

9/11 and Americans' Remarkable Incapacity for Self-reflection

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When Lois Griffin gets elected mayor of Quahog by pandering to the stupidest and most meaningless references to 9/11, audiences roar. But when that same scenario is replayed over and over again in a largely successful attempt to separate people from their intellect, their conscience and their instinct for self-preservation, no one apparently even knows what's happening. Never Forget! Shriek the flag-wavers and cheerleaders of empire, as if such a thing were even possible.

For the past ten years, every march to war, every Free Speech Zone, every step in the criminalization of dissent-the whole ball of wax has been accompanied at every turn by the mindless repetition, the fear-and-fascism-drenched threat not to question or even think too deeply, because "9/11 changed *everything.*" There is a blunt and chilling meme floating around facebook and other internet fora, subscribed either to the Palestinians or some other victims of empire's vented rage to avenge the events of that day: "Your 9/11 is our 24/7."

Yet Americans so lack the capacity for self-reflection that we apparently prefer to continue to see ourselves as eternal victims instead of the initiators of one insane war after another.

In all of the parades, all of the cheers, the self-congratulatory pomp and circumstance with which Americans greeted the supposed murder of Osama Bin Laden (seen instead with horror by much of the world), there was nary a glimmer of the careful introspection one might expect from mature adults. Instead, there seems to be this constant recapitulation of the above scene from Family Guy. No questions asked, no effective movement against the wars, no real interest at all in grasping the long range consequences of the actions of our government. Nothing, really, beyond the throwaway line, "How much will it cost so we can feel safe again..?"

It is a truly frightening and depressing time to be alive. The political system is so warped that the two monopoly political "parties" in the US, who pretend to represent different interests, are in collusion on all the most basic questions of the day in service to the corporate interests who pay for their elections. Worse, the electorate has still not caught on, rendering ever more prescient Jay Gould's famous boast that he "could hire one half of the working class to kill the other half." Indeed, people are so bamboozled that our political circus continues unmolested, focusing on non-issue distractions like the debt ceiling and cutting the deficit (while still spending more on war than all the other countries in the world combined....!). Even worse, the so-called "left" allows itself to be lulled to sleep by the

charm of a Democrat president, a black man no less, whose actions would have been vigorously and rightly opposed were there an R after his name instead of a D. What a farce.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. When history repeats itself, it is, a famous German once said, to be as tragedy before farce. And we are so deep in blood from the needless death and suffering our governments have caused in the name of avenging 9/11 that it would be presumptuous to skip over the enormous tragedy still in the making. More than a million people have been killed in the pursuit of our seemingly unquenchable blood lust. It is as if Americans, completely convinced that we are always wearing the White Hats, have no notion of scale or balance at all. In the scheme of things, and with even a cursory glance at the record, it is painfully obvious that the destruction wrought by US foreign policy absolutely dwarfs any destruction wrought on the United States itself. But of course it has always been true that the goals of empire are floated on rivers of blood—just not that of the imperialists themselves. As Robert Emmet famously said to the judge who sentenced him to die, "...if it were possible to collect all the innocent blood that you have shed in your unhallowed ministry, in one great reservoir. Your Lordship might swim in it."

Libya is the latest ticket punch on America's Trip to Hell on the Installment Plan. The unconscionable bombardment by US-guided bombs onto yet another sovereign country actually started to wear thin for a moment. The story of NATO murdering Gaddafi's grandchild and son-in-law was actually starting to gain some traction and cause tension among NATO allies. Hmmm....some began to think at long last. Maybe such barbarity is a bit unseemly for the heirs to the grand tradition of Civilizing the Natives. In fact, I had just sat down to type just such a piece when the whole storyline was interrupted by the emergency announcement of the assassination of Bin Laden and the others living in his compound.

So with new inspiration from the cowboy killing of the arch 9/11 nemesis (whom the FBI admitted they could not indict for lack of evidence), the bombing of Libya resumed in earnest. Make no mistake—NATO needed absolutely every ounce of financial, logistical and political help it got from the Americans. US military were involved in virtually every step of the horrific process—this was Obama's war, with a deliberately hidden US footprint. The only ones fooled, as it turns out, are Americans and Europeans. 30,000 bombs rained down on Libya between March and—well, they're still falling—did you know that? Killing perhaps another 60,000 people to add to the toll of the victims of wars for empire. It is simply unseemly to mourn in such a public and mawkish way while blacks in Libya are being rounded up, tortured, raped, imprisoned and killed by US proxy thugs. Once again, tens of thousands of people incinerated from the air while defending their country—more than the 50,000 US troops killed in Vietnam (and a damn sight fewer than the 2 million Southeast Asians who died there). But then, it is only **our** deaths that count—this is the fantasy world of people who always wear the White Hats. But If readers will suffer yet another Family Guy quote, I'll take one from Stewie: "Someday...your Uppance will Come!"

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