

# Psychohistory News

**Newsletter of the International Psychohistorical Association**  
**Volume 32, Number 1 – Winter 2013**

**IPA Public Statement, 1 January 2013**  
**ON REDUCING AND ENDING VIOLENCE** (page 12)



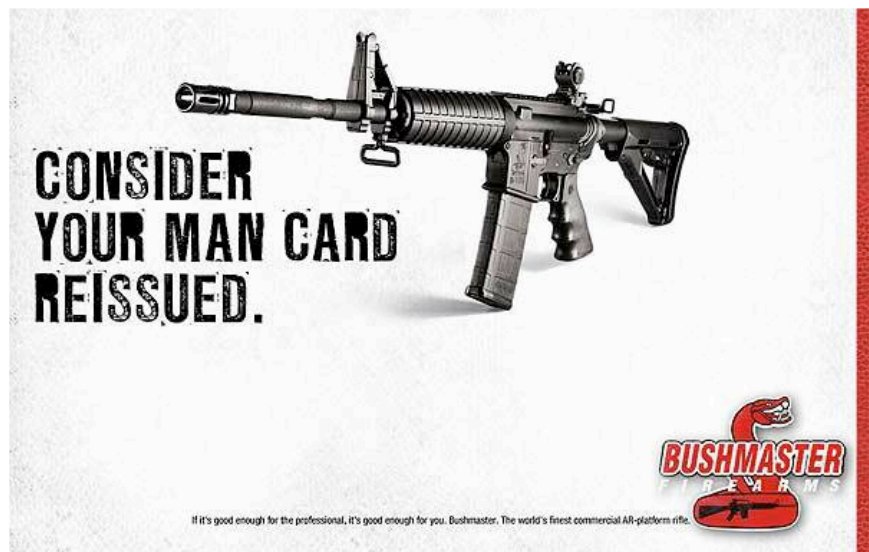
***Charles Strozier***  
***On America's Gun Culture***  
*page four*

**2013 IPA Conference, June 5 - 7**  
**New York University, *page two***  
***Review of The Middle Class Fights Back***  
**by Molly Castelloe, *page two***

**GRAPPLING WITH MASS KILLINGS**  
**Why Are American Men Now “Going Postal?”**  
**by Harriet Fraad**

Twenty-seven people were shot to death in lovely suburban Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012. Newtown was the most dramatic of the mass shootings of 2012. A mass shooting is defined as a multi-victim shooting in which victims were chosen arbitrarily. In 2012, 96 Americans were shot indiscriminately in mass

*(continued on page six)*



## 2013 IPA Conference, June 5 - 7 New York University

Dear members and friends of the International  
Psychohistorical Association (IPA),

Our organization will hold its 36<sup>th</sup> annual convention, cosponsored by New York University, at NYU's Greenwich Village campus in New York City, June 5-7, 2013. Come and hear a cross-disciplinary group of scholars, each with a unique contribution to our continually expanding knowledge of cultural, historical and societal motivations. Over 50 presentations are scheduled for the three day conference, with featured speakers Paul Elovitz, David Beisel, Jerry Piven, and NYU University Professor Jerome Wakefield on Wednesday June 5. Day 2 and 3 of the conference will include 12 independent panels. Kenneth Fuchsman will lead a panel exploring empathy and its uses in understanding the human psyche and psychohistory while Howard Stein will head a panel discussing the confluence of poetry and psychohistory. Harriet Fraad, Brian D'Agostino, David Lotto, and Myriam Miedzian will discuss violence in the wake of the Newtown massacre and Lloyd deMause will lead a discussion on the psychohistory of war. Other panels will focus on psychobiography, applied psychohistory, social policy analysis, trauma and reenactments, economic policy, psychohistorical study of film and media, and historical personality.

To learn more about our convention, pre-register, download a convention program or to become a member of the International Psychohistorical Association, please visit our website at [www.psychohistory.us](http://www.psychohistory.us).

Sincerely,

Denis J. O'Keefe, IPA President

[djo212@nyu.edu](mailto:djo212@nyu.edu)

Office: 845-446-9013

### \*\*\*\*Accommodations\*\*\*\*

A block of rooms have been reserved at a reduced rate at the historic Washington Square Hotel. The hotel sits at the North West end of Washington Square Park and is approximately 100 yards from the convention site at NYU's Kimmel Center. Hotel information follows:

Washington Square Hotel  
103 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10011  
phone: 212-777-9515 x 7115  
fax: 212-979-8373  
Group code: **3557**

For reservations, contact the WSH with our group code 3557 via telephone (hotel toll free number: 1800 222 0418) or email : [reservations@wshotel.com](mailto:reservations@wshotel.com)

Reservations are also available to book via their website:

[www.wshotel.com](http://www.wshotel.com)

Web ID: **4080**

Password: **37004959**

IPA's group code will expire on April 16 2013. Please reserve your room before this date.

### ***The Middle Class Fights Back: How Progressive Movements Can Restore Democracy in America***

(Praeger, 2012), Brian D'Agostino, Ph.D.

**Review by Molly Castelleo**

This book spotlights a crucial link between psychohistory and politics: ideology, by which I mean belief systems that legitimize power. Author Brian D'Agostino analyzes a number of prevailing U.S. ideologies, especially militarism and neoliberalism (free market ideology), and in an appendix addresses how group fantasies drive them. The book shows how the ideologies support policies and institutions that are undermining the middle class and distorting the country's fiscal priorities. The author then outlines an agenda of deep reforms that can create sustainable prosperity.

***Molly Castelleo, Ph.D., is a writer and artist very interested in psychohistory.***

"Defense" is our government's biggest expenditure: about a trillion dollars a year for military and related programs.\* How much of this comes from middle class taxpayers? About 60%, according to the author's analysis of federal tax data. (p. 28) D'Agostino shows in detail that this "national security state" serves overwhelmingly to uphold the wealth and power of elites, not to protect the population from attack or maintain a democratic world order. America's ruling elites invoke "national security," the author writes, "in much the same way that communist dictators invoked the 'proletariat' and kings invoked God or the gods to justify their control of vast wealth extracted from ordinary working people." (p. 12) The refrain resonates emotionally with our electorate, at times arousing archaic fears of helplessness, as in the aftermath of 9/11.

\* Winslow T. Wheeler, 'Defense' Budget: the Full Enchilada, Public Intelligence Blog, 20 February 2012, <http://www.phibetaiota.net/2012/02/winslow-wheeler-defense-budget-the-full-enchilada/>

*The IPA board of directors invites you to contact us with feedback or ideas about this publication, our organization, or the field of psychohistory.*

### IPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Denis O’Keefe, President [dokeefe.frc@verizon.net](mailto:dokeefe.frc@verizon.net)  
 Joe O’Reilly, Vice President [JCReilly4@verizon.net](mailto:JCReilly4@verizon.net)  
 Henry Lawton, Secretary [hwlipa@gmail.com](mailto:hwlipa@gmail.com)  
 Lloyd Demause, Treasurer [psychhst@gmail.com](mailto:psychhst@gmail.com)  
 Brian D’Agostino, Communications Director [bdagostino@verizon.net](mailto:bdagostino@verizon.net)  
 Christian Lackner, International Vice President [christian.lackner@uni-klu.ac.at](mailto:christian.lackner@uni-klu.ac.at)

Neoliberalism, the other main ideology critiqued in the book, claims that dismantling unions, deregulating business, and reducing taxes on the rich will bring about general prosperity. D’Agostino illustrates how this agenda has actually played out since the 1970s, when corporations began shutting down unionized factories and moving to lower-wage regions. Corporate profits and personal fortunes rose dramatically while median wages stagnated. White middle class men were often replaced in the workforce by lower-paid women and blacks. Ronald Reagan (who also presided over a massive military buildup) ushered in this neoliberal era, which continues today. In addition to undermining middle class prosperity, unbridled capitalism is creating an environmental crisis that now threatens the welfare of future generations.

D’Agostino’s discussion of American plutocracy raises many questions that merit psychohistorical exploration, such as why some people compulsively amass wealth and power. Hoarding, waste, and the reduction of people to things are often connected to anal narcissism. Is the irrational accumulation of “net worth” by CEOs and predatory investors a compensation for the inner child’s shattered self-worth, for parental introjects that make the person “feel like shit?” If so, no amount of wealth is ever enough—it cannot heal unconscious feelings of worthlessness rooted in childhood.

Although money does not trickle down, corporate culture does. D’Agostino, who taught eleven years in New York City public schools, elaborates how capitalism infiltrates K-12 education. Instead of providing equitable funding for inner city public schools, the neoliberal “school reform” movement scapegoats teachers for not lifting disadvantaged youth out of poverty, an ideology dramatized in the film “Waiting for Superman.” Test scores become the equivalent of the corporate bottom line, and management by numbers replaces attunement to children’s learning needs.

A vivid example of corporate practice in public education is Mayor Bloomberg’s choice in 2003 of retired General Electric CEO Jack Welch to train NYC school principals. Welch imposed on the schools a corporate management approach well honed at GE: using rewards and punishments based on “performance” data to motivate managers. With performance measured by test scores, public schools are becoming test-prep factories in which “high-stakes tests teach students to think in the box of the test maker’s scoring criteria.” Ours is fast becoming a nation of “in-the-box people” trained to repress creative and independent thought and become “interchangeable with machines.” (p. 146)

The second half of *The Middle Class Fights Back* calls for a middle class revolution against state capitalism and proposes policies and institutions that can meet the needs of ordinary people. This alternative agenda begins with a Green New Deal that can create full employment by transitioning a large sector of the workforce to jobs in renewable energy, which will also help avert climate change. Worker owned and controlled enterprises can provide a new foundation for middle class economic security, D’Agostino argues, and public schools need to be properly funded and given a mandate to promote unalienated learning.

Written with passion, coherence and exhaustive documentation, this book aims to heal a dysfunctional nation and marshals an unusual breadth of knowledge on behalf of a just and sustainable future. At a time of unprecedented income disparity,\* this book is a wakeup call for middle class America, the “sleeping giant” that began to stir in the 2011 Wisconsin uprising and Occupy movement. *The Middle Class Fights Back* provides a bold agenda of policy and institutional reform that will enable such movements to create the promising future ordinary people desire.

\* See the new viral video “Wealth Inequality in America,” [www.marketplace.org/topics/wealth-poverty/surprise-viral-hit-income-inequality-movie](http://www.marketplace.org/topics/wealth-poverty/surprise-viral-hit-income-inequality-movie)

## ***Guns in America*** **by Charles Strozier**

A host of recent killings in addition to Newtown has brought the issue of gun control back onto the front burner of politics. The shootings include James Eagan Holmes's movie theater rampage in Colorado on July 20 in which 12 died and 58 were injured, many seriously, and Wade Michael Page's murder spree on August 5 at a Sikh temple near Milwaukee. Why is it so difficult for us to imagine meaningful control of guns?

I had occasion three years ago to visit a gun show in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was held in an auditorium that was easily half the size of a football field. My camera had to be checked at the entrance and there were signs all over to vote for Allen West for Congress, a man who won and became a Tea Party favorite in South Florida. Inside the auditorium, there were rows and rows of tables with the most exotic display of weapons imaginable. The room was packed with people eagerly holding 9 millimeter pistols and fondling the long muzzles of assault rifles. It was almost obscene. There were also plenty of tables between those selling the pistols and rifles and military gear where one could immediately register your gun and then calmly walk out the door with it. I passed a pimply, overweight young man barely 20 years old who looked like a classic nerd hugging an assault weapon he had just purchased and registered. It was erect in his arms.

America is awash in guns. On the shelves in trailer parks in remote corners of Georgia, to upscale suburban McMansions outside Dallas, and to suburban areas like Newtown, are a host of shotguns, 9 millimeter pistols, hunting rifles with elaborate scopes, and even assault weapons and hand grenades, not to mention knives of various kinds, night vision goggles, and other military gear. Permits are absurdly easy to obtain for such weaponry and, even when not legal, our infrastructure of interstate highways allows for easy transportation of guns across state lines. Guns are everywhere in the West and Southwest, spread throughout states like Colorado, and wildly popular in remote rural areas of the Northwest among survivalists and right-wing, anti-tax groups. In the cities as well, from New York to Los Angeles and everything in-between, criminals stock up on sophisticated weapons (including semi-automatic assault rifles that can fire giant bullets through metal from great distances at a ferocious speed). Fights between rival

gangs over drugs in parts of the Southwest along the border with Mexico—so hauntingly evoked in Cormak McCarthy's book, *No Country for Old Men* that was turned into a powerful movie--can assume the character of militia groups at war in an unstable Afghanistan.

Americans have always treasured their guns as powerful agents of actual protection against the dangers lurking in the forests and as symbols of independence and self-reliance. The real and the imagined merged in an enduring battle over three centuries to conquer the frontier. Richard Slotkin has written brilliantly about the way the myth of the frontier stirred white European passions to overcome the dangers posed by the Native Americans, then push them out in countless trails of tears, and take their land in a process he calls "regeneration through violence." The push west from the coast began almost immediately with the arrival of the colonists, then accelerated after the revolutionary war opened what was called the Northwest but which we would now consider the Midwest up to the Mississippi, and culminated in the 19th century when the railroad allowed not hundreds or even thousands but millions to move west.

There was always a leading edge of vulnerable settlement in this process, from western Virginia in the 1670s, to Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois in the 18teens, and ending with isolated farms stretching from Arizona to the Dakotas in the second half of the 19th century. Survival on this historically moving frontier in fact depended on the ability to shoot and kill attackers. Over time the means of destruction available to the settlers, especially sophisticated rifles and pistols after the Civil War, along with the sheer numbers of white settlers, overwhelmed the Native Americans. It left intact the myth of triumphant settlement of the land from sea to shining sea by heroic individuals armed with guns and ordained by God to carry out their mission.

More immediately, America suffered a survivor disaster in its war in Vietnam that had profound meanings for the current debate about guns. We lost that war in a decade-long struggle in which some 50,000 Americans and a million Vietnamese died. Entire forests and vast stretches of cropland, along with countless villages, were wiped out in a sea of napalm and herbicides, and yet in battle after battle we were driven back, defeated, a great humiliation that came to be symbolized by the last helicopter lifting off from the embassy in Saigon in 1975



with desperate people hanging onto the runners. Almost immediately, as William Gibson has described in *Warrior Dreams*, arose a counter myth of stubborn and heroic individualism that reversed history.

The first issue of “Soldiers of Fortune” was published in 1975 simultaneously with our final defeat in Vietnam. Its central image is that of the lone warrior armed to the teeth. In that psychohistorical moment emerged the militia movement that surged in the next two decades, mostly unnoticed by intellectuals until Waco and Oklahoma City in the 1990s, but thriving on the margins, nurtured in gun shows and war games in the forests, fed by a steady stream of pulp fiction, outright propagandistic lies (with maps) about concentration camps where true patriots were gathered and thrown into crematoria, and most of all the Rambo movies that made Sylvester Stallone famous. George H. W. Bush famously (and prematurely) opined after a triumphalist Gulf War in 1991 that we had “kicked the Vietnam syndrome” by which he meant a set of symptoms that combined cowardice, defeatism, hopelessness, and introspective despair.



The militia movement that had spawned the new right wing in general after 1975—new in the intensity of its hatreds, its commitments to armed struggle and terrorism, and its wild apocalypticism—soon saw the publication of its *Mein Kampf* in *The Turner Diaries*, published in 1978 by William Pierce, a former physics professor with a literary bent. Turner had an enormous impact (Timothy McVeigh said he slept with it under his pillow). It is a reasonably well-written novel that even has a love story as part of the plot but a book that seethes with anti-Semitic and racist hatreds. Placed in the future, the book opens in 1992 with passage of the Cohen Act in which all guns are being appropriated. Black officers, guided by sinister Jews, lead a government committed to the oppression of true patriots. There are great battles as the movement

gradually takes over, eventually wiping out all Blacks and Jews, then all of Asia and Russia in a paroxysm of nuclear violence, as the New Age dawns in 2000. It is a story of ultimate redemption by those deprived of their guns.

But the psychology of American attachment to its guns goes beyond even political developments on the right since Vietnam. In the nuclear age we seem to find a kind of alternative and symbolic safety in weapons at hand to offset the terrifying uncertainty that hangs over us with ultimate weapons. This psychology touches all of us. Since the dawn of civilization the important task of imagining the end of everything, that is, the death of death or the apocalyptic, was assigned to three important groups: priests and mystics, artists, and psychotics. Such imaginings were important in the creation of culture and inevitably got woven into religious stories and artistic expressions. The outlines of the apocalyptic story, however, remained on the margins of mainstream culture. For example, it took many centuries for western Christendom to fully accept the radical apocalyptic ideas in the Book of Revelation.

In the nuclear age, in which humans have created their own means of ending everything, that divine process gets reversed. We no longer need God to bring about the end. Humans have taken over for themselves the power of destruction. That profoundly alters our relationship to death and has changed us psychologically in ways we are just beginning to understand. One proximate consequence of this larger context is the false security we gain in the belief that if we can only possess enough guns we can ward off danger to ourselves, our families, our communities, our nation, humanity itself. This psychologically diseased attachment to guns warps the American self. It will take wiser and more courageous leaders than we currently have to begin what will inevitably be a slow progress toward hope without weapon-induced fear.

**Charles B. Strozier is a Professor of History and Director of the Center on Terrorism at John Jay College, CUNY, as well as a practicing psychoanalyst in New York City. He is the author of *Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America*, among several volumes on related issues. In 2011 he published his study, *Until the Fires Stopped Burning: 9/11 and New York City in the Words and Experiences of Survivors and Witnesses*.**

## **Grappling With Mass Killings**

*(continued from page one)*

shootings. Eighty-nine were killed before the December 14 massacre and another seven were killed after December 14, 2012. Ninety-six people were shot to death indiscriminately in one year.<sup>(1)</sup> Why destroy the lives of strangers? Where does such murderous rage come from?

In order to try to engage that question we can begin by looking at the common traits of the murderers. Being male and being white (or Asian, in the case of two) are characteristics they all shared. These are remarkable facts hidden in plain sight.<sup>(2)</sup> It is all the more remarkable because the race and gender of the perpetrators was not discussed. Surely if all of the mass killers were African American that would have been noticed. If all those people were killed by white women or immigrants, that too would have been a topic of discussion, to say the least. Somehow the fact that the killers were white men seemed unremarkable. That is a clue worth noticing.

### **What Could Make American White Males so Angry?**

American white and Asian men have lost their job security and the family wage. Simultaneously, and related to this, they have lost their dominant positions in intimate and family life. The key figure in the economic and social disempowerment of U.S. workers was Ronald Reagan, who began his presidency by firing striking air traffic controllers and destroying their union. With the destruction of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO), Reagan shot the first round into the body of labor. The chance to negotiate union wages and job conditions was gravely wounded. More shots followed. Mass killings became a new phenomenon in the 1980s, in the wake of these attacks on the power and security of workers, which undermined the hegemony of white and Asian men in their families and their status in American society.

It was the Post Office workers who put mass killing on the U.S. map. In 1986, the phrase “going postal” was born when a postal worker named Patrick Sherrill fired fifty shots in his job site. He murdered 15 postal workers and wounded more. The first man Sherrill shot to death was his supervisor. Sherrill’s second murder victim was

the grandson of Reagan’s hero, the football star Knute Rockne who was the subject of Reagan’s most famous movie *Knute Rockne, All American*.<sup>(3)</sup> Reagan’s “reforms” included changing the time-honored practice of promoting experienced postal workers to supervisory positions and instead recruiting supervisors without experience in the system. In the name of productivity, this new breed of supervisor commonly harassed and maintained adversarial relationships with workers.

Reagan legitimized attacks on unions, job security, and wages that began with the corporate assault on manufacturing workers in the 1970s. Increasing real wages and benefits, won by labor unions since the 1930s, had enabled millions of white males to support families and bring them into the middle class. After working class compensation hit a ceiling in the 1970s,<sup>(4)</sup> white male mass killings have grown exponentially. Millions of women were pushed out of the home and into the labor force. Women benefited with independence as well as suffered with divorce and poverty. The demise of the family wage and eclipse of the male breadwinner undermined the patriarchal family structure. The rage of American white and Asian men may well have something to do with the resulting social humiliation and loss of dominance in the home.

Four fifths of the jobs lost in our current recession have been male jobs in manufacturing, construction, and big-ticket sales.<sup>(5)</sup> The decisions to export American jobs were based solely on corporate profit regardless of the extensive social and personal damage they produced. In low-wage capitalism that is how decisions are made. The huge shift to a service economy favored women, who dominate the growth sectors in lower paid health and food service industries. Women’s skills in personal relationships, emotional labor, compromise and negotiation work better in a service economy where aggression is unwelcome. Now a majority of middle level managerial positions as well as most professional positions in the U.S. are held by women.<sup>(6)</sup>

### **Machismo Strikes Back**

Traditional males disempowered by these economic and social developments found refuge in three growth industries. The most lavishly funded of these is the U.S. military, a now 700 billion dollar sector that has grown by 81% in the past decade.<sup>(7)</sup> The military is the one industry in which the U.S. has world hegemony. We have a bigger military sector than the other 87

industrialized nations combined.(8) Ubiquitous photos of villages reduced to rubble testify to America's glorious military might. Fully 176 Pakistani children have been killed by our drone strikes in 2012 alone. Close to a million Iraqi children have died since the U.S. invasion of 2003.(9)

Nor can state violence on this scale be restricted to the war zones. The military also infiltrates media airspace in the United States, using vast funds to advertise its ethos of armed force as a solution to problems. Ubiquitous military recruitment ads feature young, muscular men with guns, "strategic warriors keeping us safe." This glorification of violence surely contributes to the domestic gun culture. The latest U.S. figures show that 5,740 U.S. children and teens were killed by guns in 2012.(10)

As second growth industry is firearms. As *The Washington Post* glibly noted in January, "The U.S. gun industry has been one of the brightest spots in the U.S. economy in recent years, even through the recent downturn. This year, it racked up \$11.7 billion in sales and \$992 million in profits."(11) At a time when peaceful solutions to problems receive little public attention, men pained by fruitless searches for family-waged work find empowerment in the ownership and use of lethal weapons.

The third most profitable refuge for wounded manhood is violent media, films, game boys, and video games like the ones on which Newtown killer Adam Lanza spent his days. American boys spend on average 13 hours a day on video games.(12) Programs for young people in which they play non-violent sports and learn educational, recreational, and interpersonal skills are cut to ribbons while the market provides violent and very instructive killer entertainment.

## Understanding School Shootings

How does the above analysis help explain school shootings? This male phenomenon was put on the map by two very intelligent students at Columbine High School who killed 12 classmates, a teacher and themselves in 1999. In Newtown in 2012, a similarly intelligent 20 year old former student, Adam Lanza, shot and killed his mother, 26 elementary school students and staff, as well as himself. They are joined by a nursing student at Oikos University who killed seven

schoolmates and administrators as well as himself. Although the circumstances of each case differed, none of these mass killers saw a future or hope outside of revenge and death in a blaze of glory. The nursing student who killed seven saw that he was cheated by his expensive education and would be saddled with debt and shame for the rest of his life. School debt now outstrips mortgage debt in the U.S. Jobs dwindle and debt soars. The future looks grim for millions. Ph.D's are on food stamps.(13) The Columbine killers were gifted high school students who fit nowhere and had nothing but a glorious death to look forward to.

Adam Lanza of Newtown had his own story. He was diagnosed with Aspergers syndrome,(14) which might not have been a massive problem in itself but which interacted with other serious emotional problems. Since dependent children in our society have so much in common with chattel, Lanza's mother could legally withdraw him from school, provide no help or treatment, and isolate him at home where all day he played violent video shooting games in a windowless basement with no other contact but his mother. His only outings were to a shooting range with his mother. No one was allowed into the home. Adam's basement location was also home to his survivalist mother's gun collection, including the assault weapon and pistol he used to shoot her in the face and kill 27 others.

Nothing was done to help Adam Lanza. He was abandoned to his dysfunctional family as children are. Fully five children a day are abused to death in America.(15) We lead the developed world in child abuse.(16) The overwhelming majority of these murders are committed by the child's family, to which American society abandons them.(17) I believe that Lanza murdered little children because he was murdering the child in himself. When children are cruelly treated, they do not hate their parents. Instead they hate their childhood needs that keep them dependent on the savage adults that surround them.

Adam Lanza points a finger at another barbaric aspect of American life. In this country we assume that any and every person capable of the biological act of conception is automatically capable of the 24 hour care of an utterly vulnerable life. There is no direct profit to be made from saving children's lives. As Americans' lives increasingly deteriorate, children increasingly die of neglect and abuse.(18)

Mass murders beam a spotlight on the rage of America's dispossessed, including our workingmen and children who see no future. Profitable refuges for male despair are sold in war and guns. The rage has no socially constructive outlet. We have no mass progressive movement to address American pain and direct it towards the corporate and military powers that rule our lives. All other developed nations have progressive mass movements to create hope by focusing anger on obstacles to social justice. Lacking such a movement, the U.S. instead holds out big money alternatives in the military, the gun industry, and violent media and entertainment. Could that be why we have more than 35 times more gun deaths than other industrialized countries?(19)

## Conclusion

It is time to return to our initial question, "Where does the murderous rage come from?" Why does the U.S. lead the world with 35 times more mass killings than any other developed nation? Some have blamed popular violent video games of the type Adam Lanza watched almost continuously. However, Japan, to name just one major industrialized society, allows books, films and video games whose violence is at least on a par with what is seen in the U.S. Yet only in America are mass shootings common.(20) A key difference between Japan and the U.S. is that Japan has a social safety net that, even after two decades of economic doldrums, has kept its citizens in far better shape than their American counterparts. Japan has not abandoned its men and children and they do not experience the pervasive hopelessness common among their American counterparts. In the United States today that hopelessness is all the more stark because of the centuries-old optimism that existed before the 1970s, and which is exacerbated because acknowledgement of its loss is censored.

Nor can guns alone cannot explain mass murder in America. Canada is a society in which private guns are permitted and massively owned. According to the U.N., Canada has the third largest number of gun owners per capita after the U.S. and Norway,(21) but of these three countries only the United States experiences mass murder as an ongoing phenomenon. Neither Canada nor Norway outsources its jobs to any significant extent. Neither has a mass of raging, dispossessed men living in a society that defined itself previously as a land of

individual opportunity and upward mobility. In neither are its educated youth in debt and on food stamps. Canada and Norway have vast viable socialist movements for political, social and economic equality for all.(22)

Finally, America is the only wealthy Western democracy that abandons its children to families with no qualifications but conception. Our children are abandoned to the worst rate of poverty and governmental neglect among developed nations. Lost boys and men in this country look for their power in an American way, through violence.

The blind rage of mass killings is a wake-up call. We have to look at several conditions of existence that interact with one another and with the psychology of individuals to create America's mass killings. At present the U.S. is home to a vast group of predominantly white and some Asian men who are dispossessed and enraged. We have a political system that permits vast money at the top to hijack our politics and culture. We have powerful lobbies that sell us militarism and gun ownership as refuges for wounded machismo. We have profit churning mass media with films, videos, and advertisements pushing violence as a solution to problems from intimate life to international relations. We have no mass political and social movement to focus our rage on the grotesque inequality that dominates our nation, though the Occupy Movement was a start. Wake up! We need to create a socially organized, positive left voice for hope, equality and change. We cannot let money decide our future. Our lives might depend on it.

## Notes

1 On December 21, 2012 random shootings in Frankstown Township, Pennsylvania left four dead. On December 24, a killer in Webster New York, shot three people dead.

2 Andrew O'Hehir. Dec. 15, 2012. "How America's Toxic Culture Breeds Mass Murder." Salon Magazine. [http://www.salon.com/2012/12/15/how\\_americas\\_toxic\\_culture\\_breeds\\_mass\\_murder/](http://www.salon.com/2012/12/15/how_americas_toxic_culture_breeds_mass_murder/)

3 Mark Ames. 2005. *Going Postal*. Brooklyn NY: Soft Skull Press. This is a powerful and neglected book.



- 4 Harriet Fraad, and Tess Fraad Wolff. 2013. "Capitalist Profit and Intimate Life." *Journal of Psychohistory* (forthcoming).
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Hanna Rosin. 2012. *The End of Men*. New York: Penguin Books.
- 7 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, (SPIRI) April 11, 2011. "Background paper on SIPRI military expenditure data, 2010."
- 8 Jerry Kroth. 2012. "The American Empire: Delusion, Denial Deception and the End of the American Dream." [http://www.salon.com/2012/12/15/how\\_americas\\_toxic\\_culture\\_breeds\\_mass\\_murder/](http://www.salon.com/2012/12/15/how_americas_toxic_culture_breeds_mass_murder/)
- 9 Juan Cole, December 16, 2012. "Let's Also Remember the 176 Children Killed by Drones." <http://www.juancole.com/2012/12/lets-also-remember-the-176children-killed-by-us-drones.html>
- Bie Kentane, May 7, 2012. "The Children of Iraq: Was The Price Worth It?" Global Research Report on the Brussels Tribunal of May 9, 2012. A million Iraqi children have been killed in direct killings by bombs and bullets or indirect killing through toxicity invading the water systems and heavy metal and chemicals in the ground water, creating cancer, and birth defects. Wounded Iraqi children are even more numerous. Iraq has the greatest number of child amputees in the world. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-children-of-iraq-was-the-price-worth-it/30760>
- 10 Protect Children, Not Guns. 2012. Children's Defense Fund. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/protect-children-not-guns-2012.html>
- 11 The Washington Post, Dec. 18, 2012. "Gun Industry Recoils from Horror."
- 12 Erik Kain. April 19, 2012. "As Video Games Sales Climb Year Over Year, Violent Crime Continues to Drop." *Forbes Magazine*.
- 13 Tyler Durden. Jan. 8, 2013. "America's PhDs on Food Stamps." [OnlineColleges.net](http://OnlineColleges.net)
- 14 The New York Times Health Guide. Jan. 9, 2013. "'Aspergers Syndrome.'
- <http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/aspergersyndrome/overview.html>
- 15 Michael Petit. 2011. "America's Child Death Shame," BBC News Report, Oct. 17. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15193530>
- 16 National Child Abuse Statistics. 2012. Childhelp. <http://childhelp.org/pages/statistics>
- 17 Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities. 2010. Child Welfare Information Gateway. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/fatality.pdf>
- 18 National Child Abuse Statistics. 2012. Childhelp. [www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics](http://www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics)
- 19 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Centre for International Crime Prevention. 2002. "Crime Statistics: Murders with Firearms (most recent) by Country." The Eighth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.
- 20 Christopher Fergusen. Dec. 20, 2012. "Sandy Hook Shooting: Video Games Blamed Again." *Time Magazine*. <http://ideas.time.com/2012/12/20/sandy-hook-shooting-video-games-blamed-again/>
- 21 Al Smithies. 2006. "Ten Myths About Gun Control." *Canadian Shooting Sports*. [www.cdnsshootingsports.org/tenmyths.html](http://www.cdnsshootingsports.org/tenmyths.html)
- 22 George Lakey. Jan. 25, 2012. "How the Swedes and Norwegians Broke the Power of the 1%" *Nation of Change*. <http://www.nationofchange.org/how-swedes-and-norwegians-broke-power-1-percent-1327762223>; Joan Kuyek. Jan 1, 2013. "We Are Unstoppable: Another World is Possible." *Canadian Dimension Magazine*. <http://canadiandimension.com/articles/5126/>

**Harriet Fraad is a hypnotherapist/psychotherapist in Manhattan, New York. She writes a regular blog with Richard D. Wolff which is available on their websites: [HarrietFraad.com](http://HarrietFraad.com) and [RDWolff.com](http://RDWolff.com). Harriet is a frequent contributor to *The Journal of Psychohistory* and a former president of the IPA.**

## IPA Statement on Violence (Continued from page twelve)

Similarly, while most direct violence is committed by males against other males, this does not constitute evidence that males are “inherently violent.” Only some males in any culture are violent, and anthropologists have identified cultures, such as the Aka Pygmies, in which violence is rare or non-existent.

What, then, causes individuals to be violently aggressive or self-destructive? In short, such behavior is generally learned from experience. When an infant cries, the response of care-givers will profoundly shape the personality of the adult that the infant will become. Persons whose needs were met in infancy and early childhood will generally feel empowered to meet their own needs in non-destructive ways as adults. Persons who experience love and empathy will in most cases become loving and empathetic. By contrast, a person who was punished for crying as an infant and whose developmental needs were not met will most likely grow up into a troubled adult who will cause suffering to himself and others. In some cases, this will take the form of violent aggression. This is of course a simplification of how individual personality and motivation develop, but it is the least misleading simplification we know for explaining individual destructiveness.

### State Violence

The institution of war has its origins in the Neolithic period, when towns based on agricultural surplus became vulnerable to raids by armed nomads. The acts of aggression by nomads had clear economic motivations and the earliest warriors of agricultural societies most likely played a defensive role. With increasing class inequality, political elites gained increasing control over resources and used force as an instrument for gaining yet more control. It was in this historical context that the institutions of war, the state, and slavery developed simultaneously and persisted for millennia. While war has always been a complex result of psychological, political, and economic factors, it is fundamentally an instrument for the accumulation of wealth and power by self-interested elites whose perceptions of self-interest are distorted by psychopathology.(2)

In the United States today, elites use the fear of terrorism to maintain a permanent war economy that costs middle class taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars

every year, lavished on nuclear weapons, aircraft carriers, tanks, warships, fighter aircraft, missiles, and over a million troops deployed in several hundred military bases throughout the world. While legitimized in the name of “national security,” this enormous apparatus of state violence serves mainly to enrich defense contractors and other big corporations at the expense of ordinary people, while failing in its supposed mission to protect the country from terrorism, which is the real lesson of 9/11.

At more than .7 percent, the United States also has the highest incarceration rate in the world, mostly consisting of persons convicted of non-violent, drug-related crimes, and disproportionately men of color. This form of state violence costs the middle class tens of billions of dollars more, while being just as disconnected as the country’s war economy from the real security needs of ordinary people. While incarceration of violent offenders occurs only after the damage has been done, mental health and wellness programs for all who need them can actually prevent violence and would cost a tiny fraction of the vast resources politicians spend on state violence.



### Structural Violence

If a child’s brain is irreparably damaged, it matters little whether the cause was physical abuse by their caregiver, the violence of war, or malnutrition caused by economic structures not assignable to any particular agent. The end result is the same—a maimed life. An example of an economic structure that produces such violent effects is the current system of world trade, which perpetuates extreme poverty in the developing world, including brain damage caused by malnutrition. A second example of structural violence is America’s politi-

cal-economic system, which perpetuates joblessness and a fossil-fuel industry that contributes to climate change, of which the 2012 drought in the Southwest and Hurricane Sandy are symptoms.(3) As these examples indicate, structural violence is no less deadly than school shootings and in fact occurs on a much bigger scale.

## II. Remedies

Making America significantly less violent will require far-reaching reforms. The mass shootings that periodically dominate the country's attention are only a small part of a pervasive problem, discussed above under the categories of individual, state, and structural violence. The best way to honor the victims of the Sandy Hill massacre and the thousands of others who die from gun violence in America every year will be a national commitment to reducing and eventually ending violence in all its forms. To this end, the International Psychohistorical Association supports the following policy remedies:

*A federal ban on assault weapons and guns with high capacity ammunition magazines, applicable to existing gun inventories and including a buyback program for weapons already in circulation;*

*Mandatory criminal background checks and a waiting period for all gun purchases;*

*Increased funding for parenting classes in communities and public schools, which can help end the cycle of violent child rearing associated with mental disorders;(4)*

*Decriminalizing drug abuse, defining it as a medical problem, and reallocating resources from the prison industry to effective health and wellness programs;*

*Demilitarization of the U.S. economy and foreign policy;*

*A Green New Deal—massive public investment in renewable energy infrastructure and sustainable technology—which can create full employment while mitigating climate change by reducing reliance on fossil fuels.(5)*

Nothing less than a bold policy agenda of the sort proposed here can greatly reduce violence in America as measured by the incidence of individual, state, and structural violence. To those who call such an agenda utopian, we say: our children deserve to live in peace and security, and it is the responsibility of adults to do whatever is necessary to achieve that outcome.

## Notes

1 To be sure, there is evidence that some individuals have low thresholds for reacting to slights, frustration, and perceived external threat, a behavioral disposition that may have some genetic or epigenetic basis. However, there is reason to believe that such individuals, if provided with suitable treatment, are capable of compensating for this disposition and learning non-violent ways of meeting their needs.

2 The policy-making process is more complex than indicated here, of course, and involves international relations, the politics of state and other elites, and the mass public. The decisive support for militarism and wars of aggression, however, comes primarily from hawk political elites and the predatory investors and corporate elites who benefit directly or indirectly from militarist policies (see Brian D'Agostino's *The Middle Class Fights Back: How Progressive Movements Can Restore Democracy in America*, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012). Individuals who actively pursue unlimited military power and wealth at the cost of vast, unnecessary human suffering harbor pathological motivations almost by definition, though the form that the actions of policy-makers take are heavily shaped by the institutional contexts in which they act.

3 Natural disasters are instances of violence, as the term is used in this statement, only inasmuch as their increased frequency and intensity are the result of human action and thus preventable, which is the case when increased carbon emissions contribute to climate change.

4 Additional funding is also needed for home visiting programs for post-partum doulas and pediatric nurses to encourage healthy attachment and parent's capacity for mentalization/reflective function (empirically found to be the most important factor in healthy attachment).

5 Such investment can be funded through carbon taxes, increased taxes on the rich, and diversion of tax revenues from unnecessary military programs.

***The IPA Board of Directors encourages you to circulate this statement widely. A link to the statement appears on our website at [psychohistory.us](http://psychohistory.us)***

# How to End Violence in America

## Statement of the International Psychohistorical Association

*This statement was released by the IPA Board on 1 January 2013*

Enough is enough. In the wake of the December 14, 2012 Sandy Hook massacre in Newtown, Connecticut, a new moral consensus has finally emerged in America about the need to rein in the country's out-of-control epidemic of gun violence. But how? Should the federal government ban civilians from owning guns with high capacity ammunition magazines, the kind used to kill 26 children and their teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School? Or should an armed sentinel be stationed in every school in the country, as recommended by the National Rifle Association a week after the Connecticut shooting? What else should be done? Americans have a right to authoritative answers to these questions, answers based on evidence, logic, moral wisdom, psychological understanding, scientific knowledge, and all the other resources that human beings can bring to bear in understanding and preventing intolerable human suffering.

This statement is intended to provide such answers. It is the consensus that has emerged after two weeks of discussion in the International Psychohistorical Association, whose membership and interests span a wide and diverse range of disciplines that include (in alphabetical order) clinical psychology, education, ethnic studies, film criticism, gender studies, genetic psychiatry, history, media studies, peace studies, political psychology, psychoanalytic studies, psychobiography, public policy, social work, and sociology. We begin by defining violence and explaining its causes. We end with a program of social policies designed to end violence in America, or at least greatly reduce it.

### I. Causes

To ameliorate and prevent violence, it is necessary to understand it, which in turn requires definitions and classification. Civilian gun violence—such as the mass shootings that have afflicted America in recent decades—can be classified as a form of individual violence. It will be helpful to begin with a general overview. Violence can be classified into two types—direct and structural. Direct violence can be defined as the use of physical force, or threat of use, to hurt or gain

power over others. Direct violence can be committed by individuals acting on their own behalf (e.g. physical abuse within families, murders) or by agents of state institutions (e.g. the use of force by police or soldiers). Structural violence is preventable suffering, such as poverty, resulting from property relations and other social structures.

### Individual Violence

Individuals may use physical force or threaten to use it as an act of aggression or in self-defense. Aggressive uses of force are generally defined as criminal. Why do some people engage in acts of violent aggression, at the risk of incarceration? As with all human behavior, every individual has a unique pattern of motivations that arise from their heredity, experience, and their own past decisions. As for heredity, there is no scientific evidence that some individuals are genetically predisposed to be violent or self-destructive.<sup>(1)</sup> There is no gene for using a gun, or any other kind of weapon. The kind of behavioral dispositions attributable to genes are inchoate, and can only express themselves as violence in the context of a culture that provides the models and means for such behavior. Countries that institute gun control have less gun violence. If children were socialized into a culture of peace and not subjected to corporal punishment, it would most likely be rare for people to hit other people.



*(continued on page ten)*