

Letters on Andrea Yates and "family values"

4 July 2001

Below we post a selection of letters on the WSWStarticle Texas mother drowns children: Andrea Yates and "family values"

I enjoyed your commentary on the Yates tragedy. Until I read it, I thought I was the only one who made the connection between the religious names of the children and the strange comments (and thus beliefs) of the family, including this choice quote in an ABC news article:

Yates mentioned his wife several times, mostly dwelling on joyful times together. He told mourners that he had once joked to his wife: "I want a basketball team of sons, and then we can talk about girls."

http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/five_dead010627.html

After reading this, it confirmed my suspicions that Mr. Yates probably held strong religious beliefs about a woman's role in bearing children. It seems Mrs. Yates' previous suicide attempts were a cry for help or a sign that she had lost hope and a sense of her life purpose. I base my comments on my observations of family members caught in such marriages, and on the fact that many years ago I was a devout Christian. I turned away from such fundamentalist christian beliefs when I began questioning the paternal doctrine which dictated that the woman's god-given role was as baby-maker and servant to her husband who was the head of the household. Seeing the harsh realities of pain and suffering in the world made me seriously evaluate these beliefs.

Other odd comments that Mr. Yates made at the funeral were "If the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, that's exactly what he's done." and "We've set you free."

The Lord had nothing to do with murdering the children, so the statement was amazingly odd to me.

It was good to read your analysis, since the mainstream media didn't delve further into the story.

KM

2 July 2001

Gentlemen:

I read your article about Andrea Yates and the murder of her children with some interest. Yours is the first article which has provided information about Mrs. Yates' treatment with four different anti-depressant drugs, including Haldol, Effexor, Remeron and Wellbutrin.

In my opinion, your article missed the most important point of this story. Anti-depressant drugs such as the ones mentioned in your article, especially when used in combinations with one another or with alcohol, are notorious for being associated with insane and bizarre criminal acts. As examples, I would offer the following, all of which have appeared in newspapers here in the US:

1. The murder of Mr. Phil Hartmann, a well-known comedian and performer, and subsequent suicide by his wife, leaving their two children orphaned. Mrs. Hartmann was being treated with Prozac, and made the mistake of drinking alcohol. Prozac plus alcohol is a very dangerous and synergistic drug combination which disables the emotional mechanism of normal human beings.

2. The death of Princess Diana et al. The autopsy of the driver of the car, Mr. Henri Paul, revealed that Mr. Paul had imbibed alcohol, Prozac, and a third anti-depressant drug (I forgot the name) available only in Europe. Evidently this triple-combination abolished Mr. Paul's normal emotional mechanism, so that he felt no fear and was reduced to the psychological state of a "zombie." It was noted by witnesses that Mr. Paul was uncharacteristically friendly and outgoing to photographers just prior to the "accident."

3. The horrible incident here in California a few years ago in which a divorced woman with some five children set her house on fire, told the children to huddle under a blanket, and re-assured them that "everything would be OK." The woman was being treated with Prozac and had imbibed alcohol. Only the oldest child had the mature ability to fully recognize the danger of the situation and flee. All the other children died of smoke inhalation. The mother was subsequently convicted of murder and is now in prison.

This third case is especially noteworthy because the mother who committed the murders attempted during the trial to argue that her abnormal behavior was due to her treatment with Prozac. This argument was dismissed and she was convicted.

Evidently the drug manufacturers have enough political power to influence not only the press, but also the courts, so as to escape blame for these well-known lethal side-effects of the drugs they manufacture. That is the "real story" that you have overlooked.

The case of Mrs. Yates is terribly sad. I fully expect that she will be condemned to death, or life in prison, and the role of the drugs will be totally ignored by the Texas court.

As always, mankind cries out for justice, and gets none.

Yours truly,

LSC, MD

2 July 2001

To Whom it May Concern,

There is a big difference between Al Gore and George Bush's idea of family values. Gore saw programs within the federal government as safety nets, where Bush shunned them and is now making deep cuts to these programs. Democrats like myself believe government can be a working partner with a parent. Bush and the extreme right wing of the Republican party see government as being one's adversary. And his actions are proving it.

I too am a stay at home Mom raising two children, but I raise them along the lines of common sense and with reference to God. I am not a born again Christian, and do not follow the tenets of a wife submitting to her husband. Frankly, I was raised a Catholic, and converted to Protestantism before my marriage. But, honestly, I do not know if I truly believe in any religion fully.

It is my belief that had someone brought the Yates situation to the attention of a governmental agency with the resources to help her, this sad tragedy could have been avoided. In some way, I fault the husband for allowing her to get pregnant again after her bouts of depression and an attempted suicide. This woman should have been in therapy all along. But, with the Bush regime trying to bring faith-based initiatives into play, will we see many more of these cases evolve? I am sorry, I am all for the separation of church and state, and think faith-based groups should be privately funded. I do not want my tax dollars going to any group who teaches that a wife submits to her husband and basically has no rights.

In closing, I hope I have made myself somewhat clear. The extreme right wing religious fanatics truly scare me beyond belief. Also another big difference is that Gore, a man of faith, practiced his faith privately, and did not wear it on his sleeve. Bush did the complete opposite. You also can tell the difference between the Gore family and the Bush family. Gore has raised some remarkable children, and they have been a success story. With the Bush twins getting into so much trouble since the selection, one wonders just what Bush has taught them growing up.

Thank you,

MM

2 July 2001

Dear Sir,

Once again, your web site should be congratulated for treating the Bulger and Yates cases with an element of compassion and mercy. This is, of course, in stark contrast to most discourse, particularly here in the UK regarding the Bulger case. You draw some attention to the possible role Andrea Yates's medication may have had, which is well due given the present trend towards even greater medication of "illnesses" that often result from social, financial or inter-personal difficulties.

Whilst you are quite right that any incident similar to the Yates tragedy within ethnic minority communities would result in yet another dissection of the "failure" of their family structures and a stereotyped and hostile analysis of them, you veer towards the same error in this case. You seem eager to paint fundamentalist Christians in the same manner as racist commentators do blacks and other minorities. Your gleeful animus towards religion and religious people mars an otherwise thought provoking and compassionate article.

Personally, I have little sympathy with the fundamentalists and their distortion of the Christian faith into dour, cultureless legalism, along with their obsession with occult forces. But, at the same time, I feel uncomfortable, as a practicing Catholic, with the frequent and unquestioned hostility toward religious believers by many on the Left. Many of us oppose abortion, for instance, because of the same love of life and justice that compels us to oppose the death penalty, imperialism, gross inequality,

privatisation of common assets, and the fostering of a society based on rampant greed, abuse of power and a lack of respect for all human life.

Also, every year tens of millions benefit, regardless of race, faith, or gender, from the love and charity of religious-based organisations who work hard to combat poverty and injustice. I have yet to see, except for groups who raise funds for politically "clean" refugee groups, a Trotaid.

Like him or loath him, the Pope is the only major world leader to have spoken out against the depredations of untrammelled capitalism, the US boycott of Cuba, the genocide against the Iraqi people and the bombing of Yugoslavia. The hierarchy in the UK produced a leaflet during the UK elections entitled "Voting for the Common Good" detailing a progressive and humane platform, which was, unfortunately, a million miles from our main parties' manifestos.

I understand that your philosophy is atheistic but where does the hate come from? Don't just rehash the sixth-form cum taxi driver view that "99% of wars are caused by religion" (utter ahistorical rubbish). What are you so afraid of?

JD

2 July 2001

It is an excellent article. Gives us the real picture of this tragedy. Our society should be on alert and should understand how dangerous these false religious people could become to us. I don't think the true Christian doctrine can agree with the lifestyle the fundamentalists teach. Christianity is just the opposite of the Republican Party platform and the Christian Coalition. I think deep in their hearts they don't consider themselves as followers of the Man, who was a liberal during His time. You still can believe in His miracles and at the same time practice the true doctrine, which is based on love to each other. There is no love if you make rich richer and poor poorer, if there is no housing, no food, no health insurance, no legal protection etc., etc., and at the end eliminating with the death penalty the monsters that they have created or the innocents without enough money to pay for a good defense team.

Thank you.

MZ

3 July 2001



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact