

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر 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

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2013/05/24/the-silent-death-of-the-american-left/>

The Silent Death of the American Left

Generation Leftover

by JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

May 24-26, 2013

Is there a Left in America today?

There is, of course, a Left ideology, a Left of the mind, a Left of theory and critique. But is there a Left movement?

Does the Left exist as an oppositional political, cultural or economic force? Is anyone intimidated or restrained by the Left? Is there a counterforce to the grinding machinery neoliberal capitalism and its political managers?

We can and do at CounterPunch and in similar publications, such as Monthly Review and the New Left Review, publish analyses of capitalism and its inherent vulnerabilities, catalogue its predations and wars of military conquest and imperial exploitation. But where is our capacity to confront the daily horrors of drone strikes, kill lists, mass layoffs, pension raids and the looming nightmare of climate change?

It is a bitter reality, brought into vivid focus by five years of Obama, that the Left is an immobilized and politically impotent force at the very moment when the economic inequalities

engineered by our overlords at Goldman Sachs who manage the global economy, should have recharged a long-moribund resistance movement back to life.

Instead the Left seems powerless to coalesce, to translate critique into practice, to mobilize against wars, to resist incursions against basic civil liberties, powerless to confront rule by the bondholders and hedgefunders, unable to meaningfully obstruct the cutting edge of a parasitical economic system that glorifies greed while preying on the weakest and most destitute, and incapable of confronting the true legacy of the man they put their trust in.

This is the politics of exhaustion. We have become a generation of leftovers. We have reached a moment of historical failure that would make even Nietzsche shudder.

We stand on the margins, political exiles in our own country, in a kind of mute darkness, a political occlusion, increasingly obsessed, as the radical art historian Tim Clark put it a few years ago in a disturbing essay in *New Left Review*, with the tragedy of our own defeat.

Consider this. Two-thirds of the American electorate oppose the ongoing war in Afghanistan. An equal amount objected to intervention in Libya. Even more recoil at the grim prospect of entering the Syrian theater.

Yet there is no antiwar movement to translate that seething disillusionment into action. There are no mass demonstrations. No systematic efforts to obstruct military recruiting. No nationwide strikes. No campus walkouts. No serious divestment campaigns against companies involved in drone technology.

Similar popular disgust is evident regarding the imposition of stern austerity measures during a prolonged and enervating recession. But once again this smoldering outrage has no political outlet in the current political climate, where both parties have fully embraced the savage bottom line math of neoliberalism.

Homelessness, rampant across America, is a verboten topic, unmentioned in the press, absent from political discourse. Hunger, a deepening crisis in rural and urban America, is a taboo subject, something left to religious pray-to-eat charities or the fickle whims of corporate write-offs.

What do they offer us, instead? Pious homilies about the work ethic, the sanctity of the family unit, the self-correcting laxative of market forces.

The economic immiseration of black America, brutal and unrelenting, is simply elided, erased from the political dialogue, even at jam sessions of the Congressional Black Caucus. Instead, whenever

Obama mentions the plight of black Americans (about once every two years by my count), as he did in his patronizing commencement addresses this spring, it is to chide blacks about cleaning up their acts, admonishing them to stop complaining about their circumstances and work harder at adopting the flight plan of white corporate culture.

The self-evident need for large-scale public works projects to green the economy and put people to work goes unmentioned, while the press and the politicians engage in a faux debate over the minutia of sequestration and sharpen each others knives to begin slashing Social Security and Medicare. Where's the collective outrage? Where are the marches on the Capitol? The sit-ins in congressional offices?

A few weeks ago I wrote [an essay](#) on the Obama administration's infamous memo justifying drone strikes inside countries like Pakistan and Yemen that the US is not officially at war against. In one revealing paragraph, a Justice Department lawyer cited Richard Nixon's illegal bombing of Cambodia during the Vietnam War as a precedent for Obama's killer drone strikes. Let's recall that the bombing of Cambodia prompted several high-ranking officials in the Nixon cabinet to resign, including CounterPunch writer Roger Morris. It also sparked the student uprising at Kent State, which lead the Ohio Governor Jim Rhodes to declare a state of emergency, ordering the National Guard to rush the campus. The Guard troops promptly began firing at the protesters, killing four and wounding nine. The war had come home.

Where are those protests today?

The environment is unraveling, thread by thread, right before our eyes. Each day brings more dire news. Amphibians are in stark decline across North America. Storms of unimaginable ferocity are strafing the Great Plains week after week. The Arctic will soon be ice-free. The water table is plummeting in the world's greatest aquifer. The air is carcinogenic in dozens of California cities. The spotted owl is still going extinct. Wolves are beginning gunned down by the hundreds across the Rocky Mountains. Hurricane season now lasts from June to December. And about all the environmental movement can offer in resistance are a few designer protests against a pipeline which is already a *fait accompli*.

Our politics has gone sociopathic and liberals in America have been pliant to every abuse, marinated in the toxic silt of Obama's mordant rhetoric. They eagerly swallow every placebo policy Obama serves them, dutifully defending every incursion against fundamental rights. And each betrayal only serves to make his adoring retinue crave his smile; his occasional glance and nod all the more urgently. Still others on the dogmatic Left circle endlessly, like characters consigned to their eternal roles by Dante, in the ideological cul-de-sac of identity politics.

How much will we stomach before rising up? A fabricated war, a looted economy, a scalded atmosphere, a despoiled gulf, the loss of habeas corpus, the assassination of American citizens...

One looks in vain across this vast landscape of despair for even the dimmest flickers of real rebellion and popular mutiny, as if surveying a nation of somnambulists.

We remain strangely impassive in the face of our own extinction.