

Letters from our readers

18 November 2008

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

On “Bush cheers ‘free enterprise’ as US capitalism goes bust”

“The august setting stood in stark contrast to the character of the select audience, which, in the gap between its ideological proclivities and socioeconomic reality, resembled a meeting of the flat earth society.” This is beautiful stuff, Bill. I am reminded of the joke that went around toward the dawn of the Bush administration concerning Darwin’s theory of evolution and how it was not only debunked by following the presidential line of succession from George Washington to George Bush, but that it actually demonstrated that the opposite was true. How reactionary can they get?

Best Regards,
Heinz
California, USA
16 November 2008

On “Feeling around in the dark: Blindness and Quarantine”

I haven’t seen *Quarantine* but have read nothing but negative reports on it. It might be worth mentioning that it is a remake of the recent Spanish horror film REC, which is both effective and thought provoking. However, it too ends up by being confused and offering an unsatisfactory explanation (pulled from the hat like a rabbit) for the situation shown.

Hollywood is too content to remake European and Asian horror films and the real work is being done elsewhere. However good it may be, REC is ultimately tilting at windmills when one thinks of *Diary of the Dead*. The horror genre has long been a most incisive

way of treating critically a great variety of social ills, and Romero has shown courage, rigour and honesty for 40 years now (itself a remarkable feat).

Too much horror today (a key exception is Spanish horror which, significantly, deals with ghosts, forgetting the past and fascism) has dissolved the great works and insights of people like Romero into a postmodern game repressing class and history.

Reynold H
Paris, France
13 November 2008

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Regarding Hiram Lee’s review of *Blindness*, do you know that this movie and the book upon which it is based are causing uproar in the blind community? The portrayal of blind people is erroneous, bigoted and hurtful. Saramago has chosen to use blindness as his metaphor for social decay. The portrayal of blind people as hopeless, helpless and descending into terror and corruption adds to the considerable bigotry against blind people. In the US, 70 percent of working-age blind people are unemployed. Worse yet, only 10 percent of our blind kids are taught to read Braille—the only tool offering true literacy and the common link among most successful blind people. These statistics have remained stagnant despite a revolution in technology, which has enabled blind people to participate more fully in all aspects of life, despite laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACT) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and despite the achievements of some blind individuals. There are blind lawyers, chemists, Diesel mechanics, teachers, parents, entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, and so on. We do our own shopping, cooking cleaning and so on.

Many highly educated, talented and motivated blind people live in poverty, because the society would rather spend millions on disability checks than work shoulder to shoulder with us on a daily basis.

If Saramago had chosen to make the virus cause people to change race or sexual preference, theaters would be burning. Blind people are bullied and discriminated against at every turn. Issues affecting our lives rarely make the news. There hasn't been a new blind American superstar in decades, and the only blind woman most people can name is Helen Keller, who died over 50 years ago. The volunteer-run, nonprofit Performing Arts Division of the National Federation of the Blind (PAD, NFB) is working to end this rampant oppression. Visit: www.padnfb.org

We feel that, as blind entertainers are integrated into the general society, understanding and acceptance will grow and conditions for all blind people will improve.

The truly tragic thing about how blindness is viewed is the effect that it has on the not-yet-blind. Blindness has two characteristics that make it unlike other minorities. First, men don't just wake up as women one day, white people don't suddenly turn black and straight people don't just turn gay, but this is exactly what happens in most cases of blindness. Most blind people lose their sight as adults (approximately 80 percent). If they have learned through society that blindness sentences a person to a wretched life of dependence and inactivity, they become an example of that image. Prejudice is the biggest obstacle in rehabilitation, not learning how to live without sight.

The second difference is that, since we come from all races, religions and socioeconomic groups, one cannot point to a physical "blind neighborhood." This makes the problem easier to ignore on a local level where support, understanding and inclusion do the most good.

I thank you for at least pointing out that this film isn't very good. I hope in the future that, if you have an opportunity to speak out against this movie or other things that add to this oppression, you will do so.

Donna H
Pennsylvania, USA
13 November 2008

On "Strike cancels classes at Toronto's York University"

Thanks from a striking member of CUPE 3903. The article did not mention, however, that a third group of workers is on strike with TAs and contract faculty: graduate assistants—folks who work for profs, departmental librarians, journal editors, etc.

Jordy
16 November 2008



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