

As democratic socialists, we condemn the act carried out by Joseph Andrew Stack last week in Austin, Texas and offer condolences to the victims. While there is no consensus about whether this was an act of terrorism, we affirm that individual acts of violence will do nothing to solve the mounting social and economic problems faced by working people in the United States. Instead, such acts will likely create misguided public sympathy for government agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Homeland Security, who wish to further erode our civil liberties.

While condemning this act, we also recognize that some of the grievances raised in Stack's contradictory suicide letter speak to real problems faced by millions of working people every day. In the more coherent sections, he mentions the failure of the US government to provide healthcare, the gross inequity of the bank bailout and the inadequacy of support for elderly Americans. He details the plight of the elderly widow of a steel worker who is reduced to eating cat food because of the elimination of pension payments. It is difficult not to be moved to anger by this story.

Similar stories of abuse and neglect exist throughout the US today. This is not a surprise considering we live in a society where 5% of the population controls 85% of the wealth. Consequently, one child out of every six faces issues of food insecurity and almost 50 million people have been left outside the healthcare system. All of these conditions are direct results of capitalism.

Democratic socialism is the humane alternative to the madness of capitalism. Socialist economics propose worker self-management, participatory budgeting and guaranteed rights to healthcare and housing. Such changes are built upon socialist values of solidarity, compassion and justice.

What we need most in this country is a grassroots political response to injustice that gives a voice to working people. Such a re-awakening will allow us to become active creators of a more progressive future. Organizations, such as the Socialist Party USA, are working to build such movements and are open to all those seeking to struggle for justice.