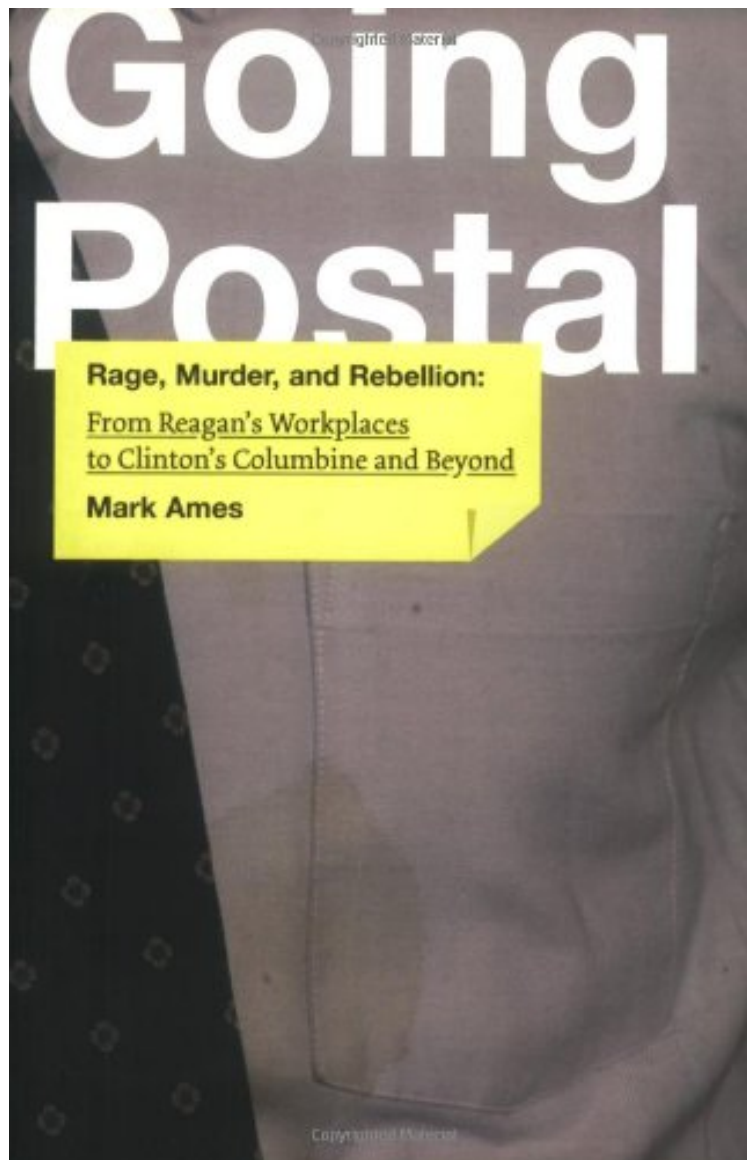


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Going Postal: Rage, Murder, and Rebellion: From Reagan's Workplaces to Clinton's Columbine and Beyond

Mark Ames

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Mark Ames : Going Postal: Rage, Murder, and Rebellion: From Reagan's Workplaces to Clinton's Columbine and Beyond before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Going

Postal: Rage, Murder, and Rebellion: From Reagan's Workplaces to Clinton's Columbine and Beyond:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Nation Going Berserk By Jeff T "Going Postal" by Mark Ames is a chilling work with an original and powerful thesis: most rage-murders in the US are failed revolts from "sane" people who finally can't take the abuse anymore. The most important contribution that Ames provides is that we need to understand these rampages in terms of them being rebellions against the dying American Dream. The pressure to live out the Dream mutates into rage when things don't work out. Ames also finds patterns in the modern act of violent rage-murder and the slave revolts of the antebellum South. Ames also argues that millions of Americans are currently living lives no different from slaves, in many respects. I do have one major criticism of the work: namely, if people in the US go postal over the terrible working conditions that have been screwed down on the American worker since the Reagan admin, why haven't we seen more instances of going postal in foreign countries where corporate America does business? In other words, if Ames's theory holds, we should see a rise in third world worker examples of violence. So far, this hasn't been the case. Anyway, there's much to consider in this demanding book.

8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Astounding, original work By Matt W. Mark Ames is one of those writers who comes up with so many original ideas and observations that the stupid stuff he frequently says--whining about racism, inventing Koch conspiracies out of whole cloth--is excusable. Going Postal is a great example of why. This is easily one of the most important books in modern America, because it advances a theory that is utterly sensible, yet extraordinarily difficult to talk about in public: the idea that spree shootings aren't random acts of violence, but the only logical response to a world that dehumanizes and enslaves us. The idea that spree shooters aren't simply deranged wackos is a little more acceptable now today than when Going Postal was originally published back in 2005, but it's still largely anathema to both sides of the political spectrum. The left wants to pretend that banning guns will somehow solve the problem; never mind that as Ames demonstrates, workplace and school shootings were essentially nonexistent before the 1980s. The right thinks that violent video games and death metal are driving kids to ventilate their own classmates, as if teenagers are brain-dead automatons who can be turned into murderers with the flip of a switch. The idea that our society is so dysfunctional that it's driving people to murderous rage is too horrible for Americans to contemplate. Ames' thesis in Going Postal is that workplace and school shootings are a modern form of slave revolts, every spree killer a Nat Turner for the Information Age. That mere sentence is enough to generate a kneejerk reaction from even the most limp-wristed peacenik liberal: "America's standard of living is the greatest in human history! You work a cushy office job, live in an apartment with central AC and can afford to spend your free time playing video games! Your ancestors had to shovel dirt for fourteen hours a day just to put food on the table, so quit whining, you crybaby!" This kneejerk reaction is possible because our culture has done a great job of hiding the reality of slavery in the antebellum South. As Ames discovered, the Northern Puritan idea of slavery being an inhumanly oppressive institution is false. Ames contends that the reason why the U.S. had so few slave revolts compared to other countries in Latin America or the Caribbean is because American slave owners developed foolproof psychological techniques for making their slaves docile and obedient. Their methods of psychological control are virtually identical to the ways that modern corporations condition their workers, including making slaves believe that their masters' interests are the same as their own and giving them a surprising amount of personal freedom (as detailed above). Additionally, Ames points out that Southerners and even Northerners to a certain extent legitimately believed that they were doing Africans a favor by enslaving them, which deprived slave uprisings of a context in which they could be framed. Without this context, slave revolts of the kind led by Nat Turner could be dismissed as acts of psychotic, pointless murder, or blamed on scapegoats such as the Catholic Church. But if spree shootings are the same thing as slave revolts, why the sudden uptick in the past three decades? The answer: Ronald Reagan. When Reagan became president in 1981, his administration transformed the American workplace--and to a lesser extent, public schools--into a cutthroat competition, where workers are forced to work longer hours for less pay, all to make the rich richer. He crushed unions (literally in the case of PATCO), supported outsourcing and downsizing, and encouraged corporations and employers to slash their workers' pay and benefits. And as it turns out, there was absolutely no rational basis for this, as the conservative/libertarian claim that the economy was ailing under Jimmy Carter was a complete and utter lie. As it turns out, the only people who were suffering during Carter's presidency were the rich. The indignity of only being able to afford two summer homes instead of three was too much for them to bear, so they pushed for the election of a president who would let them rape and loot as much as they wanted. And we're living in the world they created, a world in which 90 percent of college grads are forced to move back home, where health insurance is increasingly impossible to obtain, and where sociopaths like Donald Trump and Jack Welch are regarded as folk heroes for humiliating their employees and firing them in mass layoffs. The spree shooters are the people who've decided that they're not going to take it anymore. Workplace shootings began among Postal Service employees (hence the phrase "going postal") because the USPS was the first victim of Reagan-style slash-and-burn economics. Under Richard Nixon, the Postal Service was forced to become profitable (a requirement never imposed on any other government agency), which resulted in a series of employee benefit cuts and a new crop of sociopathic managers seizing control. Post office shootings were blithely dismissed by the public until 1989, when Louisville, Kentucky-based Standard

Gravure employee Joseph Wesbecker became the poster boy for workplace rage. Ames demolishes virtually every myth about spree shootings, from the idea that shooters can be profiled--there have been shooters from every racial group, bachelor shooters and married shooters, and even some women shooters--to the claim that their targets are random; Wesbecker and other shooters deliberately spared certain employees and targeted others. The goal of a workplace or school shooting is to destroy the school or company the shooter is subjected to, which means murdering the people who run it and work for it. And given that every single employer in America is equally inhumane to its employees, the libertarian cliché of "if you don't like your job, get another one" is drivel. Fans of Ames' other writing will be surprised by the tone he takes in *Going Postal*; I certainly was. His writing style is devoid of his usual vitriol, assuming an almost sympathetic tone. Despite this, his prose still is great to read; this is no dry academic work, with cutting jokes and cultural references from *The Simpsons* to *Heathers* all over the place. Ames' analysis of school shooters such as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold makes *Going Postal* doubly worth the price of admission. Much like how he destroyed the American workplace, Reagan's education policies also ruined public schools by placing an undue emphasis on standardized test scores and college admittance, a policy that has continued all the way up to the present day with Bush's *No Child Left Behind*. I can attest to this: AP classes, SAT prep courses and the like were hugely popular at my old high school due to the obsession with academic achievement. Add to this a school environment where "popular" kids are allowed or even encouraged to bully other kids--as was the case at Columbine--and many of the bullied kids simply snap. The most chilling aspect of *Going Postal*, in my opinion, was Ames' notes on how schools and corporations have reacted to spree shootings: by doubling down on the policies that caused them in the first place. People shocked at how 9/11 unleashed our current regime of invasive TSA strip-searches and NSA spying haven't been paying attention to how the private sector has been deploying similar policies for two decades in the form of security badges, reading employees' private emails, and fostering an environment where workers are encouraged to stab each other in the back. As for schools, we have "zero tolerance" policies leading to elementary school kids getting arrested for biting a Pop Tart into the shape of the gun and anonymous tip lines that let bullies snitch on the poor schmucks they humiliate on a daily basis. *Going Postal*'s biggest flaw is that it ignores the role of mass immigration in worsening life for American workers. Because Ames is a leftist, he's blind to how the plutocrats he rails against use immigrants to lower wages and reduce benefits for their employees, whether it's agribusiness lying about "crops rotting in the field" or Zuckerberg agitating for more Indian wage-slave programmers to be brought in on H1-B visas. Indeed, Ames briefly bashes former California governor Pete Wilson for being "anti-immigrant," even though Wilson's policies against illegal aliens were a boon to the poorest Californians. The fact that all of the Koch-funded libertarians infesting our discourse--from Megan McArdle to Bryan Caplan--are in favor of open borders should give Ames pause. Despite this oversight, *Going Postal* is a groundbreaking and amazing book, a must-read for anyone who wants to better understand the mess that is modern America. It's not a happy book, nor is it a book that provides solutions. Are there any solutions? Even today, with the Reaganomics economy in shambles with no relief in sight, Americans by and large are still screaming "Thank you sir, may I have another?" at their corporate slavemasters. Not even the "socialist" Obama wants to touch the sick workplace and school culture in this country. If this is how America ends, then frankly, you morons deserve it. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Mark Ames is one of the best American writers. By DGI highly recommend Mark Ames work, here, in *The Exiled*, and at NSF Corp. Any time there is a rampage shooting, Mark Ames is the person to interview, his insights based on extensive research are worth following, and he has frequently written articles in response to recent tragedies. His twitter handle is entertaining as well.

Going Postal examines the phenomenon of rage murder that took America by storm in the early 1980's and has since grown yearly in body counts and symbolic value. By looking at massacres in schools and offices as post-industrial rebellions, Mark Ames is able to juxtapose the historical place of rage in America with the social climate after Reaganomics began to effect worker's paychecks. But why high schools? Why post offices? Mark Ames examines the most fascinating and unexpected cases, crafting a convincing argument for workplace massacres as modern day slave rebellions. Like slave rebellions, rage massacres are doomed, gory, sometimes inadvertently comic, and grossly misunderstood. *Going Postal* seeks to contextualize this violence in a world where working isn't and doesn't pay what it used to. Part social critique and part true crime page-turner, *Going Postal* answers the questions asked by commentators on the nightly news and films such as *Bowling for Columbine*.