

Letters to the WSWs

12 July 2001

The following is a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.

Your article [Macedonia: US troops intervene to save Albanian separatists, 28 June 2001] is one of the most intelligent, insightful and truthful pieces of information I have read in this period of crisis in Macedonia.

Please keep up the good work! There are tons of people out there fed up with the mediocre articles presented by the big press agencies.

Sincerely,

JN

30 June 2001

To whom it may concern:

I was very perturbed to read a letter sent to you by "LSC, MD." [Letters on Andrea Yates and "family values," 4 July 2001]

LSC writes about how the combination of various psychiatric medications (in conjunction with alcohol or other substances) are "notorious for being associated with insane or criminal acts." First of all, LSC refers to Haldol (in addition to the other medications) as an antidepressant—it is Not—Haldol is an antipsychotic drug.

Furthermore, a respectable psychiatrist or physician would never state that such a combination of drugs would lead to "insane" acts—insanity is a term reserved for legal proceedings and used by laypersons. Psychiatrists and psychologists never refer to patients as insane; psychotic is the proper term to use when describing a state in which an individual is out of touch with reality. The conclusion that such combinations are "notorious" for such criminal acts is completely unsupported by empirical studies and [LSC's] examples are completely anecdotal.

Just because a very small percentage of patients who were part of a clinical trial for a new drug committed suicide does not mean definitively that the drug caused the violent act (we're talking very small percentages for these drugs—under 1 percent) and studies of the combination of such drugs with alcohol or other illicit drugs just have not been completed.

Dr. LSC clearly has an ignorant bias against psychiatric

medications. Furthermore, he or she would be wise to note that just because certain drugs are overprescribed in the United States does not negate their efficacious properties—properties that allow millions of people to function and refrain from killing themselves!

Furthermore, millions of Americans and Europeans are taking antidepressant medications while also occasionally drinking alcohol and are NOT killing people or themselves. Furthermore, when a tragedy does occur which involves prescription drugs and illicit drugs, it is very unclear and difficult to tease out whether the person committed the act (suicide or homicide) because of the drugs or because of the person's own propensity to be impulsive and violent. It is simply absurd and irresponsible to conclude that various drug combinations led to such lethal acts without considering other important factors (i.e., an individual's inclination to act impulsively and violent, recent loss, high levels of stress ... major psychosocial problems, etc.).

I would direct Dr. LSC to read in "Drugs & Behavior" by William A. McKim (Prentice Hall, 2000), Chapter 13, pp. 296: "...large scale studies have actually shown that fluoxetine [Prozac] 'reduces' the incidence of suicide and violence. Such drugs are often prescribed for people who are very agitated, depressed, and suicidal anyway. Suicide after taking an antidepressant drug may represent only a lack of effect—an inability to prevent a suicide, not a drug-induced effect."

Some researchers have tried to associate akathisia, a movement disorder, with violence and suicide secondary to Prozac consumption, but their efforts have been futile as they only reported on three patients (Rothschild & Locke, '91 *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 52:491-3)—hardly convincing evidence—case reports which are anecdotal just like Dr. LSC's argument.

As a final note ... his own personal war against greedy capitalist drug companies is a worthy fight but irrelevant to the Yates story.

Anonymous

4 July 2001

Dear Mr. Walsh,

Thank you for the interesting article on the Andrea Yates case [Texas mother drowns children: Andrea Yates and “family values,” 2 July 2001], you brought up several interesting aspects which I had not thought about.

What is also interesting about this case is it has, according to a recent report in the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada), caught the interest of Marie Osmond of “Donny and Marie Osmond” fame (and who is also a Mormon). She has shown support for the mother and has also written a book about postpartum depression.

I wonder if Marie Osmond would show as much support for a visible minority, single mother living in grinding poverty and on crack cocaine as an escape from the awful reality and bleakness of her life and who under the influence of “illegal drugs” decided her children had to die?

Andrea Yates will have the support of the Christian right, women’s groups, the (legal) drug business, the media and possibly even the police to have this case dealt with as quickly as possible and reported in the press as little as possible. No doubt many facts will come out in court, but I doubt this case will be covered as much as it deserves, unless, unimaginably, the police decide the medication she was taking played a significant role in her behavior and decide to prosecute the drug company.

Mrs. Yates deserves sympathy for the psychological condition which drove her to kill her children. How much of that condition was caused by social pressure combined with the drugs she was taking remains to be seen. But one thing is clear; the drug companies will have their own lawyers defending their drugs and will make sure postpartum depression is blamed for the mother’s actions.

Thank you again for an insightful article.

Sincerely,

BS

9 July 2001

Dear Sir,

I often visit your web site and regularly enjoy your unbiased, high quality journalistic work. I was very interested in your recent coverage on the film director and genuinely great gentleman, Mahakanumulle Vajira. [Sri Lankan director speaks to WSWs about chauvinist attack on film, 4 July 2001]

Although I am myself a Tamil who left my motherland about 25 years ago as a child, I have a good number of Sinhalese friends in very high positions, including some Sinhalese priests (bikku). These friends of mine are all very liberal minded people like yourself.

Sadly the attitude and actions of the hard-line extreme right-wing Sinhala nationalists are driving all the innocent Tamils directly into the hands of the LTTE. The reason the LTTE has become the most powerful and well-financed movement today is as a direct consequence of the extreme right-wing element in our society.

The recent bombing in Jaffna at the LTTE’s positions certainly hindered any hard work all the liberal minded people like yourself and Mahakanumulle Vajira have been doing for years to bring about lasting peace in our beautiful island. If you carry on torturing, killing, raping women and labeling innocent Tamils, I promise you they are going to turn hard-line, diehard LTTE supporters or members or both.

I think the work of the great men like Mahakanumulle Vajira must carry on and if need be we must support such efforts financially.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. TA

7 July, 2001

To the WSWs: Thank you for your coverage of this appalling situation. [14-year-old dies in Arizona, latest casualty of “boot camps” 6 July 2001] I wish I was articulate enough to express my grief at the untimely, unnecessary death of a young person. I wish I was articulate enough to express my disgust, my anger with a system that does this to children. I read in one of the letters that your readers sent in something that resonated in me; something that even if I can’t articulate it, I can work for it.

The future is the dictatorship of the proletariat, or there is no future at all.

Hasta la victoria siempre. AS

Los Angeles

10 July 2001



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact