

Letters from our readers

30 June 2007

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

On “US military prepares Fallujah-style bloodbath in Iraqi city of Baqubah”

The caption in the *New York Times* for the page A6 photo of June 23 says it shows a US commander’s briefing taking place in a “bombed-out hospital in Baquba.” Reports on the US attack on that city said it included F-16s dropping bombs and firing missiles. If the US bombed that hospital, it committed a war crime. But shouldn’t someone at least ask the Pentagon about it—if only to again be told it “regrets any collateral damage”?

MM

Portland, Oregon, USA

26 June 2007

This article is so true as to the comments—another bloodbath from Bush’s gang. How many more of our troops are going to be killed as well as innocent women and children, all for the sake of oil and the billions of dollars that the gasoline companies make at the gas pumps? When will the American people wake up to what Bush and his oil buddies are up to? Before Bush is to leave, which I don’t think will happen because he will put this country under military rule first, he will destroy our Constitution—or what is left of it.

JS

Houston, Texas, USA

25 June 2007

On “The secret government of Dick Cheney: US vice president claims to be outside the law”

The Bush gang sets up a shadow government, Cheney uses any excuse to ignore the rule of law in what has to be one of the greatest threats to our representative democracy, and what do the Democrats do? Write an eight-page letter! No, not a letter! That’ll show the Bush regime, I bet! Why they have not moved to impeach and convict these criminals is beyond me. I’ve completely lost any faith in the Democratic Party doing the right thing anymore. Thanks for being a voice of reason in a sea of party politics.

RA

25 June 2007

On “The Iraq orphanage story: US troops ‘rescue’ 24 as thousands remain in the streets”

Both CBS and NBC showed the orphanage story, both in the same manner. First was a report on the killing of over 25 civilians in Afghanistan. That was very short, with no pictures, no interviews, no reporter on the scene, and heavy on the military’s excuse, “We do everything we can to avoid civilian casualties.” Immediately following the killing of civilians in Afghanistan was this well-placed sympathetic story, obviously to counter the bad news and get sympathy for the US military. However, the US military has caused more casualties, created more orphans than *anybody*, with over 6,000

civilians killed in Afghanistan. How many orphans were created there? How many orphans were created in the illegal invasion of Iraq, which this complicit US “news” media helped cheerlead?

FT

23 June 2007

Thank you, Bill Van Auken, for bringing both compassion and common sense to the latest US propaganda effort. The story of the special-needs boys from the Al-Hanan orphanage has been all over the blogosphere, sending even the usually more reliable sources of information from inside Iraq into paroxysms of blind rage, directed for the most part against anyone except the American occupiers, and then perhaps only by association. From looking at their faces in the photos it’s obvious that these are, indeed, children who have special needs. To have used them in such a blatant propaganda exercise only demonstrates, yet again, the depth of depravity of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. And yet, in not a single one of the many, many blogs and news sources that I visit every day, has anyone pricked with such authority, and clarity, the transparency of this vile propaganda blitz.

WH

Hopetoun, Australia

22 June 2007

On “Damien Hirst’s main obsession is wealth, not mortality”

Thank you for calling a spade a spade and exposing Damien Hirst’s work for what it is, an expensive gimmick. The hype of his work always seemed to me to have at least as much, if not more, to do with the obscene expense of creating it than its profundity. Apparently, his shark piece has decomposed (in part because the shark was not properly embalmed in the first place) and now has to be completely restored—new shark carcass, new formaldehyde, new tank—at a cost of \$50,000, I believe, raising the question to what extent it will be the same work at all.

Your article also gets at the deeper issues expressed by the adulation of such artwork. In a moribund and wealth-obsessed art world, there is little interest in art that genuinely has insight into life, death, or any of the pressing concerns and experiences of humanity. Ultimately, Hirst’s work only emphasizes the need for this to change.

AL

New York, USA

28 June 2007

“The ultimate victory over death”? Hilarious. It must annoy the super-rich no end that they can’t hire some poor slob to die for them—but guess what, you can’t. For some reason, I was reminded of Ambrose Bierce’s definition of a mausoleum as “the final and funniest folly of the rich.” What a crock!

RM

26 June 2007

When I heard about and saw photos of Damien Hirst’s diamond-

encrusted skull, I was revolted by it. The first thought that came into my mind was that it symbolized the emptiness of sheer wealth for the sake of wealth—the worship of conspicuous consumption and extravagance—coupled with the theme of the death of human value in and of itself. In other words, it appeared to represent the idea that a human being (represented by the skull) was worthless unless it was made of platinum and adorned with fabulous jewels. It also seemed to represent the source of all this obscene wealth: the death of thousands of actual human beings in the service of providing untold riches to that level of society whose only purpose in life is the accumulation of wealth and power, no matter what is necessary to procure it.

You are correct in noting that today's "art" world is merely a money pit filled with vacuous, overpriced trinkets that say nothing so much as: "Here is how much money I have to spend. This is how powerful I am." Like the tsars of Russia, the purchasers of this creepy object have reached their status on the backs of countless people around the world who suffer under slave-like conditions to fill the bank accounts of the fat classes. But I also note that in the case of Faberge, there was at least superb craftsmanship involved in creating something that, although extravagant, was also physically beautiful. The artists of today like Damien Hirst don't even show any talent for artistry. Hirst didn't actually create this piece. The jewelers created it for him. And it isn't beautiful and shows no more craftsmanship than that involved in slapping expensive lipstick on a pig.

Finally, whose skull was this? Some pauper's? You can bet that it wasn't the skull of anyone wealthy enough to safeguard it from being profaned in this manner. I'll believe that Hirst has respect for humanity when he encrusts his own skull with jewels and sells it while he is still using it.

CZ

San Francisco, California, USA
26 June 2007

Thank you for writing this review, which I read with interest. I think it's ironic that Hirst chose as his chief material a substance whose mining contributes to so much exploitation, poverty, death and misery, while its use-value finds little application beyond that of being a dazzling trinket. Of course, we are told that the diamonds used were "ethically sourced." As if such a label can magically make the complex social forces that have made the diamond industry what it is disappear!

That Hirst was able in this context to make the laughable statement that his work is a "maximum celebration you could make against death" underscores the lack of critical thought that prevails in the official media. In this respect, your comment that this piece represents "the disdain of the wealthy for humanity" best describes the sensibilities that this piece reflects.

JR

26 June 2007

On "Religious backwardness trumps science as Bush vetoes stem cell bill"

Once again, excellent article, and it is great to see that not everyone is duped by and/or indifferent to what is happening in the US. The shamelessness of Bush Co. is really something to see! Only the most shameless, craven, inhumane, and cynical administration could claim to be concerned about "ethical stem cells" (so-called "human life" by fundamentalists) while having a record of abuse, negligence, and outright murder that has resulted in the deaths and degradation of thousands of lives, stretching from the banks of the Euphrates to the Gulf of Mexico.

Certainly, one cannot claim to be concerned about human life while extolling the virtues of "extraordinary rendition," a.k.a. torture, and a prison camp (Guantánamo) on land gained through an imperialist war with Spain, in Cuba. Meanwhile, federally funded programs are gutted, and people are making less and being asked to do more while the magical "market" works it out. Incredible! Yes, there's plenty to be pissed about, and I'm glad others are taking note, including WSWs. Thanks!

JL

25 June 2007

On "Australian government imposes military-police regime on Aborigines"

Very informative article about the military-style action by the Howard government against Aborigines, but the article did leave out one important area. The Howard government now plans to set up nuclear waste dumps on aboriginal land. Currently, a group of traditional aboriginal landowners are touring Australia, publicising their resistance to these plans. By acting now, in the way that the Australian government is, Howard very cleverly shows up Aborigines as being dangerously incompetent. He thus discredits their cause and takes attention away from the land grab. White Australians would not accept nuclear waste dumps, but the Howard government has already bribed a few Aborigines, and the Northern Land Council, against the wishes of 15 of the 16 families living in the Muckaty Station area.

What the Howard government does is keep Aborigines in poverty and lacking resources such as education, then offer bribes to get their land.

CM

Australia

24 June 2007

On "US: Nine firefighters perish in warehouse fire in Charleston, South Carolina"

I was glad to see WSWs address this story. What struck me most was that the firemen went into a building filled with highly flammable goods. When you say there was no sprinkler system, it just makes it worse. We all know that furniture fabric is petroleum based—i.e., plastic. It goes up like a bomb.

Once the employees inside were rescued, I can see no reason for the firemen to risk their lives for furniture or empty warehouses. This goes to questioning the entire issue of how much we think it's worth to protect property from loss at the cost of human life, as when people build expensive houses in forests and expect firemen to risk their lives for them. It is infuriating to see the adroit shifting of the media tale to pious grieving, when we all ought to be on fire with anger.

LO

23 June 2007



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