

Letters from our readers

12 October 2010

On “The Detroit News and the DSO strike”

This article, along with the others on the strike of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians deserve wide circulation in the Detroit area. The WSWS has emphasized over many years the necessity of culture to the human spirit, and despicable and cynical indeed is the statement of Mr. Howes of the *Detroit News*.

I was very moved by the statements of the musicians in the video that appeared yesterday as well. Their commitment to maintaining a world-class orchestra in Detroit demonstrates their appreciation for the people of the city as well as for their colleagues.

The DSO provides hundreds, perhaps thousands, of reduced priced tickets for youth and the Detroit community. The musicians have partnered with the Detroit School of the Arts, a Detroit public high school, which recently moved into a brand new facility across from Orchestra Hall. They are helping to train a new generation of young people in classical music. The musicians are obviously dedicated to raising the cultural level of a struggling city—they haven't given up on it!

All of Detroit's cultural institutions are under enormous financial pressure, including another world-class institution, the Detroit Institute of Arts which was recently renovated, redesigning much of the facility to attract local residents and to educate museum-goers about art and world culture. The Detroit Opera Theatre has also made enormous efforts to provide educational programs for young people and to make opera accessible to many who have never experienced its magic.

These cultural institutions themselves and the dedicated musicians of the DSO are facing what David Walsh so eloquently explained in his recent Perspective: “the survival and progress of art in America are incompatible with the corporate stranglehold over every important aspect of life.” The DSO musicians are to be applauded not only for their many talents, but for their stand as workers defending the cultural achievements of humanity.

Jeannie C
6 October 2010

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My son is a struggling musician. He is inspired by the stand of the DSO musicians. I'd like to share an excerpt of something I recently wrote him:

“Events that affect the lives of the masses today are so drastic and are hitting with such frequency that it appears that the world is turning upside-down, and it is. What is there to give the population a sense of constancy and a certain stability? Or put another way—harmony and order?”

“...It's music that provides this deeply vital role. One can't imagine a world without it. In all its different forms, it is the art form which has the most subliminal and subconscious impact. It connects the listener and the artist in a profound way. Whatever tastes any person may have in music, this is the effect it has. It provides a deep connection, a sense of family, a human matrix that can reach into one's soul and say ‘you are not alone!’”

I'm sure all the DSO musicians know this, but I would hope they understand that they aren't just providing inspiration when they play, but now especially when they defy the self-serving demands of the powers that be.

You are not alone!

JB
Detroit, Michigan
6 October 2010

On “The assault on culture and the crisis of American capitalism”

The cost of both wars has been estimated at \$12 billion per month. To put this into perspective, we could employ about 33,000 teachers and pay their salary for a year, every month. We could rebuild the EL, which is Chicago's ancient and dilapidated mass transit, every week. Or, we could pay the annual bonuses for 12 hedge fund managers.

These decisions are difficult. The moral ramifications not to mention the cultural and economic blowback which would inevitably follow are also beyond calculation. Thankfully, we have intelligent and independent folks in Washington who know how to spend the money and what the priorities are. In some fascist, military-controlled kleptocracy they might make the decision for the hedge fund managers, but not here. We're far, far too clever to make that mistake.

PK
5 October 2010
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At 16, I was a trombone player in the Meridian Symphony Orchestra (Mississippi) and later the best high school trombone player in the state of Alabama. My sister and I won the Meridian talent show two years show running ...

Why is this important?

Because this experience, for a son of a millwright worker, was a transformative experience, which made me aware of the arts ... and the larger possibilities of life and consciousness ...

That the talentless few—with money—now call the shots is complete anathema to humanity ...

Art is not just part of education, per se, but the essence of our humanity ... what we are ... our hopes, dreams and ultimately—forgive for my hopes ... our salvation ...

Rob M
5 October 2010

On “Waiting for Superman”

Oligarchy follows democracy. The wealth of capitalism and its beneficiaries are bent on destroying, bent on profiteering and are applying

their politics to ruin one of the last bulwarks of ... dare it be called a socialized institution.

And, yes, the larger, not-so-hidden agenda is to destroy a union, destroy a segment of the 'working class,' destroy the protection of tenure.

I was a public school teacher for 35 years in California, taught all range of students, from the most advanced to the least of academic students. A teacher's commitment is to the students and I succeeded best when allowed this. Curriculum changes were not resisted, but 'change for the sake of change' philosophies had a shackling affect. I recognized more talented teachers, producing more well educated students, and I also saw the value of (possibly) less talented and liked teachers, but the system remedies itself. If I had been judged by my first year of teaching, and not retained, I would not have had the opportunity to improve.

There is something very exploitive about the privatizing and funding of this that, if nothing else, will destroy the spirit of service in public education.

Michael S
7 October 2010

On "Supreme Court to review order to slash California's prison population"

This article is the best one I have ever had the pleasure to read. You really did your homework on this one. My son has been in Corcoran SATF for four and a half years for attempted petty theft and drugs. He received five years, eight months. He was in a terrible motorcycle accident on 3/6/06; his wife was killed and he sustained major injuries. He still needs a total hip replacement and has brain stem damage. He has never received any treatment for any of his injuries. He is also in the lawsuit with Mr. Michael Bien. I just wanted to let you know what a wonderful job you did. I wish there were more people as informed as you are.

Maddy W
California, USA
8 October 2010

On "Pro-Democratic Party rally shows bankruptcy of US unions"

You write: "Workers who fight back against the Obama administration will no doubt be branded 'racist.'" Unfortunately true, as I have found in just general conversation. Indeed, a formerly close relative has totally stopped talking to me after a disagreement about Obama's policies, because she'd "Never realized how racist" I am!

The focus on race, or gender, as with the Australian PM, is a very potent tool for obscuring the policies involved. To disagree with Obama or Gillard can, in the eyes of some, be nothing more than anti-Black or anti-woman sentiment run amok!

How simplistic to think that someone's skin color or gender is a guarantee of caring and unity with what the working class faces! How dangerous to assume that a woman or a person of color would never take actions which would endanger the livelihoods—or lives!—of people. And how very cooperative with one's own destruction to insist on voting based on such ludicrous criteria.

Christie S
4 October 2010

On "More revelations into US military atrocities in Afghanistan"

Time to get out... Mai Lai time.

Peter

Vermont, USA
8 October 2010

On "US: Tennessee home left to burn over \$75 fee"

This must be the pinnacle of the perverse logic that puts profits over people. I am deeply disgusted by the fact that firemen were not allowed to act, but have stood right there watching the fire burn down the house and only reacted to save the paying neighbor's field. And the nerve to defend the policy afterwards just boggles the mind.

The reason in revolt now thunders, let's end the age of cant.

Lux
Tokyo, Japan
6 October 2010

On "American fiction"

I find it interesting that the settings for so many of these films about social issues are in the 1970s. It's as if the filmmakers have had to go back to the 1970s to search for the last time there was social ferment in this country. Meanwhile, all around them in the present are stories that are not being told.

Carolyn
California, USA
8 October 2010

On "Arthur Penn, American filmmaker (1922-2010)"

Another significant wsws.org obituary relating this talent to the cultural and historical forces that influenced his work as well as those very different ones that contributed to his demise. There is little I can add to this obituary of another talent whose like we will not see again today due to the era we are now living in.

As a footnote to this article, I'd like to draw attention to the recent demise of Gloria Stuart (1910-2010) perhaps (unfortunately best known for her appearance in Cameron's bloated blockbuster *Titanic*). When she died I purchase the Kino DVD of James Whale's *The Old Dark House* and listened to the audio-commentary reminiscences of this delightful lady. She mentioned that the other stars of the film, Melvyn Douglas and Boris Karloff, enlisted her support in forming the Screen Actors Guild at a time when actors were poorly paid and expected to work long hours (doesn't this sounds familiar to those familiar with what those Indianapolis workers face today?). She was also active in the Anti-Nazi League and also knew Helen Gahagan Douglas, vilified by Nixon in his red-baiting California Senate campaign.

Ms. Stuart fondly remembered James Whale as a creative talent and quit Universal when they wanted her to appear in a female Tarzan series. Although happy to retire from the screen until her 1987 comeback, her life story not only reveals that sad Hollywood saga of another talent wasted by the system but also positively documents her active involvement in progressive causes of the time, something lacking in her contemporaries who chose "safe causes" that present no real threat to the system. Yes, let us remember Arthur Penn but we should not also forget others who though having no achievements to match his were nevertheless part of that very important social world that hoped for a change for the better in the 1930s and 1940s.

Tony W
8 October 2010



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