

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

PAUL STREET

28.12.2024

It's Not About What Class You're From: It's About What Class System You Serve



Image by Kayle Kaupanger.

New York Times columnist Bret Stephens recently published a widely read opinion piece claiming that Brian Thompson, the United Health Group insurance CEO that Luigi Mangione assassinated, is the “real working-class hero” in the story of Thompson’s murder. By Stephen’s reckoning, Thompson and not Mangione deserves the label because the murder victim came from a working-class family of origin and his killer comes from an elite background and possesses Ivy League degrees.

“Thompson’s life might have been cut brutally short,” Stephens writes, “but it will remain a model for how a talented and determined man from humble roots can still rise to the top of corporate life without the benefit of rich parents and an Ivy League degree.”

Stephens and his fellow vapid and conservative *Times* columnist David Brooks (see Brooks’ comments [here](#) starting at 8 minutes and 51 seconds) finds it ironic that many on “the left” have embraced someone with elite pedigree (Mangione) as a champion of the proletariat.

What a stupid mess these bourgeois ideologues weave!

Two points of correction and clarification are required here.

One, “the” working class doesn’t need lone wolf assassinations of individual CEOs. It needs an actual people’s revolutionary movement for the overthrow of capitalism within and beyond the insurance and medical systems. It needs the replacement of the soulless profits system by a new socialist order. Oxfam reasonably calculates that capitalist economic inequality kills 21,300 people per day. On top of that gruesome body count, the growth- and fossil fuel-addicted profits system is cancelling livable ecology, bringing the world to the brink of nuclear war, and spreading fascism before our very eyes at home and abroad.

The revolution required to get past all this madness is not about killing off top corporate managers, however much such actions might seem to reflect and capture righteous and legitimate class anger against capitalist parasites. If the capitalist mode of production and political and ideological superstructure remain intact, the system just grows new capitalists and executives for every one of them that dies naturally or otherwise. (The new CEO of United Health is Sir Andrew Phillip Witty, former CEO of GlaxoSmithKline, the leading British drug firm).

Two, *it’s not about what class you are from, it’s about what class and system you serve*. So what if Thompson “came from the working class”? Who cares? He became one of the tiny minority of people from working-class families who rise up into the high ranks of the managerial bourgeoisie and he did so in service to the bottom-line interests of parasitic investors who assigned him the task of restricting health care access for masses of middle- and working-class people. He became a top henchman for the capitalist insurance mafia. Who knows how many working class people Thompson helped send to their deaths sooner than would have been the case if United Health hadn’t cut off treatments required to extend their lives? I’m guessing many thousands.

Some “working-class hero”!

And while I don’t think Mangione really “served the working class” or advances the cause of socialism by murdering an insurance CEO, *so F’ng what if he came from a privileged*

background? The people's struggle against capitalism has always required class defectors and traitors from the middle and even capitalist classes.

For all Brooks and Stephens' horror at Mangione's action, where is their horror over the 21,300 people or more that the profits system exterminates daily[1] while turning the planet into a giant Greenhouse Gas Chamber and otherwise rendering the environment we all share quite possibly unlivable?

Another thing that merits critical mention in connection with the Mangione drama is the telling contrast between how the supposed American people's government in New York City has treated him and how it has treated another young white man, Daniel Penny, an ex-Marine who responded to the outbursts of a Black man on a subway train by strangling him to death in a five-minute choke-hold last year.

Mangione knocks off a leader of the mass-murderous health insurance mafia and is delivered back to New York City with an over-the-top show of fascist police state force including the city's police veteran mayor (see photo below). He is demonized across right-wing media led by Fatherland (FOX) News despite that media's pretense of "populism" and embrace of political violence (seen in its celebration of the racist and fascist murderer Kyle Rittenhouse and of January 6). Penny strangles the life out of a mentally disturbed Black man in full public transit view and is exonerated by a New York City jury, the verdict celebrated by right wing media that has been upholding Penny's murderous actions all along!

Mangione's body count of one was far exceeded by the fascist Timothy McVeigh's total (168 dead and more than 600 injured) and McVeigh never got paraded like that (even if he did get justifiably executed...and yes, federal authorities have just made Mangione eligible for capital punishment).

The secret to this double standard? Amerikaner white nationalist fascism, which should not at all be understood as populism, since fascism is very much okay with capitalist inequality and class hierarchy – something that hardly prevents mainstream talking heads and pundits from now routinely calling the Republi-fascists "populist Republicans."

Endnote

DECEMBER 27, 2024

+1. Peter Phillips. *Titans of Capital : How Concentrated Wealth Threatens Humanity* (New York: Censored Press, 2024), p. 41.

Paul Street's latest book is This Happened Here: Amerikaners, Neoliberals, and the Trumping of America (London: Routledge, 2022).