

# Letters to the WSWS

11 October 2000

Hi,

I have been following your election coverage and have just completed the second installment of the WSWS election statement. In the statement, the board refers to studies and cites several statistics that provide a compelling illustration of the growing polarization between the rich and everyone else in the US. I was wondering, however, if you could cite the sources of the studies to which the board refers as well as ALL of the sources of raw data used to compile the statistics that are presented. Presumably they are publicly available? From where? From when? Which institution(s) generated them?

The reason I ask is that in discussion I often find myself citing statistics presented on the web site, and while I find your indictments powerful and do not doubt your credibility, it helps evaporate skepticism among the people I argue with if they know that the numerical data (or derivations thereof) that I present comes from, say, the Census Bureau or World Bank or what have you (not that the people I argue with appraise the political lineage of THEIR information so critically, but still ...).

I would greatly appreciate it if full citations for the second election statement were either published on the web site with the statement, or if the board could provide me with those citations.

Thanks for your time,

JT

4 October 2000

To Patrick Martin:

Glad I wasn't the only one whose ears pricked up when Lehrer asked about bailing out the money market during the debate. I think Lehrer had guts to do it but most people are still unaware that the Fed is a private bank. What to do? What to do?

PW

6 October 2000

Hi:

I'm probably sending this too late for it to be meaningful, but I really enjoyed reading your story about the closure of the Martha Graham Company and school. It combined a clear presentation of the facts with insightful analysis. I was a researcher for the National Endowment of the Arts in one of the last years it enjoyed adequate funding; it appalled me to see such (IMHO) excessive funding go into the military in the early to mid 90s while the arts funding went into a decline. The message to me? Let's spend all our money to protect a country that in a few years won't be worth saving. I feel we define ourselves as a culture far more by our diversions during peacetime than by any show of military might and prowess during a time of war.

It may interest you to know that the struggle of the dancers and board continues. I've just started doing some background research on this issue for a piece on a local company's acquisition of Graham's "Diversion of Angels." The dancers, shortly after your article was posted, publicized their position and efforts to rebuild; they place the blame squarely in Ron Protas' lap, citing both his inability to function as an artistic director should (he has no background other than his association with Graham, from what I gather) and his abrasive personality that alienated lots of people who pulled lots of purse strings. Their letter has been posted at various sites around the web. I'm at best a closet socialist and I have no idea what political leanings the dancers have, but this strikes me as a classic struggle of sincere workers vs. arrogant elite.

In their letter, the dancers ask the arts community to demonstrate its solidarity by refusing to contract to dance any of the Graham works, all of which Protas currently owns (although I guess there's a question of copyright law pre-1978, or if the piece itself was never registered by its creator "to" be copyrighted). It puts companies like Repertory Dance Theatre—the company I'm covering—in a difficult position, as to obtain a piece for the 2000-2001 season, they had to start negotiating

by at least mid-1999. It all paints a grim picture for the future of the Graham legacy: the person who owns the rights will not let the Graham dancers have permission to dance Graham's works, while he's willing to make money from selling the rights to companies who could not possibly sustain the integrity of the Graham technique without the assistance of Graham-trained dancers

I wish somewhere in any of this press I had heard Protas (who, to the extent I have been able to determine, has never made a statement defending his actions) or the coalition of dancers mention the words "binding arbitration." The situation seems to smack less in recent stories of artistic differences and ownership of an indefinable aesthetic and more of sheer stupidity. I shudder to think where Graham's legacy will be 10 years from now and what sort of things she might be thinking of this mess from beyond the grave.

Great site! I plan to be back!

KAW

Centerville, UT

1 October 2000

Dear Mr. David Walsh:

Thank you very much for your stimulating and insightful comments on the Gore/Lieberman threats against Hollywood and the entertainment industry. Your reviews of films and other articles have always been a faithful companion for the last few years; indeed, your work on film and the arts in general are a delightful, informative testament to your concern for the arts grounded in socialist philosophy and politics.

Two questions, however, for you and WSWS: why not more articles on the significance of contemporary popular music, perhaps even with reviews of artists and works? I have appreciated your articles so far, but the only one I can remember on pop music was the excellent article on the Beach Boys. Is there aesthetic value to rock? political potential? how will pop music be remembered, as a period of decadence and aesthetic shallowness, of exploitation of people's dulled artistic sensibilities? Or will later artists find inspiration here? What were the political and social factors that give this style of music its power and interest? Etc., and how does music, music and film being the great American diversions for the moment, relate to the issues in your own article?

Secondly, do you think you might have given some

attention to the two other great American pastimes, wrestling and pornography? I read somewhere the mind-boggling statistic that those two industries have now surpassed the film industry in generating revenues; I don't know if this is true, but they are certainly generating a lot of money. In other words, film exists in a larger context, which, sad to say, is even more disturbing and degrading than film itself (though wrestling when viewed with great deals of irony, especially about performance and gender roles, can be fun, and pornography, well, needs even a less complicated justification).

The seriousness with which Marxist thought approaches the arts does and must include forms of popular entertainment; you, Mr. Walsh, and others like you at WSWS, are a sterling example of the riches of socialist thought in these areas.

Many thanks,

JB

Princeton University

27 September 2000



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**