

Diary of a socialist Amazon worker: Bezos, the royalist

Austin Bailey
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This is the third entry in the series “Diary of a socialist Amazon worker,” a column authored by Austin Bailey, a socialist-minded worker in his twenties, who has followed the World Socialist Web Site since 2016. Bailey writes this column to reach other workers, especially at Amazon, who have burning questions about the realities of working class life. He is always open to listening to the experiences of other workers, Amazon or otherwise, from anywhere in the world. If you wish to have your story shared, Bailey can be contacted at austin.bailey.diary@gmail.com or found on Twitter as @AustinDiary.

After Queen Elizabeth II died, the media responded with a slew of news articles fawning over the late monarch’s supposed grand legacy. On the other hand, the internet was flooded with just condemnations of the brutal colonial empire she presided over, along with open disdain coupled with outright denunciations of the type of hereditary privilege that has sparked many a revolution in the last two-and-a-half centuries.

Wading into this debate was none other than the founder of the company where I work, mega-billionaire Jeff Bezos, who rushed to the queen’s defense. Bezos denounced the Nigerian-born Carnegie Mellon professor Uju Anya over her tweet celebrating the queen’s death and bitterly invoking the bloody history of the British Empire. One of the top comments, addressed to Bezos was, “Imagine how people will react when it’s your turn.”

For the two weeks, it felt like anywhere you turned, the newspapers and TV news programs were celebrating all the trappings of the British monarchy. Biden ordered all of the American flags to be lowered to half-mast. The *New York Times* suggested that this was because the American population is “consumed with fascination by the royal family.”

I can testify that at the Amazon warehouse where I work, I have not heard a single worker comment on the queen’s death, let alone praise her to the skies the way she is being praised in the media. The overwhelming attitude is one of indifference. Workers simply have taken no notice of the queen’s passing, consumed as they are with the problems of everyday life.

Many Amazon warehouses are still very hot, including mine. Record inflation is making it increasingly difficult for workers to make ends meet. As if to add insult to injury, the high cost of gasoline places many workers in predicaments where they are unable to travel to work. While massive sums of money were allocated for Elizabeth’s funeral, millions across the globe face hunger and destitution amid a pandemic that continues to claim lives.

All of this begs a few questions, I think. First, why does Bezos, who’s rarely heard from on Twitter, solidarize himself with royal privilege? What kind of legacy did Elizabeth really leave behind and, given its character, is she deserving of the pompous praise heaped upon her of late? Should she be mourned or are tears being wasted?

Let us begin with the larger of the two social parasites: Bezos.

I cannot fully ascertain his psychological motivations, but it is undeniable that the last few years have given all much reason to consider our own mortality. Despite imbecilic proclamations that the COVID-19 pandemic is over, Death has been working overtime, burning the midnight oil to keep pace with the high piles of bodies former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was so keen to endorse. With the current state of public health, it doesn’t look like the grim reaper will get a break anytime soon.

Although I’m convinced Bezos is sure that his time is

not nigh (his wealth gives him access to the best medical care possible), it's clear the monarch's death has caused a stir in the upper echelons of society. For the most part, the masses have responded to Elizabeth's death with apathy or antipathy despite efforts by the capitalist press to paint her in the most flattering light possible.

I am sure the vitriol directed towards the British crown, it's obscene wealth and privilege, has awakened a bit of existential dread in the most affluent layers. Bezos himself is approaching sixty years; he's at an age the psychologist Erik Erikson believed humans give heavy consideration to their impact on future generations, so perhaps there's growing worry in Bezos' mind. Even if this is not the case, I'm certain ruling elites everywhere are losing sleep over the storm brewing in the hearts of the masses.

Frankly, the "legacy" Bezos is currently building for himself is a sordid affair. Amazon warehouses are infamous for being miserable death traps. In a healthy society, Bezos would be put on trial, charged with manslaughter for each of the many deadly accidents that happen too frequently in his company's facilities. Moreover, his ill-gotten gains could be used to address some of the world's most pressing issues, including hunger and climate change, but he'd rather take private joy rides to space.

As for the queen, the royal family is mired in scandals—a perfunctory glance at the crown's history leaves a sour taste in one's mouth. Her son, Prince Andrew, sold arms to autocratic regimes and paid £12 million to cover up his role in sex trafficking underage girls with Jeffrey Epstein. Prince Harry, her grandson, used to dress up in full Nazi regalia. During the first eight years of Elizabeth II's reign, the UK carried out savage repression in Kenya against the Mau Mau Rebellion. One may even excuse, or at least understand, Professor Anya's ill wishes, considering British imperialism secretly supplied weaponry to the Nigerian government during the civil war of the late 1960s.

The worries of today's moneyed, the sudden concern with how people are spoken of after death reminds me of a robber baron of old, Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie led the brutal expansion of the American steel industry in the 19th century. Towards the end of his life, he became deeply concerned with his soul's salvation and devoted himself to philanthropy, giving away up to 90

percent of his wealth to fund universities, concert halls, and libraries. Before his philanthropy, however, the industrialist ruled his steel empire with an iron fist (look up the Homestead strike for reference).

Of course, if there were an afterlife, Carnegie, Bezos, and their ilk would be immediately welcomed into Lucifer's royal court, but the important takeaway, in my mind, is that the existentialism sweeping through the wealthy is indicative of a simple truth: the ruling elites can see the pitchforks on the horizon. Soon, they will discover their adjacency to Lady Macbeth.

Lastly, I would suggest Bezos and others so keen to prostrate themselves before royalty brush up on their history. It was not too long ago, amid the American Revolution, when royalists were tarred and feathered by the Sons of Liberty. Of course, this is a barbaric practice that would never be condoned in modern times (rightfully so), but nevertheless demonstrates the intensity of the anti-monarchical sentiment rooted in the country's history. And, although the bloody lessons of the 20th century have imbued modern generations with a greater sense of humanity and understanding, like an elephant scorned, the revolutionary masses do not forget.

With appreciation,
Austin Bailey



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