

Van: Equal Times Newsroom <info@equaltimes.org>
Verzonden: donderdag 28 februari 2013 16:56
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Onderwerp: Equal Times newsletter: Qatar, Chile, US migrant workers and more



= LINCOLN WOULD FIGHT IN QATAR TODAY

Watching Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, one cannot help making comparisons between the abolition of slavery and today's immigration reform in the United States or anywhere else that workers are treated like slaves.

The conditions that led to the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, pushed by President Abraham Lincoln, might not be historically comparable to the situation of the US today – that is true.

However, Barak Obama's **immigration reform** is somehow as challenging to the country and its future as the 13th Amendment was in the middle of 19th century. After all, the principles that inspired the Amendment are based on what we would call today 'human rights', in terms of equality, social justice and decent work, for the people who are forced to leave their country and to work under exploitative conditions.

With all these differences, to what extent are those four million African slaves freed by Lincoln really that different from today's 12 million Latino workers, forced to leave their countries because the US has impoverished their economies?

In this regard it is worth considering that the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) caused the bankruptcy of many small-scale Mexican farmers, and then forced them to leave en-mass and look for any kind of work possible in the US. These workers, especially when undocumented, are exposed to all kinds of exploitation and abuse.

But the need to fight against such kinds of abuse is certainly stronger in places like the Persian Gulf, where migrant workers still have no protection against discrimination and the violation of core human rights.

In Qatar, for instance, all the workers from poorer Asian countries **cannot form or join unions**, simply because unions are illegal. They cannot negotiate for higher wages or better and safer conditions. In fact, many keep **dying on the construction sites** of the 2022 World Cup because of poor safety measures. Many others have their passports taken away so that even the sole right to move or go back home is

neglected.

There is no doubt that if *Lincoln* were alive, he would also fight for migrant rights in Qatar today.

Vittorio Longhi

Editor.

= HIGHLIGHTS



QATAR: DESPITE WORLD CUP PLEDGES, BUILDING SITE ACCIDENTS SOAR

Posted on February 27, 2013

New figures reveal that over 1000 workers were injured in construction site falls in Qatar last year, up from 600 in 2008. If Qatar is really committed to ensuring workplace safety, why are these numbers going up, not down?

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CHILE: IN WORK BUT WITHOUT SHELTER

Posted on February 22, 2013

Why does 77 per cent of Chile's 12,000-strong homeless population have a job but nowhere to live?

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US: STOP MAKING MIGRATION A CRIME

Posted on February 19, 2013

Is Obama ready to create an immigration policy that looks at the reasons why people migrate and stops trying to criminalise them?

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QATAR: NO WORLD CUP WITHOUT WORKERS' RIGHTS



More people will die building Qatar's World Cup stadiums than will play in the World Cup

1.2 million workers in Qatar are prohibited from joining a trade union, in violation of international rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. And incredibly, 94 per cent of working people in Qatar are migrant workers, with no rights at work. We want people to know about the problems facing workers in Qatar. Don't let your World Cup team play in a shamed stadium. Help us tell the Qatari authorities they should do the right thing for workers and allow them to form and join a trade union.

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= COMING SOON

AUSTRALIA: ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD

Mining may generate tens of billions of dollars for the Australian economy but that doesn't mean it is to everyone's benefit. In our next In-Depth article, Equal Times takes a look at the dark side of Australia's decade-long mining boom.

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