

Dear Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor,

My name is Samuel Morgan, and I am a college student who has spent the last few weeks reading one of your books, *From #BlackLivesMatter To Black Liberation*. Thank you for providing your insights on the causes of systematic oppression of the African American community by our government. Your writing has really provided me with a perspective that I often find opposed to my own. I must say that I appreciate that your argument is not built on hatred and contempt for the people who willingly or unwillingly support the oppressive social structure; that your book attempts to correct ignorance and misunderstanding that many incorrectly assume are the causes of unequal outcomes. I was afraid that you would attack those who blame Black culture or those who do not believe racism is still a major factor guiding America today. I got the impression that you understand how attractive and comfortable many of the surface-level ideas for inequality are. Thank you for growing my understanding of the history between the civil rights era and today.

But upon reading your book, I do not feel that you adequately supported your thesis statement in chapter 1. You believe the forces of capitalism prevent black liberation, and a dramatic overhaul of our economic system must occur for that liberation to continue. While reading your book, I came to a different conclusion. I believe real change comes from stubborn, unwavering, righteous protests that do not shake from incontrovertible truths.

Ever since reading chapter 1, I was looking for when you would explain what you meant by capitalism and why it would obstruct black liberation. I enjoyed the history of racial injustice in the post civil rights era, and where it failed. I enjoyed how you tackled some of the myths and preconceptions on why there is still poverty, why black representation is insufficient, and just how unjust the justice system is, but in the back of my head I was curious about how these connected to capitalism specifically.

I must say that I was disappointed. From the point that you introduced your thesis, it took almost 150 pages to get to capitalism, and I still fail to see how capitalism and racism were linked. Then it dawned on me that we must have a fundamentally different understanding of capitalism. You say in chapter 7 that capitalism is the exploitation of the many by the few. I disagree. You see, exploitation happens in every system. Exploitation happens in monarchies, feudalism, despotism, republicanism, socialism, democracy, communism, and yes, capitalism. In any system, there are those who conspire to find loopholes in the system to gain power and use it to extort others. Racism too, existed far before capitalism and has existed in every form of government. Racism indeed has been used by evil men and women to oppress others. Inequality as well has

existed far before capitalism and in every form of government. I feel that your blame has been misplaced at the feet of capitalism, that attempts to give value and resources to the ones who use it most efficiently. What I think you credit with capitalism, is instead corruption.

There is indeed inequality, the vast majority of Americans feel the wealth gap. The recent story about President Trump's tax returns show the ludicrous loopholes in tax laws designed to have the rich keep and grow their wealth. The class system is corrupt, but a dramatic overhaul of the system without a solution will only cause greater corruption. The capitalist system has indeed been corrupted, but there can be no argument that it has allowed more social mobility than any institution so far tried in the human experiment. I agree that dramatic reform is needed, but I need to know what this overhaul would look like before demanding one, or else I fear a deeper descent into inequality and corruption.

That is why concentrated, focused protests are much more preferable to me. America needs open conversation and debate about these issues, when radical ideas are discussed, they must be built on a solid foundation of reason, lest they be picked apart by dishonest rhetoricians and be misunderstood by your audience. So many people want to find a solution to the corrupt system under which we live, but I just do not feel that your book explained well enough what exactly needs to be overhauled in capitalism. Take your points about how poverty is the foremost cause of crime, not a lapse in morality by black people. I disagree, poverty is most certainly a factor, but it is not the inciting force of criminality. Poverty is a valid temptation; when you are hungry and upset at the system which keeps you poor, it is certainly tempting to lash out, rebel, protest, riot, steal, and resort to violence to receive what you deserve. But it is still a temptation, millions of down on their luck people feel these temptations, but still decide to do right. When you tell these people that poverty is the main factor of crime, and not choice, you invalidate the hard work of those who felt the temptation of poverty, but resisted and possibly succeeded. America is not a perfect meritocracy, but some people do succeed through sheer will and hard work, and you must acknowledge that while acknowledging inequality if people are going to agree with you.

I really appreciate something you said in the introduction, "Justice is not a natural part of the lifecycle of the United States, nor is it a product of evolution; it is always the outcome of struggle". I could not agree more with that. Struggle will be needed to correct the wrongs of police brutality and economic unfairness. The methods and intentions of that struggle are crucial. When the French Third Estate struggled against feudalism and the aristocracy, they were trying to correct an unfairness, but they failed in obtaining equality because very few agreed on what equality actually looked like, and instead the revolutionaries who were the

most aggressive and radical took action and gained all the power for themselves, creating a system almost as unequal as feudalism. When the Vietnamese threw off the French, their protests of setting themselves on fire were heard around the world, but they became distracted by their decades-long struggle of war, and fell into totalitarianism.

Instead, it is better that the struggle is thoughtful, calculated, and agreed upon. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., peacefully protested for years before the oppressive government finally relented. The work was slow, but it catalyzed a debate in the minds of people around the world that unquestionably led to the most substantial change in the struggle against oppression and inequality. Those kinds of protests must occur again, and a new and more equal system of society will emerge, but everyone in society must be given time to follow along, or else there will be violence and oppression instead of equality.

Ultimately, what I am trying to say is that I want to hear what you have to say about what needs to be changed in our system. You blamed capitalism as a whole, but I believe you must be more specific about which parts cause inequality. You have incredibly displayed the injustice in the supposed post-racial society. I believe anyone who reads your book with an open mind would agree. I tried to, even though your initial thesis statement sounded insane to me. I would like to hear more about what you have to critique about the current system.

I believe your most profound point was made in chapter 4, about how electoral politics are not the answer. Electoral politics do not work because the vast majority of American people, myself included, do not pay attention to what is occurring in the state and federal legislatures. There are simply too many decisions being made and laws signed, that we rarely see when corruption to our meritocracy has occurred. The news was supposed to be our watcher, but we didn't want to watch it unless it was entertaining. What we Americans lack are civics. There is so much laziness and apathy amongst the public about the political process. Politicians are not representatives of the people and are instead representatives of the corporations because the corporations are watching, and paying for the activism, normal Americans are not. That is why it is so important for people to protest and become activists; to become involved in the political process.

Truly Sincerely,

Samuel,