Letters on Terri Schiavo

7 April 2005

We continue to publish letters on the Terri Schiavo case sent in by readers of the World Socialist Web Site.

On "The case of Terri Schiavo and the crisis of politics and culture in the United States"

Thank you for this well-thought-out and well-presented analysis of the Terri Schiavo case. As a Canadian, I watched in abject horror at the machinations of the religious right and the Congress to take over this case and make it about "life" and to vilify Michael Schiavo at every turn.

I see this sort of backward thinking happening in Canada as well, and it worries me greatly. As a mother of three children, I see the creeping influence that fundamentalism is having in our schools and in just about every facet of everyday life.

This article should be read by every single person who thought they were helping Terri and by every single member of Congress and the Senate—a wake-up call that will be ignored by many.

Thank you again for your article—I will be sharing it with my friends and associates for discussion.

KP
Niagara Falls, Ontario
4 April 2005

Congratulations on a brilliant essay. I only wish it could be seen by many more people than just those who read the WSWS web site.

EM
4 April 2005

I just read a quote from the Vatican that denounces the "arbitrarily hastened" death of Schiavo. How about the arbitrarily hastened passing of inmates sent to the death house? Not to mention the innocents lost in Iraq? Maybe someone should mention to the religious right that Iraq and the "arbitrarily hastened" atrocities that happen there are ongoing.

SS
Toronto, Ontario
31 March 2005

I'm afraid we are now starting to see only too clearly what were and are the real goals of the Bush administration in deliberately mounting this apparently senseless case. We were much too naive in assuming that they only wanted to pamper the religious right. Rather, the true objective now taking shape is a full-scale attack on the judiciary in order to deprive it of its sacrosanct independence and make it subservient to the executive and legislative branches (of course, the legislative has itself already become subordinate to the executive). Comments after Mrs. Schiavo's death to the effect that the judiciary is "arrogant" and "out of control" are a very sobering pointer at the shape of things to come. It might be interesting to note in this regard that not even Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany dared to interfere with their respective judiciaries, and rather resorted to the creation of completely separated special tribunals to do their dirty work.

EB
Germany
1 April 2005

The religious right from Bush downward is responsible for the cruel and unprincipled campaign against Michael Schiavo. They are so hypocritical. "You must not play God" they say but ignore the fact that, in terms of their own religious philosophy, the intervention of medical science to prolong life (mainly in the last 50 years) and for Terri Schiavo, in the last 15 years, is "playing God," isn't it!? Lastly, I would like to inform these pro-life (it should be pro-suffering) idiots that a certain well-known figure, somebody called the Pope, who was suffering very greatly during the last month or so of his life, in the end refused further hospital treatment. He chose in effect to put an end to his life (a form of euthanasia), and no one from the religious right has complained about it and no one in authority asked for him to be put on a life support machine, which he could have had if he wished! Could it be that the Catholic Church would have found it politically embarrassing to have a Pope lying around in the Vatican, neither really alive nor dead but still in charge because one cell of his brain was still working, maybe? Furthermore, over a billion Catholics were praying to God several times a day to save his Holiness from death. Clearly, he ignored them all. Personally, I wouldn't expect anything else from "Der Fuhrer in the Sky."

BK
Buckinghamshire, UK
4 April 2005

At about 13 years of age (I am now 45), I realized I was an atheist when God couldn't even stop the nuns beating the daylights out of me at school. It was about that time I read a little of Marx. The line that impressed upon me was "Religion is the opiate of the masses." My mum asked, "What does that mean son?" I said, "It means you're going to church on your own from now on."

Recently, as I was walking past the TV, I heard the Australian singer Kate Ceberano being interviewed. She made comment that psychiatrists and Prozac are the scourge of the earth. I was livid. I have a severe depressive illness; if it wasn't for psychiatric intervention and medication I would be a mud fish at the bottom of the Yarra River and many other sufferers like me.

What did dear Kate base her scientific expertise on? Her belief in the Church of Scientology.

I wrote her a little note, suggesting that she stick to singing (the lesser of two evils) and keep her dangerous, backward comments

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to herself, as they may result in those needing assistance not seeking it, because of what some irresponsible bone-headed singer had to say. My parting line was: I don't expect a response from you, as facing reality in place of dogma will create anarchy with the definitive answer to life you so desperately need.

Fundamentalist lunatic Christians are the same. Anything that diverges from their dogma is to be repudiated, otherwise they will have to question their belief system, throwing their dogmatic existence into disarray and anarchy. Hence the line—god works in mysterious ways (I think he is on social security) for things they can't readily explain.

Historically, violence is the method they have employed (including the nuns) in defending these holy and sacred beliefs and persecuting those that don't share them—i.e., the burning of heretics, the medieval holy wars, etc. How many hundreds of thousands have been murdered in the name of god, or the spreading of his word?

Things don't appear to have changed much. Michael Schiavo's life is continually threatened by these homicidal, spooky babies because they can't have their own way. They are like a grade 4 class of petulant children, and we let them get away with it because we don't give them the spanking they deserve. When I see boneheads like Mel Gibson putting in his two cents worth, it reminds me of Albert Einstein's words, "To be successful all you need is greed, ignorance and stupidity; however, if stupidity is missing all is lost." We can start at the top of the totem pole with that one. You gotta love Albert.

Sincerely,

DD

Melbourne, Australia

1 April 2005

I suggest readers educate themselves to the Dominionist movement in the US (a.k.a. Christian Reconstructionists) to see how grave this situation is and can get without organized resistance by those who value liberty and freedom. There are now pharmacists who consider it against their religion to hand out birth control pills to customers (hence the need for government-owned/operated pharmacies), doctors and nurses who are unwilling to do certain medical practices because it is against their religion (hence the need for neutral, government run hospitals/clinics), teachers who must teach creationism along with evolution (hence the need for neutral science-based school systems), theatres no longer able to freely show science-based educational documentaries (hence the need to establish freedom of the media), all of which runs along the lines of Dominionism in its early phases. The ultimate aim is to bring the government back into line with Old Testament biblical laws. We must remember that when religion ruled the world, it was called the Dark Ages. When rationality entered the scene, it was called the Enlightenment.

SN

1 April 2005

On "Jesse Jackson at the Schiavo hospice: Democrats make common cause with the Christian right"

In fact, "the Democrats have abandoned any pretense of being an 'opposition' party and joined forces with the ultra-right" years before the Schiavo case, with their welfare-repeal policies. Unfortunately, America's poor were so demonized in our mainstream media that even our otherwise socially concerned groups have been quite indifferent to the dramatic increases in malnutrition and homelessness among our poor.

DF

1 April 2005

One of the most dangerous consequences of the Schiavo debacle is the tendency for Democrats to assert that the Republican Party has been taken over by the religious right and then further claim that in order to defeat them, progressives must appeal to "moderates in both parties."

It hardly takes a genius to see where this is going. While it is important to point out the danger on the religious right (and in religion generally), it is surely equally important for the anti-capitalist left to keep the focus on the underlying cause of economic class warfare. We cannot permit the discussion to be sidetracked into yet another sterile debate about human rights conceived in the abstract and unrelated to the concrete circumstances of the historical moment.

After Clinton, what "left-wing" points remain to be conceded by the Democrats to their "friends" in the Republican Party? I do *not* for one second believe that Tom DeLay is dangerous because he professes to be a right-wing Christian. It is very much the other way around. Furthermore, while Marx may not have been *quite* right about religion being the opiate of the masses, we moderns can certainly agree that it is their Prozac.

If people were not bewildered by debased and fetishized public rhetoric, driven mad by an unsustainable burden of "patriotic" consumer debt, terrorized by decades of Republican and Democratic fraudulent crisis-mongering, and otherwise used and abused by our blessed lords and masters in the top 2 percent, they would not be nearly so attracted to religion in the first place.

One cannot debunk religiosity without pointing to its role as a weapon of class warfare.

I am not writing this to disagree with your Schiavo coverage, which I heartily endorse, but to draw from it a lesson that many self-proclaimed progressives in the Democratic Party are trying hard to obscure. Their call for "moderation" may be nearly as great a danger as the religious fascism that you quite rightly expose.

FG

1 April 2005

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