

Letters from our readers

27 March 2012

On "The killing of Trayvon Martin"

I think that your assessment of the social situation is quite correct. It is not that this event itself is unique, as events have happened like this before. It is the overall social situation that has changed, thus creating the conditions for the kind of mass social upheaval that can bring both African Americans and other Americans together for the first time in a social(ist) revolution that the power structure may not feel confident that it can contain. The power structure does indeed have a few good tricks, as usual, up their sleeve. The sudden appearance of the so-called "New Black Panther Party" is clear evidence of that!

Charles
Florida, USA
26 March 2012

On "British teenager arrested for Facebook comments criticizing Afghan war"

This news is of concern to me as over the past several months I have visited British-based blogs and web sites and have left comments critical of US and UK actions in Afghanistan, the Middle East and elsewhere. Perhaps I have escaped censure because I'm not a teenaged boy with a Muslim name. Nevertheless, what needs to be said must be said and I will continue to visit the same blogs and make my views felt if I believe the truth is not being told or is being ignored.

Jennifer H
26 March 2012

On "New York legislature passes pension cutbacks"

While Cuomo and the legislature succeeded in passing this anti-worker legislation, they may have done working people a partial favor by publicly exposing CSEA, AFSCME, Danny Donohue, and their ilk as nothing more than parasitic interlopers. As Mr. Guelpa notes, the unions

were totally ineffectual in the pension struggle. The best they could do at my work place was hand out cheap buttons. To maintain face, CSEA has now announced they are "suspending" contributions and endorsements. Donohue states, "CSEA will also use this time to consult with our brother and sister unions and other allied community organizations about how we can collectively address the disrespect and disenfranchisement of working people by our state's elected officials." This is an empty and unconvincing statement coming from an individual who makes approximately \$250,000 a year. It is doubtful that even the "suspending" of endorsements and contributions will last an entire election cycle. As a result of their refusal to support a true workers' political party, unions have no choice but to continue to serve as crooked middlemen between NYS workers and ruling class politicians.

Jay
New York, USA
23 March 2012

On "US condemns North Korea's planned satellite launch"

Thank you for another excellent article, John. You clearly set out the kind of political, economic, and social forces involved, and in so doing revealed the interests of the main players. Perhaps most alarming of all is the contradictory nationalist and capitalist character of the dynamic forces revealed in your article that are driving these parties into an inevitable violent conflict. Without intervention by the working class on all sides, there can be no intervention to stop the inevitable. A truly insightful "kid gloves-off" overview and analysis. The perspective put forward by the SEP combined with brilliant research and writing is the reason WSWs.org is head and shoulders above any other source attempting to examine geopolitical issues on the Internet.

Gerard
23 March 2012

On “US charges soldier with 17 counts of murder in Afghan massacre”

From the article: “Between 70 and 80 percent of the troops surveyed said that they had seen a member of their unit killed.... Two-thirds said that a roadside bomb had gone off within 55 yards of them.”

While these statistics are atrocious and give a background reason for any and every soldier to suffer from PTSD or assorted psychological problems, one has to wonder what the statistics are for the Afghani people. How many of them have been injured, had an acquaintance killed, a loved one murdered, a bomb go off nearby? How many of them have had times of great fear, fear for their own lives, fear for their children’s lives? How many Afghanis (and this can also be asked about Iraqis and Libyans and Palestinians...) have had to deal with traumatic conditions of leaving their homes, or having their homes destroyed, and then finding somewhere else, hopefully safer, to live? How many of them have any sort of coping system, a knowledge that these horrible times will soon come to an end and that they and their families and communities can get on with a normal life? What do people under these conditions do? So sections of the US media talk of Bales suffering from PTSD as an explanation for his alleged actions, but when is that consideration ever put forward when any Afghani (etc.) carries out a violent action?

Jacqui P
25 March 2012

On “US student debt surpasses \$1 trillion”

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is one of the three instruments making up the International Bill of Rights (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights being the other two). Article 2 of the ICESCR imposes the principle of “progressive realization” on all parties to the ICESCR. The civil and political rights of the ICCPR and the economic, social and cultural rights of the ICESCR are complementary rights—i.e., one set of rights without the other is degraded in value.

One hundred sixty nations are parties and signatories to the ICESCR. The United States is not one of them, having

signed but *not* having ratified the Covenant. As such, the US is not obligated to work toward the provision of such basic human rights as health care, education and housing, preferring to view these as for-profit industries.

Signing the ICESCR does not guarantee that a government will ensure the provision of these rights. The rights must first be entrenched in domestic legislation. Even then, as recent events in Quebec have demonstrated in a province whose national government has signed and ratified the Covenant, these rights can be attacked by capitalist governments. Canadian citizens have remedies at international law to address their grievances, however. American students have no such remedies.

America encourages its young people to pursue higher education knowing that an educated workforce benefits not only the recipients of that education but the country as a whole, including employers. It is yet another act of hypocrisy on the part of a capitalist class that promotes the doctrine of “user pays,” that employers and the nation as a whole should benefit from the existence of an educated workforce yet should expect those future workers to bear the cost of that education. A nation that routinely wastes trillions of dollars on vicious wars in Afghanistan and Iraq can easily fund free universal education through the tertiary level.

Diane
Michigan, USA
24 March 2012



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