

Letters from our readers

25 September 2012

On “150 years since the Emancipation Proclamation”

Dear Mr. Mackaman,

I enjoyed reading your thoughtful and well-composed essay.

A story in my white Southern family is that on her deathbed, my great grandmother broke a taboo of mentioning Abraham Lincoln’s name in the household. She admitted at her end that Lincoln’s assassination was the greatest tragedy to befall the South, and that had it not happened, likely our entire country would never have suffered as much as it did in the years following the Civil War.

Now, as then, most of our personal perspectives are inescapably influenced by the environment we live in, the events we live through, the choices we are allowed, and the information we have access to.

Who has not wondered how many ignorant dogmas and prejudices we hold dear today would be shattered if our education and experience were allowed to broaden?

As always, I thank you and other writers at the *World Socialist Web Site* for providing keen insights into our times by attention to important details in history which are often ignored or neglected elsewhere—details that are illuminated through a broad Socialist perspective.

I would like to mention that I also very much appreciated reading John Chan’s recent perspective imploring people to oppose Chinese and Japanese nationalism.

No one can deny that in all countries it is the poor and working classes that bear the brunt and suffer the most

in peace and war—as civilians and as war fodder. All people everywhere and at all times must declare solidarity against those who will use them or others for selfish means.

I greatly admired the writer Iris Chang who wished us to remember the terrible atrocities at Nanking and elsewhere so that they may never be repeated. Her untimely death was a great tragedy for us all because she was an especially thoughtful and intelligent person who cared about justice.

I very often wonder to what extent her brave researches into the human potentialities for good and evil added to her burdens and how better the world might be today if she were still with us.

Would she be fanning flames for conflict between China and Japan—or putting those flames out?

For myself, the correct answer is obvious. Like Lincoln, Chang was *sui generis*, and a tragic loss.

Robert L
California, USA
23 September 2012

There is a statue of Lincoln in Manchester—at one time—although many years ago now; children were routinely taught at school, and ordinary working people were knowledgeable about our “common” history.

Imagine the sight of Confederate flags flying on some of Lancashire’s mills...

With respect,
SC
22 September 2012

Dear Tom Mackaman and staff and comrades,

So lucid that I'm downright grateful for the meaning of this proclamation, not only being a granting of equality to what were to become citizens, but to the economic reality of it did.

Another analysis that cannot be called an interpretation, rather a statement of meaning, of what it did, as so well-written in the second paragraph and second to last in particular: "the largest seizure of private property in world history prior to the Russian Revolution."

Can I add, that the seizure was a step followed by the Nineteenth Amendment. A woman was a citizen prior, but full citizenship must include the right to choose government or government policy by vote.

Michael S
California, USA
22 September 2012

On "Lessons of the Chicago teachers strike"

Keep up the great work.

For both education and organizing against ratification, it would be good to report on the history of the 1981 Philadelphia teachers' strike, which lasted 50 days and achieved victory. A planned general strike forced the Democratic mayor, Bill Green, and big business to capitulate.

The teachers' union at the time effectively organized community support into a mass movement despite the divide-and-conquer efforts of the press and politicians.

The central labor council and organized and planned a general strike. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued a decision the night before the general strike that was totally in favor of the teachers. If I remember correctly, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision broke with all prior anti-union legal precedent in order to rule in favor of the teachers. The establishment capitulated in order to prevent an actual general strike the next day.

Perhaps you have stories about this in *Bulletin* archives, or can research it otherwise. In any event, the

history of the 1981 situation is an important lesson for today.

Stu
22 September 2012

On "The enigma of Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony"

The article on Shostakovich really sparked my interest. It's difficult for me to find music to listen to, for various reasons, but the descriptions of his work inspired me to look it up. I've been listening to nothing but his symphonies since that article was published. Thank you.

Vance O
21 September 2012



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