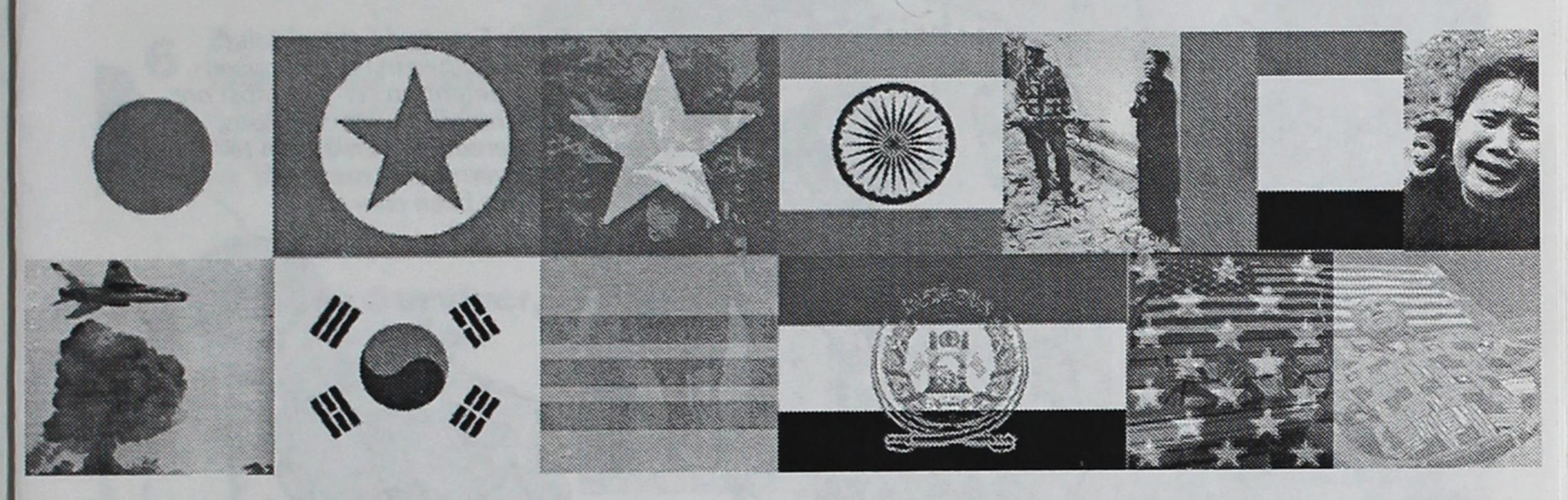
GiBRA

State of Emergency Issue



Flagg-elation

war • vengeance • endurance • freedom • patriotism • fanaticism • reflection • fear

In whose name?

fall 2001

2 gidra

Fires still burn in New York City. Smoke and dust cast the skyline in a hazy pallor and mark a place of suffering and loss. The *gidra* collective was still mourning the tragic and often incomprehensible events of 9-11, when U.S. bombers violently marked the cities of Afghanistan with the same pall of death and suffering. What is accomplished by creating this circle of violence?

The rampant racist attacks upon Muslim and Arab Americans, and "Middle Eastern-appearing" people reveal that we must question the boundaries that define the Asian/Pacific Islander community. Can we remain silent when members of our community, be they Muslim, Arab, or South Asian, face persecution?

As we ponder these questions, we are reminded of longstanding struggles for justice. Will the "global coalition against terror" address reparations for African Americans? Doesn't Afghan women's demands for freedom echo Hawaiian people's call for sovereignty? And how conveniently forgotten are 20 years of death due to AIDS? Must we wait for The End of Terrorism before our government addresses such issues?

Uncle Sam and CNN are playing their games, but we at *gidra* will try to maintain our grass roots community perspective—our worm's eye view. In this time of war, we hope to continue creating a forum for alternate views, voices, and insights from the community.

love, giddie-rah p.s. As of Nov. 4, more than 1,140 Middle East and Central Asian immigrants have been detained in federal prisons, county jails, and INS detention centers. Most are being held in secret, remaining anonymous, their status and whereabouts unknown to families, home governments and legal counsel. No one has been charged in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks.

4 A War on Terrorism or Afghans?

Sonali Kolhatkar as recorded by John Lee

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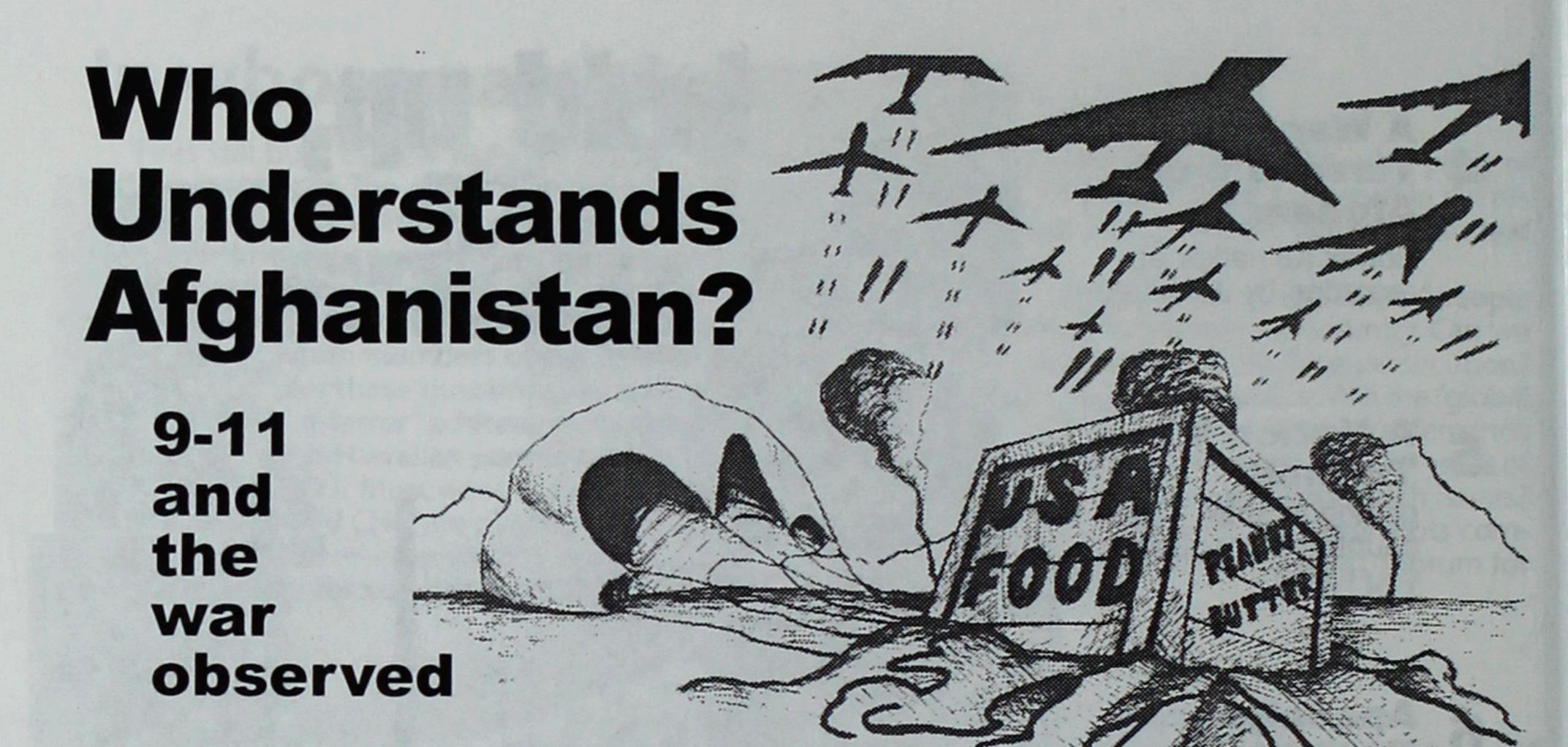


watch our back Our Handy-Dandy Resource Guide

what to do if you are ever fall victim to a hate crime, and other important stuff like where to help during times of need

[editorial re-collective] Rodney Benedito Ferrao, Ayako Hagihara, Alex Ko, John Lee, Jeff Liu, Vy Nguyen, Anthony Pinga, Richard Wang [art] Jeff Dorer [text] Alex Ko, John Lee, Lilian Nakano, Vy Nguyen, Anthony Pinga, Evelyn Yoshimura [cover art] John Lee [design] Nino [thanks] Paul Chan, Paul Dang, Granny Lee, Kent Lim, Lilian Nakano, NCRR, the Nguyen clan, the Center at UCLA, Steve and Leslie Wong-Ito, Visual Communications. For editorial contributions, email us: gidra@apanet.org; or visit gidra online: www.gidra.org

gidra magazine we are a quarterly publication of the asian pacific american community.



A group comprised of three generations of progressive activists and friends of *gidra* gathered in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks on the East Coast to respond to the backlash against people who appearto be "Middle Eastern."

Launched by the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress, which has been active in the decadelong campaign for reparations for the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the group called a candlelight vigil in Little Tokyo to oppose the rise in hate crimes that were being reported daily. About 300 mostly Japanese American community members turned out.

Calling on experience which spans more than three decades of political action, a committee formed with other Asian Pacific Americans, and has planned a series of follow-up activities to the vigil. The goals of the group focus on three areas: remembering the victims of 9-11; recalling World War II internment in order to oppose discrimination against "Middle Eastern-looking" people; and opposing terrorism of any form in any country.

According to Evelyn Yoshimura, a member of the committee, frustration by many in the group due to ignorance of the history and politics of the region led to a speaking engagement with Sonali Kolhatkar, a stateside member of the Afghan Women's Mission, on Oct. 15 in Little Tokyo. About 50 people attended the dialogue, many of whom were at the vigil.

art: Jeff Dorer

Acknowledging that, "obviously, no one has any answers," committee member Kathy Masaoka said afterward, "we all agreed for now to continue to focus on the [previously stated] three points."

"By planning more educational events on topics such as Islam, civil liberties, the history and politics of the Middle East, in addition to building relations with Arab and Muslim American people in Los Angeles," Kathy said, "the committee and community will become more educated about hate crimes, and also about the war." The group has begun discussion on the subsequent U.S. bombing of Afghanistan.

dropping smart bombs

A software developer and astronomer by profession, Sonali Kolhatkar also writes extensively about women's rights in Afghanistan and the Afghan refugee crisis. She is ethnic Indian, born and raised in the United Arab Emirates, and is a founder of ASAP (Acting in Solidarity with Afghan People) and vice president of the Afghan Women's Mission.

The following is excerpted from comments made by Sonali on Oct. 15 at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center.

"Afghans comprise the second largest refugee group in the world, second only to Palestinians. They are also among the most neglected refugees. There is no dedicated, long-term health care and education for these refugees, except for some non-governmental organizations, NGOs, on the ground, here and there, who are trying to provide relief.

"Once the military campaign started—by our country, our government—instantly, of course, all the aid agencies on the ground had to close shop and leave Afghanistan for fear of their staff being hurt. So this was what the Afghan people who did not have any other access to food, who were relying on this food, now have suddenly been faced with: mass starvation.

in our names, 7 million people

"Winter is very brutal in Afghanistan. Last year about a hundred people in a region surrounding Kabul, most of them children, died of the cold alone. One UNICEF spokesperson talked about finding a family of five, three children and two parents, locked in an embrace, frozen to death. And this is a symbol of what Afghan people are going through.

"There are, according to UNICEF, seven million people on the verge of starvation. So the situation is at a point where it is a real emergency. Imagine seven million people on the verge of starvation, because of this bombing campaign, regardless—don't even count the bombs—imagine the bombs aren't hitting any innocent civilians, at all, and they are only doing what they say they are supposed to do. Despite that, seven million people are on the verge of starvation and if the aid agencies are not allowed to go in and set up their infastructure, these people will die. And it will be a genocide on our hands. But worse, in our names.

food and mines

"These food drops you have been hearing

Please see "SONALI," page 10

Recent Afghan History

1964 • King Zahir Shah responds to popular pressure with a constitution and initiates a process known as "New Democracy." Subsequently, three main forces appear in Afghanistan: communists, Islamic nationalists, and consitutional reformers

1975 • Islamic populists attempt an uprising with Pakistani backing, and are promptly crushed.

1978 • Nationwide instability leads to a Soviesponsored communist coup. Six months prior, President Carter greenlights aid to the Islamic nationalist Mujahidin.

1978 • The Revolutionary Council of Afghanistan is established. Based upon a broad platform of social reforms, the RCA advocates the institutional equality of men and women. Women begin to take leadership positions throughout the regime.

1979 • Soviet military invades Afghanistan.
Thousands of militant Muslims throughout the Southeastern region converge on anti-Soviet training grounds in Pakistan.

1979 • The Afghan people embark on the first of a series of failed attempts to establish a democratic state. Failure is due in large part to U.S. and Soviet intervention.

1979 • U.S. and Saudi Arabia begin sending Pakistan-based Afghan exiles what amounts to more than \$1 billion in aid annually. A Saudi businessman named Osama bin Laden is a major financier.

1979 • Islamic nationalists, supported by the US and Pakistani military, dramatically increase heroine production in Pakistan/Afghanistan border regions. Profits from drug sales are used to fund combat efforts.

Please see "AFGHAN TIMELINE," page 11

To: Mom and Dad

From: Vy Nguyen

Date: Oct. 20, 2001

Subject: "Questions for You"

A few months ago my mother and I started writing letters to one another. Even though my parents call regularly, she and I had come to a place where we wanted to say more—about boys and dating, about family and long unspoken wounds—even if we didn't know how. It's been a halting process, but each confession has rewarded me with a glimpse of what a humane and loving woman my mother is.

9-11 and the subsequent war against terrorism and Afghanistan, though, has been one of those subjects (like communism and politics) that my sisters and I rarely bring up. We dread the discussion will show a side of our parents we don't often understand or agree with.

My parents have survived an American war as a part of the upper middle class in the Third World, then started over in the Unites States as refugees and immigrants, three little girls in tow. My father was a South Vietnamese army officer. My mother's father fought as a North Vietnamese soldier and Communist official, and though he could not raise her, she loved him deeply. Their story is larger than what fits on this page, more than they have ever fully told their children.

Now that war is hitting so close to home again, the silence we keep with our parents, whether out of respect or frustration, can feel as tense as our arguments. In the spirit of our letter-writing I sent my parents some questions by email. I figure if we want to work for peace at a time when no one's got the situation all figured out, we'd better keep our ears close to the ground, starting with our families and communities. I don't agree with all that they wrote back. But I am trying to listen.

Q: Why did you put up the American flag at our house? What did you want people who saw our flag to think of us?

A: We put up the flag at our house because the terrorists killed so many people at the World Trade Center. So we are just like everyone else, opposed to the terrorists and sharing in the sorrow of the victims.

Q: How do you feel when you see all the flags on all the neighbor's homes and cars?

A: I think everyone, the majority, thinks this way as well.

Q: Why didn't you like it when Lynne (the 4th daughter) put a peace sign next to the flag on our garage?

A: We didn't put the peace sign in front of the house because I think in this time Americans are very tense. It's not wise to have them misunderstand us as supporting the terrorists.

Q: Before 9-11, did you consider yourselves to be Americans? How did you feel after 9-11?

A: I think it's like this. We are born as Vietnamese, but have American citizenship and are American citizens. We have accepted this country as our second homeland. I love America because it has certain great attributes: freedom, the right to be a human being, generosity. We follow the American customs that are good and keep what is good in Vietnamese customs. Just as we enjoy the benefits of being citizens, there are also duties. I think in America there are many opportunities to enjoy life to its fullest. After 9-11 my opinion is still the same.

Q: There have been a lot of hate crimes lately against Middle Easterners as well as South Asians and others. Also, immigration legislation and civil liberties have been made more strict. What do

you think of this? Do you think it affects Vietnamese?

A: If because of the terrorism hate crimes against Middle Easterners and South Asians occur, this is very regrettable. But those are individual exceptions, not everyone is like that. It seems to me like most Americans are aware. And if immigration laws are tightened, that's also regrettable.

Q: Can you give me three adjectives that describe the experience of living in a country during war?

A: Just one: "Suffering."

Q: Can you compare and contrast the Viet Nam war with the war beginning in Afghanistan?

A: The Viet Nam war started because of the ideological conflict between the faction for Freedom and the Communist faction. In the war in Afghanistan, perhaps because of complicated conflicts over economic gain, the parties fighting have highlighted differences in race and religion.

Q: After 9-11, there were people who couldn't understand how anyone could commit such a horrific act, and there were others who said people in the Third World have reason to hate America. How do you think Vietnamese people, people from poor countries, see America? A: Our opinion about America is this: In this era, all countries are connected with one another. America because of its supremacy is first, and it comes from the perspective of the strongest and richest nation in the world, the leader of the free world. Earlier, America came to Viet Nam and fought with the Viet Cong (backed by Russia and China), but afterwards America also accepted many Vietnamese to live in America so that they wouldn't be treated badly by the Viet Cong.

describe the experience of living in a country during war:

... "Suffering."

Q: After leaving Viet Nam, you've tried hard to make our lives safe and secure. The other day you were telling us to be careful about eating in big restaurants because of anthrax. All of a sudden life doesn't seem as safe.

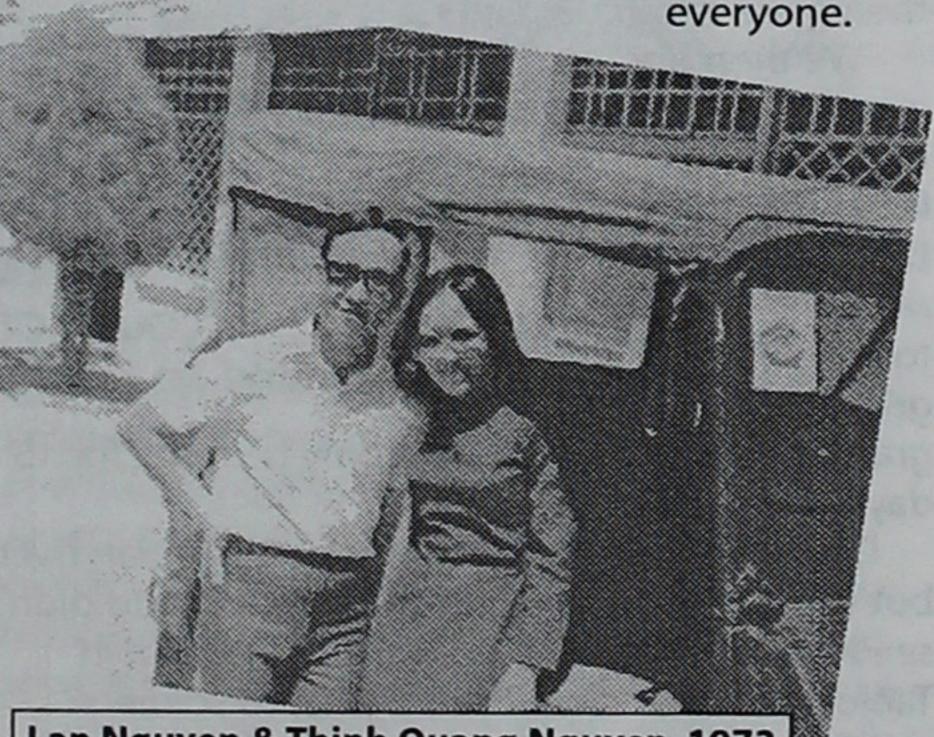
A: Living in America, the most important thing is freedom, a society with laws, not like Viet Nam, where the people have no rights at all. As to unfortunate incidents and all the insecurities of life, or terrorism—they can happen no matter where you are.

Q: My experience and understanding of the Viet Nam war is very different from yours. I think almost all war is wrong. Do you think me very naive?

A: War is never good, but sometimes it's justified. It's right when it protects what is good. If they had another way to resolve this, that would be great. We should, though, fault those who initiate conflicts.

Q: You've been Buddhists all your lives and have become more religious in the past few years. What does Buddhism have to teach us in times like these?

A: Buddhism helps us liberate ourselves from attachments and suffering. When we are still living in this life we must follow the way to become good people, to do good in everything connected to us, our family and society. If you love people you will live in peace with



war, but I didn't take it so seriously. But on 6/25/50, unexpectedly early in the morning there were reports that the North Korean soldiers had invaded. We were living in Seoul at the time.

Your grandfather was away to work at the time. I was with your great-grandfather and great-grandmother. Soon, we prepared to take refuge further south and packed our things. We were going to cross the Han River.

Your grandfather soon arrived, and we were about to leave. Then we heard that the Han River Bridge had been destroyed. So your grandfather and great-grandfather went to see if we could cross the Mapo River.

While they were gone, anti-communists in Seoul came to our house demanding to see your grandfather. I told them they had the wrong man, but they pointed a gun at me and demanded for your grandfather to come out. We had immigrated from the North. Your grandfather had found work in Seoul, but they

We then got word from great-grandfather, and we

then gave me some papers.

said he was a soldier. They said

they would be back at 2 p.m.,

began to leave for the Mapo river. I told

A Grandmother's War Tale

Lee Jean Kyung's Account of the Korean War (1950-1953) as told to her grandson, Alex Ko

greatgrandmother that we would only be gone for 15 days, and we left.

There was a lot of fighting along the Han river, but we had gone across the Mapo river and didn't see any soldiers. We then went to a school in Taejon for a few days. Then we heard soldiers were coming. So we took a train to Pusan. I was

out of my mind. I don't even know with what senses I used to get around. The only thing in my mind was making sure no family member was left behind. There were a lot of people seeking refuge,

> but you don't talk to anyone. You can only think about preparing to seek refuge again.

The train to Pusan had so many people on it. People were riding on top. We arrived at a school in Pusan. A month later, we got back to Seoul. Then we had to seek refuge again, and we took a freight train. On one side of the train were soldiers, and the others were people and their belongings. We sat on our belongings all the way to Taegu. In Taegu, your grandfather went to teach at a military academy.

We lived in Taegu for three years. At the time we were not able to flee with your great-grandmother. I asked my brother to stay with her in Seoul. We heard that they were coming to us, but the attacks were so severe that they postponed leaving for a day. That night,

your great-grandmother talked
with people
about the war
and the
r (1950-1953) plight of the
refugees.
Someone told

her that the Southern coastal cities were so crowded that they were throwing people into the ocean. Your great-grandmother thought I was dead. She thought to herself, how can I live without my daughter? Then passed away. Things were so hectic that they had the funeral at night.

Please see "GRANDMA," page 10

1945: Japan bombed atomically. WWII over.

The following comments are from a Sept. 28 speech at a gathering in Little Tokyo.

The horrendous tragedy of the 11th was so shocking in its scale and depth that we're all still in utter disbelief at what happened. So many lives have been lost, and still so many lives of families and friends of the victims are affected forever. And our hearts go out to all of them. At the same time, it is sad to see that so much of the sorrow turned to anger out of the tragedy, and is being directed at people of Middle Eastern descent and

As a Japanese American, it's an all too familiar scene. Sixty years ago, when Pearl Harbor was bombed and World War II began, 120,000 on the West Coast and some 2,000 from Hawaii were unjustly uprooted from our homes and occupations and herded off to 10 concentration

Arab and Muslim Americans.

camps for three to four years, all on the basis of our skin color or that we looked like the enemy.

The Government was ill-prepared to create those camps fast enough to get

rid of us; temporary assembly centers were installed at race tracks like

Santa Anita, Tanforan and other state fair sites. Horse stalls became living quarters—can you imagine that! The camps which followed were in the most desolate swamplands in the South and further West, in the high desert country in harsh weather and barren lands with only rows and rows of tar-papered barracks surrounded by barbed wire fence and guard towers.

Lilian at candlelight vigil on 9-28

ernmet caution agains what happened to be more contained and the scape and the scape our struggle for towers.

After camps, for the adult members of each family, picking up the pieces of their lives meant

more hardship. I was in my teens then and for us, the psychological scars were more deeply ingrained in our psyche. I recall the first shock which came when a bunch of us girls went out on a one-day pass to a town called Cody in Wyoming from our Heart Mountain Camp. We were excited about having a real ice cream soda in a drug store

#P-0M 12/7 10 9/11

BY LILIAN NAFANO

like other normal teenagers on the outside. But to our shock, there was a written notice in the booth saying, "We don't serve Japs." In the bus on our way back to camp, we sat in stone silence only to laugh in pain, because I think we would've cried otherwise.





I feel badly for the Middle Eastern people of our communities who are now the target of the same kind of hatred and violence as a result of the tragic

event. Sixty years ago, we heard very little if nothing from our gov-

ernment leaders or the general public to caution against that. But perhaps, because of what happened 60 years ago, today there seems to be more concern voiced against hate crimes and the scapegoating of Arab and Muslim Americans. One of the important points during our struggle for redress and reparation from the U.S. Government was to make sure it never happens again to any group of people. But as we see

Please see "12/7," page 10

Grandma continued from page 8

I really wanted to leave to see your greatgrandmother. My heart was overwhelmed with a desire to see her. I had already left her behind, and I was really worried that we would have to leave her behind again. How could I live with that? When I learned that great-grandmother had died, I thanked her for saving me from having to leave her behind again. Leaving her behind was more sorrowful than her passing away.

My grandmother and mother and three aunts were not able to flee from the North and were killed. American soldiers used biological weapons on the North, and this killed them.

When I think about the Afghans, the refugees must be in total shock and fear. I hear they don't have much, and they are suffering. When I think about my time as a refugee, I feel bad for the Afghan refugee. They are saying it is going to be a long war, and I am worried. In my life I have experienced Japanese colonization which made us move around the North, and the Korean War which made me a refugee again, and then I immigrated to the U.S. to experience another war. I think, how can I live a life with all these catastrophes?

12/7 continued from page 9

a similar rise in incidents targeting a particular sector of our community, I believe that as JAs who experienced that hatred and incarceration, we have a responsibility to speak out against it at every opportunity. By doing so, I believe we can help to make our country and our government more sensitive and responsive in the treatment of Arab and Muslim Americans, and for that matter, to any group of people who may be singled out unjustly because of their skin color or religious belief.—Lil

A shamisen virtuoso and teacher, Lilian Nakano, is also an NCRR member who was a leader during the movement for redress and reparations for Japanese Americans interned during World War II.

Sonali continued from page 5

about, I want to talk a little bit about them, because I think it is a slap in the face of Afghans and aid agencies. First of all they are very small compared to what is needed. There are only about 30,000 to 40,000 rations that were being dropped everyday, which is barely enough to feed one camp. Also what happens when you throw a little bit of food at a huge number of hungry people? The most vulnerable in society who need it, don't get it. Because the most able will fight over it. So women, children, the elderly, are not getting access to the food.

Additionally the Afghan landscape is littered with landmines. So it is potentially dangerous, because it encourages people to scour the landscape, looking for these food packets. Before Sept. 11, 400 people a day in Afghanistan were stepping on landmines, with only about 40 percent of them ever getting to see a doctor. Of course, now it's going to be worse.

Nobel Peace prize-winning organization
Doctors Without Borders has called these food
drops, and I quote, "a purely propaganda tool,"
and they have warned the U.S. and the U.K. of
the problems with having military intervention
accompanied by food drops. Because they have
seen this happen in Rwanda and other countries.
Where you have military intervention then you
throw food with it, the population you are trying
to help treats any future aid, even non-military
aid, with incredible skepticism and fear. They
associate it with violence and bombs. This makes
the job of aid agencies even more difficult.

So I think it's important for us to remember what's happening, and to remind ourselves it is up to us to raise our voices to the United States government, and urge them to think about the consequences of bombing the people of Afghanistan.

so ...

It sounds like a terrible situation, and it is. But I want to urge you, before you go home and get really depressed, there is hope. One of the things we can all do, which is really, really simple, and I

Continued at top of next page

think we should do, is listen to the voice of the Afghan people.

The Revolutionary
Association of the Women of
Afghanistan agenda is a very
simple one. They wish for complete disarmament of all fundamentalist factions in the country; a return to democracy in
which Afghans have full rights
as defined by international law;
a secular government which
upholds women's rights and
human rights in general. And a
united Afghanistan in which
ethnic and religious differences
are put aside once more."

Richard Katsuda, a

spokesperson for Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress, concluded the discussion by calling attention to the "really chilling climate right now, basically war hysteria."

"The Japanese American community gathered on Sept. 28 to remember what happened in New York and Washington on Sept. 11," Richard said, "but we also felt there was a need for an alternative expression for people beyond flag-waving."

"We felt people wanted to somehow speak out on how they were feeling, and so following the candlelight vigil they have planned several events both educational and political, basically, as Sonali was saying, we have to fight to circumvent the major media.

"We need to get out and learn about what the issues are, and asking really tough questions," Richard said. "Because it is the responsibility for us in this democracy."

The group looks forward to a L.A. date in mid-November when the speaking tour with a representative from RAWA visits.

—as recorded by John Lee

Afghan Timeline continued from page 5

1981 • The US, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan cultivate seven exiled Muslim nationalist factions. These forces initiate a sweeping, devastating attack on liberal elements in Afghanistan.

1984 • The Mujahidin begin firing on civilian airliners.

1986 • Exiled Muslim nationalists supported by the US combine to form the Union of Mujahidin of Afghanistan. They begin receiving Stinger missiles and other advanced weaponry from the US.

1989 • The Soviet Union withdraws all military forces from Afghanistan.

1989 • The Mujahidin fill all positions in the Interim Islamic Government of Afghanistan called a shura (council).

1989 · More than 800 tons of

heroin are produced in the Pakistan/Afghanistan border region, supplying 50% of all heroin distributed in Europe and North America.



Rugged rebels in Afghan terrain

1994 • With the help of the ISI, Pakistan's version of the CIA, the Taliban is formed. Formed by members of the Mujahidin, the Taliban advocates a form of Islam based on interpretation of the Quran without the centuries

of elaboration of tradition.

1996 • The Taliban annouces women must be veiled and that education will cease being made available to them. Official U.S. foreign policy finds "noth-

ing objectionable" with the regime, that is, until sustained pressure by international women's organizations forces the government to take a critical stance.

2001 • The Taliban destroy two gigantic, world-renowned Buddhist statues in accordance with their interpretation of an Islamic law banning idols.

2001 • After the Sept. 11 attacks, the U.S. government accuses the Afghani Taliban of aiding and harboring Osama bin Laden and other terrorists. The U.S. declares a "War on Terrorism," and bombing begins.

the 411 on 9-11 and on

The following groups organize for Peace:

Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress Committee against hate crimes and terrorism in all forms in 9-11 aftermath.

Contact Alyssa Kang email: womanwarrior1@hotmail.com

Los Angeles/Orange County Coalition to Stop the War & Coalition for World Peace 213.487.2368 323.852.9808 714.636.1232

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) www.rawa.org postal address: RAWA P.O. Box 374 Quetta, Pakistan

Donations to RAWA are handled by The Afghan Women's Mission 260 S. Lake Avenue PMB 165 Pasadena, CA 91101

Make check or money orders payable to SEE/Afghan Women's Mission. Your tax-deductable contribution will be sent to RAWA. Also send email to RAWA at rawa@rawa.org whenever a donation is made.

For current related issues see also: AfghanWomensMission.org

For timely resources and reporting hate crimes:

South Asian Network 18000 Pioneer Blvd. Artesia, CA 90701 sanpa@onebox.com saninfo@onebox.com 800.281.8111 562.403.0488

Council on American-Islamic Relations (www.cair-net.org)

If you believe you have been the victim of an Anti-Islamic hate crime, you should:

- Report the crime to your local police station <u>immediately</u>.
 Request that the incident be treated as a hate crime. Follow up with investigators. Inform CAIR even if you believe it is a "minor or small" incident.
- Document what happened.
 Write down exactly what was said and done by the offender. Save evidence. Take photos.
- Act quickly. Each incident must be dealt with when it happens, not when convenient.
- Decide on the appropriate

action to be taken. Consider issuing a statement from community leaders, holding a news conference, organizing a protest, meeting with officials, or starting a letter writing campaign. Mobilize community support.

 Contact CAIR and a local mosque or organization.
 Stay on top of the situation.
 Announce results. When the incident is resolved, make an announcement to the same people and organizations originally contacted.

Send information to:

Council on American-Islamic Relations Incident Reports 453 New Jersey Ave., S.E. Washington, D.C. 20003 tel: 202.488.8787 fax: 202.488.0833

Asian Pacific American Legal Center 1145 Wilshire Bld, 2nd Floor Los Angeles, CA 90007 tel: 213.977.7500 fax:213.977.7595

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Hotline for reporting hate
crimes against Arab-, Muslimand South Asian Americans:
800-552-6843

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