

Is America Cracking Up, One Horrific Incident at a Time?



By Steven Yates

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"The Ultimate Act of Betrayal"

A few days ago news feeds were filled with accounts of the Ohio woman, [Kristel Candelario](#), 32, who'd gone off on a vacation to Puerto Rico for 10 days, stopping in Detroit on her way back, leaving her 16-month-old daughter alone that whole time. The girl, whose name was Jailyln, was dead in her crib from severe dehydration and starvation, as all she'd had to eat or drink for that whole time were a few bottles of milk. She was lying on blankets saturated with urine and feces.

This woman's daughter died alone, suffering from combined thirst and hunger, doubtless terrified, and finally succumbing. She'd lost seven pounds during her ordeal. Neighbors had reported hearing a baby crying out, but nobody had tried to find out if something was wrong.

Candelario pled guilty to aggravated murder and child endangerment. A forensic pathologist testified during the woman's trial that a very young child's worst separation anxiety occurs between the ages of 9 and 18 months. The judge, before pronouncing a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole, called what she'd done "the ultimate act of betrayal" of the solid bond between a mother and her child based on "love, trust, and unwavering protection."

Characters in Stephen King's novels and short stories have suffered some horrific deaths. This – *which really happened!* – strikes me as magnitudes worse than almost anything the horror maestro has penned!

Candalario's vacation was last June. I don't recall any of the aftermath being reported at the time. Maybe I just missed it.

Through her attorney, she pled struggles with ongoing mental health issues, for which she'd been on medication. One wonders if she enjoyed her vacation, partying indifferently in Puerto Rico with a boyfriend, and then stopping in Michigan to see another boyfriend before returning home to find her lifeless daughter.

The thought running through my mind while reading this account and follow-ups: what would possess a mother to do something like this? Is it humanly possible for one person to be that self-absorbed?

I also thought of revisiting my opposition to the death penalty....

It was interesting to peruse comments sections under these articles. One comment stood out: execute the woman in the same fashion she executed her daughter, by locking her in a cell without food and water for 10 days or however long it took.

No prison would do that, of course, as it would straightforwardly violate the Constitution. But I get the sentiment. It's a flash of sanity, having brushed up against horrific insanity, reacting to it.

Kaylee Gain

The above case came to my attention on the heels of the [story of the black girl in St. Louis, Missouri who pummeled a white girl in a brawl](#) involving several girls outside a high school, pounding her head on a concrete sidewalk until she was

unconscious and convulsing.

Kaylee Gain had suffered a fractured skull. Brain bleeding and swelling was diagnosed later.

A video shows the attack in progress! (I decided against linking to it. We're not going to be voyeurs of that sort of thing here. Anyone who wants to can track the video down; it went viral, after all. Surprise, surprise.)

This happened on March 8. Last I heard, Kaylee was in intensive care and has not regained consciousness. She's 16; her attacker is 15. The attacker's name hasn't been released, but she was arrested, taken into custody, and charged with criminal assault. Her family has provoked outrage by opposing her being tried as an adult.

It's tempting to play up the racial angle here, but we don't have to (except to note how black kids tend to be far more vicious than white kids when they fight, if only because they seem to have less impulse control).

For my purposes here I'd prefer to emphasize something else. Fights broke out when I was a kid. Never having been one of the "popular" kids, I got in a few scrapes myself.

But never did anything like this happen. When we were kids and a fight broke out, the victor always stopped the attack when it was clear he'd won.

Fights in today's high schools and even middle schools are apt to result in serious injuries and even deaths!

Moreover, whereas other kids often took actions to break up fights when I was growing up, in today's digitally-saturated media environment they're more likely to film them and upload them to the Internet to see if it goes viral!

Are kids going insane? What's happened to parenting? Have families disintegrated that badly (especially black families)?

The Mississippi “Goon Squad”

Episode three: six white Mississippi former police officers, self-styled as members of the “Goon Squad,” the name they actually used for themselves, [were handed long prison sentences this week for torturing two black men in various ways culminating in shooting one of them in the mouth.](#)

Again, it’s easy to wonder if this case would have received the national coverage it did had the races been reversed, as that wouldn’t fit the official cultural Marxist narrative of oppressed blacks perennially victimized by privileged and empowered whites.

But given the details of the torture, which included stripping them naked and humiliating them with sex toys, again we have to set such matters aside and wonder: did these men completely lose their marbles?

In this post George Floyd era, a white police officer would have to be out of his mind to shoot or even get especially rough with a black man, but obviously it still happens.

I’d argue that this case, like many others where race isn’t even a factor (e.g., white cop shoots unarmed white man), goes beyond such considerations.

Transgenderism

There are plenty of other episodes out there, more modest in the sense that no one got physically harmed as a result, but suggesting a country spiraling towards sociological oblivion, making real victims of ordinary people finding themselves in insane situations. Some are related to the genuinely oppressive wokeness that has spread everywhere.

For example, there’s the [woman in Fairbanks, Alaska, a life coach by profession whose membership in a Planet Fitness gym was canceled after she complained that she’d confronted a man](#)

[shaving in the woman's locker room](#). The man had self-identified as a "queer LGB"; this was supposed to excuse him. There'd also been a freaked out looking very young girl in there. Perhaps aged 12.

The gym issued a statement calling itself a "judgment free zone."

The woman had snapped a photo. That was the excuse used by the gym to cancel her membership, citing a rule against members taking photos or videos of other members in the locker rooms without their permission.

The gym later clarified: the man identified as transgender. The gym cited a slew of rules about "gender identity."

Transgenderism alone is a sign of how America is going stark, raving nuts.

When I was in college, even leftists would have responded to the idea that men can change into women and women can change into men as completely bonkers.

Now you can be fired from a teaching position at a university for contending that sex is a matter of biology alone, and questioning the current dogma that "gender" is a "social construct" that "privileges" the "patriarchy."

Transgenderist insanity began to infect corporate America during the last decade.

I happen to have a public health education degree. It took me two years to earn it, back in the 1990s. The program emphasized sex ed, over more sensible topics like nutrition (it did have an exercise physiology division).

Transgenderism was not mentioned once, not in any class, not by any student. While *transsexuals* had been known to exist, no one considered the phenomenon a politically-grounded identity. It was considered a form of mental illness and treated as

such.

At least Planet Fitness has taken a hit, as sane members across the country responded by canceling their own memberships.

Go woke, go broke, as the saying goes.

That's an exaggeration. Disney and other woke corporations are far from broke. What may be called the deep influence of extreme left identity politics is everywhere, including in businesses that go with the flow, but then probably don't give politics or culture a second thought if they're making money.

"Squatters Rights"

The last case I'll look at is of a woman in Queens, NY, heir to a house worth at least a million, [who came home from an extended trip only to discover that "squatters" had taken up residence in her house](#). She ordered them out and changed the locks to keep them out.

Then *she* was arrested.

In NYC, people can claim "squatters rights" if they've been living on a property for 30 days. Evict a squatter, and the homeowner can be charged with unlawful eviction.

My sources for this story don't state whether these people were in the U.S. legally or not – no corporate media outlet (not even [Fox](#)!) touched that one – but we know that NYC has filled up with illegal aliens during the three-plus Bidenista years we've suffered through. We also know that the "Bidenomics" of the New Normal has been a complete disaster unless you're comfortably in the one percent. (No, what the Dow is doing is *not* a reflection of what the economy as a whole is doing!)

The owner of the house says she is selling it and moving with her family away from NYC.

Inheriting property is the only reason I can think of for anyone to live in NYC, or in *any* major city in the U.S., for that matter. Such cases have erupted in cities like Seattle as well: also controlled by leftists who hijacked the legal system long ago.

Clearly, you no longer have property rights in America unless you're superelite. If you have property rights it's *your call*, *absolutely*, on who lives there and who doesn't.

From the Death Culture to Creating a Culture of Intrinsic Value

So how do I sum up a piece like this? These cases are all different from one another. The first was the most horrific, and described as such by those involved – indicating a semblance of sanity on the part of law enforcement, forensic investigation, and attorneys involved. At no point did Candelario's lawyer try to excuse her conduct; he only tried to mitigate it with an account of her health issues – issues that, as the prosecution pointed out, were hardly in evidence during her 10-day vacation.

I wonder, though, what percentage of those in that courtroom think that abortion is okay, is just a woman exercising her "reproductive rights."

We live in a death culture, and it has many manifestations. Abortion can dissolve an unborn baby in the womb, or tear the unborn baby's limbs off.

Medical science has *proven* that unborn fetuses can respond to stimuli just a few weeks after conception. That means they can definitely feel pain, and possibly sheer terror during their final seconds of life.

We also live in a culture where quite a few people – it is hard to know what percentage since I'm unaware of any studies that have tried to explore this – see others as having only

extrinsic value: value accrued by doing something, or obtaining some title, or more precisely, value to *them*. A statement I saw somewhere online the other day seems to describe their attitude: *It's my world, and you just happen to be passing through it.*

We can conquer both of these by affirming, under God, the intrinsic value of persons and building this idea into education and into all of our societal systems and institutions.

What does it mean to say a person has intrinsic value? To Christians, what it means is that all persons have value by virtue of their being persons created in God's image.

To secularists and materialists, I have no idea what it means, if it can mean anything.

This implies that scrapping materialism as a worldview and restoring an upgraded Christianity is what we need to pursue. To clarify: materialism didn't make Kristel Candelario abandon her baby girl. Nor did it compel the Mississippi cops to torture two people. What it did is *create a nihilistic cultural environment* the consequences of which include me-first narcissism, which can range from disregard of the property of others to a disregard for their well-being and eventually their lives.

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Steven Yates is a (still recovering) ex-academic with a PhD in Philosophy. He taught for more than 15 years total at several universities in the Southeastern U.S. He authored more than 20 articles, book reviews, and review essays in academic journals and anthologies. Refused tenure and unable to obtain full-time academic employment (and with an increasing number of very fundamental philosophical essays refused publication in journals), he turned to alternative platforms and heretical notions, including about academia itself. In 2021 he moved to Chile. He is married to a Chilean national.

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Steven Yates's book *Four Cardinal Errors: Reasons for the Decline of the American Republic* (2011) can be ordered [here](#).

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