

# Violence is As American As Cherry Pie

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Theme: [History](#)

*Cherry Pie is a much loved American dessert. For most Americans cherry pie conjures up warm feelings of a bountiful family dinner followed by a slice of pie oozing red cherry syrup topped with a scoop of ice cream. Thus the poignancy of the maxim—"Violence is As American As Cherry Pie". Some of us will remember and will understand this adage.*

This was H Rap Brown's (Jamil Abdallah Al-Amin) cogent summation of American culture 45 years ago. I remember it often—too often, reading the daily news.

Today 'Violence is as American as Cherry Pie' describes the massacre of 16 Afghans by an American serving his great superpower nation abroad.

Yesterday it was a knife attack at an employment center, the day before that a shooting at a college, before that a bombing of shepherd boys in a far away mountainside, and before that US drone attacks on another foreign mountainside, then shootings in a neighborhood home in Ohio, a school, a military base, outside a courtroom.

It goes on and on, and on, daily in the US and wherever US military personnel and their killing machines are at work, "protecting" America and Americans across the world. The toll escapes us, as we move swiftly from headline to headline.

H. Rap Brown was Black Panther leader and chair of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s. An articulate outspoken critic of American culture, he eventually became Jamil Al-Amin, settling in Atlanta Georgia. There he devoted himself to Islam and community service "reforming people's lives and improving the community through this Divine program." (In 2000, al-Amin was sent to prison for a murder for which many believe he was falsely accused.

H. Rap Brown's saying came back to claim him as it continues to take so many of our Black American leaders. (Many maintain Al-Amin is a political prisoner whose real crime was "guiding others to Islam". In May 2004, after Iraq's Abu Graib prison revelations, in a published message Al-Amin writes "mistreatment in Iraqi prisons is only the tip of the iceberg and that Muslims in prisons inside the US 'have been similarly trampled'. He emphasized that such misbehavior must be put within its context: It is an attempt to break Muslims, [to strip them of their humanity and to trash their identity, dignity and self-respect.](#)

News headlines this past week pass over the violence in neighborhoods across the US to tell us of a deranged soldier—a lone gunman—as if this soldier himself is a victim of the war he served so gallantly.

The murder of Afghans that he reportedly single-handedly carried out is becoming a story of

the mental problems experienced by our trained professional killers and a debate about when and how the US should leave Afghanistan.

Would that this event is understood as a 'condition' of American culture: "As American as Cherry Pie". T

he problem is not in an army unit gone mad or in a military occupation.

It lies deep within US culture—the games children play, the language they use, the design of their cars, the books they read and the songs they sing.

Across the world, people understand this. Those biting into their cherry pie or watching the Baghdad sky "light up like a Christmas tree" cannot, alas.

*March 15, 2012 by B. Nimri Aziz now also posted on [www.RadioTahrir.org](http://www.RadioTahrir.org) blog*

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