

Reddit forum blacklists WSWS

The WSWS Editorial Board
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In a blatant act of political censorship, the moderators of the r/socialism forum on the link aggregating site Reddit have unilaterally “blacklisted” the *World Socialist Web Site* for a period of one month. In announcing the ban, one of the moderators declared that it would be made permanent unless the WSWS changed its political line.

On Monday, moderators of the same forum temporarily deleted an article from the Workers Inquiry into the Bankruptcy of Detroit web site (detroitinquiry.org) that had reached the top of the page due to its popularity among Reddit users. The action, taken without any explanation, clearly revealed the political motivation behind the ban on the WSWS and the contemptuous attitude of the moderators, linked to various political groups, toward the users of the forum.

Their aim is to undermine the political influence of the socialist movement at a time when the readership of the WSWS is growing and the campaigns of the Socialist Equality Party are winning widespread support among workers and youth in Detroit and around the country.

The immediate reason for the ban is the WSWS’ position on the latest sex scandal whipped up by the media—the attack on Woody Allen launched by *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof. In a February 5 article by Arts Editor David Walsh, the WSWS denounced Kristof’s resurrection of discredited allegations that Allen sexually abused his adopted daughter twenty years ago.

In penning the article, Kristof grotesquely abused journalistic ethics to promote a personal vendetta of a personal friend and political collaborator, Allen’s estranged former lover, Mia Farrow. Even as he acknowledged that “none of us can be certain what happened,” Kristof used his position as a *Times* columnist to do whatever he could to discredit and heap filth on the film director.

This article, together with one from five years ago, “The sordid coalition pursuing filmmaker Roman Polanski,” were referred to but never quoted by the Reddit moderator who announced the ban (going by the handle “GOVERNMENT” and identifying themselves as a supporter of “Marxism-Deleonism/IWW”). This individual asserted that the articles amounted to “apologiz[ing] for rape,” declaring that the WSWS should “refrain from defending pedophiles and convicted rapists in the future.”

The WSWS rejects with contempt the demand that it alter its

political line to please these forces.

The allegation of apologetics for rape is a despicable slander, sharing much in common with the right-wing tabloid press. Among those supporting the ban who commented on the announcement on the r/socialism site, hysterical accusations of “defending convicted rapists” were combined with scatological denunciations of the many (indeed the majority) of participants on the site who opposed it.

There was a strong undercurrent of threatened violence directed at Marxist critics. A separate post on Reddit, linking to the same WSWS article on Allen, was headlined “David Walsh should be shot.”

This is the language, and the politics, of the extreme right. The slanderous charges of apologizing for rape are a smokescreen to conceal the real fact of the matter: the two WSWS articles point to the coming together of open reactionaries, the media, “human rights” posers and right-wing proponents of identity politics in defense of the state and its operations.

There is a long history of reactionary forces using allegations of rape and sexual abuse to promote their political agenda, in the United States and internationally. The use of the term “blacklist” by the r/socialism moderator says it all—the embrace of a practice made infamous by the McCarthyite assault on socialist-minded artists in Hollywood, as well as left-wing writers, intellectuals and workers more broadly, during the 1940s and 1950s. There is a certain irony in the fact that Walsh has written extensively about the Hollywood blacklist and interviewed blacklisted directors and writers such as Abe Polonsky, Walter Bernstein and John Berry.

Walsh’s article on Polanski refers to other notorious cases in which sex scandals were concocted in an attempt to destroy prominent people targeted by right-wing forces and the state. These include the use of the Mann Act, which prohibited the transport of females across state lines for “immoral purposes,” to target boxing champion Jack Johnson and film actor and director Charlie Chaplin, a socialist.

It also cites the 1915 lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory manager in Atlanta, who was pursued by right-wing pseudo-populists and anti-Semites after being falsely accused of raping and murdering a worker.

In the US south, such charges played a central role in the lynch mob reign of terror against African Americans, including

the 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till for supposedly flirting with a white woman in Mississippi.

The case of the Scottsboro boys is among the most notorious examples. Nine black teenagers accused of raping a white woman in Alabama in 1931 were framed up and nearly lynched. Only a massive campaign by left-wing forces saved their lives, though several spent decades in jail and one was shot to death by a prison guard. The modern-day moralists such as those who run r/socialism would be calling for the execution of the Scottsboro boys and denouncing anyone who questioned the accusations against them as “rape apologists.”

The FBI routinely sought out information on sexual relations and infidelities for nefarious political purposes, as in the attempted blackmail of Martin Luther King, Jr. More recently, a sex scandal was the modus operandi for the impeachment of Bill Clinton, a right-wing campaign to unseat an elected president in pursuit of an unstated and reactionary political agenda.

Nor have such tactics been limited to the United States. Lurid allegations of sexual crimes, under the rubric of Rassenschande (“race defilement”) and Blutschande (“blood defilement”), were commonplace in the anti-Semitic propaganda of Nazi Germany. The Nazi tabloid *Der Stürmer* featured such charges. Many Jews were tried and executed for alleged rape in connection with alleged sexual relations with German “Aryan” women.

This is the political heritage of the present-day moral crusaders. The targets of recent sex scandals whipped up in the media include many artists—often, it must be noted, Jewish artists, as in the case of Polanski and now Allen. Those singled out for attack have generally been associated with works of a socially critical character.

Among the most infamous recent cases is the witch-hunt against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Those advocating the banning of the WSWS express full support for the vendetta against Assange, led by the Obama administration. The same moderator who announced the ban declares in one post that “there are other examples [of WSWS apologizing for rape] such as defending Assange.”

Such forces have absolutely nothing to do with left-wing politics. Their politics are defined not by what they call themselves, but by what they do. As for the use of the term “socialist,” it should be recalled that the Nazis called themselves “national socialists.”

Speaking on behalf of highly privileged sections of the upper-middle class, these elements are anti-communist, anti-Marxist, pro-imperialist and intensely hostile to the working class.

They willingly and enthusiastically line up with the state and its media appendages. The identity politics they pioneered have been adopted as a basic component of bourgeois ideology. Sex allegations, in particular, have become part of the modus operandi for attacking democratic rights and launching wars of aggression in the name of “human rights.”

In all the arguments of the opponents of the WSWS, there is not a single reference to what was the central focus of the article on Allen: the politics of Nicholas Kristof and the *Times*.

As the original article noted, Kristof has “emerged over the past decade as one of the most strident advocates of ‘human rights’ imperialism, having urged US military intervention in Sudan (Darfur), Libya and Syria, all areas where the American ruling elite’s energy and geo-political interests are at stake.”

The *Times* columnist has made a specialty of graphic descriptions of rape and sexual abuse in Africa as part of a campaign to demand the intervention of the United States.

The reason for the silence on the politics of Kristof is simple: They agree with him. The pseudo-left organizations have been the most fervent champions of operations in Libya and Syria and are now involved in similar agitation in support of US regime-change maneuvers in Ukraine.

Among the opponents of the ban on the WSWS, several suggested that the action mirrored the anti-socialist provocations of state agencies, such as the COINTELPRO program of the 1960s and 1970s. There is no doubt that behind the scenes, individuals are involved who have direct ties to state agencies. But the witch-hunting attack on the WSWS also corresponds to the politics of the groups and individuals involved. They are what they do.

The campaign against the WSWS and its position on Woody Allen helps lift the lid on the political orientation of the identity politics crowd and the right-wing upper-middle class milieu that is its social base. Their reaction to socialist criticism is to ban political discussion. Their response to a movement of the working class will be to support state repression.



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