Letters from our readers

24 February 2009

On "Chavez wins referendum vote as Venezuela's crisis deepens"

Thanks for clarifying the situation in Venezuela. I've been looking for a good class-based analysis of conditions there, and I would like to read more.

Coverage of Hugo Chavez and the "Bolivarian revolution" in the US media is highly schizophrenic. Between extreme hatred for him on the right, fawning adulation on the left, and cherry-picking of the facts on both sides, it's very hard sometimes to tell what is really going on there or what it means.

I've been telling my friends, both pro- and anti-Chavez, that the fall in oil prices, if it continues and does not begin to shoot through the roof again, will reveal the true nature—whatever it be—of Chavez's regime. When the prices are high, it is very easy to set up schools, clinics, and job programs, and be a hero to the poor, without threatening the rich too much. When the prices fall, it will be another story.

Charles H
Texas, USA
19 February 2009

*On "*The American media and the Lincoln bicentenary*"*

I enjoyed your article on US media comparisons of Obama and Lincoln, "The American media and the Lincoln bicentenary"

Imagine if President Lincoln possessed the rhetorical skills of Barack Obama:

In response to the widespread acts of murder and arson carried out by pro- and anti-slavery factions in "Bleeding Kansas" as a result of the Nebraska Act of 1854, Lincoln might have said: "There's not a liberal America and a conservative America—there's the United States of America."

Commenting on threats from southern plantation owners to reopen the Trans-Atlantic slave trade through congressional legislation, Lincoln: "The country is not as polarized as our politics would suggest."

Offering his reaction to the Dred Scott decision by Chief Justice Taney of the Supreme Court, who ruled that slaves could not claim their freedom because they existed purely as a form of property, Lincoln: "Issues are never simple. One thing I am proud of is that very rarely will you hear me simplify the issues."

In response to Confederate forces firing on the federal redoubt at Fort Sumter, Lincoln: "Help is on the way."

Funny, isn't it?

(Quotations by President Obama cited were found at the following websites: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27924569/; http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/barack_obama.html;http://www.barackobama.net/barack-obama-quotes.html)

Randy R
Arizona, USA
19 February 2009

*On "*Britain: University graduates face unemployment, low-paid jobs*"*

I can sympathize. As a baby boomer here in the US, I seemed to have a talent for hitting the economy right as it was tanking. The recession of 1974-1975 was so bad, the employment picture so bleak, I joined the navy—which as it turns out was a good thing, as I will turn 60 next year and have at least my military reserve retirement. Many people are not so lucky.

I got another wake-up call in 1990 when I finished graduate school and hit a locked-out job market.

You mention "middle-class anger." One is often tempted, as I was at times, to view one's inability to land a job as a personal failing, rather than a systemic crisis. It certainly seems incendiary to have so many college graduates—who should have the skills to put the larger pieces together, to see the underlying pattern—being idled. This cannot be a pretty picture for the ruling class, no matter how blind and feckless they are.

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Rob M
20 February 2009

*On "*Stanford International: $9 billion fraud triggers widening bank panic"

It is gratifying in one way to watch the rats emerge as the ship gets lower in the water. No surprise that major Democrats, such as Pelosi and Schumer, were taking profits from Stanford. Nor that Bill and Hillary Clinton are ready to hug him. After all, they did all right, didn't they?

The outright criminality of these worshippers of "free enterprise" will become ever more evident as times passes. One begins to understand the French in the 1780s.

Carolyn
California, USA
20 February 2009

On "Obama administration deporting 30,000 Haitians *"*

Irony! Just yesterday Obama was hobnobbing with Canada's Governor General, Haitian-born Michael Jean. I expect they didn't talk about the deportations.

KV
BC, Canada
21 February 2009

General Comment

A worldwide General Strike would be an excellent start to creating a Just World Order!

Charles R
Washington, USA
20 February 2009

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