

## **The American political system is not really a democracy, it is a plutocracy**

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*Edward C. Corrigan*

**In an interview with Muslim Press, Edward C. Corrigan said, “The American political system is not really a democracy. It is a Plutocracy or as some academics have recently concluded it is an Oligarchy.”**

“It is my opinion that much of the violence directed at the Black community, and other minorities, has its roots in the existing economic system and the systemic racism that exists in the United States,” he asserted.

Below is the full text of the interview:

**Muslim Press: The governor of the US state of North Carolina declared a State of Emergency after one person was shot Wednesday night and four officers were injured as a fresh wave of protests gripped the City of Charlotte in the wake of a police-involved shooting of a black man.**

**As you know the United States has been a self-declared champion of human rights across the globe. However, the recent killings of African-Americans by the US police have raised questions about Washington's own record. What is your take on the human rights situation in the US?**

Edward Corrigan: The United States governing authorities do not want to see the reality of Black Americans, Native Americans and Latino Americans. They live in a "White Bubble" that blocks out almost everything they do not want to see. It is almost a weekly occurrence that an unarmed Black American is killed. So far in 2016 over 700 people have been killed by police in the United States. Most have been people of color. The United States in 2010 had more than 7 million people in jail. Today that number is certainly higher. The United States has the highest per capita incarceration rate in the World. Again mostly people of color.

The privatization of the American prison system has created a profit motive for keeping prisoners in jail for longer periods of time and for reducing the money spent on rehabilitation, education and health care. The use of prisoners for forced labor has been described as a new form of slavery. Again it is mainly people of color who are being imprisoned and cruelly exploited.

In the United States if you have a criminal record in many States you are prohibited by law from voting. This means that millions of Americans are denied a right to vote for this reason. Again most of these individuals are persons of color.

There is a political agenda associated with criminalizing certain behavior, such as smoking marijuana, which was wide spread in the Black community and in alternative life style components of the population. This agenda was to disenfranchise millions of Americans who were outside the White establishment, in an attempt to perpetuate "White Privilege" and "White Economic Domination." This motive has even been admitted by some US politicians.

**MP: African American communities in the US are increasingly falling victim to violence and discrimination. Why? Do you believe the white-dominant system has waged a war on the blacks?**

Edward Corrigan: Black Americans are primarily descended from the slaves that to a large extent created much of the wealth of the dominant White settler community. It was against the law to teach a black slave how to read and write. In 1865, the Thirteenth US Constitutional Amendment officially abolished slavery in the United States. The former Black slaves were thrown into a "free labor economy" that they were not equipped to compete. This disadvantage helped perpetuate a black economic underclass that still exists today. There have been some improvements but it was not until the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's that the economic and political situation for the Black community

started to improve. Up until then, and even much after, Blacks were lynched and threatened when they sought to exercise their political and democratic rights. The Klu Klux Klan (KKK) was a widely supported White movement whose primary purpose was to terrorize and intimidate the Black community into political and economic submission. There were also other aspects of this repression which involved racial separation of the sexes and segregation of the races.

In many respects this system of racism and segregation has continued to the present day. The US Supreme Court, dominated by Republican appointees, recent revocation of the Civil Rights Act which helped protect the voting and civil rights of the American Black community was a major setback for minority rights in the US. Unfortunately many Southern States went back to their old policies of political and racial discrimination against the Black community and also against people of color who do not support the current system of White Privilege and White Economic Domination.

There are numerous examples of Republican politicians attempting to create obstacles to prevent Blacks and other people of color from voting. This is called vote suppression. This campaign to manipulate the voting process is hardly democratic. It is designed to perpetuate White political and economic dominance.

Native Americans faced similar racist and discriminatory measures to prevent them from voting. The Indian Citizenship Act was not passed until 1924. It was not until 1962 that Native Americans won the right to vote in New Mexico. The Indian Civil Rights Act was passed in 1968 which helped address some of the discrimination.

Many techniques were used to restrict Black and Indian voting including barriers to voter registration, by charging a poll tax, civic and literacy tests, having fewer balloting stations that were difficult to access and by gerrymandering boundaries to deny Blacks and Indians the right to elect members of their own community and to successfully run for office.

The reality that is denied by most White Americans is that the United States society is built on genocide, slavery, racism and discrimination in order to perpetuate an economic and political system largely dominated by Anglo-Saxon White Americans and other White European settlers. There are of course a few examples of successful Blacks but they are the exception. It is my opinion that much of the violence directed at the Black community, and other minorities, has its roots in the existing economic system and the systemic racism that exists in the United States.

**MP: Back in June, the US Senate rejected a series of gun-control measures just days after the Orlando nightclub massacre shooting, including proposals to keep weapons out of the hands of**

**people on terror watch lists. Every year, more than 30,000 people are shot and killed in the United States. What do you think about the Senate move?**

Edward Corrigan: The American political system is not really a democracy. It is a Plutocracy or as some academics have recently concluded it is an Oligarchy. It is dominated by a few billionaires who have almost a controlling lock on the electoral system. It is power, organization and money that controls the system. The most powerful special interest group is generally considered to be the National Rifle Association (NRA).

The Senators and Congressmen are afraid they will be defeated if they challenge the NRA. So when even an overwhelming majority of Americans support the idea that people on "terror watch lists" should not have easy access to weapons the Senators vote against the majorities' wishes because they are afraid of the NRA, their money and their small army of dedicated supporters that can successfully defeat almost any American politician. The Senate vote makes no sense if one wants to limit gun violence as the majority of Americans want, or from a democratic perspective, but it makes sense if you understand the power of special interests and money in the American political system.

*Edward C. Corrigan holds a B.A. in History and a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Western Ontario. He also has a Law Degree from the University of Windsor and was called to the Bar of the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1992. His academic area of expertise is the Middle East and he has published many articles in academic publications including Middle East Policy, Middle East International, Outlook and Z Magazine. His article "Is it anti-Semitic to Defend Palestinian Human Rights?" was published as a chapter in, Anti-Semitism: Real and Imagined: Responses to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism," (The Canadian Charger, Waterloo, Ontario, 2010), pp.83-99.*