Letters from our readers

20 February 2006

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

On "Congressional report condemns government response to Hurricane Katrina"

I wanted to give you my account of the situation in New Orleans. I recently volunteered for a week to clean up and gut houses for lower-income folks in the Gentilly, Ward 9, East Orleans, and Bywater districts, and stayed at Camp FEMA.

In general, little infrastructure rebuilding has happened. The situation is worse and more extensive than is portrayed on the news. NOLA residents told me that 40 percent of the city is without electricity. Half the public schools are damaged and boarded up. Most apartment buildings are the same. I saw a general hospital, in the Bywater district, that was shut. I saw probably hundreds of businesses that were recently boarded up, including international chains. Many neighborhoods (not just Ward 9) are empty. Flooding damages a house from the inside-out, so a lot of severely damaged homes look adequate from the outside. Inside, cleaning them up, it looked like a bomb hit them.

Camp FEMA is a Spartan environment with big tents for hundreds of people, poor lighting, and wafer-thin mattresses and pillows. Individuals and families evicted from the hotels were starting to trickle in when I left. The generator broke down my second to last night and the temp dropped to 35 degrees in my tent (no back-up?) Just one indication of how incompetent things are. It's not a good place for families with kids, or the elderly.

There are more details, and pictures, at: http://www.fourstringsmusic.com/katrina.html

BR
San Francisco, California
16 February 2006

On "Hurricane Katrina and the 'war on terrorism'"

Regarding the social inequities that became evident after Katrina, these same gross inequities exist from coast to coast. Nothing about the government's response to the victims of Katrina is surprising. Over the past quarter-century, America's treatment of the poor has grown increasingly brutal, consisting either of negligence (i.e., refusal of legitimate medical care, legal services, basic humanitarian aid, etc.) or worse. The poor of America have become very effectively and thoroughly scapegoated, "handled" as something that does not have the same human or legal rights as "regular Americans." The events of Katrina simply (and very briefly) put a spotlight on this American reality. We do, indeed, have a caste system here in the US.

DHF
Wisconsin
18 February 2006

On "Pentagon prepares for military strikes against Iran"

Tragically, we have known for years that George Bush was hell-bent on invading Iran. It's a huge mistake, however, to say that this is what America wants. The great majority of Americans do not want our children used as cannon fodder to fulfill Bush and Company's Napoleonic fantasies. I don't know why we, as a nation of people, don't seem to know what to do about this warmongering insanity.

DF
14 February 2006

Am I alone in finding the Bush administration's saber-rattling over Iran eerily reminiscent of Hitler's use of bogus pretexts in the Europe of the 1930s and 1940s to attack Czechoslovakia, Poland and the then USSR? That precipitated a holocaust of one kind; this represents a growing danger of another kind. I have little doubt that Blair and his monkeys in this country will rush to sign us up to Bush's adventure. Marx once said, "History repeats itself; the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." I leave it to your readers to

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decide which one of these an attack on Iran will most likely be.

BC
Bristol, England
17 February 2006

On "Video shows British Army brutality in Iraq"

I've seen this video, and was sickened by the mindless brutality displayed. I wonder if anybody knows the fate of those four boys? My attempts to contact the *News of the World* have met with no response. Perhaps my expectation that someone would know what happened to them is naive, given that this was but one small instance in an occupied military zone, where no international law applies. My sincere hope, however, is that someone else, with more resources to hand, will care enough to enquire.

WH
Australia
14 February 2006

On "Bush appointees censor scientists at government agencies"

Bush has to stop this censorship of scientists. The work that they do is a must for the better of this country and the world. I mean, what is next? I really can't say what I want because he might not like what I write. Please let me know what I can write and can't. Thank you.

JO
16 February 2006

On "Bankruptcy court approves Delphi executive bonuses"

It's been a while since my jaw has *actually dropped* when reading an article, but the unmitigated *gall* of the Delphi executive bonus plan did it. All the clichés come to mind on this one—"breathtaking," etc. But what really comes to mind is that the capitalist system is broken beyond any reformist plan for repair. I think we rapidly approach an era in which "But we have families to support" can no longer be used as an excuse for inaction. How are families supported by the paltry wages offered with the collusion of the once-powerful unions?

CMS
Portland, Oregon
17 February 2006

On recent hate crimes

I'd be grateful for an article juxtaposing the recent hate crimes in the news: the young man in Massachusetts who tried to kill with a hatchet men in a gay bar, and the spate of Alabama church burnings. These crimes show something about reactionary American culture, especially in their concurrent timing with each other and the funeral service for Coretta Scott King. We have so far to go as a culture, and it seems that the US is so far behind the rest of the developed world in regards to tolerance and fellowship.

Thanks,
PM
8 February 2006

On the war in Iraq

I cited this webpage in an essay I had to write. It was a great source to help support my opinion. Today in America, the older generations do not think the younger ones care about the war in Iraq like they did about Vietnam. This is a lie. Your article is proof that students today care enough about their country and the war to risk their educations, and use their free time to voice an opinion. Thank you for your help!

TK
15 February 2006

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