

# Trump in El Paso: The culprit returns to the scene of the crime

8 August 2019

Donald Trump returned to El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, yesterday, the scene of two mass shootings last week that killed a total of 31 people. These staged visits were seen by the citizens of El Paso, Dayton and millions more for what they were: a dishonest attempt by Trump to evade the fact that he instigated and bears principal political responsibility for what took place.

After Democratic officials greeted Trump on the tarmacs in El Paso and Dayton, sizable protests made it impossible for the president to show his face in two of the states he won in the 2016 election. Yesterday in El Paso, nurses and doctors at the hospital that treated many of the victims signed a petition demanding the president be barred from entering the building.

On July 29, the *World Socialist Web Site* responded to Trump's references to the city of Baltimore as a "rat and rodent infested mess" where "no human being would want to live." Hours before the first of last week's shootings took place in Gilroy, California, the WSWS warned:

Words have meaning and consequences. The denunciation of an American city and its citizens by a sitting president in such blatantly racist terms has no precedent in the history of the United States. Trump is playing with fire, and he knows it. He and his advisers believe that his racist comments will not only encourage and rally his supporters on the far right. Trump also calculates that his blatant provocations will intensify an already unstable political environment, with an immense potential for violence, and create conditions that will enable him to invoke dictatorial powers to uphold "law and order."

Trump is, to put it bluntly, an accomplice of murder.

But the significance of the events goes beyond Trump himself. The shootings and the response to them marks a turning point in American society.

On Tuesday night in New York City, the sound of a motorcycle backfiring caused thousands of people to panic, stampeding through Times Square in fear that yet another mass shooting was underway.

In a city that prides itself on its pluck and confidence, over a dozen were injured as people fled into restaurants and attempted to force their way into passing vehicles, desperate to escape. A Broadway theater performance of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* halted mid-scene. An actor in the performance, Gideon Glick, tweeted:

"Stopped our show tonight due to a motorcycle backfire that was mistaken for a bomb or a shooting. Screaming civilians tried to storm our theater for safety. The audience started screaming and the cast fled the stage. This is the world we live in. This cannot be our world."

This is the mood that exists in the aftermath of a week in which three major shootings took place. The fact that the backfire of a motorcycle could cause a panic in America's largest city, a thousand miles from the latest shooting, shows the desperate state of American society. Millions of people in the US and internationally have become aware that something is deeply wrong.

Such shootings are all too commonplace in the US, taking place more than once a day in 2019 and generating a tremendous degree of nervousness and insecurity. Americans are killing Americans in record numbers. Many fear that they or a loved one could be the next unsuspecting victim of a mass shooting.

The protracted buildup of immense social tensions has created conditions of embryonic civil war. Given the degree of political confusion and distress, this has so far taken a socially pathological character. But in order to treat social sickness, the conditions in which the disease emerged must first be identified.

First, the US government has ritualized state violence

and carried out 30 years of permanent war. The US government has unleashed unprecedented levels of violence on countries like Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya and Pakistan. The police, using the weapons of the wars abroad against the domestic population, kill more than one thousand people a year without facing punishment.

A whole lexicon of state violence—including words like “disposition matrix,” “shock and awe,” “extraordinary rendition” and “officer-involved shooting”—has developed over the last two decades, expressing the degree to which violence has become embedded in American life. Now this violence is blowing back into American society with extreme force.

Second, massive levels of social inequality dominate all aspects of political and social life. The rich have acquired unprecedented fortunes and transformed themselves into the most criminal and corrupt ruling elite that has ever existed in human history, showering themselves with endless wealth and rewarding every form of financial criminality.

Trump represents the rotten combination of all of capitalism’s most criminal elements: Wall Street, real estate speculation, casinos, TV entertainment, the military and long dealings with the Democratic and Republican parties.

Third, the political establishment works to suppress any progressive expression of social opposition to inequality and war. Above all, the entire state, media and trade union apparatus is engaged in the suppression of the class struggle.

This foments a deep sense of frustration and social alienation. Such broad social phenomena produce and intensify forms of psychopathy exhibited by many shooters.

It is not an apology for fascism to recognize that the shootings have social roots. Fascism is, as Leon Trotsky wrote, a form of political pathology—the politics of despair. Those who engage in fascist rampages are on suicide missions and do not expect to live.

The social anger which exists among broad masses of people must acquire a politically progressive character.

Another process is developing on an international scale: the emergence of mass working class opposition to social inequality. The wave of mass demonstrations that inaugurated 2019—including in the US, Algeria, France, Sudan and many other countries—have expanded as the year continues.

In July and August, mass protests involving substantial

percentages of the total population broke out in Hong Kong and Puerto Rico, filling the streets with people on islands off the coasts of the two largest economies in the world. The working class is now playing a more prominent role in these demonstrations, a fact which undoubtedly has fueled jitters in international markets. Protests of a similar scale have taken place in recent weeks in Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua and elsewhere.

A decade after the market crash and global recession of 2007–08, the billions-strong international working class is awakening across the world. Recently released data shows that in every continent, the number of strikes and large protests worldwide is an order of magnitude higher than at any time in the 20th century.

To oppose fascist violence and its enablers in the Trump administration, workers need a perspective. The fight against fascism must be connected to an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and socialist program that addresses the social needs of the international working class. Global economic life must be taken from the hands of the ruling class and reorganized on a planned, rational, socialist basis. The wealth of the financial aristocracy must be expropriated and redistributed according to need.

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