

CAST

AWAY

For These Reasons

**ECONOMIC
JIHAD**

JO M. SEKIMONYO

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Letter to Mama Vincent

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Interlude I

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

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

CHAPTER ONE



Introduction

"Art is an attempt to integrate evil."

– Simone de Beauvoir

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

I have been excommunicated from a long list of tea shops and bars on the bogus charge of being a Marxist sorcerer or Ferdinand Lassalle embodiment. The general public wrongly ties together an economic status quo examination with anti-Capitalism bravura based on an acute paranoia of the Karl Marx book "Das Kapital." If you don't believe me, try to turn the light on the ugliest Capitalism facets, and bam, you get ostracized from the society as a Communist. Prompting a conversation on a new robust alternative to Capitalism will only get you frightened looks from self-proclaimed Marx reincarnations. What can you say about the boring cock-fights between Capitalism deities of our time? You should be as disgusted as I am of these clown shows that chip away the substance of economic disparity dialogues. My rants can turn into a tsunami, but there are events in our lives, which, though small, prove to be very significant.

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

On that day, I was haunted by one question; how many blows and lives lost would the Democratic Republic of Congo have to endure before the world says enough? With an angry tone, my reply to his question was audacious and straightforward: "I want to become a leader in the Democratic Republic of Congo." While struggling to suppress his mirth, he asked what my solutions would be for the DRC. After all, my home country has been through more than half a century of economic and social chaos. At first, I lightheartedly laid down my ideas. He pulled his glasses back and asked me to elaborate more on my plan. Needless to say, the more I talked, the more naïve and dumb I sounded. In the end, I was not able to articulate my vision for the reason that I never seriously thought about it in detail. My entire scheme could not stand any scrutiny. The casual conversation turned into a humiliating and humbling experience.

This book emanates from the economic disciplines hijacked by escape artists and mathematicians, for more than two centuries. For all the wrong reasons, economists have blasted into a million small pieces the Holy Grails of the classical Labor Theory of Value and stripped away the humanism and the real world from theoretical foundations. Then they took the pain of stitching some of the pieces back, using pathetic assumptions as Band-Aids. There is some truth in the quarantined Marxist Fred Moseley's charge that the economic academia system has been built to reward folks who stick with the mainstream. This good man is the Shoichi Yokoi of economics, deprived of fame and fortune, hiding in the jungles of South Hadley in Massachusetts. He firmly believed his former comrades would one day return for him, and together they would launch a final assault on Capitalism. Alas, merely castigating orthodoxy for the ineptness of their

theory can neither restore the classical vision of an efficient market nor get us to the Promised Land.

I kick-started this book on a personal note with a letter to Mama Vincent. She is a teenage single mother and panhandler that my wife and I met in downtown Nairobi, Kenya. At one point, I had to hold Vincent in my arms to keep law enforcement agents away. My tourist eminence in Kenya shielded Vincent and his mother from police harassment; the city of Nairobi has passed an ordinance criminalizing poverty instead of raging a war against inequality. This modern era apartheid doesn't call any attention because the oppressed and oppressors have the same skin color. Many more cities are taking the same insane approach and have been getting away with it as long as the line drawn doesn't desecrate the burial of race or ethnic disputes.

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

The personal testimony is to show the damning universal truth that people, as well as nations, are more concerned about themselves until their luck changes. It goes for the "Occupy Wall Street" after Americans were shaken out of their dream of a house with a picket fence, and ordinary hard-working Americans saw their pensions completely wiped out by a few greedy vagrants. Another caustic example is the small group of the Russian oligarchs who have since fallen out of Vladimir Putin's favor, who cannot help but preach justice and equality from their golden exile in London. What is there to say about European countries juggling with mind-blowing debt higher than their worth (Gross Domestic Product)? Add to this picture Brazil, Russia, India, and China, the BRIC countries, who are steam-rolling their economic growth at Mother Nature's peril. Added to this gumbo the Arab Facebook generation, who are no longer content with the tiny slice of

their national wealth while a minority splurges with the rest, are attempting to shift cards.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The idea of writing a book is equated with getting butt naked in front of a large audience. I never had a problem doing that. But my constant inner battles through this experience consisted of synchronizing my heart with my mind. I had to overcome the temptation of being guided solely by either passion or vision. Both intensity and accuracy are essential in this enterprise

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