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The Gun Violence the Media Shows Us and the State Violence They Don't



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Last week there was another tragic mass shooting. The media went on to make this young man a celebrity. Some, including Donald Trump, even painted him as a victim. I still don't understand why we have to give the names of the shooters in the media. Probably because it makes a better story. CBS head Leslie Moonves said of Trump: "It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS." The same can be said for these shootings. If stardom has anything to do with the shootings, it is irresponsible to make these people into fixtures of the American psyche. Anyone who watches Quentin Tarantino, Clint

Eastwood, or most any American blockbuster would get the sense that violence, although tragic, is normal and heroic.

The personal story of this kid shouldn't surprise us—white nationalist and animal abuser. This “lonely” guy made his vengeful killing on Valentine's Day, but if he did have a Valentine he may have been like most of his predecessors, a domestic abuser. Republicans, bought by the NRA, talk about mental health (even though Donald Trump repealed an Obama protection on the mentally ill buying guns). The Democrats, who don't have many organizations left that haven't bought their silence made sure to rail against the NRA and the GOP. They are right of course but they don't have much credibility left given how they act 99% of the time.

The mental health issue is valid too but the Republicans are trying to make all of us as mentally ill as they are. Schools are turning into prisons, in both their physical structure and their philosophical one. Prisons themselves are crowded enough to be schools. The argument what kills (guns or people) is a silly one because they both do. Who could deny that Barack Obama was mentally ill as he dropped drones around the world and expanded the nuclear arsenal? But there is also the obvious point that if Obama was the President of say, a garden club, he wouldn't be killing as many people because he wouldn't have the weapons to do so (Obama's Garden Club would be snooty and pretentious I'm sure, even for a garden club).

We do not hear about the mental illness of our Presidents or their financiers (well we do for Trump but that is only because he tweets as morbidly as he acts). We do not hear about the mental illness of the police, ICE, or generals. We do not hear about the mental illness of the gun manufacturers themselves. No, you are only mentally ill if you kill without a badge. As long as you are an agent of the state (and it's financiers) you are killing for a purpose—for freedom, democracy, safety—so you are sane, you are often even revered.

To a certain extent the cops are being exposed, although little will change until we gain community control of the police. Let's give full credit to Black Lives Matter here. But we are still quite behind on the issue of war and peace. The idea that football players kneeling during the anthem is somehow patriotic is an absurd argument made by liberals. We shouldn't just be upset that America can't grant freedom to us while we send soldiers to fight for it elsewhere—we should be saying that putting soldiers in other countries is itself a violation of freedom for people abroad.

A life lost is a life lost though, so we should take these shootings seriously. When a mass shooting happens it is always inexplicable. Therefore it needs explanation. Behind every

mass shooter must be a story that we could prevent. It was because gun laws were lenient. It was because his mental health was not treated. It was because of a political agenda. All of these things are true and there is no doubt ways to reduce gun violence through reformative change that are important.

What is not said enough is that gun violence is a natural consequence of a society that solves its problems through violence and conquest abroad. A society that promises an American dream and never gives anything in return leaves a trail of despair. A society that defines success as profit off of others no doubt makes others into adversaries. As long as the cost of living a life that does not do these things is so high the soul splinters making the very act of existing in a capitalist society surreal.

All that being said perhaps we are all tired too of the romanticism of the left when the Republican leaders stomp on common decency. Yet we must know that such outbursts from the margins of society are a result of something larger. That cruelty and violence are so often legalized and celebrated in our society that it creates people who take capitalism and its consequences to their logical conclusion. That for every beaten down person there are only so many ways out and most of the easy ones involve bringing other people down. That is why more than ever we need to embrace the principles of community and peace in our society. Unions are being busted. Schools are being privatized. People are being evicted from their neighborhoods. People are addicted to their screens. Small businesses are going under. The positive, productive, and peaceful ways to revolt against our rulers are being taken away.

When a mass shooting happens it is scary. In our society it could happen anywhere at any time. It is a glitch in an old broken machine. A spurt of anger that could come from anyone with a grievance. The victims are random. There is no meaning to these tragedies. We all feel powerless. Yet we are addicted to the story. How? I knew it. But how?

Along with our fear comes a rational for our protection. More gun laws. More surveillance. More wars. More police. More violence that follows rules. More violence that has a chain of command.

If we started to talk to each other again maybe we could see that our enemy is common. Our despair is shared. Instead a hero rises from the ashes. He is misunderstood. He is evil. But he is free. His victimhood is recognized as mental illness. Or at the very least he is recognized as the powerful monster he has become. The rest of us clammer for our own break from the foot of capitalism. It never comes. Except on TV.

Anyone who kills us in the name of chaos and terror should be condemned. Yet the refugees dying everyday as they flee climate change and proxy wars get no coverage. The people who have pipelines running through their yards get no coverage. The slaves in prison get no coverage. Neither do the animals in cages on the big farms. We hear about the monsters next door. The “everyday” Americans lurking behind every corner. If only the intelligence groups could have stopped them they say.

Violence by the rich is slightly more predictable because it aims to control. Certain neighborhoods, certain countries, certain acts of resistance merit your punishment. As long as you behave we will save you from those who act evil. The good (the rich, the police, the bosses) will save you from the bad (the poor, the criminal, the worker).

They want us to be scared of each other. They want us to be angry. They want us to feel defeated and powerless. That doesn't mean the problem isn't real. There is an answer. It isn't to hand over the keys to the people who have created a culture that finds power through violence, connection through individualism, and worth through wealth.

As liberals cower in the age of Trump they turn to the FBI, the CIA, the military and the police. They long for the authoritarian smooth talker Barack Obama. They say it is the everyday people who elected Trump and that it is the everyday people who must be stopped. They want the order of their old lives back. Trump is an authoritarian but he is an unpredictable one. Therefore any of us could get struck by a stray bullet as he lashes out against anybody who challenges him.

Liberals want the guns in the hands of the rich. Chaos in Africa and the Middle East will be ignored. So will police occupation of nonwhite neighborhoods. Despite the United States interfering in elections across the globe, 100,000\$ from Russia on Facebook means something “serious” must be done (could we get more ominous?). They say calling a mass shooting by a Muslim “Islamic Extremism” is “racist” but they also say we shouldn't let even let 1% of their refugee population into the country for fear that it would upset the order of society here.

What the latest shooting tells us is that when we pick up arms we are playing by the master's rules. We are using the master's tools. And we are shooting our own schools. The revolution towards peace and equality must be nonviolent. Because it seems that sadly most of us still have no idea who our enemy is.