

# Timeline

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## **A Time For Reflection**

Since the tragic events of September 11th, Americans, along with people the world over, have experienced a whole spectrum of emotions and responses. As this issue of *Timeline* goes to press, our country is involved in a war against terrorism, and cries of anger and vengeance have filled our newspapers and television screens.

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And yet, as days and weeks have passed, other voices are beginning to be heard. While no one justifies the September 11 atrocities, some are seeing this as a critical moment in time—an opportunity to reflect and search for more creative responses.

Much has happened since some of these pieces were written, and much more will happen before you read this. Nonetheless, we feel the writers reflect opinions that cry out to be heard.

The Editors of *Timeline*

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## **Afghanistan: Did It Have To Happen?**

**by Mac Lawrence**

What is there to say about the tragedy of September 11, and the reaction by the U.S. and its allies?

In the thousands of responses on the Web, every conceivable thought has appeared. If you agree with what someone writes, you send copies to your friends and ignore opposing opinions. Polls say that up to nine out of ten Americans are in favor of the bombing of Afghanistan; those who would have relied on diplomacy, or used means other than military action, risk being called unAmerican, leftist, disloyal, naive.

The focus on Afghanistan is particularly poignant for me. In 1989, I was one of four members of the Beyond War Foundation (the predecessor of the Foundation for Global Community) who went to Pakistan at the invitation of Afghans living in the San Francisco Bay Area. They came to us saying, “We have defeated the Russians, but we need help now to move ‘beyond war’ and bring a stable government to Afghanistan.”

Accompanied by an exiled Afghan leader, the four of us discussed our plans with the State Department in Washington, D.C. We met with prominent Afghans and key members of the UN relief effort in Geneva, with mujahideen commanders and other Afghan leaders in the Pakistan cities of Peshawar, Quetta, and Islamabad, and ended by meeting the former King of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, in Rome.

We didn’t see ourselves as telling the Afghans how to set up a post-war government, but as Americans who offered encouragement and promised to relay their ideas and needs to the appropriate members of the U.S. government. It did not take us long to figure out what was obvious to anyone who spent any time there—that there would be a civil war in Afghanistan unless two things happened: first, the U.S. stopped sending more arms to the fundamentalist extremists in its zeal to force the last Communist out of the country; second, countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran ceased trying to establish control of Afghanistan and instead offered to help the Afghans set up a stable, representative government in their country.

The U.S. was especially a key player, the Afghans told us. Each evening as we returned to our hotel in Peshawar, there were a dozen or more bearded, veteran mujahideen commanders waiting for us. After thanking us profusely for helping defeat the Soviets, they pleaded with us to tell our government to stop sending more weapons, and they asked for help in holding a *Loya Jirga*—a grand meeting of leaders of all factions within Afghanistan and the traditional Afghan way of handling their most difficult national dilemmas. In heavily guarded compounds near Peshawar in the company of a hundred or more mujahideen fighters, we were shown bundles of scrolls with names and photographs of the mujahideen commanders, tribal chiefs, and religious leaders in the local, independent councils in each of Afghanistan's 29 provinces. With this degree of organization, chances were good, we thought, that appropriate representatives of the various factions in the country could be brought together for a grand meeting, provided that the missing ingredient—safety of the participants—could be guaranteed by the U.S. and neighboring countries.

After our team returned, the Afghans with whom we worked developed a well-thought out proposal for setting up a *Loya Jirga*, complete with a timetable and budget. We explained the situation in Afghanistan and promoted the *Loya Jirga* plan with articles in our *Beyond War* publication. We formed larger teams and, along with local Afghans, visited key members of Congress in Washington on two separate trips. We held dinners and gave talks. We even were able to meet with members of the U.S. National Security Agency and the State Department person who handled policy for that part of the world. It was a first-class education in how politics works—frustrating, to say the least, because it was so clear what would happen to that shattered country if things did not change, and so obvious that, by and large, those in responsible positions in setting U.S. foreign policy either did not understand the situation, did not care what happened to Afghanistan after the Russians were kicked out, or both. Even the United Nations let the Afghans down, and history shows the price the Afghans, the U.S., and the rest of the world is now paying.

It is more than interesting that today the name of Mohammed Zahir Shah is in the news, along with the idea of a *Loya Jirga*. The question is: Will the U.S. and the other countries and entities involved be enlightened enough to help the Afghans set up a grand assembly that truly represents all elements in this complex struggle? So far, several "*loya jirgas*" have already been held, but these have been largely public relations events, lacking in representation.

Meanwhile the present U.S. military force approach, with its killing and destruction, is further devastating Afghanistan and clearly beginning to alienate even those Afghan leaders—whether in Afghanistan, the U.S., Europe, Australia—who are vital to a new and stable Afghanistan. Perhaps this destructive approach has solved problems in the past, but it cannot solve the problem of terrorism, and it is not the way to oust the Taliban.

It is only the Afghans themselves, with ample help, who can solve the Taliban problem and set up a workable, tolerant government. It is the Muslims themselves who have the

responsibility and singular capability to solve the Islamic extremist problem. It is up to the countries of the world to work cooperatively to eliminate terrorist cells wherever they exist. And it is incumbent on all governments to understand the ramifications of their foreign policies and actions, make whatever changes are needed, and stop adding fuel to the existing flames.

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## **An Opportunity Lost**

**by Mac Lawrence**

*This article titled “The Continuing Bloodshed in Afghanistan” appeared in the January 1990 issue of On Beyond War, the forerunner periodical to Timeline.*

When you say “Afghanistan,” people say: “The Soviets are gone, the Afghans have their country back, we can forget about Afghanistan.”

But Afghanistan, devastated by 10 years of war, faces a further bloody future, a future heavily impacted by the United States.

In late November, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia agreed to match the \$250 million a month in weapons the Soviets are said to be sending to Afghanistan. Together, the two sides will send each month nearly half a billion dollars more Kalashnikovs, mortars, and rockets into a land already bristling with arms, a land where the roads, villages, schools, clinics, the ages-old irrigation canals, all are obliterated, and millions of mines lie hidden in the soil.

Since 1981, as much as half of the weapons the CIA sent went to a single man, Gulbiddin Hekmatyar, a radical Islamic fundamentalist, anti-Communist and anti-U.S., dedicated to a Khomeini-type government in Afghanistan. Large amounts also went to three other Islamic fundamentalists, who will continue to receive the major portion of U.S. and Saudi arms. Though Hekmatyar is now in disfavor with the CIA, he is said to have stockpiled a wealth of weapons.

It is a dismal outlook for the Afghans: A continuing war for control spurred on by the superpowers with the Afghans the ones who die. And, in the absence of a popular government, a civil war pitting well-armed fundamentalist extremists against the moderate majority of the Afghan people.

With Soviet troops gone, the situation has changed, but U.S. policy has not. *Washington Post* assistant foreign editor James Rupert, writing in the *World Policy Journal*, sums up what so many experts on Afghanistan conclude: “By continuing to adhere to a policy that prolongs the war, the United States may in effect be helping to undermine Afghanistan’s future. Having so intimately involved itself in Afghan affairs,

the U.S. government cannot now evade the responsibility for the consequences of its involvement.”

In its own interest and that of Afghanistan, the U.S. needs a new policy, one that substitutes diplomacy for force, and fully backs the Afghans’ own plans to form a new government.

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## No Glory in Unjust War on the Weak

by **Barbara Kingsolver**

*Barbara Kingsolver is a columnist and author of numerous national best sellers, including The Bean Trees, Pigs in Heaven, The Poisonwood Bible, and Prodigal Summer.*

I cannot find the glory in this day. When I picked up the newspaper and saw “America Strikes Back!” blazed boastfully across it in letters I swear were 10 inches tall—shouldn’t they reserve at least one type size for something like, say, nuclear war?—my heart sank. We’ve answered one terrorist act with another, raining death on the most war-scarred, terrified populace that ever crept to a doorway and looked out.

The small plastic boxes of food we also dropped are a travesty. It is reported that these are untouched, of course—Afghans have spent their lives learning terror of anything hurled at them from the sky. Meanwhile, the genuine food aid on which so many depended for survival has been halted by the war.

We’ve killed whoever was too poor or crippled to flee, plus four humanitarian aid workers who coordinated the removal of land mines from the beleaguered Afghan soil. That office is now rubble, and so is my heart.

I am going to have to keep pleading against this madness. I’ll get scolded for it, I know. I’ve already been called every name in the Rush Limbaugh handbook: traitor, sinner, naive, liberal, peacenik, whiner. I’m told I am dangerous because I might get in the way of this holy project we’ve undertaken to keep dropping heavy objects from the sky until we’ve wiped out every last person who could potentially hate us. Some people are praying for my immortal soul, and some have offered to buy me a one-way ticket out of the country, to anywhere.

I accept these gifts with a gratitude equal in measure to the spirit of generosity in which they were offered. People threaten vaguely, “She wouldn’t feel this way if her child had died in the war!” (I feel this way precisely because I can imagine that horror.) More subtle adversaries simply say I am ridiculous, a dreamer who takes a child’s view of the world, imagining it can be made better than it is. The more sophisticated approach, they suggest, is to accept that we are all on a jolly road trip down the maw of catastrophe, so shut up and drive.

I fight that, I fight it as if I'm drowning. When I get to feeling I am an army of one standing out on the plain waving my ridiculous little flag of hope, I call up a friend or two. We remind ourselves in plain English that the last time we got to elect somebody, the majority of us, by a straight popular-vote count, did not ask for the guy who is currently telling us we will win this war and not be "misunderestimated." We aren't standing apart from the crowd, we are the crowd. There are millions of us, surely, who know how to look life in the eye, however awful things get, and still try to love it back.

It is not naive to propose alternatives to war. We could be the kindest nation on Earth, inside and out. I look at the bigger picture and see that many nations with fewer resources than ours have found solutions to problems that seem to baffle us. I'd like an end to corporate welfare so we could put that money into ending homelessness, as many other nations have done before us. I would like a humane health-care system organized along the lines of Canada's. I'd like the efficient public-transit system of Paris in my city, thank you. I'd like us to consume energy at the modest level that Europeans do, and then go them one better. I'd like a government that subsidizes renewable energy sources instead of forcefully patrolling the globe to protect oil gluttony. Because, make no mistake, oil gluttony is what got us into this holy war, and it's a deep tar pit. I would like us to sign the Kyoto agreement today, and reduce our fossil-fuel emissions with legislation that will ease us into safer, less gluttonous, sensibly reorganized lives. If this were the face we showed the world, and the model we helped bring about elsewhere, I expect we could get along with a military budget the size of Iceland's.

How can I take anything but a child's view of a war in which men are acting like children? What they're serving is not justice, it's simply vengeance. Adults bring about justice using the laws of common agreement. Uncivilized criminals are still held accountable through civilized institutions; we abolished stoning long ago. The World Court and the entire Muslim world stand ready to judge Osama bin Laden and his accessories. If we were to put a few billion dollars into food, health care, and education instead of bombs, you can bet we'd win over enough friends to find out where he's hiding. And I'd like to point out, since no one else has, the Taliban is an alleged accessory, not the perpetrator—a legal point quickly cast aside in the rush to find a sovereign target to bomb. The word "intelligence" keeps cropping up, but I feel like I'm standing on a playground where the little boys are all screaming at each other, "He started it!" and throwing rocks that keep taking out another eye, another tooth. I keep looking around for somebody's mother to come on the scene saying, "Boys! Boys! Who started it cannot possibly be the issue here. People are getting hurt."

I am somebody's mother, so I will say that now: The issue is, people are getting hurt. We need to take a moment's time out to review the monstrous waste of an endless cycle of retaliation. The biggest weapons don't win this one, guys. When there are people on Earth willing to give up their lives in hatred and use our own domestic airplanes as bombs, it's clear that we can't out-technologize them. You can't beat cancer by killing every cell in the body—or you could, I guess, but the point would be lost. This is a war of who can

hate the most. There is no limit to that escalation. It will only end when we have the guts to say it really doesn't matter who started it, and begin to try and understand, then alter the forces that generate hatred.

We have always been at war, though the citizens of the U.S. were mostly insulated from what that really felt like until Sept. 11. Then, suddenly, we began to say, "The world has changed. This is something new." If there really is something new under the sun in the way of war, some alternative to the way people have always died when heavy objects are dropped on them from above, then please, in the name of heaven, I would like to see it. I would like to see it, now.

*A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed."*

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## Thoughts in the Presence of Fear

by Wendell Berry

*Wendell Berry is a former professor of English at the University of Kentucky and a past fellow of the Guggenheim Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. He is the author of thirty-two books of essays, poetry, and novels.*

The time will soon come when we will not be able to remember the horrors of September 11 without remembering also the unquestioning technological and economic optimism that ended on that day. This optimism rested on the proposition that we were living in a "new world order" and a "new economy" that would "grow" on and on, bringing a prosperity of which every new increment would be "unprecedented."

The dominant politicians, corporate officers, and investors who believed this proposition did not acknowledge that the prosperity was limited to a tiny percent of the world's people, and to an ever smaller number of people even in the United States; that it was founded upon the oppressive labor of poor people all over the world; and that its ecological costs increasingly threatened all life, including the lives of the supposedly prosperous.

There was, as a consequence, a growing worldwide counter-effort on behalf of economic decentralization, economic justice, and ecological responsibility. We must recognize that the events of September 11 make this effort more necessary than ever.

We did not anticipate anything like what has now happened. We did not foresee that all our sequence of innovations might be at once overridden by a greater one: the invention of a new kind of war that would turn our previous innovations against us, discovering and exploiting the debits and the dangers that we had ignored. We never considered the possibility that we might be trapped in the webwork of communication and transport that was supposed to make us free.

Nor did we foresee that the weaponry and the war science that we marketed and taught to the world would become available, not just to recognized national governments, which possess the power to legitimate large-scale violence, but also to “rogue nations,” dissident or fanatical groups and individuals, whose violence, though not worse than that of nations, is judged by the nations to be illegitimate.

We now have a clear, inescapable choice that we must make. We can continue to promote a global economic system of unlimited “free trade” among corporations, held together by long and highly vulnerable lines of communication and supply, but now recognizing that such a system will have to be protected by a hugely expensive police force that will be worldwide, whether maintained by one nation or several or all, and that such a police force will be effective precisely to the extent that it overweighs the freedom and privacy of the citizens of every nation.

Or we can promote a decentralized world economy, which would have aim of assuring to every nation and region a local self-sufficiency in life-supporting goods. This would not eliminate international trade, but it would tend toward a trade in surpluses after local needs had been met.

One of the gravest dangers to us now, second only to further terrorist attacks against our people, is that we will attempt to go on as before with the corporate program of global “free trade,” whatever the cost in freedom and civil rights, without self-questioning or self-criticism or public debate.

This is why the substitution of rhetoric for thought, always a temptation in a national crisis, must be resisted by officials and citizens alike. It is hard for ordinary citizens to know what is actually happening in Washington in a time of such great trouble; for we all know serious and difficult thought may be taking place there. But the talk that we are hearing from politicians, bureaucrats, and commentators has so far tended to reduce the complex problems now facing us to issues of unity, security, normality, and retaliation.

National self-righteousness, like personal self-righteousness, is a mistake. It is misleading. Any war that we may make now against terrorism will come as a new installment in a history of war in which we have fully participated. We are not innocent of making war against civilian populations.

It is a mistake—as events since September 11 have shown—to suppose that a government can promote and participate in a global economy and at the same time act exclusively in

its own interest by abrogating its international treaties and standing apart from international cooperation on moral issues.

And surely, in our country, under our Constitution, it is a fundamental error to suppose that any crisis or emergency can justify any form of political oppression. Since September 11, far too many public voices have presumed to “speak for us” in saying that Americans will gladly accept a reduction of freedom in exchange for greater “security.” Some would, maybe. But some others would accept a reduction in security (and in global trade) far more willingly than they would accept any abridgement of our Constitutional rights.

In a time such as this, when we have been seriously and most cruelly hurt by those who hate us, and when we must consider ourselves to be gravely threatened by those same people, it is hard to speak of the ways of peace.

But we dare not forget that since the attack of Pearl Harbor—to which the present attack has been often and not usefully compared—we humans have suffered an almost uninterrupted sequence of wars, none of which has brought peace or made us more peaceable. The aim and result of war necessarily is not peace but victory, and any victory won by violence necessarily justified the violence that won it and leads to further violence. If we are serious about innovation, must we not conclude that we need something new to replace our perpetual “war to end war”?

What leads to peace is not violence but peaceableness, which is not passivity, but an alert, informed, practiced, and active state of being. We should recognize that while we have extravagantly subsidized the means of war, we have almost totally neglected the ways of peaceableness. We have, for example, several national military academies, but not one peace academy. We have ignored the teachings and the examples of Christ, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and other peaceable leaders.

And here we have an inescapable duty to notice also that war is profitable, whereas the means of peaceableness, being cheap or free, make no money.

The key to peaceableness is continuous practice. It is wrong to suppose that we can exploit and impoverish the poorer countries, while arming them and instructing them in the newest means of war, and then reasonably expect them to be peaceable.

We must not again allow public emotion or the public media to caricature our enemies. If our enemies are now to be some nations of Islam, then we should undertake to know those enemies. Our schools should begin to teach the histories, cultures, arts, and language of the Islamic nations. And our leaders should have the humility and the wisdom to ask the reasons some of those people have for hating us.

Starting with the economies of food and farming, we should promote at home, and encourage abroad, the ideal of local self-sufficiency. We should recognize that this is the

surest, the safest, and the cheapest way for the world to live. We should not countenance the loss or destruction of any local capacity to produce necessary goods.

We should reconsider and renew and extend our efforts to protect the natural foundations of the human economy: soil, water, and air. We should protect every intact ecosystem and watershed that we have left, and begin restoration of those that have been damaged.

The complexity of our present trouble suggests as never before that we need to change our present concept of education. Education is not properly an industry, and its proper use is not to serve industries, neither by job-training nor by industry-subsidized research. Its proper use is to enable citizens to live lives that are economically, politically, socially, and culturally responsible. This cannot be done by gathering or “accessing” what we now call “information”—which is to say facts without context and therefore without priority. A proper education enables young people to put their lives in order, which means knowing what things are more important than other things; it means putting first things first.

The first thing we must begin to teach our children (and learn ourselves) is that we cannot spend and consume endlessly. We have got to learn to save and conserve. We do need a “new economy,” but one that is founded on thrift and care, on saving and conserving, not on excess and waste. An economy based on waste is inherently and hopelessly violent, and war is its inevitable by-product.

We need a peaceable economy.

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## **We Must Be the Change We Wish to See**

**by Oscar Arias**

*Oscar Arias Sanchez is a former president of Cost Rica and the 1987 Nobel Peace Laureate.*

At this time of great suffering, I want to make a plea to the American people and to their government not to allow their hearts to be filled with hatred, for this would be granting the terrorists the very response they seek and expect. Instead, I pray that the United States and its allies collectively pause and take a deep breath before responding to this violence in kind. It is essential that justice be done, and it is equally vital that justice not be confused with revenge, for the two are wholly different. I beg of the United States government to exercise caution and prudence as they plan their response to this unimaginably grotesque display of disregard for human life. Let justice be done, yes, but let the United States remain committed to its fundamental values, admired and emulated the world over: respect for liberty and for life, especially of the innocent.

I want also to ask the people of the United States, in the midst of their anguish and very justified anger, to remember that extremists of the kind who perpetrated this attack

represent only a tiny minority of the Muslim world, and that the vast majority of Muslims pray to the same God as the rest of us—whether Hindus or Jews, Christians or Buddhists—and that is a God of love and not hate, of life and not death. Therefore, let us call upon that God—that power which while being universal is known to each of us in a unique way—to give us the strength to stand firm against the darkness of hatred and violence that threatens us. Let us seek the light, and reach out in peace to our Muslim brothers and sisters.

I want to suggest that we also take this occasion to re-examine our global priorities and the values upon which they are based. Terrorism is one evil that should not exist in the world today, and there are many others, including poverty, illiteracy, preventable diseases, and environmental destruction. We have the resources—both material and spiritual—to eliminate many of these ills. Let us channel them according to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable among us. Instead of building bunkers and shields that fail to protect us, let us build good will and harmony, human capacity and understanding, and in this way we shall build the world we want to live in. We must be the change we wish to see, as Gandhi once said, and not the darkness that we wish to leave behind.

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## **Do not build again on this place.**

**by Roger Ebert**

If there is to be a memorial, let it not be of stone and steel. Fly no flag above it,  
for it is not the possession of a nation but a sorrow shared with the world.

Let it be a green field, with trees and flowers. Let there be paths that wind through the  
shade. Put out park benches where old people can sun in the summertime,  
and a pond where children can skate in the winter.

Beneath this field will lie entombed forever some of the victims of September 11.  
It is not where they thought to end their lives. Like the sailors of the battleship Arizona,  
they rest where they fell.

Let this field stretch from one end of the destruction to the other.  
Let this open space among the towers mark the emptiness in our hearts.  
But do not make it a sad place. Give it no name. Let people think of it as the green field.  
Every living thing that is planted there will show faith in the future.

Let students take a corner of the field and plant a crop there.  
Perhaps corn, our native grain. Let the harvest be shared all over the world,  
with friends and enemies, because that is the teaching of our religions,  
and we must show that we practice them. Let the harvest show that life prevails over  
death, and let the gifts show that we love our neighbors.

Do not build again on this place.  
 No building can stand there. No building, no statue, no column,  
 no arch, no symbol, no name, no date, no statement.  
 Just the comfort of the earth we share,  
 to remind us that we share it.

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## Deborah's Truth

by **Jim Garrison**

*Jim Garrison is president of the State of the World Forum.*

On September 11, 2001, we Americans lost our sense of invulnerability and joined in the universality of human suffering. The world became America, America became the world.

As we mourn our dead, let us also mourn the frailty of the human spirit and humanity's incapacity to be consistently humane. As painful as our agony is here, what America has just suffered is what others throughout the world have experienced, sometimes with even more devastating impact, and sometimes at the hands of Americans. People around the earth are caught up in a complexity of hatreds as both victims and victimizers: in Ireland, in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in Rwanda, in South Africa, in Afghanistan, in Cambodia, in Vietnam. The list is endless.

In our vengeance, however, let us be aware that from the point of view of our enemies, we are guilty of crimes against them; thus their hatred and terrorism against us. The acts of September 11 were executed by people of such deep conviction that they were willing to give their lives to the success of their mission.

President Bush has rightly declared war against such terrorism. We must know that Osama bin Laden is a warrior dedicated to more than just war; he is leading a holy war against the United States and Israel. He is not a diplomat; he is not a negotiator; he is not a compromiser. He is a man of war who has been building his army and his tactics for decades with an absolutism that only elevating war to the realm of the holy can instill. He will kill until he himself is killed. When we eventually do this, as I assume we will, we must understand that in his place will arise myriad new Osama bin Ladens, equally committed, equally impassioned, equally ruthless. When one fights fire with fire, it can lead to a conflagration that burns beyond any borders, particularly if one is fighting a fire that is considered holy.

It is perhaps worth reflecting on some truths provided by the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah, just passed. At the core of this commemoration of the Jewish New Year lies the story of Deborah, a woman judge of ancient Israel, whose leadership included the mourning of Sisera, the General against whom the Jews of the time were fighting. At the moment of victory against him and also in the midst of their grieving for their own dead,

Deborah intuited that the pain of the mothers on the other side was just as intense as that of her own people. In this, she understood one of the great truths of all religions, that we are all one, which, if we can bear to think the thought, means that Osama bin Laden is us, and we are him, and we are all made of the same dust.

Bush and bin Laden are caught up in the act of co-origination. In a mysterious way there is a deep synchronicity of opposites coming together between them with a force that, if we can endure and live through it, can potentially redeem us. The attack came against perhaps the most conservative administration in modern American history, one which has been systematically withdrawing from all multilateral agreements and treaties with the exception of those which increase American economic power. Paradoxically, the actions of September 11 were taken against the son of the man who organized the coalition of nations to fight Desert Storm, the catalytic point at which bin Laden turned his cadres against the United States. History has bestowed upon George W. the task of organizing a coalition against the man that his father's coalition turned into the enemy. The President who is withdrawing from the world in order to maximize America's freedom for unilateral actions in the world has been met by the ultimate unilateralist: bin Laden. The superpower has met the superempowered individual.

To succeed, Bush the unilateralist must become the premier multilateralist. He must forge a coalition of nations against world terrorism like the world is trying to forge to deal with global warming, nuclear disarmament, trafficking in small arms, chemical and biological weapons—all coalitions and treaties from which he has disengaged. Perhaps the ultimate irony of this complex set of interactions is that this Administration might learn that global cooperation and global governance—meaning the alignments of nation states around rules and norms for international priorities, deliberation, and commerce—actually serve the national security interests of the United States rather than threaten them.

Working within the complexity of coalitions might enable us to tackle another complexity: that the war against terrorism can only be truly won when we also declare war on the roots which cause such acts of barbarity: poverty, illiteracy, injustice, and disease. Terrorism does not arise in a vacuum but has its roots in historical, political, social, and economic dysfunctions so deep, so cruel, so systemic that they create and sustain discontent until it spills over into a desperation that sees no recourse other than wanton destruction against those perceived as responsible for the plight of the terrorists. Unless there is an equally dedicated attack on the causes of terrorism, there will never be victory in the war against terrorism.

Let us mete our measure of vengeance therefore with an equal measure of mercy. In so doing, perhaps we can come to realize that the world is not simply a rough terrain that needs to be made flat in order to enable the global corporations, financial interests, and entertainment industry to have a richer harvest. While good for business, free-trade zones may not do justice to the complexity of the world ecology with all its voices, cultures, histories, and traditions, all of which have their own unique legitimacy and all of which must be given their rightful place of honor.

If out of the present crisis the United States emerges more connected with the rest of the world, more willing to compromise national sovereignty within the context of the needs of the larger community of nations, more willing to live cooperatively within coalitions than outside them, then light will have truly come from out of the darkness and redemption out of the recesses of hatred and war.

In a year we will all look back on September 11 and view it completely differently than we do today. Let us be humbled by this and modulate our certainties accordingly; let us engage with each other with deepened empathy and compassion.

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## **Bin Laden Doesn't Speak for the "Wretched of the Earth"**

**by Anissa Mariam Bouziane**

*Anissa Mariam Bouziane is a writer and filmmaker. This column appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, October 14, 2001.*

As rockets rain down on Kabul, while the fires still smolder beneath the ruins of the World Trade Center, voices across the globe are heard trying to explain "why" these tragic events are taking place. Out of the cacophony, I hear two major themes emerging: one proclaiming the new battle lines of our age—the "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West—and the other reciting the litany of despair felt by the majority of the non-Western world and announcing that this hopelessness is the reason for terrorism.

I am an Arab American, Muslim woman, and a New Yorker. I was born in America to an Arab father and a Western mother. I lived in the United States until I was 7, and then moved to the Arab world, where I spent my formative years until returning to America to go to college. I know about the divide between East and West.

I know about the supposed "chasm that can never be bridged." I live in that chasm and the last time I checked, I was a pretty well-integrated human being. For me, the clash of civilizations theory holds very little water.

I do know first-hand the taste and smell of despair that has been festering for years in the Middle East and Muslim worlds. I stood outside my home under the torrid Middle East sun on a day when the local government was forced by the International Monetary Fund to cancel subsidies on products such as flour, butter, and cooking oil. Still today, I recall the icy taste of fear that overwhelmed me as I wondered how even my middle-class family would now make ends meet. I remember seeing the smoke rising from the shanty towns down the hill and hearing a collective roar emerging from people who had nothing to lose.

I also know that Osama bin Laden does not speak for the "wretched of the Earth." If he did, the horizon he points to for our collective tomorrows would be one of equality,

justice, and freedom for all peoples of our tiny planet. Instead, he offers a bleak landscape where the Koran—a sacred and inspiring text—has been reduced to an outdated penal code, where half the population of his world—namely women—is held in enslavement, where hate and violence are seen as the only answers to a desire for change.

I have seen the birth of the despair so many are searching to understand today—it happened one day when I was 11 or 12, not far from my school, where there was a municipal maternity ward, whose funding fell far short of its needs when international aid failed to arrive. A woman, who had just given birth there a few hours before, dragged her weary body out of the building, clutching a bundle wrapped in newspaper. She sank down against the whitewashed wall of the little market where I used to buy my chewing gum, and unwrapped her bundle, revealing her newborn child. “The ward has no blankets,” she replied flatly in response to my terrified stare, then unbuttoned her blouse and lifted the now screaming child to her breast.

The school bell rang, and as I was but a child, I turned and ran, but that moment has remained with me forever. I wonder now if in that instant—when a mother fed her infant the milk of her own desperation—a potential terrorist was born. Today, I know that anyone who would come to that woman’s rescue could have harnessed the energy of her heartache. I failed to do so as an 11-year-old child, but what if a seasoned Islamist extremist had come up to her once I ran away? What if he had given her a blanket—would that have been enough to harness her agony and make it his to use?

I speak here of individual moments of despair. The Middle East is home to great human injustices: the continued oppression of the Palestinian people, the starvation of the Iraqi people, massacres of Sabra and Shatilla—icons of hopelessness abound. Bin Laden and other Islamist extremists’ cunning has been that they did not act like children and run away, ignoring the growing desperation in the Middle East and Muslim worlds. Rather, they identified it and have silently used it as the means to reach their political objectives.

When bin Laden drove his twin chariots of death and destruction into the World Trade Center towers on Sept. 11, along with those jets, he hijacked the legitimate despair that is so much a part of the reality of the non-Western world. Today, he hopes to convince the world to accept the equation that the death and destruction he has unleashed is justified by human anguish. But to do so is to play his game and to create a reality where civilizations collide and despair justifies terrorism.

Do not tell me that bin Laden, with his vision of the world, is the heir to thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Patrice Lumumba, Mahatma Gandhi, or luminaries from another age: Ibn Khaldun and Rumi. I was recently reminded of the late Pakistani scholar and intellectual Eqbal Ahmed’s analysis of modern Islamists. Ahmed said they are “concerned with power, not the soul; with the mobilization of people for political purposes rather than with sharing and alleviating their sufferings and aspirations.” We must be careful that in acknowledging the forces that have brought our world to this dangerous brink of all-out war, we not give credence to bin Laden’s political aims.

Wherever we are from, whatever our reasons have been in the past—that we were too young to know, or too child-like to act—we can no longer turn our back on the helplessness and desperation rampant on this planet. Let us take human anguish out of the hands of bin Laden and his cohorts. Let us right the wrongs committed against humanity. Let freedom and justice truly know no boundaries and not belong to one people more than another.

The chasm between East and West is uncharted territory where the blueprints of our tomorrows have yet to be drawn. Let us not turn this space into a no-man's-land of mine fields and barbed wire.

I do not wish to live in a world determined by bin Laden, where my pen and my camera are taken from me, where a father is scorned for indebting himself in order to educate his daughters. Let us meet here and begin a dialogue aimed at building a world beyond despair.

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## The Challenge of Terror

by John Paul Lederach

*John Paul Lederach, who has worked for nearly 20 years “as a mediator and proponent of nonviolent change in situations around the globe where cycles of deep violence seem hell-bent on perpetuating themselves,” shares from his experiences some observations he believes are relevant to the current situation.*

### 1. ALWAYS SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE ROOT OF THE ANGER:

The first and most important question is how do people reach this level of anger, hatred, and frustration? Explanations that they are brainwashed by a perverted leader who holds some kind of magical power over them is an escapist simplification and will inevitably lead us to very wrong-headed responses. Anger of this sort—what we could call generational, identity-based anger—is constructed over time through a combination of historical events, a deep sense of threat to identity, and direct experiences of sustained exclusion. This is important to understand because our response to the immediate events has everything to do with whether we reinforce and provide the soil, seeds, and nutrients for future cycles of revenge and violence. We should be careful to pursue one and only one thing as the strategic guidepost of our response: Avoid doing what they expect.

What they expect from us is the lashing out of the giant against the weak, the many against the few. This will reinforce their capacity to perpetrate the myth they carefully seek to sustain: That they are under threat, fighting an irrational and mad system that has never taken them seriously and wishes to destroy them and their people. What we need to destroy is their myth, not their people.

## **2. ALWAYS SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

In situations of deep, sustained violence there is one consistent purpose about the nature of movements and organizations who use violence: Sustain thyself. This is done through a number of approaches, but generally it is through decentralization of power and structure, secrecy, autonomy of action through units, and refusal to pursue the conflict on the terms of the strength and capacities of the enemy.

One of the most intriguing metaphors I have heard used is that this enemy of the United States will be found in their holes, smoked out, and when they run and are visible, destroyed. This may well work for groundhogs and for trench and maybe even guerilla warfare, but it is not a useful metaphor for this situation. And neither is the image that we will need to destroy the village to save it, by which the population that gives refuge to our enemies is guilty by association and therefore a legitimate target. In both instances the metaphor that guides our action misleads us because it is not connected to the reality. This is not a struggle to be conceived of in geographic terms—physical spaces and places, that if located can be destroyed, thereby ridding us of the problem. Frankly, our biggest and most visible weapon systems are mostly useless.

We need a new metaphor, and the image of a virus comes to mind because of its ability to enter unperceived, flow with a system, and harm it from within. This is the genius of people like Osama bin Laden. He understood the power of a free and open system, and has used it to his benefit. The enemy is not located in a territory. It has entered our system. And you do not fight this kind of enemy by shooting at it. You respond by strengthening the capacity of the system to prevent the virus and strengthen its immunity. We must change metaphors and move beyond the reaction that we can duke it out with the bad guy, or we run the very serious risk of creating the environment that sustains and reproduces the virus we wish to prevent.

## **3. ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT REALITIES ARE CONSTRUCTED:**

Conflict is, among other things, the process of building and sustaining very different perceptions and interpretations of reality. This means that we have at the same time multiple realities defined as such by those in conflict. In the aftermath of such horrific and unmerited violence that we have just experienced, this may sound esoteric. But we must remember that this fundamental process is how we end up referring to people as fanatics, madmen, and irrational.

In the process of name-calling, we lose the critical capacity to understand that from within the ways they construct their views, it is not mad lunacy or fanaticism. All things fall together and make sense. When this is connected to a long string of actual experiences wherein their views of the facts are reinforced (for example, years of superpower struggle that used or excluded them, encroaching Western values of what is considered immoral by their religious interpretation, or the construction of an enemy-image who is overwhelmingly powerful and uses that power in bombing campaigns and always appears to win), then it is not a difficult process to construct a rational world view

of heroic struggle against evil. Just as we do it, so do they. Listen to the words we use to justify our actions and responses. And then listen to words they use.

The way to break such a process is not through a frame of reference of who will win or who is stronger. In fact the inverse is true. Whoever loses, whether tactical battles or the “war” itself, finds intrinsic in the loss the seeds that give birth to the justification for renewed battle. The way to break such a cycle of justified violence is to step outside of it. This starts with understanding that TV sound bites about madmen and evil are not good sources of policy. The most significant impact that we could make on their ability to sustain their view of us as evil is to change their perception of who we are by choosing to strategically respond in unexpected ways. This will take enormous courage and courageous leadership capable of envisioning a horizon of change.

#### **4. ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE CAPACITY FOR RECRUITMENT:**

The greatest power that terror has is the ability to regenerate itself. What we most need to understand about the nature of this conflict and the change process toward a more peaceful world is how recruitment into these activities happens. In all my experiences in deep-rooted conflict, what stands out most are the ways in which political leaders wishing to end the violence believed they could achieve it by overpowering and getting rid of the perpetrator of the violence. That may have been the lesson of multiple centuries that preceded us. But it is not the lesson from the past 30 years. The lesson is simple. When people feel a deep sense of threat, exclusion, and generational experiences of direct violence, their greatest effort is placed on survival. Time and again in these movements, there has been an extraordinary capacity for the regeneration of chosen myths and renewed struggle.

U.S. leadership [is correct] that this will be a long struggle. What is missed is that the emphasis should be placed on removing the channels, justifications, and sources that attract and sustain recruitment into the activities. What I find extraordinary about the recent events is that none of the perpetrators was much older than 40 and many were half that age. This is the reality we face: Recruitment happens on a sustained basis. It will not stop with the use of military force; in fact, open warfare will create the soils in which it is fed and grows. Military action to destroy terror, particularly as it affects significant and already vulnerable civilian populations, will be like hitting a fully mature dandelion with a golf club. We will participate in making sure the myth of why we are evil is sustained and we will assure yet another generation of recruits.

#### **5. REORGANIZE COMPLEXITY, BUT ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF SIMPLICITY:**

The key in our current situation that we have failed to full comprehend is simplicity. From the standpoint of the perpetrators, the effectiveness of their actions was in finding simple ways to use the system to undo it. I believe our greatest task is to find equally creative and simple tools on the other side.

## SUGGESTIONS

I believe three things are possible to do and will have a much greater impact on these challenges than seeking accountability through revenge.

**1. Energetically pursue a sustainable peace process** to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Do it now. The United States has much it can do to support and make this process work. It can bring the weight of persuasion, the weight of nudging people on all sides to move toward mutual recognition and stopping the recent and devastating pattern of violent escalation, and the weight of including and balancing the process to address historic fears and basic needs of those involved. If we would bring the same energy to building an international coalition for peace that we have pursued in building international coalitions for war, particularly in the Middle East; if we lent significant financial, moral, and balanced support to all sides that we gave to the Irish conflict in earlier years, I believe the moment is right and the stage is set to take a new and qualitative step forward.

This type of action is precisely the kind of thing needed to create whole new views of who we are and what we stand for as a nation. Rather than fighting terror with force, we enter their system and take away one of their most coveted elements: the soils of generational conflict perceived as in justice used to perpetrate hatred and recruitment. I believe that monumental times like these create conditions for monumental change. This approach would solidify our relationships with a broad array of Middle Easterners and Central Asians, allies and enemies alike, and would be a blow to the rank and file of terror. The biggest blow we can serve terror is to make it irrelevant. The worst thing we could do is to feed it unintentionally by making it and its leaders the center stage of what we do. Let's choose democracy and reconciliation over revenge and destruction. Let's do exactly what they do not expect, and show them it can work.

**2. Invest financially in development, education,** and a broad social agenda in the countries surrounding Afghanistan, rather than attempting to destroy the Taliban in a search for bin Laden. The single greatest pressure that could ever be put on bin Laden is to remove the source of his justifications and alliances. Countries like Pakistan, Tajikistan, and yes, Iran and Syria, should be put on the radar of the West and the United States with a question of strategic importance: How can we help you meet the fundamental needs of your people?

The strategic approach to changing the nature of how terror reproduces itself lies in the quality of relationships we develop with whole regions, peoples, and world views. If we strengthen the web of those relationships, we weaken and eventually eliminate the soil where terror is born. A vigorous investment which takes advantage of the current opening, given the horror of this week shared by even those who we traditionally claimed as state enemies, is immediately available, possible, and pregnant with historic possibilities. Let's do the unexpected. Let's create a new set of strategic alliances never before thought possible.

**3. Pursue a quiet diplomatic but dynamic and vital support** of the Arab League to being an internal exploration of how to address the root causes of discontent in numerous regions. This should be coupled with energetic ecumenical engagement, not just of key symbolic leaders, but of a practical and direct exploration of how to create a web of ethics for a new millennium, a web of ethics that builds from the heart and soul of all traditions and that creates a capacity for each to engage the roots of violence that are found within their own traditions. Our challenge, as I see it, is not that of convincing others that our way of life, our religion, or our structure of governance is better or closer to Truth and Human Dignity. It is to be honest about the sources of violence in our own house and invite others to do the same. Our global challenge is how to generate and sustain genuine engagement that encourages people from within their traditions to seek that which assures the preciousness and respect for life that every religion sees as an inherent right and gift from the Divine, and how to build organized political and social life that is responsive to fundamental human needs.

Such a web cannot be created except through genuine and sustained dialogue and the building of authentic relationships, at religious and political spheres of interaction, and at all levels of society. Why not do the unexpected and show that life-giving ethics are rooted in the core of all peoples by engaging in a strategy of genuine dialogue and relationship? Such a web of ethics, political and religious, will have an impact on the roots of terror far greater in the generation of our children's children than any amount of military action can possibly muster. The current situation poses an unprecedented opportunity for this to happen, more so than we have seen at any time before in our global community.

### **A CALL FOR THE UNEXPECTED**

In summary, to face the reality of well organized, decentralized, self-perpetuating sources of terror, we need to think differently about the challenges. If indeed this is a new war, it will not be won with a traditional military plan. The key does not lie in finding and destroying territories, camps, and certainly not the civilian populations that supposedly house them. Paradoxically that will only feed the phenomenon and assure that it lives into a new generation. The key is to think about how a small virus in a system affects the whole, and how to improve the immunity of the system. We should take extreme care not to provide the movements we deplore with gratuitous fuel for self-regeneration. Let us not fulfill their prophecy by providing them with martyrs and justifications. The power of their action is the simplicity with which they pursue the fight with global power. They have understood the power of the powerless.

They have understood that melding and meshing with the enemy creates a base from within. They have not faced down the enemy with a bigger stick. They did the more powerful thing: They changed the game. They entered our lives, our homes, and turned our own tools into our demise.

We will not win this struggle for justice, peace, and human dignity with the traditional weapons of war. We need to change the game again.

*John Paul Lederach is Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, and Founding Director of the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University. He has conducted training programs in 25 countries across five continents, and is the author of 12 books and manuals.*

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## Memorial

by Alma A. Hromic

It doesn't matter what I was. The essence of me  
has fled into the empty sky, dust to the dust  
of the steel-and-glass wreckage when the towers fell.  
It doesn't matter who I was, or what my name was,  
or what I was doing in the place of fire when the hour struck  
of its shattering. What matters is the stories people tell  
of the aftermath of the dying, and what people say  
when they talk of the disaster, and what people will do  
when they roar wounded revenge in my name.  
Let not my everlasting memory be some other mother's tears  
and more blood and ashes in this sad old world—  
let my memorial be justice, and not shame.

*Alma Hromic's book Letters from the Fire, was reviewed in the January/February 2001 issue of Timeline. She was born in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, and, before moving to the U.S, has lived in Zambia, Swaziland, South Africa, the UK, and New Zealand. She recently won the coveted BBC online short story competition, and is the author of numerous pieces of short fiction and nonfiction. Her poem, "Memorial," is reprinted courtesy of the website <http://www.swans.com> where it first appeared.*

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