

# Letters from our readers

1 July 2008

*The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the WSWS.*

*On “As war clouds gather: Democrats back covert US attacks on Iran”*

Is it any wonder that “impeachment is off the table” with Pelosi after she’s agreed to fund political killings? I wonder if these people have studied the geography of Iran and know that it’s seven times the size of Colorado with three times the population of California. Who, exactly, is going to staff our military against these well-educated and armed people?

PK

30 June 2008

*On “The need for socialist politics in the film and television industry—Screen Actors Guild negotiations continue in secret on eve of contract expiration”*

Commenting on the article about the SAG-AFTRA negotiations by Ramón Valle—excellent thinking and analysis, and I’m afraid it’s all true!

DK

Hollywood, California, USA

30 June 2008

*On “You can’t go home again: George Romero’s Diary of the Dead”*

It is high time that a George Romero film received some coverage in WSWS since *Land of the Dead* with its critique of George Bush’s America (featuring George Bush supporter Dennis Hopper in the role of a ruthless CEO type) remained unreviewed. Hiram has made some very good comments concerning *Diary* but I’d like to mention two items that need further discussion.

First, I do not believe that Romero is in despair concerning humanity in terms of a universalist pessimism. He is critical not only of the way media influences people but also in the manner that people are in danger of becoming dehumanized by their fascination with technology in a manner paralleling the zombie condition. Like those fascinated by Iraq as the first technological war where the “medium becomes the message” (to quote an old McLuhan analogy), the appropriately named Jason (referring to the monster of the *Friday the 13th* cycle) becomes gradually dehumanized by his fascination with recording events through the distanced medium of technology.

We must not forget the resilient examples of the black community seen earlier in the film who share their supplies with the young survivors who later lose them to the National Guard led by a white man. Also, the footage showing the zombies at the beginning of the films clearly marks them as immigrants (perhaps illegal immigrants) as their dark complexions show. They could be Arab, Hispanic, or African-American. Romero leaves the issue of their ethnicity deliberately open. However, as the later re-edited film shows, the incident has been changed into another version of “the war on terror” completely distorting the facts behind the original recording of these events.

Romero is not a director who believes in the utopian premises of the happy ending but questions the very role of survival and how people must change if any positive new society must occur. As well as women and minorities, he significantly includes the character of an English academic who appreciates books and gives up his drinking to rise to the challenges of a new threatening situation. Romero’s characters are always contradictory and no easy solutions characterize his films.

TW

28 June 2008

An astute and illuminating analysis of the new Romero, which nevertheless omits a crucial aspect of the film that has potentially considerable repercussions.

You make no mention of the way Romero raises and returns insistently to the themes of immigrants and boundaries. The latter serve to keep out the former but become meaningless when the dead come back to life. These two meanings dovetail in the first sequence where the audience (of the film, of a TV news programme) sees a family return to life, only to be shot by police. Surely it is significant that the family is clearly from the Middle East, suggesting that Romero is also raising the question of the repressive and murderous implications of the post-9/11 “war on terror” and the war in Iraq.

It is therefore revealing that it is this footage that is co-opted and re-edited by the authorities whose spokesman (a senior police officer played by Romero) makes comments destined to lull the public into silence and blame everything on the victims and immigrants.

Similarly, the scenes with the black militants are not reduced to race. They are clearly working class, whereas the students are from well-to-do families (Jason refers to his “\$100,000 education”). It is essential to recall the role of blacks in Romero’s zombie movies, notably the hero of *Dawn of the Dead* and the zombie “leader” in *Land of the Dead*, which you rightly refer to as “overlooked.”

Surely the use of the Amish is bitterly ironic. His highly symbolic deafness and the fact he communicates simply by writing words on a slate is a neat comment on how ultra-sophisticated technology and the unscrupulous use of it made by the very media Romero has been smiting hip and thigh since *Night of the Living Dead* have led to a breakdown in collective communication. What passes for “news” is now carefully orchestrated by those in whose interests it is to pit one group of victims against another in order to preserve neoliberal economic interests.

RH

Paris, France

28 June 2008

*On Young@Heart: Not going gentle ...*

This is not a new documentary as it was shown on British TV in autumn 2006. However, quibbling apart, I would urge your readers to see this if possible, as it demonstrates what people who may be ‘written off’ by the rest of society can do when they take some control over some aspects of their lives. This is a message that needs to be understood by all workers, students, pensioners, etc., instead of worrying about house price crashes, the price of fuel, etc. and thinking that nothing can be done to challenge the power of the banks and big business. By the way, I’m not aware that you can get this documentary on DVD, but the last time I looked you could download ‘Fix You’ performed by Fred for a donation of five US dollars if you go to the Young@Heart web site.

SB

Gillingham, Kent, UK

27 June 2008

*On “Social crisis in Detroit—An investigative report”*

This was an excellent story, one that is well articulated. It really opened my eyes. For example, even though I knew that the job scene in Detroit was bad these days, I had not considered the trickle-down effects that have resulted, such as the lack of a major supermarket within the city borders, the increase of “food deserts,” liquor stores, etc., the state’s correctional budget being larger than the education budget, etc. Thanks for the article.

PB

28 June 2008

*On “Australian call for ‘Asia-Pacific Community’: A sign of growing tensions”*

Mr. Chan, your exceptionally informed article prompts my acknowledgement. On a geopolitical scale, it attunes to realities and risks.

JR

28 June 2008

*On “US Supreme Court rejects ‘Millionaire’s Amendment’ to campaign finance law”*

Bourgeois democracy is the freedom of capital and money talks. Notwithstanding the obvious noxious motivations behind the decision, your discussion was rather light if nonexistent about the legal issues. Did you read a dissenting opinion? Why not offer what the best of the dissent said?

Though my politics are (close to) yours, my off-the-top-of-my-head opinion is that this matter was correctly adjudicated, albeit for the wrong reasons. *Buckley v. Valeo* sanctioned campaign contribution limits but carved out an exception for the candidate himself whose right to self-expression through his own wealth should not be constrained. That right is constrained if its exercise lifts the contribution limits imposed upon his opponent, but not upon himself.

MG

Los Angeles, California, USA

27 June 2008

*On “Obama attacks US Supreme Court decision barring death penalty for child rape”*

Actually, for once I agree with the decision made by the Supreme Court. This does not, of course, detract from my belief that child rape is a heinous crime, but any other decision would merely begin the extension of the death penalty for more and more reasons other than murder. Also, it could lead to the death penalty for such crimes committed by persons too young or too incapable of understanding the enormity of their actions. We need to work on reducing the death penalty, not making it more applicable.

MM

26 June 2008



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