

President Obama is wrong: Australia is not like the US

by Michael Pascoe via cyd - The Age Friday, Oct 2 2015, 8:16am

international / prose / post

*Well, bravo Mr Pascoe, Obama is not only wrong about Australia, he is wrong on just about everything, but you should never forget he is America's well deserved president. Perhaps real Oz journalism is taking a breath of fresh honest air. I sincerely hope your article reminds all Aussies that we are a unique culture/nation that many other nations envy and that insecure, un-Australian conservative politicians should cease attempting to create a little America in the South Pacific. We are the envy of the world and we should never forget it -- are you reading this Mr 'G Sachs' Turnbull? If you wish to succeed you had better pay more attention to our **culture of a fair go** than your predecessor did -- "ISIS is coming to get every one of us;" a Yankee ploy that may get traction over there but not a hope in Oz. Abbott truly is the "suppository" of all wisdom as are his remaining Libs that continue to emulate the USA and its appalling, unfair policies and mindless violent culture.*



In his very fine [speech this morning](#), full of sorrow and frustration, President Obama made a mistake: Australia is not like the United States. We decided not to be.

We decided to grow up instead and become a more reasonable, rational society that explicitly values human life and prefers to think the best of people, rather than the worst.

The US is too immature a society to be allowed to play with guns. It has never shed its Wild West mythology. Americans still use their courts to kill people, which sends a message in its own way. Read The New Yorker's account of the [Rodricus Crawford case](#) and see a state that thinks taking a life is a no big deal. It's a country that values property more than life.

Unlike the US, we collectively decided to have a decent social safety net, the concept of a living wage and make good education freely available. Most of us are wary of those with extreme views of any kind. Inherent scepticism about church and state turns out to be not such a bad thing.

Unlike Australia, the US is at war with itself, strongly divided on racial, religious, political and social lines. We have our problems, significantly worse in some places than others, but overall our gaps are bridgeable. The US seems to prefer to use its societal chasms as moats and defend their borders.

Dystopian view

The dystopian viewpoint is a significant theme in American literature, the assumption that the country is a disaster away from rape and pillage, from turning into plundering carnivores. Having never made peace with its past, which pretty much was one of rape and pillage, it hasn't escaped it.

From The Road to Hunger Games, the effect is numbing. The National Geographic Channel features a show called Domsday Preppers, a how-to guide for armed and dangerous "survivalists" building redoubts on the assumption that everyone else is armed and dangerous and out to get them. It is a nation that is collectively paranoid.

It doesn't seem to help to have a large body of religious fanaticism - it doesn't help anywhere, whatever the particular brand of religion. There's little difference between the violently fundamentalist Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Jew.

There's an American brand that hasn't evolved far from justifying slavery. It carries a fundamentalist certainty that is in equal parts both ignorant and frightening. The concept of American exceptionalism - that God has a chosen mission for the USA - is a dangerous adjunct.

It's all fodder for the deranged fanatics of the American gun lobby, with a bible in one hand and an assault rifle in the other. It's fuel for the paranoid interpretation of a line in the constitution that is a blatant anachronism.

We have our share of deranged individuals, but we try not to empower them. We don't promote violence for good or bad and increasingly decry the bad.

Protection myth

That was another mistake Obama made: talking of responsible gun owners having firearms to "protect their families". The statistics have long been in - having firearms is more likely to endanger families than to protect them. Obama is not immune to the paranoia.

And so, when domestic terror struck at Port Arthur and John Howard showed political leadership, we overcame our ratbags, our Leyonhjels, and agreed to reasonable controls on firearms. They're not particularly tough, except in restricting access to weapons specifically designed for killing human beings. Only an NRA member could think that unreasonable.

The restrictions demonstrably work.

The immediate American-like response at the crazier end of the National Party has abated. It's safe to say we're now rather proud as a nation of our gun laws. We haven't suffered another mass shooting. In National Party heartland, there are men alive who would not be if guns had remained so freely available when they were troubled youths.

And I write as a person who grew up with a knowledge and enjoyment of and respect for firearms. My father was a policeman. We had firearms in the house. I have a gun licence. It's been a little while now, but I enjoy shooting clays when I have the chance. And I think only a madman would want to water down our gun laws or, in America's case, not adopt them.

But, no, we are not like America. We're a society the USA should aspire to be.



Indiscriminate killers



Is it really a surprise when Americans kill each other?

<http://tinyurl.com/p4fzh9h>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-1896.html>