

Letters from our readers

11 April 2009

On “The mass shootings in America”

The mass shootings in America cannot be understood without first researching the medications being used by the shooters and the side effects of those medications.

Robert K
New York, USA
7 April 2009

About ten years ago, I was assigned to teach a course on global politics. Under the impression that I as the instructor could select the textbook to be used—and after a great deal of research hunting for a textbook that wasn’t “status quo-oriented” (an almost impossible task)—I finally came across a book written by Professor Jerry Kloby entitled *Inequality, Power and Development*. I was delighted to discover that Professor Kloby’s textbook covers global politics in a way that (*mirabile dictu!*) doesn’t defend the status quo, but rather sees global politics if not exactly from a wsws.org point of view, at least close enough.

A couple weeks into the term I was informed by the administration that I had made a grievous mistake—that, no, the instructor couldn’t just pick out the textbook but rather I was to use the textbook assigned by the school. And guess what? In the words of that great American philosopher Gomer Pyle: “Surprise! Surprise!”—the assigned textbook was radically different from Kloby’s textbook.

Whereupon I had a goofy idea. I said to the class that seeing that they had already purchased Kloby’s book what we could do as a class project is to compare how the author of the mainstream textbook differs in his point of view from Kloby’s point of view. A comparison that proved to be quite a revelation!

For example, the mainstream textbook—which, I should point out, was written by a professor from a state university and published by Mc-Graw Hill—in its discussion of corporate power was *radically* different

than the manner in which Kloby’s book discussed corporate power. Other topics such as homelessness, poverty, hunger, and the like were also treated much differently, one textbook versus the other.

In any event, Kloby’s book came to mind while I was reading your recent editorial, “The Mass Shootings in America,” specifically, how mainstream media have assiduously avoided discussing the root causes of such violence.

The section of Kloby’s book that came to mind is where he discusses “social stressors,” Kloby pointing out that studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between social stressors such as poverty, unemployment and low wages and major illnesses such as heart attacks, strokes and diabetes. In such cases, the individual internalizes stressful economic conditions—the stress playing itself out personally, on the human body, as opposed to the body politic.

At the same time, there are those people who *externalize* their stress, directing their anger and frustration outwardly through acts of social violence, such as robberies, rapes, and murders.

Of course we all know how the political establishment-cum-media react to these acts of social violence... Who among us is not consoled when our pious President Bill Clinton quotes that good ole standby, the pre-capitalist Saint Paul, to help us through our collective grief?

As for mainstream media, who can fault Diane Sawyer when she cues us on how to react—and, more importantly, how *not* to react—to such acts of social violence? (Trust in the Lord. But first a word from our sponsor. After all, prayer may be holy, but profit is divine.)

Meanwhile, in the background, behind the curtain, legislatures are busy not so piously enacting evermore reactionary measures to “protect us.” More prisons, harsher criminal penalties, greater and more arbitrary police power, fewer civil liberties.

As for when stress plays itself out *inwardly*, body, leading as it does to more heart attacks, more strokes, more major illnesses—how does the political establishment react? With quotes from Saint Paul and urgent dispatches from “Good Morning, America”? No. Not at all. Rather with unholy cuts to social and medical services—the so-called “safety net” services that, ironically, are supposed to justify democratic government in the first place.

With friends like this in government—praying for us, no less, while at the same time aiming weapons of mass destruction at other people (people we haven’t even met!)—and mainstream media relieving our bodily ills with ok-lucrative-but-who’s-perfect 30 second drug commercials—who needs enemies?

Tony F
7 April 2009

On “Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac executives to receive millions in bonuses”

Typical. Loot first. Regulate second. Make sure no one can do it again, unless you’re “one of them.”

John D
Virginia, USA
7 April 2009

Watch David North’s remarks commemorating 25 years of the *World Socialist Web Site* and donate today.

Reading the quote from James Lockhart, the Freddie Mac/Fannie Mae overseer brought in by the Bush junta—“It is not realistic to expect that experienced and highly skilled employees will indefinitely continue to work as hard as they have if we do not provide reasonable incentives to perform...If the bonuses are rescinded, it sends the exact opposite signal, and it would be extremely dangerous for the American economy to lose these workers at this point.”—my first thought was, he’s having a laugh (a popular comment of derision said here in the UK). It was the only other reaction I was capable of having, apart from seething with rage.

Upon a second reading (and I had to read it twice just to get over the shock of seeing it the first time), there are a number inaccuracies in his comments, but I will limit my comment to only two of them. The “skilled and highly experienced workers” he talks about are the very ones responsible for the wrecking of the two mortgage companies. They should have never been

retained, they should have been fired immediately without ever seeing a bonus. Second, when he states it would be dangerous to “lose these workers” at this time, I have to wonder to whom Lockhart is addressing his letter. Because the last time I checked, these “executives” are not workers because they did not create any wealth for these entities, but rather, control the wealth others have created for the exclusive use of the executives. Yet he says nothing about the rest the workforce saying, in effect, if other workers not sharing these “performance bonuses” are laid off, so much the better for the economy.

Like AIG and all the other banks around the world, it is the real workers, the ones who are not receiving the bonuses, who will take the brunt of this “correction” when they lose their jobs in order to “bolster the economy.”

The arrogant hubris in Lockhart’s statement is appalling. Instead of receiving bonuses, these “hard working talented executives” should be stripped of their bonus pensions and brought up on criminal charges and given long prison sentences. They are not workers; they are criminals.

Conseulo C
Scotland
7 April 2009

On “Red Cross report details CIA war crimes”

I realize the risks authors like yourself take in writing these stories, so I want you to know how much I appreciate them. The story about Peru this morning was another outstanding look at the abuses going on in the name of profiteering. As a lifelong passive believer in the mainstream, I have only come to genuine consciousness in the last half decade, and it is through efforts like yours that I am relearning reality. Peace.

Hank G
9 April 2009



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