

Letters from our readers

11 September 2012

On “SEP presidential candidate Jerry White reports on visit to Sri Lanka”

Dear Mr. White,

I am very impressed by your report and your perspective that everyone deserves a good life regardless of where they were born.

I will proudly vote for you and Phyllis Scherrer this year.

Sincerely,

Robert L
California, USA
9 September 2012

Wow. I'm completely overwhelmed by the video report from Sri Lanka. The photographs were so powerful and the plight of workers, living in company housing, wages deducted for a myriad of reasons, was almost too much to bear seeing. I sincerely hope that we can draw more people in and work to end this sort of stratification into an extreme state of poverty. I was saddened by the fact that although the workers pay union dues, they receive no protection from exploitation on this account. It seems that Marx's closing statement in the Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League of 1850 was right on: "But they [the workers] themselves must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organized party of the proletariat. Their battle-cry must be: The Permanent Revolution."

Vance O

8 September 2012

On “A lost generation and the struggle for socialism”

In Northern Ireland recently, there were sectarian riots and 67 police were injured. Cause? Admittedly it was a straight sectarian issue but it was unemployed youths that were rioting.

Philip A

6 September 2012

On DTE Energy

Just read an article from 2010 regarding a strike vote with DTE Energy. Really well-written. I am an IBEW #17 member. We are currently on an extension to our contract and may also be near a strike vote. Everything written in that article seemed to mirror what we are going through now. Company making record profits again and still wanting its employees to take major concessions. Thought you may be interested. Thanks!

W

Michigan, USA

6 September 2012

On “Letter carrier dies after delivering mail in heat wave”

As a former journalist, I have written many times about the danger of heat in high school sports, especially American football. In the military, including the Marine Corps, the cutoff for any kind of work (obviously in non-combat situations) is a heat index of 90 degrees. A Marine could not be made to do what the postal worker was doing when he died of heat stroke (not heat exhaustion). Soldiers are protected from high heat but workers are not.

On military bases, flags are used to denote heat levels. A “black flag” day is when the heat index reaches 90 degrees. All physical training and anything approaching strenuous work are halted. The policy is available on the US Department of Defense’s web page and is worth looking at.

The heat index measures air temperature and humidity in the shade. Direct sunlight can add 10-15 degrees to the heat index. The poor postal worker making his rounds was working in an oven.

As I wrote 20 years ago following the death of a high school football player from heat stroke: “High school football coaches can do to children what Marine drill instructors can’t do to Marines—run them in the heat.”

Warren D
Tennessee, USA
5 September 2012

On “Under African Skies: The story of the collaboration that became Graceland”

One of the developments foreshadowed by Paul Simon’s clash with the African National Congress over *Graceland* is the defamation suit brought by the party against Brett Murray earlier this year.

Murray’s painting “The Spear” depicted President Jacob Zuma with his genitals exposed. Although a significant number of blacks in South Africa find fault with Zuma’s polygamous, womanising lifestyle, to which the painting alluded, the exhibition of “The Spear” hardened them against Murray, a white man, and split opinion along distinctly racial lines. This is despite the fact that Murray’s past work has also been critical of the apartheid regime.

Petty bourgeois blacks, among them the sternest critics of the ANC, were up in arms over the supposedly disrespectful manner in which Murray depicted the president. For that reason they imputed to him a racism for which Murray had not previously been known.

The level of cultural discourse in South Africa was plain for all the world to see, first when the painting was defaced by two black men; and secondly, in the statement issued by the owners of the Goodman

Gallery, where it had been on display, to the effect that they had never intended to insult anyone, and strove to conduct themselves with sensitivity toward all peoples.

The *City Press Sunday* newspaper, whose editor Ferial Haffajee rather fancied her leftist credentials, then buckled under pressure to remove the image of “The Spear” from its web site. The ultimate farce was the ruling of the Film and Publications Board, which replaced the apartheid-era Directorate of Publications. In the age of Facebook, Flickr and Wikipedia, the FPB rated the painting 16N (nudity), banning all those under 16 years of age from viewing it!

Thabo
9 September 2012



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