



Co-directors' Column

Sept. 11, 2001: The day that changed us all in some way

It is the best of times and the worst of times. These are the words that keep ringing in my head – words written long ago but still shaping every part of my present being.

Since Sept. 11, 2001 we have witnessed the very best and the worst of humankind. Many of us were pasted to our TV sets hour after hour unable to do anything but push remote control buttons from channel to channel for fear we would miss something. Many could not believe this was happening – not in New York, not in America, not to us!

Yes, it happened to us, and on that day, our lives were forever changed.

We watched footage after footage of scenes that reminded us of movies we have seen at some time in our lives. We have loved how wonderful the special effects have become in the movies. The special effects now were real. This time there would be no such words as cut, re-

shoot, let's go for another take, change costumes for just one more shot, or people, that's a rap.

This time, more than 6,000 people killed in the assault on America will not dress up and wait for the academy awards. This time no producer will show up and receive the little gold stature for a film well done.

Much of what was going on was taking place within our own homes. The only thing that made it bearable was seeing the world become more and more connected as one human family.

Millions upon millions of people around the world flooded the United States with random acts of kindness. Many countries stopped for a moment of silence and this event was washed in tears from the eyes of people around the globe. This event brought people togeth-

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Internalize Oneness

Redefining 'American' – A Eurocentric Curriculum in a Multicultural Society

By **Sonia Kotecha, MSW**
(Part 1)

"Where are you from?"

"I am from Austin, Texas"

"No, originally?"

"Originally, from Manassas, Virginia."

"No, no where are you really from?"

In wake of the recent tragedies, anger has been displaced on many Arab and South Asian Americans residing in this country. It has been easy to question and distrust anyone who looks like they could be from the country believed to have orchestrated such a horrific act on so many innocent human beings – any brown-skinned American. As a South Asian American, I am confronted on a daily basis with the question, "where are you from?" A question, which elicits a candid response, is one I often have to hesitate before answering. I am not sure if the inquirer is requesting my place of birth or the name of the country he/she believes I originate from. I was born and raised in America,

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Help Center meet expenses with automatic draft

The end of the year is time for last minute tax deductions and resolutions for the new year. Resolve to help the Center year-round by making monthly contributions. We would be happy to set up an automatic draft of your account or credit card. Regular monthly contributions can help us budget for the regular expenses we incur. Please call us for more details

Board to hold final meeting of the year

The Board of Directors invites all Center members to attend the last meeting of the year. Your input and suggestions are welcome as we chart the path for 2002.

WHEN: Sunday, Dec. 2, 2001 at 3 p.m.
WHERE: 5200 Fannin at Southmore St.

The Center for the Healing of Racism was one of the recipients of the 14th Annual Peace Award from the Baha'is of Houston

Redefining 'American'

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English is my first language, and some would say, I am "American as apple pie." When people look at me, why do they assume I am from another country? What is an American? Who or what defines what it means to be an American? These questions and many more gave rise to an undergraduate Sociology thesis I worked on at the University of Texas at Austin in 1998 – A Eurocentric Curriculum in a Multicultural Society. I was curious to understand and learn why my community and other communities of color often described someone as an American when referring to a white person. I traced the origin to the American history curriculum. This paper will provide a brief synopsis and discussion of the findings.

The teaching of American history in primary and secondary schools was developed to give young people a national identity. By learning the triumphs and trials of "Americans" before them, children would gain a sense of what it means to be an "American." This identity would bring them a sense of belonging and pride in their country.

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Co-directors' Column

Events of September 11 changed us

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er and touched the world in much the same way as the death of Princess Diane, but on a much larger scale.

President George W. Bush, as well as other people in high places, religious, political, or educational leaders, began to teach us about Islam. We know more about Islam now than ever before. Some of the education we're getting about Islam is that it is a religion of peace that teaches the total submission to the will of God (Allah). We have been told that we are not at war with Muslims, but with acts of evil.

Another pain and still other lessons were learned by those who showed up to give blood and were turned away due to the overwhelming response of Americans. New York had to stop people from coming to the aid of the city, for the response was greater than what was needed at the time. More people than jobs.

It is my feeling that the money raised will exceed any dollar amount ever given on a global scale. All the human emotions we felt were turned into some sort of action by young, old and ages in between.

It would be wonderful to just celebrate our goodness – if it were not for the other side of the coin. With all of the acts of kindness we have seen, we have seen the worse also. More than 300 physical random acts of violence and three murders were committed as well.

Some Americans unleashed stereotypes on Americans with brown skin and black hair, seeing all of them as Muslims and terrorists. Some of them may have been targets due to a type of clothing or head dress their faith dictates they wear. This played into our ignorance with a broad-brush assumption that they must be terrorists.

Some of our children are asking questions and dealing with issues they never had to ask or deal with before. Feeling unsafe in schools due to being targeted as one of the people that started all of this. Not wanting to be descendants from South Asia and the Middle East. Americans in

hiding from other Americans. Changing their names to sound more American. Hiding their ancestors' country of origin. I cannot guess how many have altered their personal appearances to be safe.

How many times must lessons be repeated before we learn? This is a space we have been in before. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, many Americans of Japanese decent were rounded up as traitors who were no longer American and put into internment camps. Chinese Americans wore visible bands on their clothes to make the statement, "I am not Japanese." Some Jewish people changed their names and altered some of their physical appearance as a way to be safe. Still, in present times some Jewish people will only let us know they are Jewish if they feel safe with us. Anti-Semitism is still with us.

The morning of September 11, the Center was working at the University of Houston, being true to its mission. In the days that followed, we were asked to present various workshops and to speak about what is happening now.

I find myself doing the same work that we did in 1991 when we were at war with Iraq – educating Americans about the Americanness of people that came here from the Middle East and calling attention to the 180+ acts of violence acted out by other Americans.

We are staying true to our mission statement: Serving as a catalyst for the healing of racism by educating. In the first two weeks we have been busy touching over 250 people in eight different settings, many of them high school students.

My life changed on September 11 in ways only the future can answer. But what has not changed is the commitment to stand fully committed to the work of the Center. The Center stands fully committed to paving the way to a brighter and better future for all people.

Please visit our web site for an article, Sorting it All Out, by Barbara Hacker.

– Cherry Steinwender

Reflecting on Sept. 11

Reflections from Linda Block related to the events of September 11, 2001.

In the past weeks, I have seen these emotions:

Trepidation

from those whose brothers and sons are in the military.

Fear

from those with dark skin and dark hair (no matter what their origin).

Hurt

from those with spouses and relatives born in the Middle East who are now recipients of hateful words.

Anxiety

from those with family or friends currently living in areas subject to future U.S. attacks.

Frustration

from pilots that can no longer fly their small planes.

Uncertainty

From Reservists who have been called back to duty.

Huge responsibility

from Hospitals and emergency response personnel who are desperately trying to

prepare for local attacks with limited resources.

Seriousness

from Industries that know they could be targets.

Deep Sorrow

from those who knew people whose lives were lost.

Horror

from everyone who witnessed these events through TV images, radio broadcasts, news articles, and printed photographs.

We were ALL affected by the tragedies in some way. If we learn anything from these past weeks, I hope it is the personal pain and widespread, long-lasting effects such random, hate-provoked actions cause. May the United States never cause similar suffering in any part of the world.

Hate often comes from fear and fear, from the unknown. The importance of the Center's work to build understanding has again been confirmed.

Just as we would tell a child in tears squirming to strike back at another in revenge, there are other ways.

Center presentation for hotline trainees very well received

On September 15, 2001, I was very proud to represent The Center when I was asked to speak to a new group of volunteers who were being trained to answer the telephone hotlines for Crisis Intervention of Houston.

Volunteers are required to have extensive training in several sociological areas. I was delighted to speak about diversity, stereotypes/biases and racism.

It is crucial that volunteers are able to deal with people from all cultures and/or ethnicities. Grief has no boundaries!

My presentation was very well received, with several questions and much discussion.

Literature about The Center was distributed and a couple of participants expressed an interest in volunteering.

This was a wonderful experience for me and I was invited back to assist with future training sessions.

The Center for the Healing of Racism is definitely making a difference in the lives of many people.

– Georgette Dredge

dialogue

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MISSION STATEMENT

To serve as a catalyst for the healing of racism through the education and empowerment of individuals.

Have you gotten around to filling out your membership for 2001? Please take the time to do so. The work must go on!

INTERNALIZE ONENESS

Has your address changed? If so, please notify the Center so your newsletter can be timely delivered!

Quote of the month

I seek strength, not to be superior to my brothers and sisters, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy – myself.

– Sioux Chief Yellow Lark



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INTERNALIZE ONENESS

All submissions to the newsletter are due the first week of the month before publication. Articles are accepted in any form, but e-mail and 3.5 disks are preferred. Please send submissions to: robertcn@iapc.net or to **Newberry Communications, P.O. Box 980631, Houston, TX 77098-0631.**

Telephone: (713) 528-1965.

**Submissions are subject to editing.*

DIALOGUE: RACISM SERIES

The free Dialogue: Racism series is held in a supportive and honest setting. Information is provided at each session, followed by an opportunity for voluntary sharing. Facilitators say participants leave with a new understanding of racism, what they can do about it, and a sense of community with others of different backgrounds and life experiences.

Dialogue: Racism

Presents Stereotyping on Trial

Oct. 20, 2001, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Upper Kirby District Center

3015 Richmond Ave. @ Eastside, First Floor Meeting Room

Footage from the following videos will be shown in this workshop setting:

1. The Longest Hatred

"They are the other. They are not us." Throughout time, words such as these have been used to justify and vilify. This stunning documentary takes an unsparing look at the ways such words have shaped the experience of Jewish people.

2. Family Gathering

"4 stars. An effective tool for showing the effects of cultural racism. One segment of history that should not be forgotten." An Asian-American woman learning about World War II internment of Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor tells the story.

3. Viva La Causa

Five hundred years of Chicano History. A unique, inspiring tool for everyone to learn about one of the oldest, yet least known peoples.

4. In Whose Honor?

"In Whose Honor?" examines the issues of race, minority representation and the powerful effects of mass-media imagery.

The workshop is free and open to the public. Please call the Center's office at 713-520-8226 to register. Leave your name and telephone number and number of people attending.

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