

Voice Viewpoint

Kent, Jackson State Still Haunt Us

*There are days so full of blood
We think we will die from it*
— Stephen Leggett

May 4, 1970, was one of those days. In a sudden, sickening period of 13 seconds, four Kent State University students were murdered by the Ohio National Guard, and nine more were injured. A short while later, seven more students (including two dead) were shot at Jackson State University. They were gunned down for protesting Richard Nixon's decision to annihilate the people of Cambodia (as if genocide against the people of Vietnam and Laos wasn't enough to maim his conscience).

Now, eight years later, the blood shed at Kent and Jackson State is still flowing. Maybe not in a physical sense like it did on that incredibly violent day, but in a political/cultural sense, the Kent and Jackson State murders are still with us. The proof of that claim is all around us, as evidenced by our generally passive acceptance of the serious problems the country faces as a result of misdirection and deception from the nation's capital. Taxes are higher, unemployment is higher, inflation is more severe, nuclear death traps (more euphemistically called power plants) are being built all around us, etc., and yet now, more than ever, we sit back and allow these problems to expand.

The murders at Kent and Jackson State are with us every day because of the consequences which necessarily follow from, in essence, hundreds of millions of Americans being silenced through the past eight years. Since that horrifying month of May, when the majority of America saw — for the first time — their government turn its guns against its own citizens (blacks had already seen such behavior for decades), people around the country have been silent as exploitation and repression have escalated.

As long as we sit back and mindlessly observe our hearts and souls being taken away from us by giant corporations and the federal government, Kent State will be with us. As long as we allow our lives to be manipulated by huge, heartless business interests, Jackson State will still be with us, because our inexcusable acceptance of those conditions is a perfect indication that the government's sanctioned murders intimidated us.

The emotions of Kent State are best illustrated in Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's "Ohio," an extraordinary memorial to the students government guns shot down. The words of that song best express the range of feelings we all should feel about both Kent and Jackson State. Two lines in particular are poignant reminders of one of the saddest — and most important — times in our history:

Four dead in Ohio . . .
How can you run when you know?

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Monday, May 4, 12:28 P.M. Captain Ron Snyder, left, with baton, and members of Charlie Company stand guard at the body of Jeff Miller.



Secretaries Deserve Better

This year, as in past years, secretaries are going through a very humiliating and demeaning ritual called National Secretaries Week. During this week secretaries throughout the nation are subjected to sexist jokes about the importance of their work and feigned interest in their plight on the part of the executives they work for. Their employers will take them out to token lunches and patronize them for an hour or so, and everyone will smile and laugh at what is actually a very pathetic situation.

The fact of the matter is that secretaries are among the nation's most neglected and, ironically, most vital workers. They also happen to be the largest segment of the nation's work force, and in the long run probably do more important work than any other single group of employees in the country.

For decades now secretaries have labored under exploitative and humiliating working conditions. They have no union, are paid slave wages, and receive very few benefits.

And for all this they receive, in addition to their incredibly inadequate compensation, the degradation that occurs every year during National Secretaries Week when their employers — who are responsible for their low wages and poor work situation — suddenly pay a lot of attention to them. This is a prime example of adding insult to injury. It isn't enough that employers and executives humiliate their secretaries every day; in addition, one week is set aside annually to honor that exploitation.

The real purpose of National Secretaries Week should be to draw attention to the important work that secretaries perform, and to the ridiculous conditions under which they are forced to operate. More people need to be educated about the fact that a lot of secretaries do an executive's work for a slave's wages.

Maybe this year National Secretaries Week can be celebrated by all the nation's secretaries taking that week off from work. Some real consciousness raising might take place if not even a single secretary shows up for work during the entire week. That may be the only way secretaries will receive the credit and attention they deserve.

Your reactions and comments are appreciated and wanted. Please send all letters to the editor to: the Flint Voice, Hotline Center, 5005 Lapeer Rd., Burton, Mich. 48509. Letters should be signed, but names will be withheld upon request.

