

Letters from WSWs readers

21 July 1999

My contempt for National Public Radio grew a couple of days ago when I heard their Los Angeles stringer do a piece on Clinton's visit to Watts. With Clinton was "Magic" Johnson who, as the stringer noted, has "invested" in Watts by opening several movie houses there. And then on to the next cliché and to the end of the report.

Two seconds of reflection by an honest reporter or one not in thrall to NPR's agenda would have made clear the fact that an investment in movie houses is a way of sucking money out of a region, not one of putting money to work productively. Johnson's movie houses will employ minimum wage popcorn clerks and ticket sellers under the supervision of a low salary, probably white manager. The corn peddlers will clean up the litter between showings, and the profits will go to Westwood or wherever Johnson and his fellow investors live.

I say this by way of pointing to the need for a more consistent and more searching critique of NPR, which long ago became the principal propagandist to well-meaning but slack-minded liberals.

AB

Madison, Wisconsin

10 July

This article got me thinking, and maybe you addressed this point some time ago and I didn't catch it. How curious it is that only six or so Olympic delegates were kicked out of the IOC for bribery and corruption—and that they were all from countries without a lot of political/economic clout. I don't recall any Americans or Europeans being dismissed, and the idea that only these few were guilty is ludicrous. Sadly, the Olympics have been corrupted by money for decades now, and that's unlikely to change.

AH

9 July

David Walsh's review of *The Thin Red Line* was close to my own heart. I LOVED this film. I too attended the

AFI, in Cinematography, and although I no longer work in the industry, film holds a special place in my life. It seems so difficult to find voices in this medium who really speak out about the human condition and are willing to take a stance on their view of things as opposed to trying to simply entertain or make a profit.

I have read reviews that run the gamut of opinions about *The Thin Red Line*. But people seem so unable to do anything but compare it to a "normal" narrative process and how it disturbs them when it just doesn't meet these certain criteria. I found it to be an amazing exercise in cinema, powerful, moving and thought-provoking.

It contains the best action scene I have ever come across in a film. When Charlie Company overruns the Japanese camp. The camera just keeps running with the soldiers. Pushing and pushing forward. Moving like a force of nature though it's sheer momentum. But through this motion we see so many bits of the human story. Soldiers go down and others stop to help them. The fear and adrenaline of the individuals as they are alone—yet a part of this thing. The condition of the Japanese. The personalities of each of the main characters—and how each retains its consistency in the face of these events. The music is a perfect complement—haunting yet powerful and building with the scene. This is filmmaking at its very, very finest.

HN

8 July

Thank you for Jerry White's excellent article on the \$4.9 billion verdict against General Motors. I would like to add a few points.

The horror of this accident was particularly unspeakable. It occurred on Christmas Eve, as Patricia Anderson was driving home from church services with her four children, ages 6 to 15, and a family friend. The defective gas tank caused the 1979 Malibu to burst into flames, as one witness described it, like a stunt from the "A-Team." Besides the pain and suffering, each of the

plaintiffs is seriously and permanently disfigured.

The impact in this case was approximately 50 miles per hour. The evidence demonstrated that by the early 1970s GM had designed and tested fuel tanks that would have survived crashes at speeds as high as 60 to 70 miles per hour, but deliberately chose not to use these safer, more expensive designs because they would have added \$4 to \$12 to the cost of producing each car. Finally, it should be noted that the 12 jurors were unanimous in assessing the punitive damages award, although California law requires a vote of only 9-3, underscoring the strength of the evidence and the revulsion for GM's conduct. Although the award was almost \$5 billion, it amounts to only about two weeks of GM's income.

John Andrews
15 July



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