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Commentary, analysis and investigations  
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**October 23, 2008 - Issue 296**

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**A Letter to America: Why Must the Show Go On?**

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It's not easy or even fun to be an expatriate. Unless you didn't know, that is just a highfalutin word that is used especially for American emigrants. Why the special word? Because people who "leave" America are expected to see it with a critical (perhaps even artistic) eye, and Americans who "remain" are expected to disregard the criticism, and even accuse the expat of Anti-Americanism or sheer snobbery. In writing, you will see the word distorted to "ex-patriot".

I've never been a "patriot". I've never served in the armed forces. I've never done anything more than my "duty" as a citizen, paying taxes, voting when I could and showing up when called to jury duty. I've gotten very little in return, to be frank. Whenever I needed urgent medical care, I've had to pay out of my pocket. Health insurance certainly doesn't cover everything, and a collapsed lung in 1984 cost me over seven thousand dollars because my HMO specified that I should not opt for the nearest hospital, but should have gone to "theirs". Thank God I refused to be admitted to a room after the ER, because I felt deep down that I had greatly sinned. I figured that I would be paying a surplus for my audacity to allow the ambulance to take me to my local hospital. When I got the bill three weeks later, it is another miracle that I did not die of a heart attack.

I put myself through college by working full-time as well as taking out a student loan, every penny of which I paid back to you, America. In a way, I contributed to your economic growth, I produced, consumed, got sick enough for you, got an expensive higher education while barely scraping by myself. In my humble opinion, you owe me.

Yes, I am a product of the country by virtue of birth, at times a pawn or even a victim of its limited vision, like every citizen of every country. I've been compelled to pledge allegiance to the flag and to the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands. I had my hand on my heart and was sure they were keeping their part of the bargain with that guarantee of Liberty and Justice for All. But who's really going to go into checking all those details? Children ask only the right questions, or at least,

grown-ups give them comforting answers.

Yet, being American gets on my nerves more and more as I watch America do their "big show". I've seen elections and campaigns all my life. I know it's a circus, the most expensive show on earth. But I am at the point where I want to shout at you, America. "Can you please get serious and stop the show?"

You act like you are the most important nation on Earth, the best, number one. I would like to know what gives you this idea. If it weren't for your military might, what would you really be?

Your economy is a shambles and you rescue those who have destroyed it with the taxes of your own workers? The stock markets of the world have crashed because they are controlled by the vicissitudes of Wall Street and the Dollar. Thanks! We really appreciate it over here. But we don't expect you to do the right thing. No, I don't mean bail anyone else out, but just to APOLOGISE. That's a silly fantasy, I know. While you are concentrating on erecting Holocaust monuments in Florida and Washington, where are your monuments to the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? To the victims of the genocide of the indigenous people of your continent? To the Africans you dragged over in chains and forced into slavery? That might force you to apologise for your sins and crimes, and it's better to avoid that. Break for Commercial.

But you drag things anyway, America, not only slaves to your shores. You dragged us into your Global War on Terror. If someone isn't your ally, fighting at your command, you are entitled to put an embargo on them, attack them and occupy their land.

You impose your energy and pollution policies without concern about the international agreements. However, if other countries violate or even threaten to violate international agreements, they are aided if they are Israel, or punished (if they are your Rogue States). If other States determine their own policies, they become friends or enemies according to your own interests, whipping up international consensus to get nations involved in wars for or with you. You occupy foreign lands with your military bases – yes, even your allied nations have bases that are "pieces of America" abroad. It might be normal to you, but I wonder if you would like having pieces of other countries on your own soil.

Haven't you had enough of wars you can't win and which only drain resources? Or is that the only way you have found to take your own people's attention off their deteriorating Social Security, their abysmal health care programs and the constant outsourcing of their labour? If the enemy is "out there", the devil in the backyard can play merrily.

Americans get thrown onto the streets in a parade of deepening poverty that makes the American Dream look like a joke to anyone who has eyes to see it. But the homeless don't vote, you can't register "a non-address", so they don't matter anyway. Some even think they had it coming... tough luck.

So, Americans are convinced they are going to have some bright future, with the change they can believe in, or even the change they need. Good for them. When they wake up, please tell them that we are sick to the teeth of the show. Sick of the parade of wives and children and ministers. Sick of the smiling and nodding human wall that claps at every empty word uttered by the leaders who have been bought and sold precisely by the same folks who have bought and sold the American citizen up the river.

Americans complain about the system too, don't get me wrong. But why do they never lift a pinky finger to change the voting system? The dreaded Electoral College.... man, I remember them saying that would be a thing of the past about 6 campaigns ago. The deceptive Black Box voting and uncounted Absentee Votes will give a bit of drama to the election night coverage, but the pundits will assure us everything is totally fair and without a loop.

Race is always an issue, and isn't this sad? In a nation that can boast the mystery of diversity, the great melting pot, why does every candidate have to be the standard carbon copy as far as policy and beliefs, catering to a certain profile of voter that is far more conservative than most people I know would admit? I thought that those great ideals such as separation of Church and State, All Men are Created Equal and whatnot were at least something to aim for. But the candidates are parading their "personal Christian Minister" around, (until he says something embarrassing, then they are expected to dump him unceremoniously), doing race-specific campaigning and denying that America is still as racist as it was in the 60s.

If I tell people I'd only use my (uncounted, most likely) Absentee Vote to elect Ralph Nader or Cynthia McKinney, my progressive friends tell me I am helping the Republicans get elected. I beg to differ. Even if they don't get the votes, they get elected sometimes. Even if the people are "sick of things" a wartime president gets re-elected. It's happened before, in fact, it always happens, and even without the smoke and whistles, the Americans realise what is in their immediate interests, they always go for the most warlike Party, the one that can assure them "cheap oil". What have I got to do with it? Why should I play a part in that game and cast a vote for one of the two showmen? They have both tired me out with their finger-pointing, their two-steps, their pats on the backs, their baby-kissing and Minister and lobby ass-licking.

I refuse. I refuse to play the game. They can force me to watch the show, but they can't make me applaud.

So America, get on with your elections. But get it over with quickly. Put one of your favourite sons in office. It really doesn't matter who it is. The rest of the world expects it will keep getting four more years of your war, your cultural and economic hegemony, your air and water pollution, your toxic waste and occupation of land and space. Four more years of your arrogance and refusal to apologise. Bring It On.

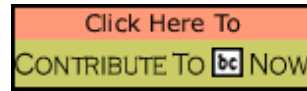
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