

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد بدين بوم وېر زنده يک تن مېباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهيم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهيم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/12/07/reaping-what-we-sow/print/>

Reaping What We Sow

By Howard Lisnoff
December 7, 2015



The last time I fired a gun was during the summer of 1969. It was a rifle: an M1, the kind that was used during World War II and the kind that was used against unarmed students by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State University in 1970. I was in the Rhode Island National Guard at the time and I went out as part of an honor guard, probably out of boredom, or perhaps to get out of some foolish and meaningless military detail. I can't honestly remember which motivation it was all of those years ago.

During basic training in the army, I learned to be "proficient" with an M16. That is the rifle that was used by the military during the Vietnam War. I remember aiming the rifle at targets over 100 yards away and watching them fall silently at the rifle range, as if the firing of the rifle and the falling of the target were not connected in time: it was surreal. Some soldiers bribed the trainers

at the rifle range to give them higher scores than they actually had achieved with their rifles. I was “satisfied” by being rated as a sharpshooter and never had to deal with this lethal device again.

The AR15 is the civilian equivalent of the military’s M16. On the semiautomatic setting, it is close to a machine gun in lethality, with slight hesitations between the rounds of ammunition being fired. In San Bernardino, 14 innocent people were killed and 21 people were wounded in an act of political and religious extremism. Syed Rizwan and Tashfeen Malik join the long, no, endless list of mass shootings in the U.S. They used rifles like the ones that the army used in training recruits. The motives of mass shootings are many, from extreme mental health issues to religious and political fundamentalism. Hate for the government and hate toward a coworker: the list of grudges and the availability of weapons that the Second Amendment and gun lobbyists and gun manufacturers and politicians protect has flooded this nation with between 270 and 310 million guns according to the Pew Research Center. In 2013, Pew estimated that 37% of households have guns in a population of about 319 million people.

No other developed and highly industrialized nation has the constant drumbeat of mass shootings as does the United States. No other advanced nation even comes close to what has become a public health hazard.

When Adam Lanza took his mother’s legally owned guns to Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012, he killed 26 innocent children and the people who taught them. Lanza’s mental illness went untreated, but the gun culture that exists in the U.S., fueled by the frontier ethos and the gun lobby and gun manufacturers were all on the same page in allowing this inhuman atrocity to take place. Some states enacted tougher gun laws in reaction to Sandy Hook. The gun lobby headed by the National Rifle Association, and its president Wayne LaPierre, even suggested that the answer to gun atrocities was to have more guns in places like public schools to counter gunmen.

The *New York Times* ran an article in “The Upshot” series that compared gun homicides around the world with those in the U.S. That article, “In Other Countries, You’re as Likely to be Killed by a Falling Object as by a Gun” (December 4, 2015), makes sobering comparisons of gun violence and accidental deaths. No other highly industrialized country matches the gun insanity, availability, and profit from guns in the U.S.!

It has been said that the U.S. lost its soul in Vietnam. There are tentative connections between endless warfare and guns and the ethic of machismo that fuels some gun sales in the U.S.: certainly there is great profit. Gallup polls taken between 1993 and 2013 show that a majority of Americans have a favorable opinion of the NRA. What soul that was left of this nation was chewed up in the gruesome shootings that have become routine. That innocent children, churchgoers, moviegoers, those accessing health care, and innocent workers can be gunned down and nothing is done as a nation is a monumental disaster! In some states, such as Florida, a person can even shoot to kill while standing their ground when a threat is perceived. We’ve got the worst Wild West nightmare scenario with guns that can be imagined and there’s a dollar sign attached to the entire hellish enterprise!

And as if all of this were not enough, one of the community college students I teach was gunned down and murdered at his home while visiting there over a weekend this semester. He was an excellent student and now he is gone, the promise of his life erased by the insanity of gun violence!