

The Michael Jackson case: the New York Times piles on

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The *New York Times* has joined in the general media campaign aimed at discrediting and demonizing singer Michael Jackson, who faces charges of child molestation in California's Santa Barbara County.

Numerous voices have been raised, some no doubt belonging to those who once rode the Jackson bandwagon or profited from it, condemning his behavior and proclaiming that they had seen the disaster coming all along. The humiliating arrest of Jackson has proven a field day for the sadistic and bullying moralists on the ultra-right, the social type unfazed by bombing raids on defenseless populations. In their eyes, Jackson's alleged misdeeds have turned him into one of the accursed, a "homosexual pedophile." The comments made along these lines are too vile and stupid to repeat here.

The *New York Times*, rejecting the popular wisdom that kicking a man when he's down is both unfair and cowardly, has added its own malicious two cents to the Jackson affair.

In an editorial headlined, "The Childhood of Michael Jackson," *Times* editors choose a most peculiar means of getting in their low blows. They write that "of course [Jackson is] presumed to be innocent of the charges that led to his arrest on Thursday."

However, he is evidently already guilty of another crime—trying to remain a child. "Most people have given up having slumber parties with prepubescent children by the time they cease being prepubescent themselves. Most people never need to be exiled from the Neverland of childhood. We leave it willingly on our own," intones the editorial.

Not only is Jackson culpable of "infantilism," he betrays "a distrust, if not a loathing of adults," according to the *Times*. One must say that in contemporary America, the "adults" one sees in the

public arena by and large deserve to be "loathed," including the members of the hypocritical and corrupt "liberal" establishment represented by the *Times*. Brushing aside the fact that for all anyone knows at this point, Jackson's activities on behalf of children, sick children in particular, have been entirely benevolent, the newspaper's editors insist that this behavior "has long ceased to look selfless to the world around him." According to whom?

The editorial concludes: "Cruel or not, the world reserves a special kind of contempt for adults who choose to see themselves mainly through the eyes of children. Mr. Jackson has earned that contempt as surely as he has earned our respect for his musical talents."

Cruel indeed, and entirely unsupported by logic. How does the *Times* know that Jackson sees himself in this manner and, in any case, since when has that become a crime worthy not merely of "contempt," but "a special kind of contempt"? By what right do the *Times* editors use such abusive and demeaning language?

Since the newspaper will, in the coming days, undoubtedly crank out invocations of the holiday spirit, it is fitting to recall that Christmas is named for an individual who chastised his disciples, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

This is not the first time the *Times* has chosen to join in the vilification of figures targeted for prosecution and public condemnation by government officials. In December 2001, the newspaper solidarized itself with the decision by the Justice Department to indict John Walker Lindh, the young American captured in Afghanistan, with "aiding a terrorist organization," declaring that the charge "sounds about right."

The WSWWS noted at the time: "Far from raising the

question of Walker’s democratic rights, the *Times* essentially intervenes to further poison public opinion against Walker under conditions in which virtually nothing is known about his case, nothing has been proven against him, and the full force of the state, armed to the teeth and in unrestrained military mode, is bearing down upon him—a 20-year-old who has seen things that no 20-year-old should have to see. In this the ‘liberals’ at the *Times* demonstrate a horrifying callousness.”

The explanation for the Jackson editorial and its bizarre reasoning is not so difficult to work out. It reflects the *Times*’ own movement to the right and its growing indifference to democratic rights—particularly the rights of those facing media and government persecution.

It also marks another effort by the *Times* to extend an olive branch to the extreme right. Nothing so pleases the newspaper’s editors these days as finding common cause with the Republican right. A direct attack on Jackson as a “homosexual pedophile” would be unwise, given the *Times*’ pretences to tolerance and the generally liberal makeup of its core audience. Determined to join the anti-Jackson camp without indulging in open gay-bashing, the newspaper chooses an alternate tactic: criminalizing Jackson’s childishness.



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