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Intolerance and “The Trump Effect”

By Malú Huacuja del Toro
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In the aftermath of Orlando, do you ever wonder how come some of the most prodigious artists in the world were homosexual or bisexual, and even homophobic people must give up their hatred, if only to recognize their value?

Why is it that millions of Catholic tourists will enjoy this summer inside the Vatican – of all places – the Sistine Chapel, one of the top wonders in art history, painted by a homosexual prodigy named Michelangelo Buonarroti? And what about Shakespeare’s sonnets, written by him to a mysterious male lover? And how come even the most conservative theater-goers relish Oscar Wilde’s plays, trying to forget he ended up in prison for being gay?

From Rimbaud to Proust, from Yukio Mishima to Truman Capote the list of some of the most revered homosexual artists in history is quite impressive, to say the least. Is it that the LGBTQ community is artistically superior, somehow more gifted? Before going into some kind of inverse biased criteria just as white supremacy does with everything, let’s consider that anyone who defies social conventions is destined to be more critical, and therefore, creative, in the world we are set to exist. This does not mean that, just as among any other demographic group, there are not mediocre, dumb or insensitive gay people. The only rule we can always count on is that we cannot reduce human beings to a stereotype. Besides, for historical circumstances, it helps to keep in mind that it has always been easier for a gay artist to somehow make his voice heard than for a woman, regardless her sexual orientation. But, as the poet says, “Let us not burden our remembrances / With a heaviness that’s gone.” The point here is that some of the most renowned

works of art were made by one of the most repudiated communities in almost every culture and time in history.

The same pattern applies for contemporary art, and even modern TV. We owe some of the best-crafted, inspiring and thought-provoking TV series to gay creators/screenwriters, with *Six Feet Under* being a memorable example.[a] Their anti-racist, anti-sexist contribution made a difference in US youth's culture. It led to the New York's proposed tax incentive that "could create more TV jobs for minority and female screenwriters," as recently informed by *IndieWire*. [b]

With so many fine productions, rating one of them as "the best" would always be inaccurate. That is why considering that *The Americans* is "the best show on television" is an overstatement, but that is what audiences in the US have been hearing and reading over and over this year, almost as frequently as we see Donald Trump's face on TV. Written by former CIA agent Joe Weisberg, the show is about two KGB agents posing as US-born citizens during the Reagan administration.

Word has it that President Ronald Reagan once greeted the people of Bolivia when being in Brazil. These two very different countries may be both called "Latino" in the United States, but their residents don't even speak the same language. However, as one Mexican journalist pointed out thirty years ago, "Reagan might not know much about Latin American geography, but he certainly had a very clear counterintelligence strategy and war policies against the Latin American people." With the most unforgettable operation being the "Irangate," or "Iran-Contra" scandal — the involvement of the CIA in cocaine trafficking in Central America to fund the Contra rebels in Nicaragua — Reagan's administration supported brutal Latin American dictatorships like Pinochet's in Chile and Ríos Montt's in Guatemala.

You will never see any of this in *The Americans*, by the way. It features two attractive agents, Elizabeth (Keri Russell) and Phillip (Matthew Rhys) living in a fake marriage with real children. A typical work day in their lives includes killing with their bare hands innocent people, seducing — and even marrying — others, while happily regrouping every night at family dinners. Of course, they have a counterpart: FBI agent Stan Beeman (Noah Emmerich), who is a victim of these two human robots developed by the KGB.

It is a skillfully constructed story with fascinating plots and sub-plots, only that the same intriguing stories about marriage between spies can be written about the FBI agent who destroyed a married couple when he infiltrated an anti-war group during the Vietnam War, met "the Bennetts," and "started a rumor that the wife was cheating on the husband," as stated in the files that a group of activists stole from one FBI office in Media Pennsylvania in 1971. Or else, you can write a captivating script about marriage based on "The Cult of the Reagans" by *CounterPunch* co-founders Jeffrey St. Clair and Alexander Cockburn. Like the latter once said, "It's not a hard task to dishonor Ronald Reagan by listing his infamies." You can create compelling TV series with any of them. If you hire a good screenwriter, it can be equally enthralling and surprising, I promise, but it would never be considered "the best show on American television." I promise that too.

Contents matter. Such an imaginary show wouldn't be praised as "the best" because it would show both sides of the war – not just the Stalinist, totalitarian regime's actions but the US Government hypocrisy regarding the so-called "war on drugs."

The Americans is very popular not only because of the good acting, but because it commits the sin of omission about Latin American history. It even steals the name of the Continent, using the demonym for only one nation. So does Donald Trump's campaign against Mexican immigrants to "Bring America Back." And, just as it happens with "The Americans" slogan, the more you repeat it, the more people are predisposed to believe it.

In an effort to oversimplify, while speaking about Mexican drug trafficking and immigration, Trump's echoing media omits that the majority of the Mexican civil society is opposing the organized crime within the Mexican Government. Mexican politicians almost never get democratically elected, but imposed by drug lords and corporate power through a rigged electoral system. Peasants are severely starved by pro-Monsanto policies like NAFTA, which was decided in secret, without the knowledge and consensus by the Mexican people and in spite of our opposition movement. These peasants have no other resource to survive than working in sweatshops either in Mexico or the United States. Far from being drug smugglers and rapists, even in the US, while working in semi-slavery conditions, these undocumented workers keep opposing our government and the Mexican cartels.

Such is the untold cause of immigration. It takes a NAFTA and a TPP to bring more Mexican people to the US, and a wall won't stop despair.

Rallies and actions against the Mexican Government involved in the organized crime in New York City have intensified for over a year now, especially after the unspeakable massacre and disappearance of 43 Ayotzinapa students of a rural, public school. From protests every 26th of every month at the Mexican Consulate (in memory of September 26th, 2014, when the protesting students defending public education were attacked and kidnapped by the Federal Police), to hunger strikes at the UN, marathons and creative/informative displays, the Mexican community in NYC has not stopped peacefully demonstrating. They have become familiar for many pedestrians, neighbors and business owners at certain spots. New Yorkers don't get surprised at anything, but the faces of the 43 disappeared students make pedestrians ask questions. They ask the same questions we all asked in the first place, "Why and who?" When learning that the Ayotzinapa school is located near a field of poppies to produce heroine and the government at all levels (local, state and federal) is simply protecting the heroine production over any other kind of lifestyle (like studying, learning to read and write not just gangs' death threats), people wish they could do something about it. Then the demonstrators explain they can call their legislators and ask them to oppose any military aid from the US Government to the Mexican corrupt government. The less the US Government supports Mexican drug lords in the Presidential, State and Mayoral offices, the more we can build our democracy, protect our lands, save our women from the organized crime's slaughterers, build our economy and stop emigrating.

Needless to say, not every New Yorker is interested in our cause, but after hearing the Mexican people out, they usually say they will stay tuned and wish them the best of luck. However, over the last months, since Trump has been insulting us to gain popularity and become President of

the United States at our expense but without our vote, the situation has slightly changed. A phenomenon that I call “The Trump Effect” has started. For example, during a recent, peaceful, informative assembly in Washington Square, a man came over to shout, “Fucking wetbacks! Go back to your country!” He was no longer willing to ask what the event is about.

Those kinds of US citizens are now under the Trump’s spell, that is, with permission to insult Mexican people on the street, and feel good about it. Such is the real achievement of that campaign since, as the saying goes, “If you can make it in NYC, you can make it everywhere.”

Yes, they can get back to what the United States of America were about a century ago. In that respect, Trump is indeed “the best show on TV.”