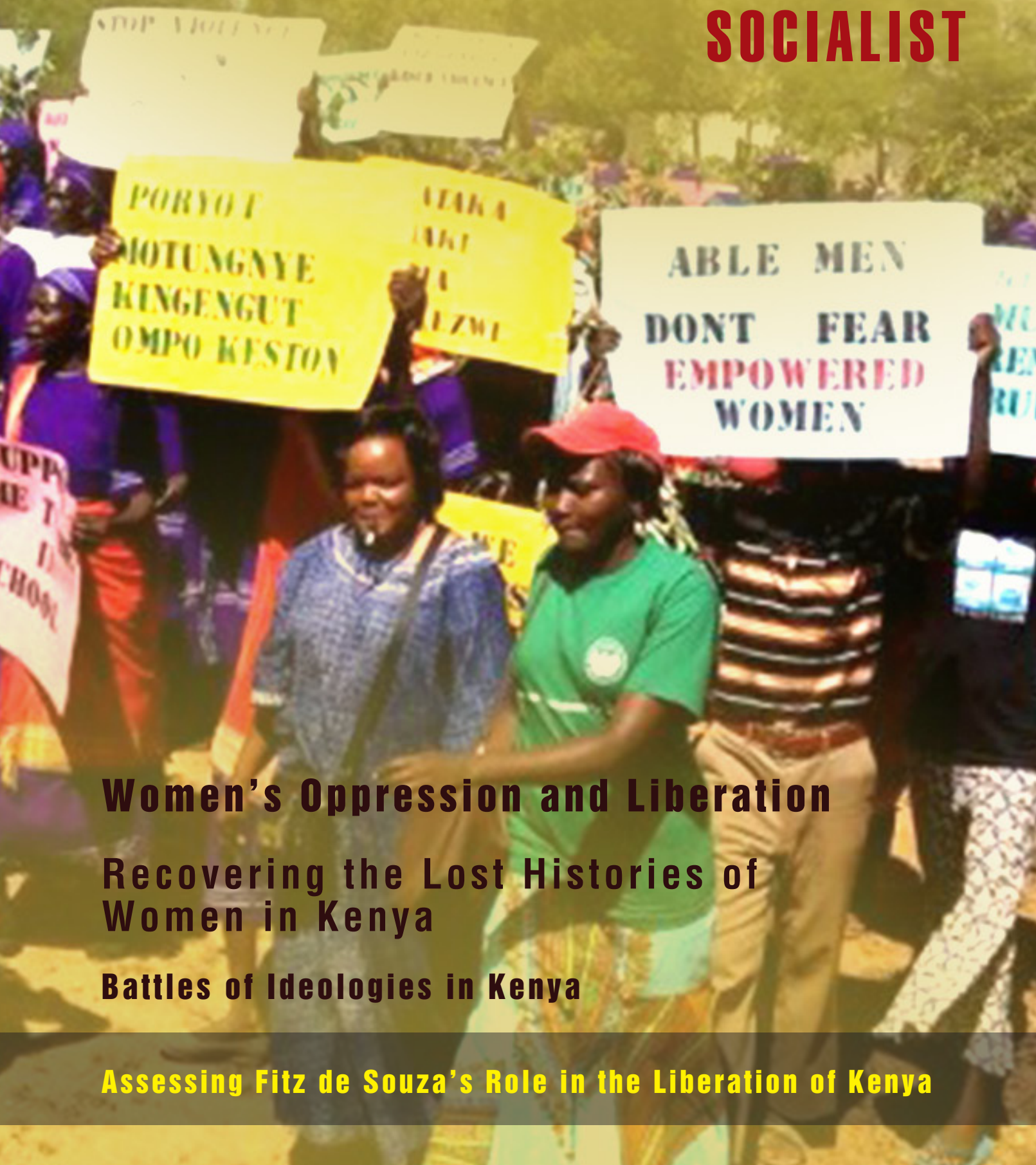


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# The Kenya

## SOCIALIST



**Women's Oppression and Liberation**

**Recovering the Lost Histories of  
Women in Kenya**

**Battles of Ideologies in Kenya**

**Assessing Fitz de Souza's Role in the Liberation of Kenya**



The Kenya Socialist is published by Vita Books, Nairobi, Kenya.  
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Uni.Way House, Second Floor, University Way  
Next to Lilian Towers Hotel  
P.O. Box 62501-00200  
Nairobi  
Kenya  
info.vitabkske@gmail.com  
<http://vitabooks.co.uk>

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- Promote socialist ideas, experiences and world outlook
- Increase awareness of classes, class contradictions and class struggles in Kenya, both historical and current
- Expose the damage done by capitalism and imperialism in Kenya and Africa
- Offer solidarity to working class, peasants and other working people and communities in their struggles for equality and justice
- Promote internationalism and work in solidarity with people in Africa and around the world in their resistance to imperialism
- Make explicit the politics of information and communication as tools of repression and also of resistance in Kenya

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[petermaina1st@gmail.com](mailto:petermaina1st@gmail.com)

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## Editorial

We welcome you to the second issue of The Kenya Socialist (TKS). When launching the first issue in September 2019, we had planned for TKS to be published on a quarterly basis. However, changing situations and our limited resources have made it difficult to meet this aim. Coronavirus has taken its toll on the work at Vita Books and the Ukombozi Library, as it has in other organisations. Our decision to publish an unscheduled book at Vita Books, *Corpses of Unity*, added to our workload and delayed other publications, including The Kenya Socialist. In view of this situation, we have decided to publish TKS twice a year as a minimum, while retaining the wish to make it quarterly as soon as conditions allow.

The second issue is dedicated to issues of gender equality. The woman question has been discussed and debated in many forums and conferences over many years. All these efforts have not improved, at least in materially substantive terms, the condition of women. This issue of TKS carries three articles on the gender: the first one is by Kimani Waweru who interrogates the history of women's oppression and what should be done to end it. The other two articles are by Lena Anyuolo: one is her speech at the Conference of the African Studies Association of Africa (ASSA) held in Nairobi at the United State International University (USIU) on 25th October 2019. The article links the struggle for women's liberation with that of ending the capitalist system. She notes that the capitalist system yields a myriad of oppressions and discriminations. She also highlights the class aspect of women's struggles which is often ignored by liberal feminists. In her second article, Anyuolo reviews the book *Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain* by Amrit Wilson. Anyuolo emphasises the need to document acts of women's resistance in order to counter the dominant sexist narratives of 'model' women in any space. Only thus, she says, is it possible to preserve the radical history of women, which is in danger of being forgotten or revised by patriarchal state history in the neoliberal era.

Other articles in this issue include the first part of *Battle of Ideologies in Kenya* by Shiraz Durrani. It is a selection from his forthcoming book, *Two Paths Ahead: The Ideological Struggle between Capitalism and Socialism in Kenya. 1960-1990*. In the article, he analyses the struggle for socialism in Kenya and the deceptive mechanism that the ruling class in Kenya has used since colonial times to portray socialism as inappropriate for the country. The second part of the article will be carried in the next issue. In his

second article, Durrani analyses the role of Fitz de Souza in Kenyan politics and indicates the reason that made Kenyatta work with Fitz de Souza. He claims that the Kenyatta government needed allies from different nationalities and de Souza in his silence, fitted the bill.

In the final article, Kimani Waweru shows how capitalism cannot meet the needs of working class, arguing that the means of production under the system can only function when they have undergone a preliminary transformation into capital. He continues to argue that the means of production needs to be controlled by working class. Only then can they function for working people.

Finally, we have reproduced the review of the first issue of The Kenya Socialist carried in the *Communist Review* (CR) No 94, Winter 2019/2020. We would like to apologise to the *Communist Review* for the inadvertent omission of acknowledgement of the source of the article "*Kenya Resists: Artists Challenge the Hawk in the Sky*" which appeared on page 19 of the first issue of TKS and which was reproduced with the kind permission of the *Communist Review* from its issue No 91 Spring 2019. Users of Ukombozi Library will be pleased to note that the Library subscribes to the *Communist Review* as well as to the *Morning Star*. Both provide excellent analyses of issues that confront the world today in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism. Ideas and experiences of socialism know no national boundaries and Kenyans need to learn from other experiences of socialism around the world.

**Kimani Waweru**



# Women's Oppression and Liberation

## *Historical Analysis of Gender*

by Kimani Waweru

The term gender, according to the World Health Organisation<sup>1</sup>, refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of, and between, groups of women and men. In Kenya, as with other countries in the capitalist world, gender relations are generally connected with oppression of women in modern society. A historical analysis of gender is instrumental to comprehending the concept of gender in the past and its reality in the present. It is necessary to understand the source of women's oppression in order to know what needs to change in order to achieve gender equality. To do this, it is necessary to be objective and base any analysis on scientific methods. Otherwise, subjective ideas can influence the analysis. Such subjective ideas are dominant in capitalist societies and are embedded in social and cultural traditions dating back many centuries. They manifest themselves in such notions as: it is the will of God that women are subservient to men, women are emotional and therefore cannot be good leaders, women's place is in the kitchen and they are only supposed to tend to the families. Such ideas are generated by male-dominated societies.

There are a number of people who have written about the oppression of women but few dwell on the root causes of gender oppression. The few that do, often use religion as their principle source. Many religious practices today reflect feudal and male-dominated power structures and thus reinforce the oppression of women. In addition, these ideas reflect capitalist social relations, which again create gender inequality for women. Apart from that, some religious sects influence the state in legislating laws that deny women's rights to control their bodies. For example, the Catholic Church has always advocated against right to divorce that traps women in abusive marriage and against contraception as well as abortion. In 2010, the Catholic Church asked its congregants to reject the then proposed constitution because of Article 26 which allows a trained health professional to abort pregnancy when the life or health of the mother is in danger<sup>2</sup>. It argued that the provision on abortion was sinful and violated the Sixth Commandment.

The genuine liberation of women cannot be achieved through subjective arguments based on one's thinking, but need to be based on external reality (objectivity). This allows us to understand how reality is changing and understand the forces

that bring about social change. That, in turn, shows that everything material including the brain, which helps one to think and develop ideas, is composed of matter that is constantly changing. Once people understand this reality, they will see that ideas are reflections of reality external to their thinking, not the other way round.

It is on the basis of the above paragraph that Frederick Engel's book "*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*," is very important. The work of Engels should be understood from a critical angle, taking into account the different geographical and historical context it was embedded in. In fact, Engels himself noted this when he was writing the preface to the fourth edition in 1891; seven years after the first book was published. He hoped that the fourth edition was 'to take due account of the present state of knowledge'<sup>3</sup>. However, the book can be used as a guide to help us understand oppression of women in our society today.

### **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**

Frederick Engels' book, "*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*," provides a materialist analysis of the rise of the institution of family. In writing the paper, Engels used Karl Marx's detailed notes and also the research of the American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, who had published *Ancient Society* in 1877 and focused on the experience of the Iroquois and other Native Americans. Engels argued that the oppression of women arose hand in hand with the rise of class societies. Women before this, he said, were equal to men and were not oppressed in previous periods of savagely or primitive communalism.

Engels equates the family with the state in the sense that the family comes about in the interest of a small ruling class seeking to maintain its control over property. This statement might sound controversial to some who see this assertion as gender economic determinism. But Engel's meaning becomes clear on reading the entire book. He argues that before the emergence of classes, women and men enjoyed a degree of sexual freedom and there was a totally different concept of family. Children belonged to the community and no man could claim them. They knew about their mother, who had all the care responsibilities. It was only through the mother that the descent of a child could be proven. This is one of the reasons why families in earlier epochs were headed by women (matrilineal kinship). This also applies to some African nationalities whose oral

histories show that in earlier times, societies were headed by women, for example the Agikuyu assert that Mumbi was the head of the Agikuyu nation and even today the Agikuyu refer to Mumbi as the mother of their nation (Nyumba ya Mumbi). Further evidence of matrilineality among the early Agikuyu is based on the fact that their clans are named after the ten daughters of Mumbi.<sup>1</sup>

Engels notes that during the era of primitive communalism that preceded slavery, human beings used to get their food by hunting and gathering. In this situation, there was equality between women and men. Women were in charge of gathering and growing crops. The work performed by women was central to the group's survival, and therefore valued highly. Men, on the other hand, were involved in hunting of large game and later started to domesticate animals. Domestication of animals made it possible for human beings to create more than the bare minimum that they needed to survive and for the first time, there was an accumulation of surplus, or wealth. This surplus was accumulated by men as they were the ones in control of the production (domestication of animals). Engels associated the rise in inequality with the rise of production by men specifically for exchange purposes because as it developed and expanded, it came to overshadow the household's production by women. This consequentially transformed the relations between men and women within the household thus leading to defeat of the matrilineal society and ushering in of the patrilineal society.

### Further definition of roles of men and women

Further improvement in technologies of forces of production increased the dominance of men who passed their wealth (surplus) to their biological male children and that is how the monogamous family came to be all-powerful. Thus, monogamy and male supremacy were established and became the means by which property was passed down from generation to generation through to male inheritance. Marriage became little more than a property relationship. Sharon Smith emphasises this perspective when she states:

The modern family arose for one purpose only: to pass on private property in the form of inheritance from one generation to the next. All of the romantic imagery of "true love" which has since helped to idealize marriage in contemporary society can't change the fact that

marriage is essentially a property relationship. Most people learn this all too clearly if they find themselves in divorce court.

Engels argues that the monogamous family ideal is based upon a fundamental hypocrisy. From its very beginning, the family has been stamped 'with its specific character of monogamy for the woman only, but not for the man.' The term family, used to describe such enslavement of women to their husbands came from the Latin word "familia" meaning a household of slaves. It was used in ancient Rome to refer to male-headed household in which not only slaves and servants but also wives and children were counted as the man's property, over which he held the power of life and death.<sup>4</sup>

The dominance of men over women came with the imposition of patriarchal ideology, which is still dominant in capitalist societies today. It is no wonder that infidelity among men is more acceptable or seen as normal, while women who engage with multiple sex partners are maligned.

As the demand for surplus increased in earlier societies, so did the demand for labour. Women were now expected to produce more children to perform more labour. In this way, women became tied to the household. It is due to this that Engels suggested that for women to be free they have to be free from household labour and be engaged in social production just as men are. This was to be done by being in employment. This argument however, has been disputed by some socialists who assert that advanced capitalism has only changed the forms of oppression against women. As Sharon Smith in her article *Engels and the Origin of Women's Oppression* noted, "most women hold jobs outside the home yet, despite all of these changes, they are still oppressed. Their wages are substantially lower than men's throughout the capitalist world. They are sexually molested at workplaces and some still suffer from rape and domestic violence".<sup>5</sup> Sharon continues to state that although women play a productive role in advanced capitalism, this alone hasn't translated into equality with men as it did in pre-class societies. As long as privatized reproduction within the nuclear family continues, so will women's oppression, she asserts. Sharon's argument shows how women today are doubly exploited, both in their work places and in their homes. The society expects women to work for a wage and at the same time, expects them to fulfil household and family duties.

i. i.e. Wanjiru - Anjiru clan, Wanjiku - Anjiku clan, Wambui - Ambui clan, Wangui - Angui, Waithera - Aithirandu clan, Waceera - Accera clan, Nyambura - Ethaga clan, Wairimu - Airimu clan, Wangari - Angari clan, Wamuyu - Aicakamuyu clan.

## The Liberation of Women

Many theories or ideologies have been put forward on how women can liberate themselves from this exploitation. Those most popular are those advanced by bourgeois feminists. Their brand of feminism is promoted by the ruling class using state machinery and other means they control such as the media. Such theories dwell on reforming the capitalist state rather than revolutionising it. This creates an illusion of freedom. Thus, these feminists advocate changing certain laws as a solution to women's problems for instance, the enactment of laws that gives women more seats in the parliament (two-thirds gender rule bill). Advocating for the changing of laws that are oppressive to women is a move in the right direction but the problem is how the bourgeois feminists see it as the end to the exploitation rather than as a means to end it. They knowingly or unknowingly limit themselves at reforms without proceeding to dismantle male dominated structures that are capitalist in nature and that uphold women's oppression. These feminists, as Thomas Sankara said *use women's oppression to climb the social ladder. They use the gender ticket for narrow material benefit, which has no bearing on the course of women's emancipation.*<sup>6</sup>

As the majority of the bourgeois feminists come from petty bourgeois backgrounds, their outlook is associated with their class and thus lack proper understanding of oppression which the working class women face. They criticise Marx and Engels for what they see as their economic determinism. Their class outlook as well as ideological bankruptcy hinders them from digesting Engels arguments and thus fail to grasp the concept.

It is the ideas advocated by Marx and Engels that make genuine liberation of women possible. There is need for people to understand that talking about the liberation of women without addressing the cause, which is inequality in sharing social wealth is hypocritical. Liberation of women is interwoven with the fight against exploitation of the oppressed classes and should be carried by both sexes fighting alongside each other. It cannot be achieved by women fighting alone. As Clara Zetkin (a German fervent campaigner for women's rights and universal suffrage) said in 1896,

The liberation struggle of the proletarian woman must be a joint struggle with the male of her class against the entire class of capitalists. She does not need to fight against the men of her class in order to tear down the barriers which have been raised against her participation in the free competition of the market place.<sup>7</sup>

Marx and Engels' ideas are scientific (materialistic and dialectical) and show how the oppression began and how it can be ended. The advocates of these ideas and revolutionaries who have come to power through a revolution as we will see have authenticated this fact.

## Case Studies of Women Liberation

The liberation of women has only been witnessed in the countries in which the oppressed classes have taken over the state after overthrowing the oppressive capitalist system and ushering in a socialist society. They dismantled capitalism and liberated women in their respective countries. This however, should not mean that socialist revolution is all that is required to end women's oppression. Old customs and attitudes take time and cannot be changed at once. The socialist revolution creates a path for the genuine liberation of women. The following case studies on Russia, China, Burkina Faso and Cuba will shed light on this assertion.

### Russia

Russian revolutionaries led by the Bolsheviks party overthrew a reactionary government in 1917. The Bolsheviks understood that the revolution was not the end, but the beginning of the struggle to win women's liberation. The party therefore started to enact laws aimed at liberating women. According to Raymond Rotta of the Revolutionary Communist Party of USA, the church-sanctioned system of marriage that codified male authority over women and children was abolished.<sup>8</sup> Marriage now took place through a simple registration process based on mutual consent. Each partner could take the other's name or keep their own and men were legally stripped of their authority over wives and girl children. The concept of illegitimate children was abolished and all children were treated equally, whether they were born in or out of marriage. Divorce was made easy and could be achieved if one person demanded it, even without the other partner's consent. Both men and women were paid the same for the same job. Maternity hospital care was provided free and in 1920 the Soviet Union became the first country in modern Europe to make abortion legal. All restrictions on women's freedom of movement were removed. Before the revolution a wife was legally bound to remain with her husband. Far-reaching changes in property relations weakened the family as an economic unit, as well as the father's dominant position within the family.

### China

In China the situation of women before the revolution was hell. Instances of wife beating, child arranged marriages, and forced prostitution were normal.



One of the most oppressive and hideous customs in Chinese society was the practice of foot binding. Seven-year and eight-year-old girls had their feet tightly wrapped and bent until the arch was broken and the toes permanently bent under. This horrible practice was done to keep women's feet small and forced women to sway when walking so that they could look sexy to men.

The diabolic culture of foot binding was banned after the socialist revolution and new laws like the marriage law that ended child and arranged marriages were installed. The law that guaranteed the right to divorce for women as well as men was enacted. However, a man was forbidden to divorce his wife if she had a child less than one-year-old. But the China revolution was more than the enactment of new laws as it majorly dealt on revolutionising the mind of both women and men through conscientisation. This was aimed at transforming oppressive social relations and backward ideas. Women, who earlier on were dehumanized by the system thus opting to sell their bodies, were re-educated by the revolutionary government and offered opportunities to engage in productive activities. Prostitution was strictly forbidden and disappeared from Chinese society only to emerge after the reintroduction of capitalism in the mid 70s.

### **Burkina Faso**

In Burkina Faso the situation of women and the entire population before the 1983 revolution was pathetic. For example, according to the article on "*Thomas Sankara and the Black Spring in Burkina Faso*",<sup>9</sup> the infant mortality rate was the highest in the world standing at 208 for every 1000 live births. The average illiteracy level was 92%, meaning that less than one child in five attended school; the average annual income was US\$150 and there was only one doctor per 50,000 people. Outdated cultural practices harmful to women such as genital mutilation were common practice and women who lost their husbands could not inherit their marital property and were left to fend for themselves.

When a 33-year-old Thomas Sankara took power following the overthrow of a comprador imperialist backed government, he brought about profound revolutionary changes which empowered women and to some extent liberated them from many years of oppression. For example he banned polygamy and forced marriages, he outlawed prostitution and created training programs to provide prostitutes with a means of earning, he advocated for pregnant girls to stay in school so that they could continue with their education and female genital mutilation was banned. Moreover, new policies were put in

place where widows were allowed to inherit their marital property and a living education program was set up to teach home economics and parenting. He also created the position of street sweeper exclusively for the poorest women. Aside from this, the revolutionary government appointed women to high government positions, encouraged them to work, recruited them into the military and granted pregnancy leave during education. The average literacy level in a span of four years had jumped from below 10% to 73%. It was unfortunate that the imperialists together with their lackeys were not pleased with the revolutionary work of Thomas Sankara and therefore plotted and killed him in 1988.

### **Cuba**

Before the revolution in 1959, Cuba was not different from other countries. Malena Hinze in her article "*The Revolutionary Role of Women in Cuba*" says that the women's general situation was characterized by Illiteracy, unemployment (only 12% of women were employed and only 19.2 % of the work force in 1953 were women), sexism, racism and exploitation. Women could only find work outside the home in demeaning, low-paying jobs. Many women were forced into prostitution to survive and feed their families. Contraception was generally unavailable and abortion was illegal. The general lack of medical care meant that 80% of all babies were not born in hospitals. Many died at an early age.

The July 26 Movement that led to revolution in Cuba understood the power of women and involved them in the struggle for freedom. There was even a female military platoon, named Mariana Grajales. Mariana Grajales was woman who struggled and fought for an independent Cuba in the 17th century. After the revolution, the socialist government embarked on empowering the women and assisted them in creating the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). FMC played a crucial role in fighting illiteracy. It spread out across the country teaching a million people to read and write. It also worked on developing access to healthcare and eliminating prostitution. It unbanned abortion and made it free and more easily accessible. The revolution has to some extent liberated women and Cuba today is distinctly ahead of many countries including economic power-houses such as USA. The following statistics shows how the revolution can liberate women. Now, the literacy level of women in Cuba is 99%, while the level of AIDS (highly prevalent in many third world countries) is very low. Whilst in Kenya the most infected are women, less than 25% of those infected in Cuba are women.



It has also made great strides on health even with the embargo on it shoulders. Women comprise of 51% of all Cuban doctors and 63% of the employed professionals and technical personnel are women. The major thing that has contributed to the success of the Cuban liberation has been the revolutionary consciousness driven by the Cuban revolutionary government.

## **Conclusion**

Now the fundamental question is - how a society can make the lives of more than half of the population better? This demands critical analysis of the capitalist system. It is important to understand that we live in a class society and each class has its own outlook driven by its own interests. Every class believes that its outlook is the outlook of the entire society and it would do whatever it can including the use of violence to defend or protect it. For example, the capitalists believe that what they do to the lower class is right or natural and there is no way things can be different. On the other hand, the working class have a different outlook, which leads them to understand that what the ruling class does to them is not right and have their own justifications. It therefore important to bear this in mind while pursuing women's liberation from thousands of years of suppression.

Based on the above analysis, it would not be wrong to state that the exploitation of women is related to the private ownership of the means of production

and also the private distribution of social wealth. It means that people have to get rid of the system that promotes injustice and replace it with the one that promotes public ownership of the means of production and that, as it has been seen, will usher in women's liberation. The defeat of the oppressive system should be followed by raising the consciousness of men and dismantling old ideas that are governed by class instincts. This is because old conservative customs and habits of both women and men take longer to change. And changing them is a continuous process, which takes years and even decades. This means that the struggle against patriarchy, especially contempt towards women, and women's attitude about their 'natural' role in family and the acceptance of general inferiority to men will continue to be waged even after winning the battle.

The revolutionaries or progressives should not just sit and wait for the revolution to come. Rather, they should prepare the ground for the revolution which entails challenging laws that are oppressive to women in capitalist states, conscientising or educating people and exposing the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. This will certainly contribute to hastening the revolutionary condition that will make it easy to mobilise people and eventually overthrow capitalism and bring freedom to the oppressed class. As Lenin said 'women will never be free without the emancipation of their class'.

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## Women in the Struggle



### Rosa Luxemburg

“Women’s freedom is the sign of social freedom.”

Aside from the few who have jobs or professions, the women of the bourgeoisie do not take part in social production. They are nothing but co-consumers of the surplus value their men extort from the proletariat.

They are parasites of the parasites of the social body. And co-consumers are usually even more rabid and cruel in defending their ‘right’ to a parasite’s life than the direct agents of class rule and exploitation.

The women of the property-owning classes will always fanatically defend the exploitation and enslavement of the working people by which they indirectly receive the means for their socially useless existence.

Economically and socially, the women of the exploiting classes are not an independent segment of the population.. Their only social function is to be tools of the natural propagation of the ruling classes. By contrast, the women of the proletariat are economically independent. They are productive for society like the men. By this I do not mean their bringing up children or their housework which helps men support their families on scanty wages. This kind of work is not productive in the sense of the present capitalist economy no matter how enormous an achievement the sacrifices and energy spent, the thousand little efforts add up to. This is but the private affair of the worker, his happiness and blessing, and for this reason nonexistent for our present society. As long as capitalism and the wage system rule, only that kind of work is considered productive which produces surplus value, which creates capitalist profit. From this point of view, the music-hall dancer whose legs sweep profit into her employer’s pocket is a productive worker, whereas all the toil of the proletarian women and mothers in the four walls of their homes is considered unproductive. This sounds brutal and insane, but corresponds exactly to the brutality and insanity of our present capitalist economy. And seeing this brutal reality clearly and sharply is the proletarian woman’s first task.

*Source: Luxemburg Critique of Bourgeois Feminism and Early Social Reproduction Theory*



### Claudia Jones C

“Marxist-Leninists fight to free women from household drudgery, they fight to win equality for women in all spheres, they recognise that one cannot adequately deal with the woman question or win women for progressive participation unless one takes up the special problems, needs and aspirations of women as women”

“The capitalists exploit women doubly, both as workers and women. Woman have to face special oppression in every field in capitalist society — as a worker, a wife, homebuilder and citizen”

“It was out of my jim crow experiences as a young Negro woman, experiences born of working class poverty that led me in search of why these things had to be, that led me to join the Young Communist League and to choose at the age of 18 the philosophy of my life - the science of Marxism-Leninism — that philosophy that not only rejects racist ideas but is the antithesis of them.”

“I was a victim of the McCarthyite hysteria against independent political ideas in the USA, a hysteria which penalizes anyone who holds ideas contrary to the official pro-war, pro-reactionary, pro-fascist line of the white ruling class of that country. I was deported from the USA because as a Negro woman Communist of West Indian descent, I was a thorn in their side in my opposition to Jim Crow racist discrimination against 16 million Negro Americans in the United States. [I was deported for] my work for redress of these grievances, for unity of Negro and white workers, for women’s rights and my general political activity urging American people to help by their struggles to change the present foreign and domestic policy of the United States. I was deported and refused an opportunity to complete my American citizenship because I fought for peace, against the huge arms budget which funds should be directed to improving the social needs of the people. I was deported because I urged the prosecution of lynchers rather than prosecution of Communists and other democratic Americans who oppose the lynchers and big financiers and warmongers, the real advocates of force and violence in the USA.”

*Taken from various sources*

# Recovering the Lost Histories of Women in Kenya

*Speech at the Conference of the African Studies Association of Africa (ASSA) at USIU on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019*

by Lena Anyuolo

I had prepared to present a paper on Developing African Feminism by Recovering The Lost Histories of Women, but upon further reflection, I realized that the topic confines me to define feminism within my particular racial experience. And because I want this idea to develop into a class conscious debate, I have decided to speak instead as an African woman presenting on feminism globally.

Socially structured racial and gender discrimination is compounded by class. These three make all working and peasant women vulnerable. We must ask ourselves the question, 'what is it that makes women and men globally feminist despite their difference in race and gender?' It is because of their opposition to the imposition of capital over labour. Therefore there is no African worker or African peasant, but workers and peasants subdued by the yoke of wage labour and capital.

The title of my presentation is now 'Struggle for Liberation through recovering the lost histories of African Women'

The struggle for liberation from the bondage of global capitalism and wage labour is a worldwide struggle. I want to avoid pigeonholing African realities and framing them from a racial lens because as I have said earlier, anywhere you go, the woman worker is the most exploited in the chain of labour.

## What is liberation?

Viewed from a Marxist perspective, the question of liberation is a class struggle between the workers who do not own the means of production and the bourgeoisie who own the means of production and exploit labour for profit. This base structure yields a myriad of oppressions and discriminations. One of them is patriarchy. The women struggle for liberation is therefore a struggle to usher in a new society in which all are equal economically, socially and politically despite race or gender, a classless society.

Within this context of working class liberation, where does the Kenyan woman lie?

On 21st Monday, Ukombozi Library held a discussion about the life of Mukami Kimathi at

the Kenya National Theatre. Mukami Kimathi has always been identified simply as the wife of Dedan Kimathi. Her story is lost and identified within her husband's story. The book that was at the centre of discussion was Mukami Kimathi: Mau Mau Freedom Fighter by Wairimu Nderitu. Mukami was a brave women who fought in the Mau Mau class war against British imperialism and capitalism. What became clear is that the historical framing of the role of women within Mau Mau as simply bringing food and medicine to the male fighters in the forest serves patriarchy and it's idea of who a woman should and should not be. Within this narrow context, even in liberation struggles , a woman's ability is still dictated by her biology and confined to domestic work. Yet, we found out that Mukami wa Kimathi fought in the forest with her husband and even led her own battalion. It is not only her but many others including Field Marshall Muthoni wa Kirima as well and Wanjiku wa Thamweri, a brave 17 year old Mau Mau Freedom Fighter under General Kariba's battalion who lost her life in the Mau Mau war.

The Mau Mau Monument in Uhuru Park also repeats this narrative as women are shown holding viondos passing food and the men holding the guns.



There is also the story of Muthoni Nyanjiru. She was a brave peasant woman who led a crowd of thousands in protest in front of Central Police Station for the release of their leader, Harry Thuku in 1922. The overnight vigil turned bloody when the British settler police and revellers at the Norfolk shot at the crowds of unarmed peasants and workers. Despite



this brave act which got Harry Thuku released, the road in front of Central Police Station was named Harry Thuku Road and not Muthoni Nyanjiru Road. As activists, we are intensely lobbying to have the road renamed Muthoni Nyanjiru Road.

These are just a few examples.

For the past two weeks in preparation for Mashujaa Day, Ukombozi Library had been trying to dig up the stories of women in liberation struggles. All over Africa and the world, we found women like Winnie Mandikizela Mandela, Josina Muthemba Machel, Phila Portia Zandile, Rosa Luxemburg, Lilian Ngoyi, Dulcie September, Claudia Jones among others who inspired us.



*Portraits of Revolutionary Women at the Ukombozi Library*

When it came to Kenya, our search greatly disappointed us. We could only find a few names. Wangari Maathai, Sara Sarai, Chelagat Mutai, Mekatilili wa Menza, Micere Mugo. The histories and struggles of women are still buried within the masculinities of men and history is being told from a patriarchal perspective. What we decided to do is to take on the project of recovering these lost histories. This project is ongoing and there is currently an exhibition at Ukombozi Library of women in the

struggle for liberation. As a library, we are attempting to have an exhaustive archive of women's contribution to the working class struggle.

To quote Ursula Le Guin,

“We will not know our own injustice if we cannot imagine justice. We will not be free if we do not imagine freedom. We cannot demand that anyone try to attain justice and freedom who has not had a chance to imagine them as attainable.”

Among other factors, the depoliticisation of woman has been made possible by the erasure of women from the fight for independence and liberation struggle. The lack of icons of freedom that show women as brave, courageous, satisfied and joyful greatly limits our ability to dream and imagine freedom and actively take part in the liberation struggle.

Through the project at Ukombozi Library, we will reclaim the history of women and inspire many women around the world in the struggle for working class liberation from Capitalism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and patriarchy.



**bell hooks**

“As all advocates of feminist politics know most people do not understand sexism or if they do they think it is not a problem. Masses of people think that feminism is always and only about women seeking to be equal to men. And a huge majority of these folks think feminism is anti-male. Their misunderstanding of feminist politics reflects the reality that most folks learn about feminism from patriarchal mass media.”

“Think of all the women you know who will not allow themselves to be seen without makeup. I often wonder how they feel about themselves at night when they are climbing into bed with intimate partners. Are they overwhelmed with secret shame that someone sees them as they really are? Or do they sleep with rage that who they really are can be celebrated or cared for only in secret?”

*Taken from various sources*

# “Socialism Utopian and Scientific”

## How Capitalism and Socialism Meet the Needs of People

by Kimani Waweru

Frederick Engels wrote his pamphlet ‘Socialism: Utopian and Scientific’, in 1880. It is a masterpiece, which every revolutionary should read and study. Although it was written over a century ago, its ideas are still relevant today.

The pamphlet is in three parts i.e. The Development of Utopian Socialism, Dialectics and Historical Materialism while the third one is a detailed analysis of the development of capitalism and the way it works. Part three of which this article dwells on explains very well how the contradictions within the capitalist system leads inevitably to social contradictions. For example, Engels argues that under capitalism the major economic contradiction is between socialised production and private appropriation, which manifests itself in the social contradiction between workers and the capitalists. When these contradictions heighten, forces of production are fettered by the system and this results in crises, which, Engels argues, is inevitable under the capitalist system. All the laws of production and distribution of commodities are turned upside down and the circulation of commodities is temporarily stopped. This, he says, is when the mode of production (capitalism) is in contradiction with the mode of exchange. This contradiction can only be resolved by socialism and therefore calling for a catalyst to effect the systematic change (socialism). It is socialism that unfetters the forces of production and develops them in a more effective way than capitalism

### Preliminary Transformation into Capital

When analyzing the crises in capitalism, Engels argues that under capitalistic society, the means of production can only function when they have undergone a *preliminary transformation into capital*. To enable us to expound further on this, there is a need to understand the word ‘capital’, which can be defined in simple terms as money meant to generate profit through the production of commodities. Therefore, *preliminary transformation into capital* means that for anything to be produced under capitalism, as Bob Avakian the Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA says, it has to go ‘through the dynamics of how the capitalist system operates i.e. there has to be investment in a way that turns that investment into capital’<sup>1</sup>. It would therefore be absurd to believe that a capitalist government can provide services without transforming social wealth into capital.

In Kenya, the majority of the people are unable to meet their basic needs, including medical services, food, shelter or education. These are services that should be a priority for any government but due to the rules of capitalism which require firstly, the preliminary transformation into capital - there is no way they can be provided without factoring in the profits. This is one of the reasons the so called The Big 4 Agenda (Food Security, Affordable Housing, Manufacturing and Affordable Healthcare) will not succeed in meeting the social needs of the people as claimed by the neocolonial regime in Kenya. For example, under the affordable housing project, the government has partnered with the Kenya Mortgage Financing Company under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) in a plan to build one million houses by 2022. The project has started in Nairobi where some residents are being forcefully evicted from the houses they have lived in for decades in readiness for the construction of new ones. Both national and county governments have been ostensibly assuring residents that they will be the ones to be given first priority once the houses are complete. But this is a deceptive tactic to mislead residents. This is because there are private players in the project who are putting money in the project so as to generate profit. This means that there is no way that a capitalist government or any investor will cater for the needs of people at the expense of profit. As a result, only those residents who have money will benefit from the new houses. The poor will be forced to vacate their houses and will have to leave their homes. They will inevitably end up in informal settlements or poor neighborhoods.

Under socialism, things are usually different. Government focuses more in meeting the needs of its people. It thus plans and prioritises the things that the people need most - free or heavily subsidised housing - as opposed to the situation in a capitalist state where profit is prioritized. For example, in recent times the Kenyan government has mostly focused on infrastructure (expanding and upgrading Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, constructing the New Standard Gauge Railway, among others) while giving lip service to the things that matter most for the majority of the population (food production, health services, education). The government justifies this by giving out estimates of the revenue that will be generated by the infrastructure projects upon completion. The information is packaged in such a way that that ordinary people believe that







# Battles of Ideologies in Kenya<sup>i</sup>

## *The Hidden Face of Capitalism*

by Shiraz Durrani

Current events and history in Kenya are usually seen in the actions related to politics, law, governance and the leadership of the ruling classes. What is not seen or shown is the ideology of the ruling class — capitalism — underpinning all these actions. Historical records of Kenya show what the leaders and their parties say and do, what the constitution, the Parliament and the laws say about social and political issues, policies and events. But the presence of capitalism, which sets the direction for all happenings, rarely appears in the open.

Similarly hidden from news and public consciousness are the lives, livelihood and actions of working people and their struggles for survival in a hostile economic, political and social environment created by capitalism. Nor do their resistance to capitalism or their struggle for socialism feature in official records. Capitalism works behind the scene, unseen and unheard but relentlessly driving its agenda in a pre-determined hidden ideological direction set to defeat socialism and render capitalism and imperialism supreme. There is often a facade of democracy to obscure the hidden 'private-profit-good' agenda. What is made visible to the public are constitutions, elections, parliamentary systems, political parties and the legal framework that appear to be the force behind events. This is the situation in capitalist countries where the most obvious aspects are kept well hidden by the state in order to cover up its real purpose, – to serve corporate, ruling class and imperialist interests - at the expense of lives and livelihoods of workers, peasants and all working people. Even those actions that appear to be in the interest of working people have a hidden capitalist motive.

Capitalism then also hides from the public the negative impact of its rule. The first aspect it obscures is its very existence. Capitalism cannot be seen or understood in isolation from its opposite - socialism. A false impression is created that capitalism is the only possible way of organising societies. Resistance to capitalism is shown as acts of individuals driven by evil intentions and forces, for instance, in the case of Kimathi in Kenya and Mummer Gaddafi in Libya to mention a few. Capitalism assigns its own shortcomings and the crises it creates for working people to external factors or to the 'evil intentions' of 'bad' people, 'terrorists' and scapegoats a religion, a nationality, a gender, a region or individuals who

support socialism – but never to the very nature of capitalism. It thus shows capitalism as TINA - There is No Alternative to it. It becomes so pervasive in every aspect of life that its very existence becomes invisible. It is everywhere, yet it is never identified as such.

Another aspect that capitalism seeks to hide is the division of society into antagonistic classes, which are created by capitalism itself. Its solution to problems it creates is 'we are all in it together' when obviously the ruling classes are miles away from the reality of working-class lives. In order to silence resistance, it attacks the working class, its organisations like the trade unions and their leaders. Also included in their attacks are peasants, pastoralists, fisher people, as well as progressive professionals, students and activists. They thus clear the way for the bourgeoisie and compradors to gobble up the wealth of the nation without fear of being overthrown.

The third aspect that capitalism hides is its relentless pursuit for private profit that drives its acts of plunder, exploitation and oppression of working people. Its unseen and unwritten agenda drive events, which are then made to appear 'normal'. Imperialism, with its support for the ruling class in Kenya ensures that it, and capitalism, remain unseen and un-mentioned in public. Yet, it takes the country in directions that satisfy only its never-ending thirst for profit. It manipulates in its favour all democratic institutions, parliaments, political parties and even the Constitution. It uses the civic and military powers it controls to achieve its profit-driven agenda. It sweeps away any obstacle on its way just as a powerful river rushing to meet the sea sweeps away stones and rocks on its way.

But the stones and rocks are formidable entities. Socialism is the social counterpart of the stones and rocks in a river. People's resistance to capitalism and the struggle for socialism has now become the defining feature of life. This scenario is true in most of Africa and, indeed, in most of the capitalist world where capitalism always finds resistance to its relentless agenda of exploitation and oppression in people's search for socialism that alone can provide the justice and equality they seek.

When faced with increasing resistance from people,

1. Selection from the forthcoming book: Two Paths Ahead: The Ideological Struggle between Capitalism and Socialism in Kenya, 1960-1990.

capitalism uses events such as the coronavirus to roll back gains people had made over decades of resistance. It is the disaster capitalism, as Klein (2008) shows, that has been added to imperialist arsenal to further attack people, their property, wealth, resources and rights. When no such natural disaster is in sight, capitalism creates similar conditions, for example through wars and invasion of countries on false pretenses.

### Capitalism Entrenched at Independence in Kenya

As resistance in Kenya made independence inevitable, Britain aimed to ensure that Kenya remained capitalist and did not turn to socialism. It overturned the aims of the Mau Mau struggle and its quest for land, freedom and justice. The radicals in Mau Mau and in the early KANU Party were well aware of this neo-colonial danger as they pointed out in 1961 in their document *The Two Paths Ahead*.<sup>2</sup> The British support of Jomo Kenyatta and the moderates he led ensured that capitalism and a Western-orientated government came to power. This support included the suppression of radical political parties, trade unions, political and social organisations as well as the marginalisation and undermining of their leaders. Other methods used to instill capitalist values among younger generations included using education, culture, media, and laws as ways of creating a There-Is-No-Alternative-To-Capitalism mentality that served the long-term interests of imperialism. This imperialist intervention in Kenya ensured the survival of capitalism after independence. It also removed socialist ideas from the public domain, including education, media and government policies. But they continued underground.

Colonialism attacked the ideology, the organisations and the leadership of all the three pillars of resistance to colonialism, capitalism and imperialism: Mau Mau, the radical trade union movement under the East African Trade Union Congress and people's resistance in all walks of life. Its first attack was on the concept of classes and class division which capitalism itself had created and whose existence colonialism and imperialism sought to hide. Their reasoning was that working people would find it difficult to attack capitalism if its main manifestation – classes – is not seen by people as their main enemy.

Resistance by **Mau Mau** was then attacked at various levels. The armed might of the entire British Empire was used against Mau Mau, using the tactics

the British had used in Malaysia and Aden. One tactic was to cut its support among the people by a programme of creating detention villages. Yet another was the use of the homeguard troops, which it bribed with looted Kenyan wealth to create colonial-orientated armed forces. In addition, it attacked and killed Mau Mau leaders and weakened its organisation. It then went on to destroy Mau Mau archives and libraries in an attempt to destroy the history of resistance. It used its control over state power to enact laws that protected looters' right to stolen lands and wealth. It prevented resistance to its rule by introducing oppressive laws that the comprador government was advised to keep in place after independence.

The next pillar of resistance to be attacked was the radical **trade union movement**. Colonialism saw the danger that the organised, radical trade unions posed to capitalism and the continuation of colonial and imperialist presence in Kenya. The trade unions, by their very existence, proclaimed that there were classes and class struggle in Kenya – before and after independence. Hence, they became the target of colonialism and imperialism. Legal and illegal methods were used to reduce the power of trade unions, among them the detention or jailing of leaders such as Makhan Singh who was the inspiration for radical trade union movement.

Another aspect that made trade unions dangerous to colonialism was that they were an organised force. Opposition to colonialism and imperialism by individuals could be managed by colonialism but it was difficult for it to manage an organised force, such as trade unions with membership from all nationalities and from all parts of the country. The radical movement was inspired by ideology and experiences from other places, particularly ideas of socialism and national liberation from USSR and India where colonialism had been defeated by people's forces. It was also inspired by the earlier radical movements such as the Ghadar movement which was active in Kenya. All this made them enemies of capitalism.

The trade union movement in Kenya had been active ever since Britain introduced capitalist relations when it set about building the railways and importing Indian labour. The first strikes were as early as 1900. That history points to yet other factors that Britain feared: the trade unions had no room for the divisive "tribalist" or sexist policies instigated by Britain. Workers were male and

2. Reproduced in: Muchai, Karigo (1973): *The Hardcore: The story of Karigo Muchai*. Richmond, B.C.: LSM Information Centre. Introduction: Kenya: *Two Paths Ahead*. pp. 5-11. Also available in Durrani, S. (2018): *Kenya's War of Independence*. (Nairobi: Vita Books), pp. 365-369.

female and came from all Kenyan nationalities. The trade unions were thus spread throughout the country, using the railways, among other means, to unite and organise the working class in the country. Plantation and other rural workers not only provided a strong link with peasants but also cemented the urban-rural split that colonialism sought to use as yet another divisive factor against people. It was this unity that the British feared. It was a force that could not be isolated, divided and destroyed easily by colonialism.

Finally, the trade union movement had a committed leadership that was guided, not by personal greed, but a clear ideological vision in the interest of the working class. Taken as a whole, these factors made the trade union movement a formidable obstacle to the colonial objectives of using the country for its own imperialist interests. And indeed, the colonial fears came true as the trade union movement understood that the economic interests of working class could only be safeguarded if they, at the same time, safeguarded their political interests. The radical trade union movement thus became active in politics and influenced the ideological direction of Mau Mau.

It is due to the success of the trade union movement in the national liberation movement that the colonial government suppressed prominent trade unionists like Makhan Singh, Fred Kubai, Pio Gama Pinto and Bildad Kaggia. It also passed on colonial laws to the independent Kenya government so as to ensure that future trade unions were forced to take the non-radical approach to meet worker needs. They thus created imperialist-oriented and led trade unions that bedevil working class politics to this day.

The third pillar confronting imperialism was **people's resistance**. This brought together several wings of people's resistance, including resistance by nationalities, women, students, peasants and workers in what can only be described as people's resistance. While Mau Mau and trade unions were essential in the liberation struggle, on their own they would have faced innumerable difficulties to achieve their goal. Peasants, nationalities, women, children and young people, students, independent churches and independent schools all played a part in reinforcing the organised and ideology-led resistance of Mau Mau and trade unions. Colonialism attacked people directly by putting them in concentration camps, raping, looting at will and creating a lawless society for them. This was on top of looting their land and means of livelihood.

British colonialism then set out to find a leader favourable to its objectives. They had to find someone with creditability among people but also favourably inclined to capitalism and the interests of USA and UK. Malcolm MacDonald, Kenya's last Colonial Governor, identified Kenyatta right from the beginning as a moderate who could be used to defeat the radicals in KANU as well as nationally. Upon arriving in Kenya in 1962, MacDonald decided to speed up the process of independence, which had been forced upon London for late 1964 or early 1965 by resistance. His reason for early independence in 1963 was related to ensuring that the moderates came to power at independence. MacDonald (1976a) says:

The reason why I thought the transition should be speeded up was that the "moderates" were in control of both KANU and KADU. Jomo Kenyatta was not supposed to be a "moderate", but I decided within a few days that he was one... I felt that if independence didn't come as quickly as they wanted, they would lose influence with a lot of their supporters, and the more extreme, less reasonable and capable politicians would take over. I thought it would be a great mistake to allow that to happen.

MacDonald was so successful in taking Kenya in the direction that capitalism and imperialism wanted that he was appointed as the first British High Commissioner to Kenya after independence. The Government transformed into the High Commission, but with the same remit, maintained British influence and ensured the victory of capitalism in Kenya. MacDonald's close links with Kenyatta ensured that he became a special adviser to the president after independence. While promoting Kenyatta, MacDonald sought to reduce the power of Oginga Odinga who opposed the rampant inequality that capitalism and imperialism had brought to Kenya. It was Malcolm MacDonald (1976b), who pushed Kenyatta to distrust Odinga and had the police portfolio removed from him when he became the Home Affairs Minister, thus driving a wider wedge between the radicals and moderates.

One of the tactics used by Britain to strength of the moderates in KANU was to bring KADU — which was funded by the City of London financiers — into KANU. This also provided a stronger base for the business and financial interest of the West in the newly independent country. Whereas the radical wing of KANU had differences with the Kenyatta-wing of KANU, there were no ideological divisions



between the right wings of the two parties. 'In fact,' says MacDonald (1976a), 'they agreed on an economic policy, social policy and political policy in Kenya'. The isolation of radicals and socialism was now complete.

### The Struggle for Socialism

The presence of capitalism in Kenya remained hidden, although there is evidence of its existence everywhere. The struggle for socialism is similarly everywhere, but not apparent to casual observers. The evidence that it was socialism that people wanted can be seen in various documents and speeches by those active in the resistance. The entire history of the trade union movement brilliantly recorded by Makhan Singh (1969,1980) indicates the presence of class consciousness and class resistance among workers. Their struggle was against capitalism, which created classes, class exploitation and oppression. Workers' demands were for justice for all working people, which implies the establishment

of a new system to replace capitalism — socialism.

The call for socialism can be seen throughout the period of British colonialism in Kenya as well as in the independence period. However, the manifestation of socialism came in different ways, not always as direct calls for socialism. It manifested itself in class actions for workers' rights, in peasant resistance against capitalist exploitation, in the struggle for land and other rights as well as in references to classes, to anti-imperialism and issues around poverty.

Resistance results from exploitation and may not be always seen easily, but its existence cannot be denied.

There needs to be a systematic research and documentation of all resistance activities if the real history of Kenya is to be written.

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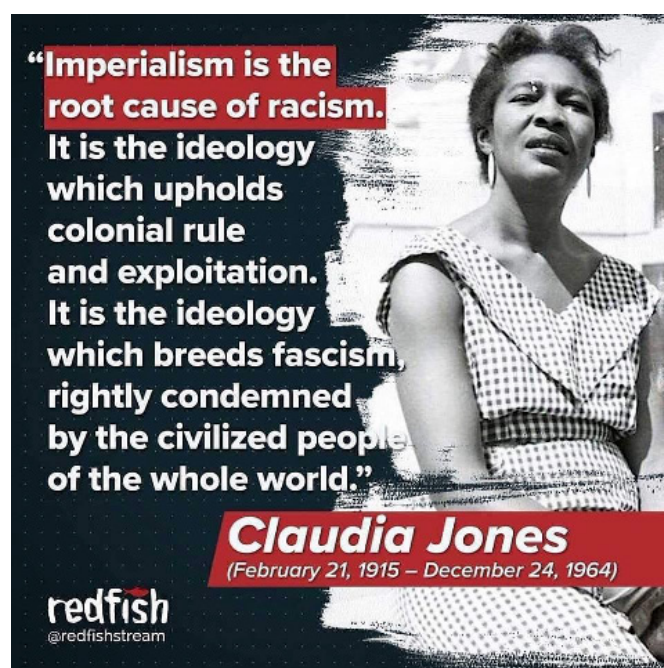
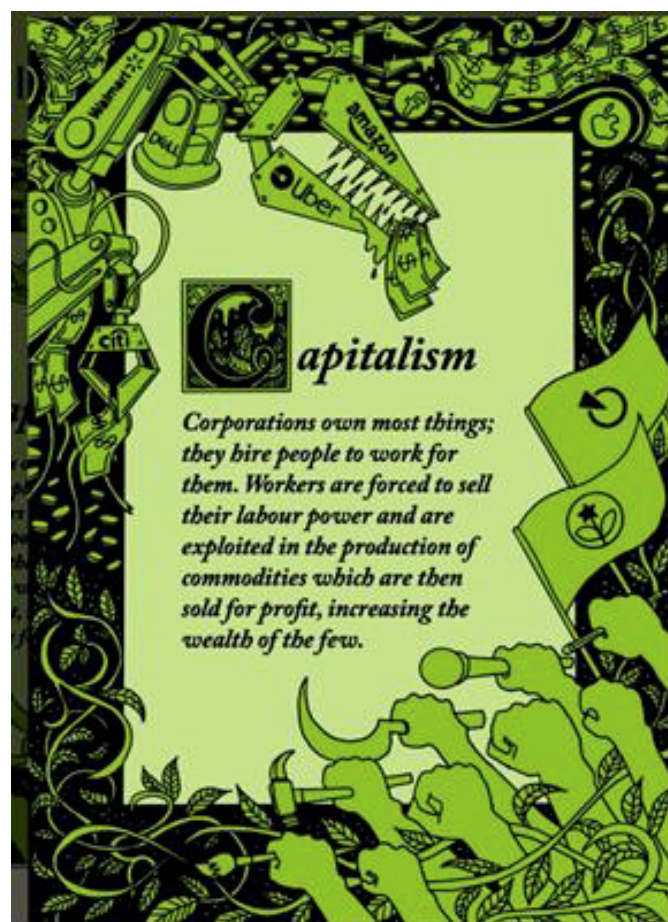
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# Assesing Fitz de Souza's Role in the Liberation of Kenya

## *Life & Times of de Souza*

by Shiraz Durrani

The liberation of Kenya can be considered in two linked phases. The first was the war of independence from British colonialism, which ended in 1963. The second phase started after independence and is an on-going struggle for liberation from capitalism and imperialism. Any assessment of a Party, a politician or an activist needs to take account of these phases with differing conditions and requirements.

Fitz de Souza's activities and contributions can be assessed separately in the two phases. The earlier phase has been well covered, including in the introductory section of his autobiography (de Souza, 2019). An important reflection of his life and stand can be gleaned from how others saw him in his personal life. An excellent insight is provided by Gama-Pinto (2020), Pio Gama Pinto's daughter, Linda:

As regards Fitz, unfortunately, I really can't comment on his political views. I can say that he and Romola were kind to my mother. We were in Canada some time before any of my father's friends visited us. ... Fitz came a couple of times, once with his whole family in 1974. I was 16 and was licensed to drive and acted as 'chauffeur', driving them on a sightseeing trip to Ottawa, Kingston and around Toronto.

I do recall him saying that he was a "humanist". In 1980 Fitz paid for our entire family, including my grandmother, to fly to Kenya for a four-week holiday. Whenever my mum passed through London, she spent a couple of days at the de Souza's.

Whatever Fitz's political views, I can only judge his actions and behaviour toward our small family. He kept in regular contact, gave a lovely gift of a return visit to Kenya (our first since our departure in 1967) and he always welcomed mother's presence. At my sister's (Malusha) request, he journeyed to Canada and walked her down the aisle and he also gave me a generous wedding gift. No one else of that political class, regardless of their avowed beliefs, not Murumbi, Oneko, nor numerous others kept in contact to see whether or how, their "friend's" widow and children were fairing. I am not angry or bitter - through hard work and perseverance we built good lives here. We

are, each of us, blessed in countless ways. I do wonder, however, if those other "friends", and the nation for whom papa sacrifice everything, ever asked themselves if they could have done anything to ease a widow's burden? Whatever Fitz's political views, his actions demonstrated that he was a good friend to my father.

That is indeed a glowing a reflection on Fitz de Souza's personality and his contribution to the struggle in Kenya. It is easy to mouth high political slogans and proclaim adherence to high ideals but it is in daily life and in personal and social relations that a true assessment can be made of a person's real character, away from the glare of cameras and news reports.

Fitz de Souza's contribution to the liberation of Kenya from colonialism was exemplary as indicated in his memoirs and various studies on him. But he also deserves a critical appraisal if he is not to be patronised by reviews. It is in this spirit that the following section has been written.

### Two Paths

Kenya's history is one of contradictions. On the one hand were the external contradictions between the people of Kenya and colonialism and imperialism. This changed qualitatively with the achievement of independence when people's contradiction with capitalism and imperialism became the primary one.

On the other hand, there was the internal contradiction among the people themselves. During the colonial period, the contradictions were between those who sought changes and reforms through petitions to the British Government and those who took a more militant position of armed struggle to end colonialism. After independence, the contradictions were between those who favoured capitalism and became willing allies of imperialism and those who wanted socialism and resisted imperialism. The history of Kenya, as well the role of individual politicians, can only be understood fully within the context of these internal and external contradictions.

Jomo Kenyatta and KANU-B Party<sup>i</sup> reflected the former position — support for capitalism — and sought to retain the economic and political structures created by colonialism. Their action intensified class conflict and resulted in increased poverty for the

i. The term KANU-B Party is used to indicate the Party after it was captured by the conservative wing led by Kenyatta. The Party in 1960 was advocating socialism but it turned to capitalism (under guide of 'African Socialism') under Kenyatta. The 1966 KANU Limuru Conference can be seen as the birth of KANU-B.

working people, while the comprador bourgeoisie grabbed national wealth and resources. Their ideological position was expressed in the Kenya Republic Sessional Paper No. 10 (1965) which became the national policy under Kenyatta. The economic, social and political outcomes of these policies are summed up by Ochieng' (1995, p. 91):

The postcolonial state has largely inherited the former colonial economic infrastructure and policies. Kenya's economy is still dominated by multinational corporations and foreign capital. While the former ruling and farming European bourgeoisie departed at independence, their positions were largely inherited by an indigenous bourgeoisie, who are ruling in collaboration with international finance. Although it is demonstrable that the interests of the indigenous (or local) bourgeoisie and those of foreign capital are not harmonious, no fundamental structural changes have been made in the inherited colonial economy.

The new government, under guidance from imperialist countries, used state power and resources to reinforce the class system initiated by colonialism. It is the vested interest created under this programme that created the new petty bourgeoisie, many of them were the homeguards created by colonialism to fight Mau Mau.

The opposing side was made up of those who sought equality and justice and rejected capitalism in favour of socialist policies. Their position was reflected at the time of independence, for example, in the document, *The Struggle for Kenya's Future* (1961) which stated:

Let us fashion an ideology which will unify the vast majority of our people by articulating their needs and by advancing a program of socialist development in agriculture and industry which promises to eradicate poverty, disease and illiteracy, a program which will draw out the creative talents and energies of our people, giving them that personal dignity and pride which comes from socially constructive and productive activity. Let us, in short, provide our people with the ideological and organizational tools necessary for the achievement of genuine independence and development. Let us not sell them cheaply down the glittering path of neocolonialism and social, economic and cultural stagnation.

Socialism was also the aim of the Kenya People's Union whose Manifesto (1966, pp.3-5) proclaimed that it will 'pursue truly socialist policies to benefit the wananchi. It will share out the nation's wealth equitably among the people and extend national control over the means of production and break the foreigners' grip on the economy...'

These then were the two positions in Kenya politics when Fitz de Souza was active. The need after independence was not to continue the colonial status quo but to chart out a new path where justice and equality played key roles.

In this situation, many people, including Oginga Odinga, Bildad Kaggia, Makhan Singh, Fred Kubai, Pio Gama Pinto and Ambu Patel stood firmly for socialism and opposed Kenyatta for taking the capitalist path as he went on looting and stealing national resources. Below are two examples of the position of prominent South Asian activists which contrasts with the position taken by de Souza. Makhan Singh, a communist, was perhaps one of the most influential figure in the history of Kenya. The threat he posed to the imperialist status quo by his opposition to capitalism and imperialism was so powerful that he was locked up by the British colonial governments in Kenya for 11 years and in India for over four years. Jomo Kenyatta also feared Makhan Singh's influence on the trade union movement and kept him away from politics, yet he remained steadfast in his pro-people stand. He made no compromises for position and power. Seidenberg (1983, p.97) provides a record on his stand and achievement:

With the return of Makhan Singh in August 1947, the trade union movement also acquired a radical wing. Having spent eight years in India actively participating in the trade union movement and the political struggle for independence, Makhan Singh was well equipped to breathe new life into Kenya's labour and freedom campaign. The Labour Trade Union of East Africa formed in 1937 and later the larger East African Trade Union Congress (EATUC) formed in May 1949 became the nerve centres for activities of the more militant Asians. From 1947 until 1952, when all trade union activities were proscribed, Makhan Singh worked in behind-the-scenes activities with prominent African trade unionists including Bildad Kaggia, Aggrey Minya and Tom Mboya.



The second example is that of Pio Gama Pinto. At the time of independence in 1963, Pio Gama Pinto (1963) went on record to proclaim:

Kenya's Uhuru must not be transformed into freedom to exploit, or freedom to be hungry, and live in ignorance. Uhuru must be Uhuru for the masses — Uhuru from exploitation, from ignorance, disease and poverty. The sacrifices of the hundreds of thousands of Kenya's freedom fighters must be honoured by the effective implementation of KANU's policy — a democratic, African, socialist state in which the people have the rights, in the words of the KANU election manifesto, "to be free from economic exploitation and social inequality".

It was everything that Kenyatta opposed. Fitz de Souza, by aligning himself with Kenyatta and rejecting in his actions the position of Pinto and his colleagues became, intentionally or not, a supporter of Kenyatta's position.

### Battle Lines Drawn

By the time independence was won, battle lines had already been drawn between those who favoured capitalism and all the ills it implied and those who opposed it and came up with alternative proposals. In this situation, individual politicians could no longer claim to be neutral. Everybody had to take sides. There was now a clear dividing line in Kenya politics.

The ideological stand of Kenyatta and KANU-B had been set out clearly even before they came to power. It was no easy task for Kenyatta to impose his power over the country as he faced powerful opposition. However, he managed to clear his path to absolute power, of course with imperialist support. Mutie et al (2015, p.56) explains how he planned to gain legitimacy as a national leader:

Faced with the twin problem of forging a nation from the diverse ethnic communities of Kenya and placating the Kikuyu masses, Kenyatta decided to pursue both goals simultaneously. He co-opted the power elite of other ethnic nationalities into his ruling coalition and by so doing, he set himself up as the ultimate patron in the neo-patrimonial state he presided over, without placating the poor and the dispossessed. This complex client-patron network within which Kenyatta set up "ethnic chiefs" was aimed at helping him retain power.

Fitz de Souza's rise to power in the Kenyatta government needs to be seen in this context. Kenyatta needed a person well respected within the South Asian community to strengthen his position as *baba wa taifa*.<sup>ii</sup> But he wanted no radicals. Few met his requirements for the South Asian community. Makhan Singh would come with all the workers and their socialist ideologies if given half a chance and Pio Gama Pinto would stick to his principles of justice and equality. Joseph Murumbi did not stay on board once he saw the real nature of the Kenyatta clique when it resorted to the assassination of Pio Gama Pinto. Many others were too economically powerful or had other strengths that Kenyatta did not want.

The ideal person should appear to be neutral, well respected nationally and internationally, ideally with a background in law so he would respect the rule of law, however unfair it was; with 'no personal interest in leadership' as de Souza (2019, pg. 207) says. And someone who would be comfortable with capitalism and with working under Kenyatta and KANU-B.

Kenyatta found his ideal candidate in Fitz de Souza who he knew well from his trial days. He was honest, hardworking and loyal. That is not to say de Souza was part of the mafia clique that Kenyatta created. He worked with the best intentions, hoping to serve people who needed support and rule of law. Events were to show that there was no neutrality in the battles raging in Kenya. One had to be committed either to Kenyatta and capitalism or to socialism and join Oginga Odinga, Pio Gama Pinto, Makhan Singh, Bildad Kaggia and many others who were charting out an alternative, socialist path. The price that the latter group paid was high, as the assassination of Pinto showed. But de Souza chose to be on the side of Kenyatta. He was not coerced into joining the group that hi-jacked independence. He did not join out of ignorance of what Kenyatta stood for. In his Memoirs (de Souza, 2019, p. 235) he states clearly what Kenyatta represented:

Kenyatta [was] a leader who saw the fruits of independence as belonging not only to the country and the party, but also to himself and those close to him.

Indeed, Kenyatta had offered de Souza various favours, which would not have happened were he not totally corrupt. Again, de Souza (2019):

ii. Kiswahili for 'Father of the Nation'.

Kenyatta equated loyalty with land, and as early as the Lancaster House talks, had told me that when independence came I should have some as a reward and to be patriotic. ...He offered me not one farm but several (p.228).... Kenyatta seemed keen that I should have a position in the new Kenya, and as well as offering me farms, asked if I would like to be a minister, or Attorney General (p.233)... Kenyatta pretended to be on the left when it suited him, and on the right when it suited him. I think his ideology was basically that of himself as ruling patriot... and he had an absolute determination to remain in power.

At the same time, de Souza knew how ruthless Kenyatta could be, as he told Pio Gama Pinto a number of times. And he also knew what Pinto and

the others he worked with stood for. The opposing positions of the two sides were clearly shown in the battles over socialism vs capitalism, disguised as African Socialism. The Sessional Paper 10 (1965) of the Kenyatta side and the alternate proposal that Pinto and others were working on were well known to de Souza.

It is then clear that knowing what each side of the contradictions in Kenya stood for, de Souza took a decision to side with Kenyatta while keeping in close contact with Pinto and his socialist allies, perhaps out of sympathy for their position; perhaps he hoped to bring the two sides together. The tragedy for de Souza was that an honest, well-meaning person was used by ruthless gangsters who had captured national leadership.

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- The Struggle For Kenya's Future*. The document was written as 'part of a collective effort by several Kenyans and myself [Don Barnett]... It was mimeographed and distributed at the Kenya African National Union (KANU) conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in December 1961' - Don Barnett in Muchai, K. (1973): 5-9. 29

## BOOK REVIEW

**Author: Amrit Wilson**

**Title: Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain**

Publisher: Daraja Press

Place of Publication: Ottawa, Canada

Date of Publication: October 2018

Number of Pages: 288

**Reviewed by Lena Anyuolo**

Amrit Wilson first wrote *Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain* in 1978. This expanded edition is the second publication of the original. It contains reflections of women who read the book forty years after its publication in 2018. Wilson wrote the book to counter the colonial and racist anthropological lens used then to view Asian women. The material used to build the patriarchal perspectives was gathered from interviews of Asian men about their wives, but never the women themselves. Some of the stereotypes about Asian women, such as then notion that Asian women have a higher pain threshold, were used to justify and inform British government policy.

As a journalist and activist, Wilson felt compelled to show an alternative and realistic perspective of Asian women's lives as told to her by Asian women, to counter the mainstream racist construction of the women in her community.

Using interviews with women on various subjects such as immigration, the workplace, marriage, education, family life and political struggles, Wilson challenges us to analyse critically how attitudes and relationships between genders from the past dominate and haunt the present. She poses questions relevant in all societies like "What are oppressed and exploited women to make of women's rights, and the freedoms accorded to them in the 21st Century?" and "Has the role of women as the reproducers and servicers of the labour force changed or are women still slotting themselves into the different patriarchies in their families and workplaces?"

What is also clear throughout the book is the intersection between race, class and gender and how the three cannot be delinked from the political reality of people of colour. For example, in the chapter on 'Work Outside the Home' she documents the struggles of Asian women in the factories. This

group of women was paid the lowest amount of wages in the factories in Britain. The employers used the stereotype that Asian women were passive and submissive to justify that exploitation. Asian women did not have representatives in the labour unions. A Caucasian woman was placed in their stead. They were also betrayed by the bureaucracy of the labour unions when they tried to strike. In spite of these obstacles, the Grunwick Photo-Processing strike carried out by Asian women to protest against poor working conditions was the most successful strike of the 70s. This victory had great influence and impact on other Asian women in the industrial sector. It gave them the courage to stand up and demand for their rights.

In the chapter on 'Adolescence and Sexuality', Wilson analyses the complicated nature of freedom. She argues that when South Asian women began to chart out their own path, as depicted in their choice of love relationships or even in the type of clothes they wear, they were viewed to be threatening the family's izzat or honour. Izzat is linked to the man. It is her father, husband, brother and uncle whose ego will be hurt. The consequences of that dishonour are ostracization from the family and worse still, their mother and aunties were made to carry the blame. Wilson finds that women who break from the family's armlock also have to cast out its embrace. Womanhood was defined and regulated principally from the purview of male dominance.

The oppressive nature of dowry and how it fits neatly into class society is also discussed by Wilson. Daughters are seen as a burden because of this. The groom's family may ask for high amounts of money and gifts and the bride's family is forced to oblige as the amount of dowry paid can make the family move higher or lower in the caste system.

Reading the chapter on Immigration against the backdrop of rising fascism in Europe, the election of Boris Johnson in the UK and the heightened British nationalism during the Brexit debate, was a chilling experience. The immigration laws in the 1970s were racist and the trend has been continued in Theresa May's Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016. These led to the mandatory surveillance of people of colour who have immigrant status. Wilson shows how racism has been intricately woven into the social fabric of British society through its institutions such as Immigration services which carry out forced sexual examinations of Asian women and detain them in the most inhumane conditions, regardless of their health. The story of Zubeida who went into labour during detention without any assistance, and the consequent loss of her child is enough to send the



reader into a fit of rage. Moreover, essential public institutions such as hospitals do not have Punjabi, Gujarati or Hindi transaltors to meet the language needs of South Asian women.

Wilson also writes about the beautiful examples of intimacy and friendship among women and how these bonds help them navigate, interpret and fight racism, class and gender oppression. Truly, in the solidarity and sisterhood of women at the Grunwick picket line, or in animated afternoons in each other's living rooms, the warmth and resilience of women persists..

What I have drawn from reading this book is that to counter the dominant sexist narratives of 'model' women in any space, one must document continously acts of women's resistance in order to preserve the radical history of black women which is in danger of being forgotten or revised by neo-liberal feminism. It is also a challenge to see myself outside the boundaries of how a woman should and shouldn't behave in any space, as the women in this book have. The most important thought after reading the book is that I am not alone, that despite the multiplicities of narratives shared in this book, the struggle against all forms of domination -- patriarchy, racism and capitalism -- is a worldwide struggle in which all the oppressed women -- and men -- join hands to defeat the unjust system.



Angela Davis

"Feminism involves so much more than gender equality. And it involves so much more than gender. Feminism must involve a consciousness of capitalism (I mean, the feminism that I relate to. And there are multiple Feminisms, right). It has to involve a consciousness of capitalism and racism and colonialism and post colonialities and ability and more genders than we can even imagine, and more sexualities than we ever thought we could name."

"As a black woman, my politics and political affiliation are bound up with and flow from participation in my people's struggle for liberation, and with the fight of oppressed people all over the world against American imperialism."

"We have inherited a fear of memories of slavery. It is as if to remember and acknowledge slavery would amount to our being consumed by it. As a matter of fact, in the popular black imagination, it is easier for us to construct ourselves as children of Africa, as the sons and daughters of kings and queens, and thereby ignore the Middle Passage and centuries of enforced servitude in the Americas. Although some of us might indeed be the descendants of African royalty, most of us are probably descendants of their subjects, the daughters and sons of African peasants or workers."

*Taken from various sources*





## Photo Review: Looking at Kenya's History

### *Illustrations of Mau Mau*



*Wanjiku Waring'a (Also known as Mama Kamenge) - Served on the war council, responsible for providing food, shelter, concealment of the fighters in Nairobi and transportation when they had to move new bases*  
Source: Unknown. Supplied by Nazmi Durrani



**General Kavote**



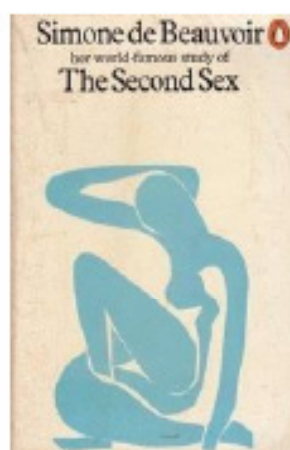
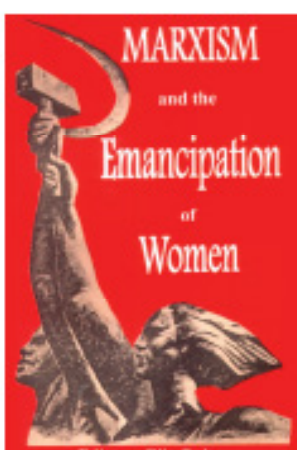
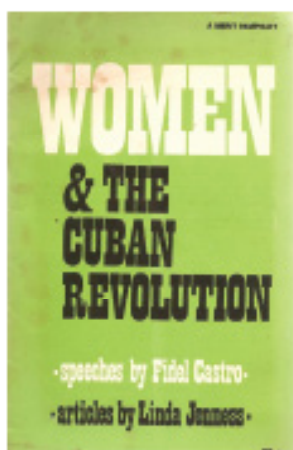
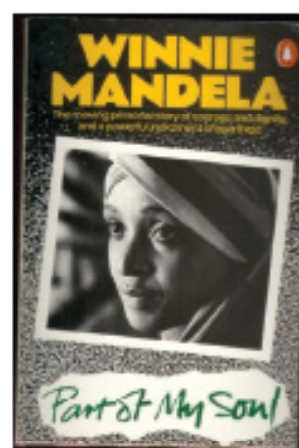
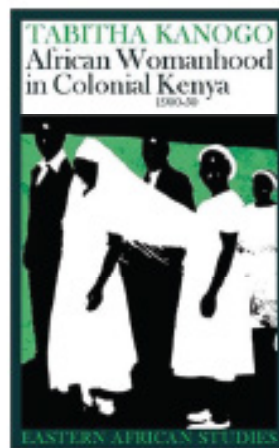
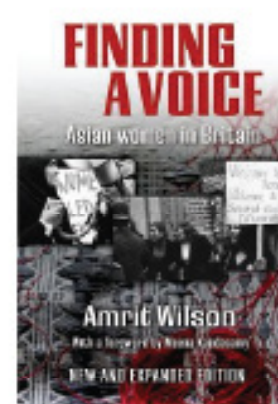
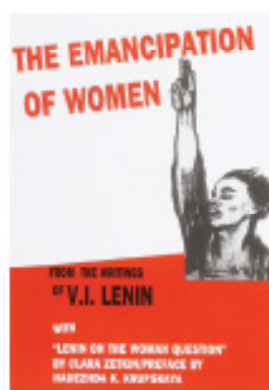
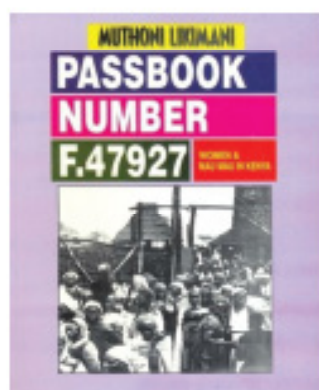
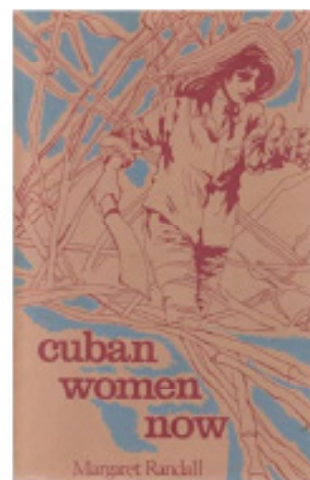
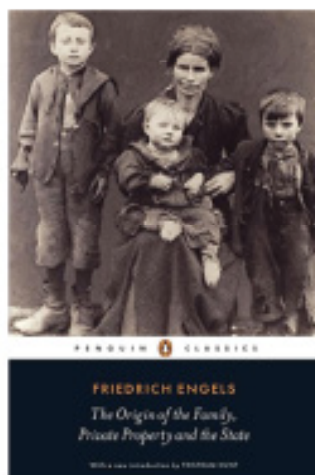
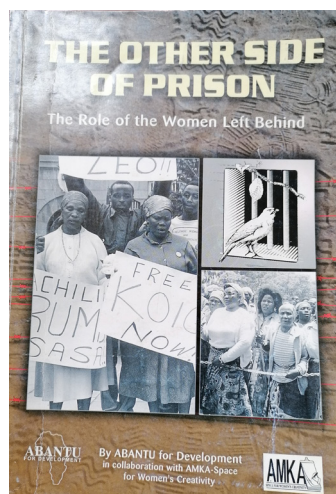
**General Tanganyika - Muriuki Kamotho**



**Mau Mau Troops in the Forest**



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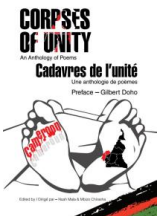
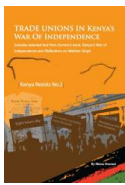
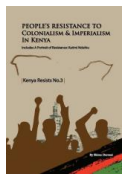
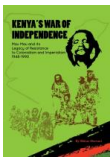
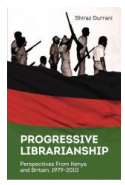




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#### **Tunakataa! We Say No! Poems of Resistance. By Nazmi Durrani**

The poems depict peasant and worker resistance in Kenya in the 1980s to the oppressive Moi-KANU government. Here is the voice of people saying ‘no’ to capitalism and imperialism. The poems, in Kiswahili and English, are as relevant today as they were in the 1980s. They are as relevant in Kenya as they are in the rest of Africa struggling against capitalism and imperialism.

#### **Two Paths Ahead: The Ideological Struggle between Capitalism and Socialism in Kenya, 1960-1990. By Shiraz Durrani**

The struggle between socialism and capitalism have been long bitter and violent. Capitalism won with the active support of USA and UK governments at the time of independence in 1963. Yet the original (1960) Kenya African National Union (KANU) Party was in favour of socialism. It was Presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi who used violence to suppress those advocating socialism. They used their power to massacre, assassinate, exile, imprison and disappear people and created a state of terror to silence their opponents. Capitalism became the unstated state policy. Thus imperialism won and the aims of Mau Mau were brutally suppressed. However, the desire for socialism never died. Resistance movements and opposition parties made socialism their aim, reflecting people’s desire for justice, equality and empowerment.

Many studies on Kenya focus on personalities or ‘tribes’ or race as driver of events, ignoring the all-important class and ideological positions of leaders and their Parties. Two Paths Ahead reproduces and gives a brief commentary on the documents from the opposing sides in the battles between capitalism and socialism — the original Kenya African National Union (KANU), its successor, KANU-B, and the Kenya People’s Union (KPU) on economy, land, labour, and social policy. It also touches upon the demands of the organisers of the 1982 Coup and traces the political stand of key leaders as proponents of capitalism or socialism. Also covered are some of the policies of the underground December Twelve Movement-Mwakenya. The final section reproduces some of the documents on this ideological struggle. The book exposes the hidden hand of imperialism in the country’s rush to capitalism. It fills a gap in understanding the real contradictions that divide Kenya to this day.

#### **Escape from Moneyville**

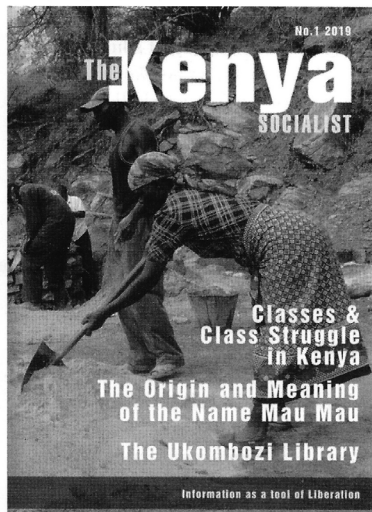
A Short Story for Young People by Shiraz Durrani

Translated from Gujarati: *Muri nagar nu nash*. Edited by Noosim Naimasiah. Illustrations by Bwana Mdogo

It was a cold, dark night. Everything was quiet. A Mawingo bus was travelling from Nairobi to Mombasa. It had big signs painted on the outside: *Dangerman*. It had travelled over two hundred kilometres and was approaching Mtito Andei. Everybody in the bus was fast asleep. Everyone, that is, except four people.

So begins an adventure for four Kenyan youths, two boys and two girls, that explores the depth of deprivation and disaster that capitalism has been for working people in Kenya. Tricked into becoming forced workers for a factory with owners from USA, British and Japan, the youth live the harsh life of exploited workers. However, their sense of justice soon turns them into rebels seeking life and freedom. The story takes them through life-threatening adventures, fighting the armed forces summoned by the factory owners. Will they manage to survive the brutal attacks by fierce dogs and armed militia? Will they live to see the sea at Mombasa they had set out for?

# A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD FOR KENYA SOCIALISTS



The Kenya Socialist, No 1, September 2019 Edited by Shiraz Durrani and Kimami Waweru [36 pp: Vita Books, Nairobi, Kenya, ISBN 978-9966-131-81-6. Downloadable free as a pdf from <http://vitabooks.co.uk/the-kenya-socialist/>. Paper copies obtainable for £12 from African Books Collective, PO Box 721, Oxford OX1 9EN, <http://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/the-kenya-socialist>.]

Review by Martin Levy

Over the past few years *CR* has published a number of articles on colonial and postcolonial Kenya: a 3-part series by Shiraz Durrani on 'Mau Mau: The Revolutionary Force from Kenya' (*CR*67-69, 2013); a further article by the same author on the legacy of Makhan Singh, trade union leader and independence fighter (*CR*73, 2014); and reviews by Cyprian Fernandes of Shiraz's book on assassinated Kenyan socialist, Pio Gama Pinto (*CR*90, Winter 2018-19), and of the memoirs of Pinto's friend Fitz de Souza, giving further background to why, and by whom, Pinto was killed (*CR*93). In between those last two articles, we also published, in *CR*91, Shiraz's 'Kenya Resists: Artists Challenge the Hawk in the Sky', describing the harsh conditions for left-wing activists under postcolonial repression, but at the same time the use of culture, underground libraries and more recently the establishment of the Ukombozi ('Liberation') Library to keep the revolutionary flame alive.

The repression forced both Shiraz and

Cyprian into exile. But Kenyan government changes have now allowed new opportunities for socialist activities. The Ukombozi Library – which has become a partner of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in Germany – and the 2016 move of Vita Books from London to Kenya are two examples of this. Vita Books' latest venture, *The Kenya Socialist*, edited by Shiraz Durrani and Kimami Waweru, and intended as a quarterly journal, is a significant step forward.

The editorial in the first issue sets out the aims, announcing that "socialism is the way ahead". The starting point is a quotation from Lenin's article, To the Rural Poor:

"We want to achieve a new and better order of society [where] ... there must be neither rich nor poor; all will have to work. Not a handful of rich people, but all the working people must enjoy the fruits of their common labour. Machines and other improvements must serve to ease the work of all and not to enable a few to grow rich at the expense of millions and tens of millions of people. This new and better society is called socialist society."<sup>1</sup>

This, the editors say, matches what Pio Gama Pinto summed up as the aims of Kenya's war of independence. They go on to state that the journal will:

- promote socialist ideas, experiences and world outlook;
- increase awareness of classes, class contradictions and class struggles in Kenya, both historical and current;
- expose the damage done by capitalism and imperialism in Kenya and Africa;
- offer solidarity to working class, peasants and other working people and communities in their struggles for equality and justice;
- promote internationalism and work in solidarity with people in Africa and around the world in their resistance to imperialism;
- make explicit the politics of information and communication as tools of repression and also of resistance in Kenya.

The lead article, by Kimami Waweru, is on 'Classes and Class Struggles in Kenya'. He counters Kenyan ruling circles' claims that the development of classes is a European idea, analysing Kenyan society in terms of comprador bourgeois, national bourgeois, peasants, pastoralists, semi-proletarians, the proletariat, the petty bourgeois and lumpen proletarians. He divides the peasants into rich and poor, and the petty bourgeois into lower (teachers, nurses

etc), middle (doctors, professors etc) and upper (senior people in local and national government). Of these classes only the proletariat is reliable; the lower petty bourgeois are always indecisive; the middle petty bourgeois have comfortable conditions and rarely protest, except for themselves; the lumpen proletariat can be both enemies and friends of change; the poor peasants can be won for change but are generally conservative; the semi-proletarians can only be won for change when they understand that the capitalist system is responsible for their predicament.

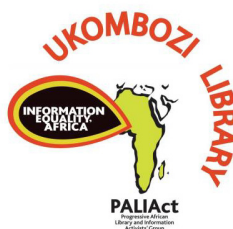
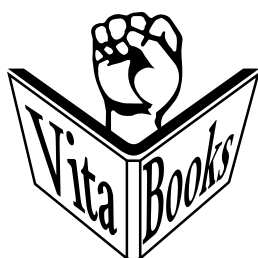
In the following article, Nicholas Mwangi demonstrates that the term Mau Mau originated as a deliberate attempt by the colonialists to denigrate the anti-imperialist resistance; the freedom fighters only ever referred to themselves as the Land and Freedom Army. His article is followed by the above-mentioned 'Kenya Resists', although by an oversight the prior publication in *CR*91 is missing. Then Kimami Waweru writes on 'Ideology – Ideas that can Oppress or Liberate', Njokol Wamal writes about the Ukombozi Library (a speech to the 2018 All African People's Conference), and Shiraz Durrani is interviewed on 'Information as a Tool of Liberation'.

The journal is professionally designed, illustrated by colour photographs, and with references to, or quotations from, Lenin, Marx and Engels, Mao Zedong, Maurice Cornforth, Rosa Luxemburg, Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral and a number of other African writers who may not be known to British readers. Given the parallels in class structure between Kenya today and pre-revolutionary China, Mao's writings of that period are arguably of some relevance. However, Kimame Waweru's statement (p 7) that China "is now an imperialist country" may be disputed by *CR* readers, although this needs to be understood in terms of the Kenyan context which he cites.

Communists in Britain may not agree with all assessments made, but we need to respect them. As anti-imperialists and revolutionaries within the former colonial metropolis we have a duty to give what solidarity we can to those fighting for socialism in Kenya. Supporting and publicising *The Kenya Socialist* is a start – and in the process we educate ourselves about the realities of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

## Notes and References

- 1 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 6, p 366.



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