

October 6, 2002

Dear David Cohen,

I write to congratulate you on your splendid achievement, and to say how much I enjoyed your book. To show "where I am coming from", I enclose an old C.V. I was born in South Africa, and was away (apart from brief visits) for more than fifty years. Most of those years were spent in the U.S. (California), so I have a particular interest in your book. We returned to South Africa in August 1999, and now live (happily) in the Cape.

I was held by all your chapters, but had a special affinity for Chapter 6, "California and esp pp 218 - 240, dealing with Mexican-Americans. During the 1960's I made some studies in Patterson, a small town in the San Joaquin Valley, about 200 kms north of Visalia - and quite similar, in terms of the society and the ecology and economy. When I first saw Patterson, in 1964, I thought that I was back in apartheid South Africa. The Mexican-Americans lived literally "across the tracks"; although the schools were officially integrated, there was little social interaction; the "Anglo" "growers" made breath-takingly racist and patronising remarks. In an effort to do some participant observation, I did (for a short period) some farm labour, living and working with Mexican-Americans. To come to the point, your section on this area was devastatingly accurate.

I have spent enough time in New York, and in other parts of the U.S., to appreciate the perceptions and ironies of your other chapters, too. At first, I was not sure about your letters to Alexis de Tocqueville, but, as I got used to them, I saw that they added another valuable dimension.

My friend, Bernard Riley, who spent a few years longer in the U.S. is presently reading your book ; he keeps calling me, "David, listen to this. It is spot-on!"

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One review (possibly Cape Times), mentioned that you were writing a somewhat similar book on South Africa. I look forward eagerly to this. Generally, we are pleased to be here, in Fish Hoek. After a quarter of a century in California, ten years in UK, and assorted periods in African Countries, we both would rather be here than anywhere else. Of course, we have some reservations about government policy, and an uneasiness about the apparently intractable gulf between rich (mainly white) and poor (mainly black), but overall, this suits us very well. This is why I would be glad to see what analytical insights you will bring on the contemporary scene.

Again, thank you for writing such a penetrating analysis of the USA, in such a well thought out format - a well designed book, too.

Yours sincerely,