

Letters from our readers

21 February 2008

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

On "The two faces of Barack Obama"

Thanks for the informative article. I'm Australian so I don't get to vote in your election, but of course it affects us terribly whoever you elect. My daughter kept saying Obama was two-faced.

LS

February 2008

I have been begging people to look at the golden boy of politics and ask the hard questions. Why is he beyond scrutiny? I am sick about the way he just cruises through every gathering without ever being challenged. Thank you for putting it out there a little. The emperor parades naked and everyone keeps oohing and ahing at his beautiful Italian suits.

MT

14 February 2008

On "The 'circularity' of hope: The Nation endorses Barack Obama"

Beautifully written. Obama is the robot Maria in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

AF

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

15 February 2008

On "Six dead after yet another US school shooting"

You write, "Kazmierczak had evidently recently quit taking psychological medications and had become 'erratic.'" In this particular incident, this information might suggest paranoid schizophrenia, which often emerges in young men in their twenties.

Patients often stop taking their medications because the side effects (severe insomnia, impotence, etc.) become unbearable. Recent improvements in these drugs have supposedly minimized the side effects. I don't think there is a known "cure," only management of the symptoms. Also the "cause" is not precisely known but a number of factors are involved, including "stress" and chemical imbalance in the brain, and that it tends to hit young men of high intelligence.

JW

Santa Monica, California, USA

16 February 2008

On "US to hold 9/11 show trial at Guantánamo"

Yours was the best reporting I read on the forthcoming "trials" of KSM and the others in Guantánamo. One thing bothers me, however, and that is something that no one has commented on: the acts with which the 9/11 plotters are charged all occurred (with the exception of five "overt acts" consisting of making celebratory propaganda videos) *before* the war had begun. How can you have war crimes without a war on foot? Here is what the Supreme Court said in the Hamdan case on this point:

"The Government has not charged Hamdan with an 'offense ... that by the law of war may be tried by military commission' 10 U. S. C. §821. Of the three sorts of military commissions used historically, the law-of-war type used in Quirin and other cases is the only model available to try Hamdan. Among the preconditions, incorporated in Article of War 15 and, later, UCMJ Art. 21, for such a tribunal's exercise of jurisdiction are, inter alia, that it must be limited to trying offenses committed within the convening commander's field of command, i.e., within the theater of war, and that the offense charged must have been committed during, not before or after, the war. Here, Hamdan is not alleged to have committed any overt act in a theater of war or on any specified date after September 11, 2001."

Although the context in Hamdan did not involve an interpretation of the Military Commissions Act, the requirement for a state of war would surely remain. Also, few if any of the "charges" are known to the law of war, another requirement of war crimes, according to the Hamdan court.

Regards,

R. Briggs

Australian Capital Territory

12 February 2008

On "Australia: Press blacks out Aboriginal protest over Northern Territory intervention"

The press blacking out of the protest by Aboriginals in Canberra against the military-police intervention in the Northern Territory reveals the fear the press and the political establishment have of working class people. They are desperate to stop people from understanding that the Rudd

Labor Government's Sorry Resolution is just a cover for deeper attacks against the Aboriginal people.

Why is it necessary for the new Labor Government to be involved in such a sickening disguise and betrayal? I think part of the answer is that there is no substantial social base of support for the NT intervention. The WSWS has recently pointed out that in order to try and overcome this, the Rudd Government's National Sorry Resolution was an attempt to give a new impetus to the partly discredited and tired petty bourgeois leadership amongst the Aboriginal people.

Rudd has not said what historical and economic conditions existed in society that produced the politics that led to the forced removal of aboriginal children from their families, or how those conditions no longer exist, and thus give some substance to his apology. Rudd has not said that one of the United Nations definitions of genocide is the forced removal of children from their families.

The constant that has not changed is the capitalist system of exploitation and marginalisation of minorities. Previous Labor and conservative governments have carried out similar policies to suppress Aboriginals. They both supported assimilation of Aboriginals, which in effect meant the destruction of Aboriginal culture.

What's new is that they are now forced to act in an open bipartisan way because the extreme nature of the NT intervention has no community support. This is indicated by the need for the suspension of the anti-discrimination legislation. The primary aim of the NT intervention is to break up Aboriginal culture and communities. One of the chief advocates of bipartisanship is Aboriginal opportunist Marcia Langton, whose whole career has been fast-tracked by the political establishment. Her career has been highlighted by her constant hostility to Aboriginals being seen as part of the international working class.

As a white participant at the Aboriginal Embassy struggle in Canberra in 1972 I clearly remember the courageous struggle of the Aboriginal working class. I think the lesson from our struggles since then is that we need a program to unite the working class internationally.

This is the only way we can deal in the future with the crimes committed against the Aboriginal people.

RR

Melbourne, Australia

18 February 2008

On "California: Schwarzenegger administration presents austerity budget"

It's obvious Arnold is looking out for his rich friends and once again is cutting the legs off essential programs that affect the most vulnerable in our society.

My son, who attended the California School for the Deaf, would not have fared as well if he'd not been given the

opportunity to attend. For the last several years, the fear has been that developers have been eyeing the property the school sits on in Fremont. And with Arnold's help the school will not be able to operate. Teachers have struggled trying to stay in the area due to the high price of living and rents that are out of sight.

The other frightening thing is this country, which sends our men and women off to fight wars, has seen cut after cut in budgets. And here we go again, having to endure another cut.

When will there be fairness? When will the richest of our state be expected to pay their fair share in taxes?

CK

Tucson, Arizona, USA

15 February 2008

On "The Great Debaters: An enlightened struggle against racial oppression during the Depression"

Having a knowledge baseline near zero on the matters discussed in your article, it nevertheless strikes me that you have written a remarkably detailed, informative and authentic review of a film dealing with an important period of American history and the social relations of the depression era.

As an eight-year-old in 1941, I well remember newspaper illustrations of Ku Klux Klan cross burnings in the South and the shocked and frightened reactions of my parents. It seemed to me at the time that the Klan's anger was directed at Catholics. This was, I felt sure, the reason my White, French-Canadian immigrant parents so feared the KKK even though they were then living in Eastern Connecticut. They (and I) long experienced the discrimination of a Yankee dominated mill town in which English mill owners and managers lived in magnificent Victorian mansions in the "Hill Section," while factory workers shopped in the factory store and lived in mill-owned houses along the railroad tracks and flood-prone river front.

RD

San Diego, California

13 February 2008



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