, my wife and I moved from the sunny southern part of the United States to somewhere close to freezing Canada. The best ethnic description of this charming little town: a black ghost town. We always felt obligated to acknowledge, and at the same time, to rejoice in the presence of another black person by nodding our heads to one another. Being used to down south, where Negroes populate a considerable chunk of the society's hierarchic bottom, I naively thought that any strong traceable smell of decaying poverty could not be found around here. Then came Thanksgiving Day 2013, we were on our way to New York City when there suddenly appeared a shadow in the middle of the road. There, battling the gruesome freezing temperature and slightly covered was a homeless white man branding a big sign. Gosh, senseless drivers almost ran him over. As we got closer, I pulled my window down to give him a dollar bill. Something shifted inside of me because I saw the face of a man humiliated and broken. On that day, from that point on, I kept seeing the same expression of a child, a woman, or another man on different corners.

Cities have found that changing the reflection of a word is the clever way of expressing the disdain of a particular group. Adding a cynical twist to panhandling has permitted towns to chastise the poor. Around this beautiful planet what is called "aggressive" panhandling is prohibited. Some towns have even gone so far as to actively conducting educational outreach programs to residents, advising them not to give to moochers (sorry, label borrowed from the 2012 Republican Party's nominee for President of the United States, Mitt Romney), and their police departments have been instructed to bully panhandlers, especially around the downtown zones. Developing countries are more creative; they have added the supernatural element or voodoo to the pretexts. While touring several third world countries, paranoid guides and friends always warned me not to give money to street beggars, and if I ever dare, supposedly, money will mysteriously disappear from my pockets, and I would have brought some juju curse on myself. I did laugh at and broke this ridiculous rule. I can testify that I did not turn into a goat or was struck by lightning, and all my money's disappearance has been accounted for by my pursuits of worldly happiness.

It is deplorable that people around the world from different ways of life, race, and background would bluntly say that they hate active solicitation or aggressive panhandling. They do not mind passive panhandling of which an example is opening doors at the store with a cup in hand but saying nothing. As to say, people are more comfortable to give when beggars do not bother their conscience and make their presence less felt. I have taken my time to watch cool kids rushing through New York City's central station exit with the latest super expensive Dr. Dre brand line of headphones covering more than their ears and government officials speeding through the bumpy and dusty roads of Kampala, Uganda, on brand new black-tinted 4x4 Prados, without any of them noticing the poor on the corner. These spectacles brought me to the realization that the indefensible and heartless attitude toward the less fortunate is truly an omnipresent global phenomenon. When I find myself outnumbered and starting to lose hope, I always come across another batch of individuals on this beautiful blue planet from diverse ways of life, race, and background. Unlike famous academic charlatans who merely brush off the poverty issue to get a degree of academic notoriety, they dedicate their lives to break the momentum of the indifference towards the poor. I find this sentiment very moving, and it echoes the deeper desires of my own heart; a decent society does not happen miraculously. *As I do (I guess), they cannot stop seeing poor people.*

## 4

### Gangnam Style



"Every time we buy something we deepen our emotional deprivation and hence our need to buy something."â## Philip Slater

If the first time you saw Psy humping around in a shiny tuxedo and sunglasses was on Saturday Night Live, known as "SNL," the popular American comedy show, you probably assumed it was a parody based on the 90s Blues Brothers American movie. Don't feel bad; I gave two thumbs up to the executive producer; not only did Psy seem to be a great addition to the talented cast. I thought that Lorne Michaels had finally caught up with the United States' rapid demographic changes and race diversity. Little did I knew at the time; the South Korean rapper was already a sensation on social media with the official "Gangnam Style" video racking millions of views on our beloved YouTube and registering a million download sales in just fifty-one days! Like bats flying out of Dracula's black cape, a myriad of different song versions started to pop up all over the world. Even the Tango tempo was not exempt. In a short time, I came to realize that nowhere on this planet could I be safe from the "Gangnam Style's" infectious beats!

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