

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8065>



USA

Two Shootings Symbolic of American Malaise of Fear and Hatred

- IV Online magazine - 2023 - IV579 - April 2023 -

Publication date: Thursday 20 April 2023

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Two heartrending shootings this month dramatized the state of American society a culture of disintegrating social solidarity, of increasing violence, and of political inability to solve the country's problems. Embedded in these violent encounters and manifest in their context is a social psychology of fear and hatred, of insecurity transformed into aggression, of resentment become revenge against the other.

The first incident happened on Thursday, April 13, in a quiet suburban neighborhood in Kansas City, Missouri when Ralph Paul Yarl, a sixteen-year-old boy, went to pick up his younger brother and accidentally went to the wrong house. Yarl, an excellent student and musician, stood waiting for a while at the door. Then Andrew Lester, an 85-year-old retired aircraft mechanic, came to the door, and shot Yarl in the head. The boy, wounded and bleeding went to three houses where he was turned away before a woman called for help and aided him.

Police did not immediately arrest Lester, who later turned himself in and was released on a \$200,000 bond. He was charged with first-degree assault and armed criminal action, both felonies. Lester later said, he was afraid that the boy was going to break into his house, though police said there was "a racial component" to the shooting. Lester pleaded not guilty and may use Missouri's "stand your ground" law which permits one to defend himself, or the "castle law" (so-called based on the old saying that "A man's home is his castle") which permits the use of arms to stop intruders to defend himself—though Yarl never threatened Lester and never crossed the threshold into his house. Remarkably, doctors believe that Yarl will have a complete physical recovery.

The second shooting occurred on April 15 in Hebron, New York, 208 miles north of New York City and 60 miles north of Albany, the state capital. It is a quiet rural town with a population of just 1,800 people. There, a group of young people driving in two cars were looking for a friend's place when they drove into the driveway of the wrong house. Realizing their mistake, they turned their cars around and were driving off when the 65-year-old homeowner and owner of a small contracting business named Kevin Monahan stepped out on his porch and fired two shots, one of which killed Kaylin Gillis, a young woman 20 years old, an honors student, a competitive cheerleader, and an aspiring artist.

Sheriff Jeffrey J. Murphy, who happens to know Gillis' family, said "There was no reason for Mr. Monahan to feel threatened," Sheriff Murphy said, "especially as it appears the vehicle was leaving."

Neither man had anything to fear. But a 2019 study by the journal *Nature*, found that "most research comparing gun owners to non-gun owners suggests that ownership is rooted in fear." Many say they own a firearm for self-defense, but those most likely to own guns are among the least likely to face victimization. These two old white men, living in fear, and at least on Monahan's case filled with hatred by the conservative news he watched, had nothing to fear from these two young people, and yet struck out at the young black man and the young white woman.

We don't know the political views of these men, but Monahan, a small business owner, and Lester, a highly skilled worker, both white, are typical of the Donald Trump's voting base. And young people like Yarl and Gillis, though we don't know their politics, are like much of the voting base of the progressive Democrats. The shots were a kind of dramatization of the national sickness of fear and hatred stoked by the right.

Following the shooting of Yarl, 1,500 of the 1,800 of his classmates at Staley High School, both black and white joined what they called a "unity march," carrying signs that read, "Justice for Ralph." Yes, justice for Ralph. And for Kaylin, And yes gun control. but we must also stop to the right which is stoking fear and hatred.

Two Shootings Symbolic of American Malaise of Fear and Hatred

20 April 2023

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.