

Letters from our readers

26 November 2004

The following is a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “The Pistons-Pacers brawl and sports violence in America”

Dear David,

I agree with the conclusion of your article on the Piston-Pacer brawl, though I think such an inquiry should extend to cover all sports in the United States from pee-wee leagues on up to the professional level.

Obviously, the large number of violent outbursts we have witnessed recently are a reflection of the growing antagonisms within—and the increasing brutality of—imperial America. However, these scenes can be witnessed to a greater or lesser extent all across this country every day in every sport at every level.

You touched on how athletes are dropped into the meat-grinder of professional sports without a care to their mental state. US society trains athletes from a young age in such a way that for anyone to reach the professional level psychologically unscarred is a virtual impossibility. This is especially true for football, where the violence of the sport hides some of the more humiliating aspects of what passes for training and discipline in this country. The chain of degradation and humiliation that American athletes must suffer through before they even pick up that first paycheck begins when they are quite young and never stops. From parents, to coaches, to peers, and even themselves, athletes—and, for that matter, everyone else as well—are taught that winning is everything, and losing is nothing. All that comes after flows from that perspective.

As for the bread and circuses aspect, I have felt for the past 10 years that sports in the US has played the role of religion with that portion of the population which is unable to accept religious discipline or doctrines, as well as providing an extra crutch for those whose church does not give them enough stability. I think the entire entertainment industry in the US is included. That is not to say that I think there is something inherently wrong, (evil, bad), with sports, film, radio or television. Rather, this problem merely reflects the diseased state of society as a whole. And the only cure is to transform society from the one we now have that is based on the greed of a few, to one that is based on serving the needs of the many.

HR

23 November 2004

Nevada

To Mr. Walsh:

Regarding your recent article concerning sports and violence in America, I just wanted to thank you for voicing what I've felt for a long time. I attend a public university in the South whose main concern (football) is quite evident. Most of the people here are ardent Bush supporters, and I was struck by the gloating and self-puffery that went on after Bush's reelection. This arrogant “in-your-face” attitude is exactly the sort of thing you see after a win in a football game. The words “Bush” and “Kerry” could easily be substituted in people's talk about the home team and the rival school, and they often are. I definitely feel that the nature of politics in this country encourages this sort of aggressive identification with one side or the other. People have transferred this trivial obsession with their team onto their preferred candidate, and the effects for this country and the rest of the world have been devastating.

DS

23 November 2004

This analysis is quite accurate and illuminating. I would add the following: The rise of nationalism and militarism in sports has been accompanied by the gargantuan surge in its commercial success, starting in the 1960s. This has especially been true of football and basketball, since baseball had already been in the forefront.

It would be further illuminating to report the rise of the profits since sports became sports-for-TV. This would also put athletes' salaries in the proper perspective.

DS

23 November 2004

On “US Soldiers in Iraq suffer horrible brain and mental injuries”

Rick Kelly's article was a compelling synopsis of the problems our troops will bring back with them, when and if they return to US civilian society. He summarized PTSD in this way: “Post-traumatic stress disorder sufferers can experience feelings of detachment and isolation, poor concentration and memory, depression, insomnia, flashbacks, as well as headaches, gastrointestinal complaints, and immune system problems.”

It is difficult to diagnose in patients who, for one reason or another—prompt discharge, perceived stigma—are reluctant to disclose their symptoms. However, as I'm sure you are aware, heavy metal poisoning causes these same myriad symptoms. Mercury, for example, commonly found in the vaccine

preservative thimerosal, and present in more than a dozen of the experimental shots active duty troops receive before heading overseas, can cause extreme confusion, bowel problems, staring spells, etcetera. So-called “depleted uranium,” uranium-238, 10 pounds of which is expelled mainly in the form of fine, gas-mask penetrable dust from each round of ammunition fired from an Abrams tank, is another readily available example of a source of these spectrum symptoms, though not necessarily the sole culprit.

So long as the Department of Defense and VA [Veterans Administration] are in charge of monitoring discharged veterans, conducting studies, and administering into the military certain questionable, toxic agents, we will never have legitimacy, and the injured will never have proper care.

NG

20 November 2004

Richmond, Kentucky

Dear Rick Kelly

With reference to your article of 20 November entitled “US soldiers in Iraq suffer horrific brain and mental injuries,” my sincere thanks for exposing the true colors of those who so piously profess to be “pro-life” whilst sending other people’s sons and daughters off to Iraq as cannon fodder.

There is, however, another unreported death toll resulting from the Iraq war, namely those of American contractors who perform paramilitary work such as battle area clearance (de-mining) in the war zone.

The current practice of outsourcing traditionally military tasks to private contractors who make astronomical profits off their workers but then refuse to compensate the families of those who paid the ultimate price in the war is nothing but scandalous.

A point in case is the death of Tim Eysselinck (40), US Ranger and former captain in the US army, who headed the RONCO de-mining team under life-threatening conditions in Iraq since last August. About two months after his return late February, he committed suicide as a result of a severe PTSD as diagnosed by a reputable local psychiatrist.

Two weeks before his death he confessed to a friend that he was disillusioned with the war and ashamed of being an American.

The onus is now put on his African widow to prove that his death was work-related. She is being stonewalled at every turn and has to date not received a single cent in benefits, not even Social Security which she is entitled to for her three-year old American daughter.

These are not human beings, they are callous predators worshipping the god of money. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

BE

20 November 2004

Windhoek, Namibia.

On “Iraq elections announced amidst mass repression”

The world press, mainly American owned or leaning, seems to put out the story of the US massacre of Iraqi civilians as something quite new. But this is not the case at all. It has been a standard policy of the US government to wipe out people of areas that they want cleared. But this goes back to the founding of the infamous Texas Rangers, whose main job was to kill off Mexicans in US-occupied Texas.

Then of course there was the wholesale slaughter of old men, women and children in Okinawa and Iwo Jima in the home islands of Japan. The US army forced Japanese villagers to jump over the cliffs, and turned around and accused the Imperial Japanese Army of having done it.

Then there is of course the wholesale wiping out of some 300 hamlets and villages in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Where Tiger Force, an elite unit of the US 101st Airborne Division, went on a killing spree and slaughtered at least 30,000 Vietnamese men, women and children. Worse still they usually cut off the ears of their dead victims and kept them as souvenirs. The US government knew that this was going on in Vietnam for a good 28 years and hid it from the press. Now we know why the Vietnamese people took such a dislike to Americans, their pseudo liberators. The US surrender at Saigon in April 1975 was the result of the murderous actions of US forces and the collusion of the US government in the wholesale murder of innocent civilians there.

Up till the present time the US invaders in Iraq have killed at the very least 300,000 to 500,000 Iraqis and keep foreign press reporters out, so as not to allow the truth to be known. Just like the Nazis the US has a stranglehold on all newspapers dealing with Iraq. Your news must first be cleared by the Pentagon, or you might get shot or killed accidentally on purpose by the US army.

KT

22 November 2004

Ontario, Canada



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