

REVENGE
OF THE
MUTT-
PEOPLE

ColdType

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**DRINK, PRAY, FIGHT AND FUCK:
Dispatches from America's Class Wars**

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“There are some things so disgusting that only a white man would be willing to do them.”

– Walter Wildshoe, Coeur d’Alene Indian

MANY years ago I worked at an industrial hog farm owned by the Coeur d’Alene Indian tribe in northern Idaho. The place stank of the dead and rotting brood sows we chopped out of farrowing crates – bred to death in the drive for pork production. And it stank of the massive ponds that held millions of gallons of hog feces and rotting baby pigs, and every square inch was poisoned by the pesticides used to kill insects that hogs attract and the antibiotics fed to hogs from hundred pound sacks. The Coeur d’Alene Indians refused to suffer those kinds of conditions; they wouldn’t even manage the place. They contracted it out. As my friend Walter Wildshoe said: “Only a white man would work there.”

The hog farm, however, offered one company benefit. The white manager gave employees any young pigs that developed large tumors – those with tumors smaller than golf balls went to market with the rest of the hogs – or were born with deformities such as heads scrunched sideways with both eyes on the same side, or a leg that stuck out of the top of their body instead of the bottom. We employees would butcher and eat them. Among hog farm employees, all of whom were tough descendants of the Scots Irish mutt people, free pork of any kind was prized, deformed with tumors or otherwise. You never saw a Swede eat the stuff.

So I took these pigs home and, using a huge old butcher’s knife, slashed their throats in the woods, right in front of my two kids – aged two and four at the time – without flinching even as the pigs screamed almost like humans and thrashed around, splashing thick dark glops of blood everywhere. It bothered me not one bit, just as it never bothered my daddy or granddaddy. Nor did it seem to bother my children as they watched, just as it didn’t bother me as a child when my uncle handed me sacks of barn kittens to drown in the crick. And Walter would shake his head and say, “Only a white man would wrestle a hog with a butcher knife. An Indian would shoot the motherfucker with a gun.”

My point here is that we rural and small town mutt people by an early age seem to

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have a special capacity for cruelty compared, say, to damned near every other imaginable group of Americans. For instance, as a child did you ever put a firecracker up a toad's ass and light it? George Bush and I have that in common. Anyway, as all non-whites the world round understand, white people can be mean. Especially if they feel threatened – and they feel threatened about everything these days. But when you provide certain species of white mutt people with the right incentives, such as free pork or approval from god and government, you get things like lynchings, Fallujah, the Birmingham bombers and Abu Grahb. Even as this is being written we may safely assume some of my tribe of mutt people are stifling the screams of captives in America's secret "black site" prisons across the planet. Or, on a more mundane scale of cruelty (according to CBS footage), kicking hundreds of chickens to death every day at the Pilgrim's Pride plant in Wardensville WV, just up the road from where I am writing this. Or consider the image of Matthew Shepard's body twisted on that Wyoming fence... All these are our handiwork. We, the mutt faced sons and daughters of the republic. Born to kick your chicken breast meat to death for you in the darkest, most dismal corners of our great land, born to kill and be killed in stockcar races, drunken domestic rows, and of course in the desert dusty back streets at the edges of the empire. Middle class urban liberals may never claim us as brothers, much less willing servants, but as they say in prison, we are your meat. We do your bidding. Your refusal to admit that we do your dirty work for you, not to mention the international smackdowns and muggings for the republic – from which you benefit more materially than we ever will – makes it no less true.

Literally from birth, we get plenty of conditioning to kill those gooks and sand monkeys and whoever else needs killing at any particular moment in history according to the whims of our leadership. Like most cracker kids in my generation, from the time I could walk I played games in which I pretended to (practiced for) killing – Japs, Indians, Germans, Koreans, African Zulus (as seen in the movies Zulu and Uhuru!), variously playing the role of U.S. cavalry, Vikings a la Kirk Douglas, World War II GIs, colonial soldiers and, of course, Confederate soldiers... As little white cracklets we played with plastic army men that we tortured by flame, firecracker, burning rivulets of gasoline, kerosene or lighter fluid. And, if atomic bombing was called for, M-80s and ashcans. We went to sleep dreaming of the screams of the evil brutes we had smitten that day, all those slant-eyed and swasticated enemies of democracy and our way of life. Later as post-cracklets in high school we rode around in cars looking to fight anyone who was different, the "other," be they black, brown, or simply from another school or county. As

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young men we brawled at dances, parties or simply while staring at one another bored and drunk. We bashed each over women, less-than weight bags of dope, money owed and alleged insult to honor, wife, mother or model of car – Ford versus Chevy. In other words, all of white trash culture’s noblest causes. With the “fighting tradition” of Scots Irish behind us, we smashed upon each other ceaselessly in trailer court and tavern, night and day in rain and summer heat until, finally, we reach our mid-fifties and lose our enthusiasm (not to mention stamina) for that most venerated of borderer sports.

Said meanness is polished to a high gloss murderous piety most useful to the military establishment. Thus, by the time we are of military age (which is about 12), we are capable of doing a Lynndie England on any type of human being unfamiliar to us from our culturally ignorant viewpoint – doing it to the “other.” Sent to Iraq or Afghanistan, most of us, given the nod, can torture the other as mindlessly as a cat plays with a mouse. That we can do it so readily and without remorse is one of the darkest secrets that underlies the “heroes” mythology the culture machine is so fervently ginning up about the ongoing series of wars now just unfolding. And when one of us is killed by a rooftop sniper in Baghdad we weep and sweat in our fear, band closer together as Border brothers in the ancient oath of ultimate fealty and courage. And we meant it and we do it.

About half of the Americans killed in Iraq come from communities like Winchester, Virginia or Romney, West Virginia or Fisher, Illinois or Kilgore, Texas or About 45 percent of the American dead in Iraq come from communities of less than 40,000, even though these towns make up only 25 percent of our population. These so-called volunteers are part of this nation's de facto draft – economic conscription – the carrot being politically preferable to the whip. The carrot does not have to be very big out here where delivering frozen food wholesale to restaurants out of your own car entirely on commission is considered a good self-employment opportunity. I’m serious. One of my sons did it for a couple of months. Once you grasp the implications of such an environment regarding the so-called American Dream, the U.S. Army at thirteen hundred bucks a month, a signing bonus and free room and board begin to look pretty good. Even a nice long ass-kicking tour of the tropics killing brown guys becomes attractive. Especially compared to competing with other little brown guys at home, humping “big-roll sod” across ever-expanding MacMansionland. In the process, we mutt people learn worldly lessons that the post graduate set raving about the jobless economy cannot know. For instance we know first-hand that there is no way to beat little brown sod balling guys willing to sleep in their cars and live on canned beans and store brand soda. Better to go “volunteer” for the army.

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Along with the military come those big bucks for college later, up to \$65,000, which according to current wisdom is more than enough to buy your way out of the beans and soda pop car camp at the edge of the new Toll Brothers development. Maybe some poor kids do go to college on their military benefits. But, personally speaking, I can count the number on one hand I know who ever did. Most of them were black. The rest seem to go to the local truck driving school (rip-offs designed to collect government money) or the ITI “vocational career training,” again designed to Hoover up federal dough. Let's be honest here: graduating from the average American cracker high school here in the suburban heartland is not exactly the path to Harvard Yard. Your best educational option is probably the one you are looking at on the matchbook cover.

Now that education has been reduced to just another industry, a series of stratified job training mills, ranging from the truck driving schools to the state universities, our nation is no longer capable of creating a truly educated citizenry. Education is not supposed to be an industry. Its proper use is not to serve industries, either by cranking out feckless little mid-management robots or through industry purchased research chasing after a better hard-on drug. Its proper use is to enable citizens to live responsible lives that create and enhance their democratic culture. This cannot be merely by generating and accumulating mountains of information, facts without cultural, artistic, philosophical and human context or priority.

“No one should be forced to dive into an ocean of debt to learn how the world works, much less escape minimum wage hell. It should be enough just to want to know. Then too, look at our educational institutions.

Academia, at least from this outsider's perspective, is an almost impenetrable veneer of elitist flatulence and toxic competition.

Jesus, no wonder this country is in such sorry shape.”

– Arvin Hill, Texas philosopher

HOW in the hell did knowledge become so commoditized in America? Dumb question. After all, what do we expect from a nation of pickle vendors who will charge you for the air you breathe, and then make you beg for your change? At first blush, higher education and the working class Scots Irish mutt people seem to be oil and water. Maybe so. But the majority of them also have a snowball's chance in Florida of getting

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a higher education. Especially when it comes to the institutions of learning that constitute our elite springboard into careers in law and politics, business and science. The Yales and the Harvards and Princetons... For example, according to the Wall Street Journal Asians constitute about 2% of the population, but make up over 20% of Harvard graduates. About one third of Harvard graduates identify themselves as Jewish. Together Jews and Asians make up about half of Harvard graduates. Subtract these, plus the 15% minority quota and that leaves maybe 40% of openings for the 75 or 80 % of white Americans who are not Jewish, Asian, Latino or black or whatever... Now throw in the skew of northeastern WASPS at elite universities and we are left with maybe 20% of openings for 60% of white Americans. It presents a sorry damned picture of liberal East Coast WASPS and Jews and minorities getting all the prime educational gravy. The neocon leadership is right when they tell working white Americans the system has been stacked against them by an unseen hand, though they never mention that their own kids are among the silver spooners rowing around in the Ivy League gravy boat. I know I'll get clobbered by Jewish and black critics for pointing this out. But liberal refusal to see white people as also being diverse, and seeing that some of them indeed need their own sort of affirmative action is exactly the kind of thing that helped the neocons lead these working white people by the nose. Education is everything. You know it and I know it. And what the white working classes don't know because lack of education has hurt you and me and them. So why in the hell don't we help this group of people into college and into the institutions that are elite springboards to careers in law and politics? Why not have affirmative action for Appalachian kids from the Ohio Basin or from the Deep South or anyplace else where tens of millions of kids grow up in houses containing not a single book, except possibly the Bible. Why don't we do these things? Part of the reason is that this stubborn proud people does not whine beg or threaten its way to access to education, employment or anything else. And part of it is because we unquestioningly accept a system that calls greed and self-interest drive, thus letting the prosperous professional and business classes pretend there is no disparity around them for which they might just be partially responsible, even as they pay the maid and the gardener who lack health insurance a pittance...or see that their mechanic's bill reads, "repare of fuul injection, \$105." And because liberals have driven secularism into the ground and broken it off, and need to actually adhere to some religious values – real ones – even if we don't feel particularly inclined toward religion. (Psst! Everybody else in America DOES feel inclined toward it.)

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So we will either see that Americans, religious or not, get educated equally so they won't be suckered by political and religious hucksters. If not, then we must accept that uneducated people interpret politics in an uninformed and emotional manner, and accept the consequences. America can no longer withstand the political naiveté of this ignored white class. Middle class American liberals cannot have it both ways. It has come down to the simplest and most profound element of democracy: Fairness. Someday middle class American liberals will have to cop to fraternity and justice and the fact that we are our brother's keeper, whether we like it or not. They're going to have to sit down and actually speak to these people they consider ugly, overweight, ill-educated and of poor taste. At some point down the road all the Montessori schools and ivy league degrees in the world are not going to save your children and grandchildren from what our intellectual peasantry, whether born of neglect or purposefully maintained, is capable of supporting politically. We've all seen the gritty black and white newsreels from the 1930s.

A member of this peasantry, I quit school at age sixteen in the eleventh grade to join the U.S. Navy. I hated school, hated the social class differences in a small town that make life so miserable during adolescence, when one's community and social status is being nailed down permanently for anyone planning on staying here. As a former young white cracklet I can say with all confidence that when you live with a rusty coal stove in the middle of the living room for heat, your old man smells of gasoline and motor oil no matter how much he bathes, and your mom suffers from strange, unpredictable behavior due to untreated depression, you do not much feel like inviting the doctor's daughter home. Or anyone's daughter for that matter. Doctor's son = College, career, golf, nice car and a bimbo. Redneck laborer's son = Well, if you stay out of trouble, there's always room for one more broad-shouldered chinless pinhead stamping out bright yellow plastic mop buckets on the injection molds at Rubbermaid. Thus, at 16 and choosing options, I decided that launching fighter jets from the deck of an aircraft carrier to kill gooks and the notion of pussy and booze on some exotic foreign shore looked damned good. When I think about what happened to my boyhood friends who stayed home and put in 30 years at Rubbermaid, my choice doesn't sound that bad even today. They all became redneck ultra-conservatives, mostly out of some sort of fear and bitterness that I can never seem to put my finger on. But I knew these people in a younger and more hopeful time. I know they were capable of – not to mention deserved – more than they got out of life. Maybe their bitterness stems from that.

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Meanwhile, their kids do the same as they did. Go uneducated. Sometimes I walk the street on which I grew up. And when I look around I see the same kinds of kids as ever. They are all fatter, but they are the same cigarette-smoking, know-nothing white punks that I was, the tough sons and daughters of the unwashed. In my old neighborhood where over one quarter of adults do not have a high school diploma, there are lots of yellow ribbons in the windows, Marine Corps and Army parent's icons on the porches and scrubby lawns, evidence enough that you do not need an education to contribute something of value the far-flung perimeter of our expanding empire of blood and commerce. Pure meanness is highly valued in Caesar's legions. Lots of Americans don't seem to mind having a pack of young American pit bulls savage some flyblown desert nation, or running loose in the White House for that matter, as long as they are our pit bulls protecting Wall Street and the 401-Ks of the upper middle class.

The problem is this: pit bulls always escalate the fight and keep at it until the last dog is dead, leaving the gentler breeds to clean up the blood spilled. We mutt people, the pit bulls, have always been your own, whether you claim us or not. And until you accept that you are your brother's keeper, and help deliver us from ignorance, you will continue to have on your hands some of every drop of blood spilled... from the sands of Iraq to the streets of East L.A. All the socially responsible stock portfolios, little hybrid cars and post modernist deconstruction in the world will not wash it off.

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