

# iMilwaukee Evaluation!

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## A Critique of Capitalism, the Elite Class, and Corporate-run Governments for Program Evaluators

**May 20, 2020** 1:00-3:00pm CDT

A call to arms webinar to build strong  
evaluations in favor of social justice  
and public goods after COVID-19

*Members free, non-members \$10 donation.  
Register at [evaluation.wildapricot.org](https://evaluation.wildapricot.org)*

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### **This is a call to arms for Evaluation Warriorship**

Right now, and in the very near future, program evaluators and evaluation researchers will be asked to ex... many questions related to the current coronavirus pandemic. RFPs are already being prepared to study its

on specific populations and issue areas. **We will be responsible for setting the evaluation agenda for you to come.** If we harness the full potential of our influence and power, we can help secure a fundamentally different society, one that is firmly rooted in social justice and celebrates the full scope of our humanity and the sacredness of this planet.

While COVID-19 exacerbates the cruelties of our economic and political systems on a global scale, it also creates an environment ripe to continuously critique capitalist values and frameworks in both the programs we aim to understand and our evaluation practice. We ask: How can we work toward the liberation of ourselves and the people we are **capitalist evaluators** (un)intentionally serving a profit-over-people agenda? What would it look like to investigate unregulated capitalism in your next evaluation or explore data metrics related to the impact of privatization on the people you serve?

## **This call to arms offers a praxis to discredit failed economic and political ideologies**

### **Register**

Since 2011, we have asked you to call out programs and policies if they serve white supremacy, and in 2020 we have promoted an environment where it is increasingly supportive to do so. We are now asking you to call out failed economic and political policies tied to America's capitalist system, the elite class, and corporate-run governments. Our capitalist system creates high levels of poverty, low education attainment, sick people, incarcerated people, and racial stratification to divert resources to the 1%. These fault lines have been exacerbated by the current crisis. Our capitalist system is designed to offer compelling illusions of citizen participation and progress. Capitalist proponents often co-opt resistance by adopting freedom (and equity) rhetoric to castrate and control change. Our evaluation protocols do not contest unwritten rules about who is deserving of welfare and who is not. Our evaluation projects are often commissioned by the elite class. Professional evaluators must become attuned to and draw on the energy warrior within to challenge capitalists values and the erosion of universal public goods. It is good science to situate our study designs, data metrics, and program outcomes against America's capitalist system and explore unregulated capitalism more directly in our data analysis work.

This webinar is a centering space to help you start your next evaluation design using this macro lens, whether your next evaluation is an after-school arts program, neighborhood reinvestment, or an assessment of pharmaceutical bundling of COVID-19 medications.

In solidarity, we hope to:

1. **Explore, unpack, and name the values you hold and bring with you to the evaluation project regarding the size and scope of a democratic government, public goods, and unregulated capitalism.** Part of this process is to explicate the logic of capitalism and how this logic has become conventional wisdom embedded in our social policy and programs. This section will break down key concepts.
2. **To detect the free market ideology, the elite, and corporate-run government "dog whistles" and mechanisms underpinning program development, financing, implementation, and evaluation.** In addition to the current crisis, we will review examples from neighborhood reinvestment efforts, public-private partnerships, and collective impact.
3. **To discern tangible ways to build an evaluation design that is responsive to a pro-public, pro-democracy values system and resists racialized and gendered capitalist encroachment on evaluation methodologies.** Many thought leaders of color have interrogated American capitalism and how evaluations can benefit from their work. Our evaluation colleagues at AfREA, through the Made in America

(MAE) initiative, have already linked global capitalism and imperialism with monitoring and evaluation methodologies, as did proponents of decolonizing research methodologies under the tutelage of Lin Tuhiwai Smith. We extend that discourse with this skills-based session.

4. **To practice warriorship** we are drafting a *Hard Questions* handout to work through a hypothetical evaluation RFP using this macro lens. We are working on the format for this aspect of the webinar to figure out logistics and the potential use of virtual breakout rooms.

## Register

### How can we use our evaluation power collectively?

Since we started in 2011, we've asked Wisconsin evaluators to hold a mirror to their practice. We've called to diversify your evaluation teams racially, ethnically and culturally, to ensure your teams are representative of the population being served, and to incorporate lived experience into data analysis and when drawing conclusions. We've also demonstrated the value of social justice, liberation, and emancipation, knowing that the lens you bring to evaluation must serve a higher agenda: a society where we are all happy and free. These not-so-simple practice changes are game changers. They direct us to center everyday people and discredit program outcomes that fuel oppression.

This webinar recognizes that science, research, and evaluation have been and continue to be strategies used to colonize, dehumanize, exploit, and subjugate people of color here and abroad. Knowledge production, capitalism, and white supremacy go hand in hand. We began preparing this webinar pre-pandemic as a continuation of our decolonizing capitalism and evaluation work started with members of the Young African Leaders Initiative in the summer of 2018 and 2019. The current health crisis calls on us to stand in our Radiant Body (or the 10<sup>th</sup> body in Kuda Yoga) and strategically dissect an aspect of society that, in our new normal, should be meaningfully included in our future evaluation projects or our next logic model. Unregulated capitalism and privatization are no longer too abstract or immaterial. Disaster capitalism is already here and the evaluation field must respond to this. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- As the media highlights the deaths of celebrities, the first people to die in Wisconsin were Black men. A disproportionate number of fatalities are people of color. Reports from Detroit and New York call attention to many patients who are dying alone, without loved ones or even medical staff nearby.
- Many *essential workers* in retail are the least paid and have the fewest employer-based benefits such as health care or paid sick leave. They have restricted opportunities to unionize or achieve real wealth and are afforded few official labor protections even now.
- Civil liberties are already being eroded and justified by the pandemic. Our current leaders prefer to see incarcerated people become sick and perhaps die at high rates, rather than expose the fact that if our brothers and sisters were released today, the justification for the size and scope of our criminal justice system would be untenable.
- Corporate-run government failings suggest the private sector might be our savior during the pandemic. Taxpayers (not shareholders) just invested hundreds of billions of dollars to save their companies. Who are the homeless get? Who does a corporate-run government serve well?
- As air pollution decreases with less transport and the extent of human environmental impact cannot be denied, the U.S. rolled back more environmental protections. Climate change and new diseases are correlated.
- The U.S. disestablished the Mashpee Wampanoag reservation and reportedly did not want to provide financial support to tribal governments to fight the pandemic. As history repeats itself with the First

Peoples, it was the same white-majority policymakers and private contractors who separated Latinx children from their parents at the southern border and put both in cages without basic supplies.

- Calls for unity, sense of community, local charity, and self-help at this time lack a strong critique of larger oppressive system. The political class and plutocrats are actually encouraging immobilization complacency.



In March 2019, at our social justice and evaluation conference we learned how to *Heal from War*. Last July, ancestors have passed their wisdom on to us and that to be a warrior is to be a light for others, to be in se

Evaluators amplify voices and set knowledge agendas. **We cannot be silent or neutral on the adverse** name it in our evaluation work if we are accountable to social justice values. A warrior's job is to protect.

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# iMilwaukee Evaluation

BORN IN MILWAUKEE – SERVING THE STATE

# ITPI

IN THE PUBLIC  
INTEREST

This original content and material for this webinar was spearheaded by iMilwaukee Evaluation! Inc. with the support of In the Public's Interest, which has written extensively about conservative attacks on government and the impact of privatization on universal access to public goods.

Since 2011, *iMilwaukee Evaluation! Inc.* has provided emancipatory field development, networking, and capacity building for evaluators serving Wisconsin, and works toward a diverse, representative, and responsive evaluation workforce. It values social justice and centers people of color and underrepresented groups in its strategic work. It works closely with an ever-expanding network of evaluators in Wisconsin and the midwest region to push the science of evaluation.

*In the Public Interest* is a nonprofit research and policy center committed to the democratic control of public goods and services. We help citizens, public officials, advocacy groups, and researchers better understand the impact of government contracts and public-private agreements on service quality, democratic decision-making, and public budgets.

## **We will record the webinar**

As the crisis unfolds, we don't know what May 2020 will look like so we plan to record the session and offer recording to all registrants at some point after the webinar. This session is for evaluators, evaluation researchers, funders, government staff, and most importantly, the evaluand – the everyday warrior. To help diffuse this information throughout your organization we encourage entire teams to participate.

## We can learn from you

If you have directly confronted capitalism in your evaluation and would like to share a past evaluation product with your brilliant mind with the field, please contact us at [milwaukeeevaluation@gmail.com](mailto:milwaukeeevaluation@gmail.com).

To meet our learning objectives is a very tall order. We plan to ask volunteers to hear several test arguments and make sure we are clear and concise. Thank you in advance for considering this request.

# BEING RESPONSIVE:

The First Assessment of Culturally Responsive Evaluation in Wisconsin: Findings from the 2017 Survey



HOW PROGRAM EVALUATORS OF COLOR + CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EVALUATION CAN HELP GRANTMAKERS ACHIEVE THEIR MISSION

A Funders' Briefing hosted by Milwaukee Evaluation! Inc. in collaboration with the Wisconsin Philanthropy Network

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