Letters from our readers

13 April 2010

On "Boston Public Library trustees vote to close four branches"

Libraries truly are a community resource, rather than just the equivalent of a free bookstore. Cuts in Boston and elsewhere will have impact that is not measurable by simple statistics of books loaned, computers used, and so forth.

I know this because over the last four months I've had the pleasure to use libraries across Richmond, Virginia, for my job as a US Census Recruiter. I was there to test job applicants, but saw how every library was an active center of community activities and involvement.

As mentioned in this article, librarians are a key source of assistance and information. Library patrons I saw knew their librarians, and the librarians in turn knew the community.

Throughout the library system, the book and media collections seemed too underfunded and outdated. Despite this, each branch—regardless of the socioeconomic traits of the surrounding community—appeared to have healthy borrowing rates. Every branch always had chairs filled with patrons reading library material.

Access to computers is also an absolutely essential feature of library systems. At every branch I was sure to see nearly all computers in use. Many without internet access rely on library computers, particularly for job searching in this period of horrid unemployment. I found that through libraries, homeless individuals can maintain an email account and other online resources that would otherwise be out of reach.

Libraries are also a point of contact for any given community. People meet there, a quiet space is found, a safe and educational environment is offered for children. The meeting rooms I used were also scheduled for concerts, clubs, speeches, teaching, and book readings.

I used many different sites for Census testing—including churches, community centers, employment centers, universities, and hospitals—but none were nearly as popular as the city libraries. People knew where they were, felt comfortable going there, and had easy access to all of the library resources.

One of the busiest libraries I used was the North Avenue Branch, which is situated in an area where nearly 22 percent of individuals were below the poverty line according to the 2000 Census. Every time I visited, the library was busy inside and had people coming and going, using a variety of resources. Yet I was told by staff that evaluations of the library for funding were based just on data of books borrowed, rather than a broader measure. They too feared funding cuts.

Jeff L
Virginia, USA
11 April 2010

On "Britain: Election campaign focuses on economy"

In truth there are few points of interest in this contest between the three faces of capitalism. However, the impact of an emerging "Can't vote, won't vote" culture is one of them. And in the longer run the growth of abstentions as a conscious choice may be the most significant outcome of the current round of an old periodic fraud.

Chris
Ireland
9 April 2010

On "West Virginia workers speak on mine disaster"

Twenty Nine
From deep in the bowels of Upper Big Branch Mine;
On April 5th an explosion took the life of 29.
To the Hills of WV the media was sent:
A well scripted and edited event.
The ratings soared
The true past struggle of all miners ignored.
With the media's cameras and well articulated voice;
A nation hung on every word we had no choice.
Reported 12 dead, then 15 and now 25.

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The four not found a nation praying hoping they will be found alive.
The major media fell silent on that 4th day.
A game of golf and the tragic headlines magically go away.
But gone not are the tears of those miners families that await.
To hear what happened to their loved ones, their final fate.
That hour looms and now is the time;
To stand up for these families, and let it be not just the number 29.
A time to hold the so called blameless, shameless, those that profit and hold a miners life at pawn.
To strip them of their money and power, yes this is the hour it must stop it can not go on.
Let the cries and the voice of anger come to WV with mass dedicated reason tear down that wall.
Let the voices and the souls of the past, be heard at last, from the Matewan Massacre, to Charleston's governing hall.
Yes America let us lift up the families of those 29 that fell,
Pick up your pen;
Let it shatter those hardened hearts of men.
Let it be a sword that wields from the left to right.
That cuts down the power that calls for profit at any price.
For 29 miners' souls cries for justice let it not be in vain.
On left and right bended knee, to a merciful God let's plea,
Dear God I pray and vow that somehow, this must never happen again.

Harold Heater Jr.
Florida, USA
9 April 2010

On "Music Review: Yonder is the Clock by the Felice Brothers"

Dear Dwight,

Loved the review. I'm a big fan of the Felice Brothers. I think they are without a doubt a real inheritor of the musical mix that made the Band so great and this, combined with their humanism and interest in the lives of ordinary people, makes for wonderful listening.

Anyway, I thought I would send you a link to the Mark Twain story that the saying "Yonder is the Clock" came from. I think it adds to an understanding of their 'Americaness' and dedication to all that is greatest in American culture. Once again I really enjoyed the review. Maybe you should check out Dan Auerbach. Not in the same vein but equally simple and soulful.

Regards,
Tony C
Australia

10 April 2010

On "Obama orders assassination of US citizen"

There is something fishy about the whole Awlaki thing. He was jailed in Yemen at the request, it is assumed, of the US for quite some time a few years back. There have been no calls to ban the sale of his DVDs or CDs, where there has been numerous calls and support for "jihad." His oratorical style and message would be attractive to a particular class of disaffected Islamic personages. His incarceration established a credibility factor that increased his influence. Prominent Islamic scholars have questioned his qualifications (Islamic studies, etc). I would be surprised if this order is actually carried out. What better way to continue the myth of the "war on terror" than to create a new figurehead.

John H
10 April 2010

On "New York Times distorts research on statin drug therapy"

Statins represent huge profits for Big Pharma. The theory behind their usefulness is simplistic. Reduction of cholesterol has problems associated with the effect on the liver and the interference with the absorption of important nutrients like co-Enzyme Q10. The cholesterol story is more complicated than generally understood. I am on side with WSWS and write to protect you from possible error. All expensive treatment promoted by the medico-industrial complex must be carefully evaluated. The stakes for the public are very high!

Alf L
Australia
9 April 2010

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