



## WAR, TERRORISM AND OUR CLASSROOMS



## Teaching in the Aftermath of the September 11th Tragedy

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1001 East Keefe Ave,  
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Milwaukee, WI  
Permit No. 3638

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The printing and free distribution of this edition of **War, Terrorism and Our Classrooms** is made possible through a generous grant from the Ford Foundation. The grant does not imply agreement with all editorial content contained herein.

## Who We Are

**Rethinking Schools** is a nonprofit, independent newspaper advocating the reform of elementary and secondary public schools. Our emphasis is on urban schools and issues of equity and social justice.

**Rethinking Schools** is published by Rethinking Schools Limited, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

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ISSN # 0895-6855

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### PAGE ONE PHOTOS

**TOP:** U.S. bombs strike village of Khanaga, 37 miles north of Kabul, on Nov. 7.

**MIDDLE:** Survivors flee the World Trade Center

**BOTTOM:** Afghan refugee children

**BACKDROP:** Attack on the World Trade Center

**CREDIT:** All photos AP/Wide World Photos

## Dear Reader:

The last year has not been an easy time for educators. After the deadly events of September 11, 2001, we all needed to help students grieve, to help them try to make sense of an event that shattered so many lives. Then we had to respond to the war in Afghanistan, the demand for patriotism at all costs, the demonization of those who questioned the status quo (or those who simply resembled the 9/11 hijackers in any way), and the stripping of our civil liberties in the name of security.

As educators committed to social justice, we believe that students need something different than a daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Whether we teach elementary students or older ones, young people need global education. All students, starting with the youngest, need to develop empathy for people who are different or live under different conditions. They need to learn basic geography and history, and they must unlearn damaging stereotypes. And we can help students develop other critical skills: to question the policies of our government, to consider alternatives, to ask about who benefits and who suffers from particular policy choices, to evaluate media coverage of world events. We need to direct students' attention to the broad trends that continue to make the world an unequal and dangerous place.

You are receiving this reprint of our 9/11 special edition because we believe it contains valuable information and resources that can be shared with both colleagues and your students. You will find background materials to provide social and historical context on the international crisis and a range of perspectives from educators who are attempting to meet the needs of their students in a time of uncertainty.

If you find this special edition of Rethinking Schools useful, we hope you'll choose to subscribe to our quarterly journal or purchase our books — or both. (See the back page for an order form and visit our website at [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org).) We've been working since 1986 to bring equity and justice to public school classrooms and we invite you to join us in our struggle to build a more just and peaceful world.

**The Editors**



An Afghan refugee after the U.S. air raids.



New York City, Sept. 11.



Women watch the World Trade Center burn.

# Sept. 11 and Our Classrooms

BY THE EDITORS OF RETHINKING SCHOOLS

No teacher education program could have prepared us to confront the emotionally shattering events of Sept. 11. We began school that morning in one era, but left that evening in a different era — one filled with sorrow, confusion, and vulnerability. No matter what age student we work with, we found ourselves rethinking and revising our lesson plans, if not our life plans.

In this special edition of *Rethinking Schools*, we offer two things: a range of perspectives from educators seeking to respond to students' emotional and intellectual needs in the current crisis; and background articles that provide social and historical context to guide our work as educators. These efforts are tentative, intended more as point of departure than as final statement. We welcome feedback, and urge you to visit our website where we have a section devoted to teaching about the aftermath of Sept. 11: [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11).

\* \* \*

Although the events of Sept. 11 changed many things, the core principles that guide our curricular response were already in place:

**Educators need to nurture student empathy.** As Alfie Kohn urges in his article, page 5, "Schools should help children locate themselves in widening circles of care that extend beyond self, beyond country, to all humanity." In these pages, teachers use poetry and letter writing to prompt students to imagine themselves as part of a human, not just American, family (page 7 and page 9). Globalizing empathy can be especially difficult when textbooks and pundits alike use "us," "we," and "our" to promote a narrow nationalism. It's our job to reach beyond this chauvinism.

If there has been a "good" effect of Sept. 11, it has been the outpouring of generosity, self-sacrifice, and solidarity. We should help students make these "circles of care" as wide as possible.

**We need to be multicultural and anti-racist.** This stems both from a commitment to the kind of world we want to live in — one where the lives of people of all races and cultures are equally valued — as well as from a methodological imperative: The only way we can make sense of this moment in history is through a multicultural lens. We hope this sensibility weaves throughout this special issue, from articles about racist attacks on people of Middle Eastern or South/Central Asian descent (page 17), to explorations of Islam (page 6), to perspectives on U.S. policy as seen by others around the world (page 9).

Crisis will always be used to further agendas of racial privilege. In multiple ways this is a dangerous time: immigrants are made to feel more fearful; as military budgets swell, programs that could ameliorate racial inequality suffer; the "war against terrorism" emboldens defenders of the status quo who have new tools to stifle racial justice activism.

A multicultural inquiry always prompts teachers to ask: Who benefits? Who suffers?

In its critique of the new anti-terrorism law — the high-sounding USA Patriot Act — the ACLU spells out in chilling detail how the federal government has used this crisis to seize greater power and to erode civil liberties (page 16). In this same vein, U.S. officials have sought to discredit the burgeoning global justice movement, conflating activism with terrorism, claiming that those who oppose "free trade" oppose freedom.

**We need to ask the deep "Why?" questions.** Nothing can justify the heinous attacks of Sept. 11. But to unequivocally condemn these attacks does not relieve us of the responsibility to *explain* them. A photograph from a demonstration in Pakistan that Bob Peterson uses with his students (page 10) urges, "Americans, Think! Why You Are Hated All Over The World!" Several articles in this issue suggest some U.S. policies that have led to such antipathy, especially in the Middle East: U.S. support for anti-democratic regimes, and the overthrow of more democratic ones, like Iran's Mossadegh in 1953; the tenacity of U.S. support for sanctions against Iraq that have killed hundreds of thousands of children; U.S. arming of Israel and its support of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Beyond such policies, teachers need to engage students in questioning the global economic system. Its relentless emphasis on profit continues to impoverish millions around the world, dislocating cultural patterns and making people receptive to repressive fundamentalisms of all kinds.

**We need to enlist students in questioning the language and symbols that help frame how we understand global events.** Terms like terrorism, freedom, liberty, patriotism, and unity evoke powerful images, and consequently must be critically examined. When Osama bin Laden was fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan, President Reagan called him a "freedom fighter." Now he's a terrorist. In the 1980s the U.S. government considered Nelson Mandela a terrorist. Now he's a statesman. Language is marshaled for political ends, and students need to reflect on this (page 12).

**Educators need to honor dissent and those who challenge power and privilege as they work for justice.** Too often, students are denied knowledge about individuals and social movements that have made the world a better place. They learn that obedience is a synonym for patriotism and that citizenship gives you the right to vote and do as you're told. The articles in this issue of *Rethinking Schools* propose a more activist vision. They urge students to question basic premises about terrorism and war. They give students permission to think independently from the Official Story.

\* \* \*

Clearly, these principles will play out differently in an early childhood setting than they will in a high school classroom. But they are the starting point for how we propose to help our students confront an era fraught with violence and uncertainty. They remind us that if a better world is possible, we're the ones who have to build it. ■

**To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.**

**What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places — and there are so many — where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.**

— Historian Howard Zinn, from his book *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*.

# A Time of Gifts

**In a time of horror, we have a responsibility to remember how people respond with innumerable acts of kindness and generosity.**

BY STEPHEN JAY GOULD

**T**he patterns of human history mix decency and depravity in equal measure. We often assume, therefore, that such a fine balance of results must emerge from societies made of decent and depraved people in equal numbers. But we need to expose and celebrate the fallacy of this conclusion so that, in this moment of crisis, we may reaffirm an essential truth too easily forgotten, and regain some crucial comfort too readily forgone. Good and kind people outnumber all others by thousands to one.

The tragedy of human history lies in the enormous potential for destruction in rare acts of evil, not in the high frequency of evil people. Complex systems can only be built step by step, whereas destruction requires but an instant. Thus, in what I like to call the Great Asymmetry, every spectacular incident of evil will be balanced by 10,000 acts of kindness, too often unnoted and invisible as the “ordinary” efforts of a vast majority.

We have a duty, almost a holy responsibility, to record and honor the victorious weight of these innumerable little kindnesses, when an unprecedented act of evil so threatens to distort our perception of ordinary human behavior.

I have stood at ground zero, stunned by the twisted ruins of the largest human structure ever destroyed in a catastrophic moment. (I will discount the claims of a few biblical literalists for the Tower of Babel.) And I have contemplated a single day of carnage that our nation has not suffered since battles that still evoke passions and tears, nearly 150 years later: Antietam, Gettysburg, Cold Harbor. The scene is insufferably sad, but not at all depressing. Rather, ground zero can only be described, in the lost meaning of a grand old word, as “sublime,” in the sense of awe inspired by solemnity.

In human terms, ground zero is the focal point for a vast web of bustling goodness, channeling uncountable deeds of kindness from an entire planet — the acts that must be recorded to reaffirm the overwhelming weight of human decency. The rubble of ground zero stands mute, while a beehive of human activity churns within,



**Firefighters rest during the recovery efforts at ground zero in New York.**

and radiates outward, as everyone makes a selfless contribution, big or tiny according to means and skills, but each of equal worth. My wife and stepdaughter established a depot on Spring Street to collect and ferry needed items in short supply, including facemasks and shoe inserts, to the workers at ground zero. Word spreads like a fire of goodness, and people stream in, bringing gifts from a pocketful of batteries to a \$10,000 purchase of hard hats, made on the spot at a local supply house, and delivered right to us.

I will cite but one tiny story, among so many, to add to the count that will overwhelm the power of any terrorist’s act. And by such tales, multiplied many millionfold, let those few depraved people finally understand why their vision of inspired fear cannot prevail over ordinary decency. As we left a local restaurant to make a delivery to ground zero late one evening,

the cook gave us a shopping bag and said: “Here’s a dozen apple brown bettys, our best dessert, still warm. Please give them to the rescue workers.” How lovely, I thought, but how meaningless, except as an act of solidarity, connecting the cook to the cleanup. Still, we promised that we would make the distribution, and we put the bag of 12 apple brown bettys atop several thousand facemasks and shoe pads.

Twelve apple brown bettys into the breach. Twelve

apple brown bettys for thousands of workers. And then I learned something important that I should never have forgotten — and the joke turned on me. Those 12 apple brown bettys went like literal hot cakes. These trivial symbols in my initial judgment turned into little drops of gold within a rainstorm of similar offerings for the stomach and soul, from children’s postcards to cheers by the roadside. We gave the last one to a firefighter, an older man in a young crowd, sitting alone in utter exhaustion as he inserted one of our shoe pads. And he said, with a twinkle and a smile restored to his face: “Thank you. This is the most lovely thing I’ve seen in four days — and still warm!” ■

*Stephen Jay Gould, a professor of zoology at Harvard, is the author of **Questioning the Millennium**. The above article originally appeared in the Sept. 26 *New York Times*. Reprinted with permission. Professor Gould passed away in 2002.*

## Teaching Ideas

Stephen Gould says that the carnage of Sept. 11 is insufferably sad but not depressing. What’s the difference? How can he make this claim?

The period since Sept. 11 has been filled with acts of violence and horror — but Gould also suggests there has been a “web of bustling goodness.” Since Sept. 11, what are some of the parts of this web that you have seen? Make a drawing that illustrates this “web.”

Gould’s story about the 12 apple brown bettys reminds us of the human capacity for goodness and to make a difference in others’ lives. Brainstorm similar stories that you are aware of from your own life. Choose one of these and write about it.

**This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)**

**E**ven before the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan began on October 7, some 7.5 million Afghans were at risk of starving to death, due to the ongoing effects of decades of war, dislocation, repression, poverty and drought.

**Providing relief food is complicated by the fact that there are an estimated 10 million land mines in Afghanistan. Problems also erupted because the yellow U.S. food packets delivered by air were the same color as highly explosive U.S. cluster bombs.**

## Not in Our Son’s Name

*Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez’s son Greg was one of the World Trade Center victims. The Rodriguezes have asked that people share as widely as possible copies of this Sept. 15 letter they distributed to the media. It was written before the bombing of Afghanistan began.*

BY PHYLLIS AND ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ

**O**ur son Greg is among the many missing from the World Trade Center attack. Since we first heard the news, we have shared moments of grief, comfort, hope, despair, fond memories with his wife, the two families, our

friends and neighbors, his loving colleagues at Cantor Fitzgerald/ESpeed, and all the grieving families that daily meet at the Pierre Hotel.

We see our hurt and anger reflected among everybody we meet. We cannot pay attention to the daily flow of news about this disaster. But we read enough of the news to sense that our government is heading in the direction of violent revenge, with the prospect of sons, daughters, parents, friends in distant lands, dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against us. It is not the way to go. It will not avenge our son’s death. Not in our son’s name.

Our son died a victim of an inhuman ideology. Our actions should not serve the same purpose. Let us grieve. Let us reflect and pray. Let us think about a

rational response that brings real peace and justice to our world. But let us not as a nation add to the inhumanity of our times. ■

## Teaching Ideas

Discuss how Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez would respond to the policies of the U.S. government since they wrote this letter.

Find a newspaper letter to the editor about post-September 11 events — terrorism, the war in Afghanistan, the new anti-terrorism legislation, etc. — and write your own letter in response. If you like, write this from the Rodriguezes’ perspective.

**This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)**

# Teaching about Sept. 11

Teachers have a special — and difficult — responsibility to help students extend their circle of caring beyond the victims of Sept. 11 to all of humanity.

The following article by education writer Alfie Kohn was rejected by several leading education publications that have often published his writings. "No one challenged the accuracy of anything in the piece," according to Kohn. "Rather, it was argued that there are times when it's not appropriate to say things even if they are true."

Kohn was also disinclined as keynote speaker for the March meeting of the California League of Middle Schools (CLMS) conference. Apparently, someone on the CLMS board saw a copy of this essay (which had appeared only on Kohn's website) and convinced the executive director to break the contract with Kohn, even though his planned talk had nothing to do with Sept. 11.

BY ALFIE KOHN

Some events seem momentous when they occur but gradually fade from consciousness, overtaken by fresh headlines and the distractions of daily life. Only once in a great while does something happen that will be taught by future historians. Just such an incident occurred on Sept. 11. The deadly attacks on New York and Washington have left us groping for support, for words, for a way to make meaning and recover our balance.

Almost 30 years ago, my father suffered a serious heart attack at the age of 42. I remember how he smiled up at me weakly from his hospital bed and made a joke that wasn't a joke. "I guess I'm not as immortal as I thought I was," he murmured. This fall we have all suffered an attack that has stolen from us, individually and collectively, our sense of invincibility. Our airplanes can be turned into missiles. Our skyline can be altered. We can't be sure that our children are safe.

It is unimaginable to me that people could patiently plan such carnage, could wake up each morning, eat breakfast, and spend the day preparing to destroy thousands of innocent lives along with their own. But while the particulars seem unfathomable, the attack itself had a context and perhaps a motive that are perfectly comprehensible — and especially important for educators to grasp.

The historical record suggests that the United States has no problem with terrorism as long as its victims don't live here or look like most of us. In the last couple of decades alone, we have bombed Libya, invaded Grenada, attacked Panama, and shelled Lebanon — killing civilians in each instance. We created and funded an army of terrorists to overthrow the elected government of Nicaragua and when the World Court ruled that we must stop, we simply rejected the court's authority. We engineered coups in Iran, Zaire, Guatemala, and Chile (the last of which coincidentally also took place on Sept. 11).

In 1991, we killed more than 100,000 men, women, and children in Iraq, deliberately wiping out electricity and water supplies with the result that tens of thousands of civilians died from malnutrition and disease. We continue to vigorously defend (and subsidize) Israel's brutal treatment of Palestinians, which has been condemned



A single shoe amid the debris of the World Trade Center.

by human rights organizations and virtually every other nation on the planet. We have aided vile tyrants, including some who later turned against us: Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, and, yes, Osama bin Laden (when his opposition to the Soviets served our purposes). We are not the only nation that has done such things, but we are the most powerful and, therefore, arguably the most dangerous.

Does any of this justify an act of terrorism against us? No. Our history may help to explain, but decidedly does not excuse, the taking of innocent lives. Nothing could. By the same token, though, the September attack does not justify a retaliatory war launched by our government that takes innocent lives abroad. Early polls showed overwhelming American support for revenge, even for killing civilians in Muslim countries. If this seems understandable given what has just happened, then the same must be said about the animosity of our attackers, some of whom may have suffered personally from U.S.-sponsored violence. Understandable in both cases — and excusable in neither.

And so we come to our role as educators. There are excellent resources for helping students to reflect deeply about these specific issues, such as the website [www.teachingforchange.org/Sept11.htm](http://www.teachingforchange.org/Sept11.htm). But our broader obligation is to address what writer Martin Amis recently

described as Americans' chronic "deficit of empathy for the sufferings of people far away." Schools should help children locate themselves in widening circles of care that extend beyond self, beyond country, to all humanity.

Likewise, education must be about developing the skills and disposition to question the official story, to view with skepticism the stark us-against-them (or us good, them bad) portrait of the world and the accompanying dehumanization of others that helps to explain that empathy deficit. Students should also be able to recognize dark historical parallels in the President's rhetoric, and to notice what is not being said or shown on the news.

One detail of the tragedy carries a striking pedagogical relevance. Official announcements in the south tower of the World Trade Center repeatedly instructed everyone in the building to stay put, which posed an agonizing choice: follow the official directive or disobey and evacuate.

Here we find a fresh reason to ask whether we are teaching students to think for themselves or simply to do what they're told.

Ultimately, though, the standard by which to measure our schools is the extent to which the next generation comes to understand — and fully embrace — this simple truth: The life of someone who lives in Kabul or Baghdad is worth no less than the life of someone in New York or from our neighborhood. ■

Alfie Kohn ([www.alfiekohn.org](http://www.alfiekohn.org)) is the author of eight books on education and human behavior, including *The Schools Our Children Deserve* and *What to Look for in a Classroom*. ©2001 by Alfie Kohn.

## An Alternative to War

BY MICHAEL RATNER AND JULES LOBEL

A number of organizations and people have asked us about alternatives to the use of military force, the legality of the United States employing military force, and what can and should be done under international law. Set forth below are some principles that should guide the United States actions, and steps the United States can and should take that are short of using force.

We believe that at this point it is crucial to prevent a unilateral and disproportionate response by the United States. Reliance upon the United Nations has the potential to do that; it will also provide a forum for the trials of those suspected of terrorism and crimes against humanity. We recognize that our suggestions are not long-term solutions. Those will only come when the government of the United States and others recognize that they must change their policies and make

a more just world.

### Key International Law Principles and an Alternative To the Use of Military Force

1. The UN Charter prohibits the use of force except in matters of self-defense. Article 2(4) and Article 51.

A country is not permitted to use military force for purposes of retaliation, vengeance, and punishment. In other words, unless a future attack on the United States is imminent, it cannot use military force. This means that even if the United States furnishes evidence as to the authors of the Sept. 11 attack it cannot use military force against them. To this extent the congressional resolution authorizing the President to use force against the perpetrators of the attack on Sept. 11 is a violation of international law. Instead, the U.S. must employ other means including extradition, and resolutions of the Security Council, which could eventually

authorize the use of force to effectuate the arrest of suspects.

The United States will argue that the attack on Sept. 11 was an armed attack on the United States and that it has the right to use self-defense against that attack. Even though the attack is over, it presumably would claim that those who initiated the attack were responsible for prior attacks and are planning such attacks in the future. At the same time, President Bush has stated that the "war" on terrorism would be lengthy, implying that it would go on for years.

In order to rely on this self-defense claim, the U.S. would need to present evidence to the Security Council not only as to the perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attack, but evidence that future attacks are planned and imminent. They have not yet done so. Even if the U.S. can

continued on page 15

# What Is Islam?

BY SEMYA HAKIM

The recent attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon have brought to the surface a lot of ignorant beliefs and stereotypes about Islam. Clearly, it is past time for teachers to educate themselves and their students about what is the second largest religion in the world.

One way to start discussions is to ask students to: 1. List stereotypes about Islam and/or Muslims; 2. List everything they know about Islam and/or Muslims.

When I ask about Islam, I often get blank stares, followed by stammerings such as, "Muslims pray a lot," or, "They believe in Allah" (or, as one of my students told me, "They believe in Allan."). Some students have even told me that all Muslim men have, and possibly are required to have, more than one wife.

One common misconception is that Jihad can be easily translated as "holy war." Jihad actually translates as "to strive in the way of God." So a person who studies Islam, preaches Islam, or defends an Islamic country is jihad. It is not someone who initiates violence in the name of Islam. In fact, the literal translation of the word "Islam" is "peace."

This misunderstanding stems, in part, from the fact that many non-Muslim Americans do not understand that Islam is a way of life. Because Muslims don't necessarily see boundaries between nation-states the way Americans do, their patriotism is more about the religion than a particular country. Also, because of religious/racial profiling in the media and elsewhere, Muslims are one of the few groups who are consistently identified by religion when they are accused of committing terrorist acts.

## BASIC FACTS ABOUT ISLAM

Part of the problem is that many teachers approach Islam as if it were some distant, ancient religion. Yet there are six million Muslims in the United States, and Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in the country.

Here is some basic information about Islam that can help teachers educate their students.

- Islam is the name of the religion; Muslim refers to its followers.
- Worldwide, there are 1.2 billion Muslims. Islam is the dominant religion throughout large portions of Asia and Africa, with the largest Muslim populations living in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.
- Islam is the third of the three largest monotheistic religions, in addition to Judaism and Christianity. Muslims believe that the Qu'ran is God's word as revealed to the prophet Muhammad (570-632) through the angel Gabriel.
- There are five basic beliefs of Islam. 1. Belief in one god. (Allah is the Arabic word for god, not believed to be a separate god from the Judeo-Christian version). 2. Belief in prophethood (Muhammad and the ones before him). 3. Belief in the justice of God. 4. Belief in the Imams (or Apostles) of God (Shi'ite belief). 5. Belief in the Day of Judgment.
- There are five major duties of Muslims. 1. Pray five times a day — morning, noon, afternoon, sunset and evening (Sullah). 2. Make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetime if physically/financially able (Hajj). 3. Fast during the month of Ramadan (Saum). 4. Give to the Poor (Zakat). 5. Strive in the way of God (Jihad).



**A Muslim in New Mexico prays east, towards Mecca, during his midday prayers.**

AP/Wide World Photos

Ibn Abd-al-Wahab. It is often discounted by Islamic scholars, just as they discount the Taliban.

- Arranged marriages have changed over time. It is rarely the case where the two people involved have absolutely no input in the decision to marry. Muslim women are rarely forced into marriage, even in the most religious of families.
- Muslims follow the lunar calendar, and thus their holidays move approximately 11 days on the Christian calendar. There are two major holidays in Islam: Eid al Adha is at the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca and Eid al Fitr is at the end of Ramadan.
- Islam is very family-oriented. The primary means of transmitting the religion are through the family. Therefore parents, both mothers and fathers, take on a big responsibility when raising children. This family orientation also translates into a community-oriented way of life that can greatly conflict with Western notions of individuality.

While this article does not begin to make other teachers "experts," hopefully it can give you some confidence in starting a dialogue in your own classrooms. Here are some websites for further information:

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), [www.adc.org](http://www.adc.org)  
 Arab American Institute (AAI), [www.aaiusa.org](http://www.aaiusa.org)  
 American Committee on Jerusalem (ACJ), [www.acj.org](http://www.acj.org)  
 American Muslim Alliance (AMA), [www.amaweb.org](http://www.amaweb.org)  
 American Muslim Council (AMC), [www.amconline.org](http://www.amconline.org)  
 Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), [www.cair-net.org](http://www.cair-net.org)  
 Islamic Institute, [www.islamicinstitute.org](http://www.islamicinstitute.org). ■

Semya Hakim teaches at St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, MN.

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

# Facts about Arabs

BY MARVIN WINGFIELD

## Who is an Arab?

"Arab" is a cultural and linguistic term. It refers to those who speak Arabic as their first language. Arabs are united by culture and by history. Arabs are not a race. Some have blue eyes and red hair; others are dark skinned; most are somewhere in between. Most Arabs are Muslims but there are also millions of Christian Arabs and thousands of Jewish Arabs, just as there are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Americans.

## What is the Arab World?

The Arab World consists of 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Iran and Turkey are not Arab countries and their primary languages are Farsi and Turkish respectively. Arab countries have a rich diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and religious com-

munities. These include Kurds, Armenians, Berbers and others. There are over 200 million Arabs.

## What is the Muslim World?

There are an estimated 1.2 billion Muslims in the world. The Organization of Islamic Countries has 55 member states. The ten countries with the largest Muslim population are: Indonesia (170.3 million), Pakistan (136 million), Bangladesh (106 million), India (103 million), Turkey (62.4 million), Iran (60.7 million), Egypt (53.7 million), Nigeria (47.7 million), and China (37.1 million). Of these countries only Egypt is an Arab country. Most Arabs are Muslims, but most Muslims are not Arabs.

## Who is a Muslim?

A Muslim is a follower of Islam. [See article on this page. The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee also has an information sheet on Islam.]

## What is the Middle East?

The Middle East is a loose term, not always used to

describe the same territory. It usually includes the Arab countries from Egypt east to the Persian Gulf, plus Israel and Iran. Turkey is sometimes considered part of the Middle East, sometimes part of Europe. Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh are usually described as South Asia.

## Who are Arab Americans?

Arab Americans are Americans of Arab descent. There are Americans with roots in each Arab country, but most originate from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. There are also substantial communities from Egypt, Yemen and Iraq. The first immigrants arrived in the late 19th century. A second wave of immigration started after World War II, and still continues. The largest communities live in the Detroit area. ■

Marvin Wingfield is director of education and outreach at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). For more resources, go to [www.adc.org](http://www.adc.org). Reprinted with permission.

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

# Letters to the Universe

**An English teacher draws on student experiences with losing a loved one to help them cope with the Sept. 11 tragedy.**

BY TRACY WAGNER

The night of Sept. 11, unable to stop watching the constant news coverage of the day's tragedies, I knew I had to plan a special lesson for the following day. I pulled an old box out of my closet, decorated it with bits of postcards and envelopes, and, after cutting a slit in the top, labeled it "Letters to the Universe."

Earlier in the day, I had encountered some students who said they were "unaffected" by the attacks. I knew my students needed a way to begin processing the attacks, and I hoped the lesson would be a start. I also wanted to help my students understand the power of empathy, and how people gain strength by coming together in times of crisis.

I started out my first hour class by asking students what they had heard on the news and how it made them feel. Some students shared; most remained silent.

"I felt very sad watching the news last night, and even though I felt that way, I still couldn't turn the TV off," I said, trying to model that it was OK to feel frustrated and upset.

My lesson plan was based on the idea of the guided freewrite — students are given a topic and given time to write whatever they want. I passed out a sheet that asked students to "share a time in your life when you lost someone, and offer advice from your experience and what you learned." The students were to write their response on the back of the sheet.

Familiar with guided freewrites, my students knew they would have 15 minutes to write quietly and that they would not have to sign their name. After helping a few of the students choose to whom they would write, I sat down to write my letter.

When I called "time's up," we folded up our letters and dropped them into the "Letters to the Universe" box. Then, I opened the lid and students passed around the box, each picking out an anonymous letter. The students began to read.

Marcus, a boy in the front row, started to cry. "Man, this is so sad, so sad. Ms. Wagner, come look at this," he said.



**New Yorkers walk through falling debris on Sept. 11.**

The writer had shared the experience of losing his grandmother the year before, saying, "The day she died part of my heart did, too." The writer advised: "Be strong for your family and never forget the good times you had with your loved ones. Our time on earth is short and we all know that." I knew that Marcus' grandmother had died earlier that year, too.

Marcus was the first to volunteer to read a letter. Soon, a panel of readers had assembled in the front of the room. One by one, students passed up letters through the rows to a reader who read it to the group. Sometimes, students who were listening asked that a particular line, or an entire letter, be read again. Following are excerpts from two of the letters:

Dear Survivor in the Second Building,  
I'm writing to say how bad I feel about what happened yesterday. I'm sure it must have been terrifying to see or hear the other building getting hit. What could you see from the window?  
What floor were you on? I would think if you were up on a high floor it would have been difficult

to fight your way through the crowded staircases to get outside. What were your first thoughts when you heard the plane hit the building and when you saw the building collapse?

Do you know anyone or have any friends inside that didn't get out on time?

What do you feel about the country who did this to us? ...

Sincerely,  
A Friend

Dear Family of A Lost Loved One,  
I would like to share my condolences to a family of a lost loved one. I have once shared your experience before with the loss of my grandpa. It is hard to lose a loved one, but you can't stop living, you have to keep going on living your life. Losing someone can be hard especially in the act of a terrorist attack. From experience I learned that you must go on living your life because time don't stop for the people who are still living.

With my Condolences.

The student panel of readers read right up until the bell. Surely, not all students were as engaged as I had hoped. I had envisioned each of them reading a letter

out loud instead of a uniform panel of readers. I had hoped that more students would feel comfortable saying about a letter, "That's mine!"

I also knew that teaching about Sept. 11 was not a one-time event. I continued to plan lessons almost instant-by-instant for the following week: playing the game of "telephone" to make students think about how many people information had passed through before landing in their ear; finding a piece of factual news information and responding with poetry or artwork; simply discussing what we knew, and sharing our fears.

I do not know what the future holds. But I hold tight to the hope that my students remember how good it feels to write, listen, and to respond together in times of tragedy. ■

*Tracy Wagner currently teaches English 9 and 10 at Madison East High School, in Madison, Wisconsin. All students' names have been changed.*

## "first writing since"

BY SUHEIR HAMMAD

*Following are excerpts from a poem by Palestinian/African-American poet Suheir Hammad. It was the first poem she wrote after Sept. 11. The complete poem is available at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11).*

1. there have been no words.  
i have not written one word.  
no poetry in the ashes south of canal street.  
no prose in the refrigerated trucks driving debris and dna.  
not one word.

today is a week, and seven is of heavens, gods, science.  
evident out my kitchen window is an abstract reality.  
sky where once was steel.  
smoke where once was flesh.

fire in the city air and i feared for my sister's life in a way never before. and then, and now, i fear for the rest of us.

first, please god, let it be a mistake, the pilot's heart failed, the plane's engine died.  
then please god, let it be a nightmare, wake me now.  
please god, after the second plane, please, don't let it be anyone who looks like my brothers.

i do not know how bad a life has to break in order to kill.  
i have never been so hungry that i willed hunger

i have never been so angry as to want to control a gun over a pen.  
not really.  
even as a woman, as a palestinian, as a broken human being.  
never this broken.

more than ever, i believe there is no difference.  
the most privileged nation, most americans do not know the difference between indians, afghanis, syrians, muslims, sikhs, hindus.  
more than ever, there is no difference. ...

3. the dead are called lost and their families hold up shaky printouts in front of us through screens smoked up.

we are looking for iris, mother of three. please call with any information. we are searching for priti, last seen on the 103rd floor. she was talking to her husband on the phone and the line went. please help us find george, also known as adel. his family is waiting for him with his favorite meal. i am looking for my son, who was delivering coffee. i am looking for my sister girl, she started her job on monday.

i am looking for peace. i am looking for mercy. i am looking for evidence of compassion. any evidence of life. i am looking for life.

*Suheir Hammad is author of a book of poems, **Born Palestinian, Born Black**, and the memoir **Drops Of This Story**. Reprinted with permission.*

# Dear Parents ...

**A teacher offers help with understanding how young children may react to tragedy and war.**

*The following is condensed from a letter that Ann Pelo sent to parents of children at the Hilltop Children's Center, where Pelo teaches in Seattle. The letter was written shortly after the bombing of Afghanistan began.*

BY ANN PELO

"What really matters now is love. Strength, love, courage, love, kindness, love. That is really what matters. There has always been evil, and there will always be evil, but there has always been good, and there is good now."

—Maya Angelou, poet and author, September 2001.

These are heavy days, full of the ache of violence, death, and devastation in the United States and in Afghanistan. We adults feel the weight of war in both tangible and subtle ways as our lives shift focus and our hearts open wider and wider. The children feel the weight of war, as well, though they may not have the language for their questions, fears, and uncertainties. We see children wrestling to absorb and understand the violence in New York, Washington D.C., and Afghanistan in a range of ways:

- Children are more fragile these days. Some children are waking at night with bad dreams — children who typically sleep long and soundly through the night. Many parents have described their children as needing extra reassurance; they notice their children clinging to them with unusual intensity, or crying more easily. Some children have expressed fear about unfamiliar people who may be "bad guys."
- Children are more volatile these days. Kids' voices are loud and their feelings are raw; we hear children snapping at each other and giving way to quick anger as they play and work together. And there is a lot more physical conflict.
- Children are playing about and trying out violence. We've seen children intentionally break or damage other children's block and Lego constructions, something that hadn't happened until recent weeks. Gun play and "bad guy" play are ever-present at our school, and I've heard from some parents that they've seen their children take up gun play at home in new and startling ways. There's a recurring game in our classroom in which firefighters are trapped in a burning building and are hurt and killed before the rescue workers can reach them. Children build tall towers with blocks and knock them down, over and over and over. Children have begun to make poison foods in their play and feed them to bad guys; several days last week, children hunted down and captured bad guys, throwing them into the oven to "roast and



Young children must be allowed to express their concerns during times of trauma.

cook and eat them for supper."

## WHAT WE CAN DO

Here are some thoughts about how parents and teachers can support children during this time of unrest and pain:

- Engulf the children in tenderness. At home, create time for long, cozy evenings on the couch with a pile of good books to read together; make dates for baking yummy treats together; linger over family photos and home videos that anchor your child in the joys and safety of your family. Your child may ask for your help with things that you know she can do by herself; this is a great time to offer that extra help. If your child seems particularly edgy, pushing limits and testing boundaries, it may help to snuggle up together for a song or a story rather than enforcing the limit just then: your child's misbehavior may be his way to ask for reassurance. It'll probably be easier for him to navigate family rules and boundaries after some tender loving from you.
- Affirm children's feelings, acknowledging that it's all right to be frightened, confused, or angry. Reassure your child that she or he is safe — and, too, recognize with her or him that there are folks in the world right now who aren't safe and that we can feel compassion and grief for them. This is a tricky balance: we want to comfort our children, and we want to cultivate in them the compassion and generosity of spirit that will add to a culture of peace.
- Anchor children's days with familiar rhythms and rituals. And consider creating a new family ritual about peace, or love, or compassion, perhaps lighting a candle, singing a peace song, or inviting the folks gathered at the dinner table to share an image of beauty, an experience of kindness, or an expression of love.
- Ask your child periodically what she thinks is happening and what she is hearing about the war to open up opportunities for her to express her ideas. It'll be helpful for your child if you simply listen and acknowledge her thinking, rather than correcting her misunderstandings as she talks; after she's had a chance to share her thinking, you can share your understandings of and feelings about what's happening.
- Monitor gun play and "bad guy" play. This play provides children with a way to gain a sense of control and power; as I watched the children in my classroom capture, roast, and eat "bad guys" last week, I was struck by the power in their play: they captured and disarmed bad guys and swallowed their power, taking it into their bodies, conquering it absolutely. You might want to add new perspectives to this play about bad guys, hoping to shift him from one-dimensional understandings to an expanded sense of bad guys as fully human people. You can pose questions like: What does the bad guy's family do while he's fighting? How can you get the bad guy to listen to you?
- Stay alert for issues of racism and bias. Children are likely absorbing both the subtle and the overt racist images in our culture that define "bad guys" as people with olive-colored or brown skin, an Arabic accent or language, who dress in long, flowing gowns and wrap their heads in cloth, and who pray in mosques. When your child expresses a biased understanding, it's important to counter it right away. For example, if your child comments that "People who talk funny are bad guys," you might intervene to say: "To say someone talks funny is not okay. People talk differently because people in our city, country, and world speak different languages. Sometimes talk sounds funny to us when we haven't heard it before; we're not used to the sounds of a new language."
- Teach peace to children. Share stories of peace heroes. Continue to emphasize the importance of resolving conflicts in ways that honor the needs of everyone involved in the conflict. Talk about peace as an action, rather than as a passive absence of conflict. ■

*Ann Pelo has taught at Hilltop Children's Center for 10 years and is co-author, with Fran Davidson, of **That's Not Fair: A Teacher's Guide to Activism with Young Children** (Redleaf Press, 2000.)*

## Talking to Children

BY EDUCATORS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### Should children watch coverage about tragedies and warfare?

It depends on the age and maturity of the children. Parents may decide that some shows and topics are inappropriate. However, if children are going to watch programs about the event, we recommend that a parent or caregiver watch with them. Afterwards, talking together about reactions to the coverage and feelings about the event in general can help children make sense of a seemingly senseless tragedy.

### How can I judge if a child is ready to talk about difficult events?

Most children from age four to five and above would appreciate talking with adults they trust. In the media there is daily discussion of difficult topics, and it is likely that children know about them. However, it is also quite likely that they have some confusion about the facts and the magnitude of the danger they personally face. They often have mistaken information, questions, and some strong feelings. Often children are hesitant to share their questions and fears with adults. For this reason, we recommend that adults open the way for children to talk about their concerns.

### How do I open up the subject with children?

The key word here is LISTEN. Most experts agree that it is best NOT to open up a conversation with children by giving them a lecture — even an informal, introductory lecture — on the particular tragedy that is on the news. Don't burden children with information they may not be ready for. The best approach is to listen carefully to children's spontaneous questions and comments, and then respond to them in an appropriate, supportive way. Let children's concerns, in their own words, guide the direction of the discussion. ■

*Excerpted from "Talking to Children about Violence and other Sensitive and Complex Issues in the World." For the complete article see [www.esrnational.org/guide.htm](http://www.esrnational.org/guide.htm).*

# Poetry in a Time of Crisis

High school educators call on the power of poetry to help students critique injustice and develop empathy.

BY LINDA CHRISTENSEN

On a post-Sept. 11 visit to New York City, my daughter Gretchen and I caught a taxi to a “Poetry in Crisis” reading at Cooper Union. After we settled into the taxi, Gretchen pointed to a note written in ink on the leather seat, “This cabbie doesn’t have an American flag. Don’t tip him.”

The cabbie was an immigrant. From his accent and appearance, I’d guess he was from India. During our short visit, just about every taxi we rode in flew the stars and stripes. It felt mandatory. Obligatory patriotism.

Immigrant cabbies had reason to be fearful. Following the Sept. 11 tragedy, Arab-Americans and other Middle Eastern- or Central-Asian looking people were attacked at an alarming rate.

In an effort to raise student awareness about such anti-immigrant attacks, I worked with Renée Bald, a social studies teacher in Portland, OR, to develop a poetry lesson that highlighted the attacks and put them in historical context. We wanted students to see how fear too easily turns into repression based on religious or racial identity.

One of the most powerful poems we used was “first writing since,” by Suheir Hammad, an African-American/Palestinian woman. Hammad wrote this poem a week after the Sept. 11 attacks, and I read the poem in its entirety to the class. (The poem is available at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11). Excerpts are on page 7.)

Prior to reading, Renee and I told students: “Mark places that remind you of your own reactions. Also, mark lines that show us her fears.”

Hammad, like many of us, identified with the survivors who lost loved ones, who would wait at home for a phone call, a key in the door, the familiar shuffle of feet on the porch to let us know our family, our friends escaped. But as a Palestinian American, Hammad also captures the fear that many Arabs felt after witnessing the event.

## CHAOS AND JUSTICE

To further underscore the current discrimination and violence against Arab Americans, we handed out brief summaries of discriminatory acts that occurred in the first two weeks after the attacks. (See article, page 17. For the longer list we used in our classroom, go to: [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11).) Prior to reading about 20 of the attacks, we told students that they would be writing a poem about discrimination or injustice. To prepare for this, we encouraged them to highlight incidents that created a visual image for them, that created a visceral reaction or helped them understand the current crisis from a personal point of view. Two events struck students more than others:

- Islamic Institute of New York received a telephone call threatening the school’s 450 students. The male caller said he was going to paint the streets with the children’s blood. The school is closed, but continues to receive several threats a day. (*Seattle Times/Detroit Free Press*)

- One Muslim woman said she, her husband, and their eight children endured a night of terror when an angry mob rose outside of their home in Oak Lawn, IL. The woman, who asked not to be identified out of fear, said, “We had people riding up and down our block shouting obscenities, ‘Go home you bleeping ragheads, bleeping a-rabs, we’re gonna get you.’... My husband and I stayed up all night guarding the windows,” she added. “My husband is of Arab descent. He gave four years of his life in the U.S. Navy ... to have some skinhead with an American flag screaming at your house.” (*Reuters, Chicago*)

Once students had a feel for the violence being perpetrated against Arab-Americans

since Sept. 11th, we shared two poems “We Would Like You To Know” by Ana Castillo and Janet Wong’s “Waiting at the Railroad Café.” We told them they could use either poem as a model for their own writing. (Wong’s poem is in *Rethinking Our Classrooms, Vol. 2* and also available at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11). Janet Wong has a student-friendly website [www.janetwong.org](http://www.janetwong.org).)

Castillo’s poem, in which she counterposes stereotypes about Latinos with more accurate information, is an excellent prompt for students to engage in writing about discrimination. We read Castillo’s poem and, using the graph format, we generated lists of words or phrases typically used to stereotype Arab Americans, and then opposing lists to deflate those stereotypes:

### We Are Not

All terrorists  
All murderers  
Members of the Taliban  
We do not all wear turbans

### We Are

Family members  
Students  
American citizens

Student Kristin Eberman followed Castillo’s format in her poem:

We would like you to know  
we are not all  
part of the Taliban  
nor followers of bin Laden.  
We were born in this country  
and are U.S. citizens.

We do not all  
wear turbans  
nor are we all taxi drivers.  
We do have  
a home and  
family we love.

We are not all  
against America  
nor are we spies  
passing on secret information.  
We are all  
a part of this country  
and also have family and friends  
in New York and  
killed in the World Trade Centers.

We would like you to know  
we are not all  
terrorists  
nor murderers.  
We also have feelings and pride  
in our country, America.

Wong’s poem “Waiting at the Railroad Café” powerfully portrays an Asian father and daughter and their differing reactions to the discrimination they face at a café. After reading the poem out loud, we asked students to locate the two different forms of discrimination in the poem: One is passive — a waitress ignores them; the other is active — a drunk yells at them.

After discussing the content of the poem, we pointed out how Wong creates a movie close-up of the moment. We see the father with his arms folded; we hear them talk; we watch the waitress ignore them.

Then we asked students to create a poem detailing one of the acts of discrimination against Arab-Americans we read about earlier. We encouraged students to use details to help their readers see and hear the story in their poem. Freshman Rebecca Jacobson wrote:

### The News Comes In

The news comes in early that morning.  
“Terrorists attack.”  
“This is war.”  
Everyone says it is so remote  
so not real.  
But not to me.

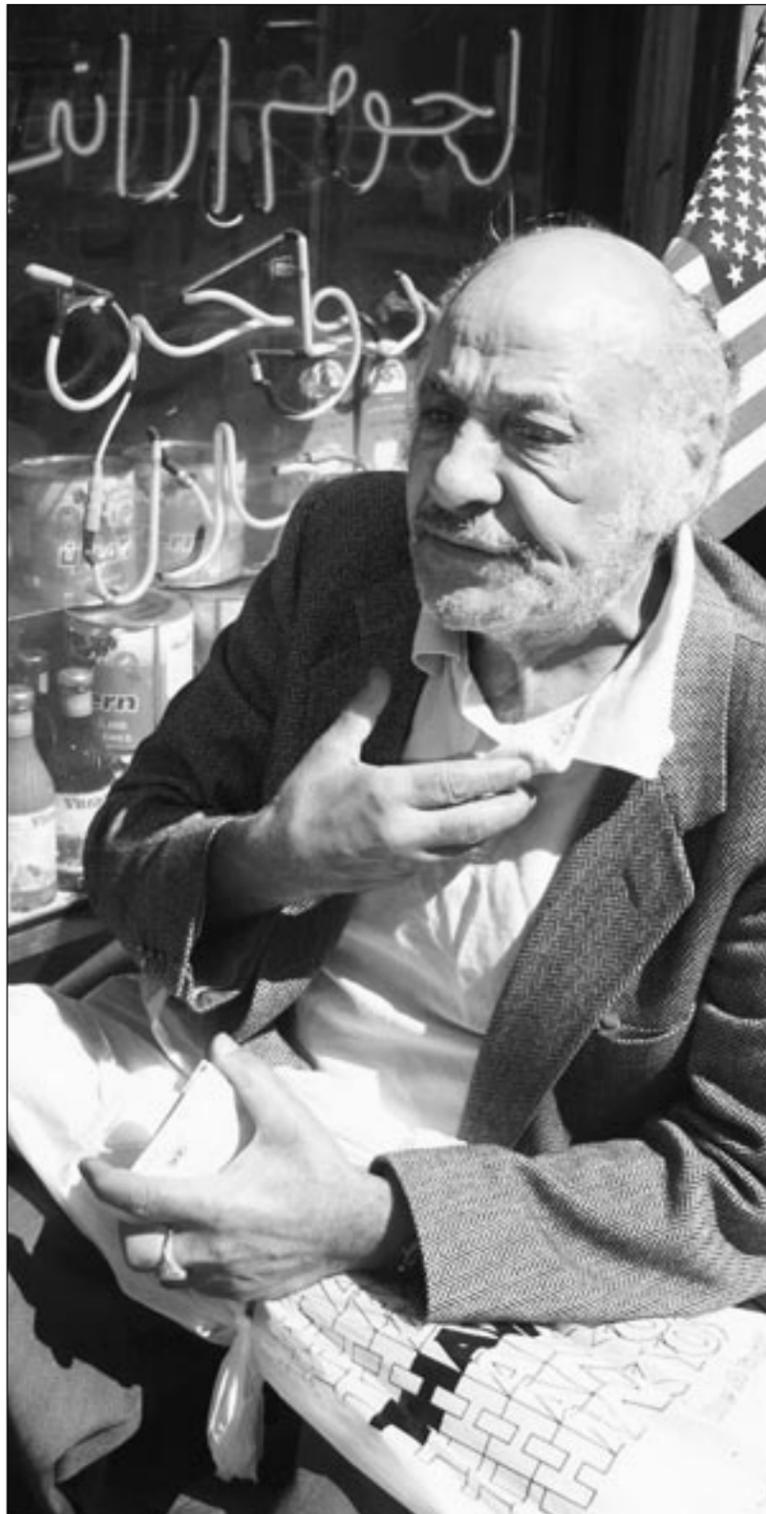
I walk down the street  
bombed with glares  
jeers  
insults.  
I hang my head in shame.  
“You did this to us!”  
“Go back to your own country!” they  
scream.

What do these people not realize?  
This is my country.  
I come home, broken, and see my  
house is, too.  
Windows smashed  
spray paint decorating the walls  
in an array of obscenities.  
“Why?” I ask. “Why?”

Out of the corner of my eye  
I see my neighbor emerge from her  
unblemished home.  
She glances at me, wary  
then turns around.  
Though not without firing me a look  
that could slice steel.

Poetry is only a piece of a much broader social justice curriculum that aims to critique injustice and build empathy. But at this moment in our nation’s history, poetic intimacy seems an especially valuable strategy to invite our students to touch the lives of others — others who may be in urgent need of allies. ■

Linda Christensen ([lchristensen@pps.k12.or.us](mailto:lchristensen@pps.k12.or.us)) is high school language arts coordinator for Portland, OR Public Schools, and an editor of *Rethinking Schools*.



Thirty-year U.S. resident and Egyptian native Mostafa Abdallah discusses reaction to the Sept. 11 attacks in the Arab-American community.

AP/Wide World Photos

# The World Up Close

**A 5th grade teacher helps his students explore issues of war and terrorism as they look at the war in Afghanistan.**

BY BOB PETERSON

**I**t was Sept. 12 when Rafael, one of my fifth graders, pointed out the window and asked, “What would you do if terrorists were outside our school and tried to bomb us?”

Clearly, the tragic events of the day before had left my students confused and fearful. Such questioning continued when the United States started bombing Afghanistan in October. “Will they bomb us like we are bombing them?” one student asked.

Sometimes we stop and immediately talk about such questions. Other times we postpone them until the day’s lesson on “current events.” I often have students write their questions in a spiral notebook, labeled “Questions That We Have,” that sits in front of the class.

It quickly became clear that a single lesson or even series of lessons on Sept. 11 would not suffice. I realized that two things were necessary. First, students must express and share their emotions. Second, they must start to look at the broader context of global injustice. Following are some of the ways I have started to approach these complicated issues.

## WRITING AND POETRY

I want my students to be comfortable expressing their fears about war and terrorism. This allows for emotional release and also provides insight into my students’ thoughts on topics such as stereotypes, Islam, immigration, or grief about loss of a family member. I help students express their feelings partly by encouraging them to write in their journals, and by having a bulletin board with photos, maps, and students’ writings.

Two poems, in particular, provided a structure for students to express their feelings. One poem is “If I Were in Charge of the World,” by Judith Viorst (Atheneum, 1981). After reading the poem together I encouraged students to write their own versions. One wrote:

If I were in charge of the world there would not be any stereotypes in the world. bin Laden who America accuses of the September 11 tragedy would never have happened. And one day the whole world would figure out that we are all equal and you’re not more than me and I am no more than you.

A second poem, useful for discussing stereotypes, is Lucille Clifton’s, “We and They.” (See poem, page 17.) Using the poem as a model one student wrote:

We are from America  
they are from Afghanistan  
We are rich to them  
they are poor to us  
We sometimes like war  
they never do  
We have houses  
they have refugee camps with tents  
We have shoes

some of them do not  
We cry good cries  
They sometimes cry bad cries  
But we are all sisters and brothers in God’s Way!

## WHY DO THEY HATE US?

One of my lessons focused on getting students to think about why some people might attack the United States. To get the discussion going, I made an overhead of a Sept. 16 photo of a demonstration in Pakistan with a banner reading, “Americans, Think! Why You Are Hated All Over The World!”

As a class, we brainstormed why people might dislike the United States. Many students parroted President Bush’s claim that terrorists hate us because of our freedoms. I suggested that matters were more complicated and that throughout the year we would explore this topic.

I mentioned that many people blame the United States for sanctions against Iraq that have led to the deaths of some 500,000 children. (See article, page 21.) Hands shot up with a multitude of questions and comments. Not surprisingly, we got bogged down on the concept of sanctions and the Gulf War. After a half hour we put our remaining questions — including one by a girl who wondered if the sanctions were a form of terrorism because they led to children dying — in our Questions notebook and moved on.

The lesson ended with more questions than answers, but that didn’t bother me. Early in the year, it’s less important to “answer” such questions than to raise them.

## LAND MINES AND CHILDREN

In late September, we read in a news article that there are 10 million land mines in Afghanistan. After explaining what a land mine was, I mentioned there was an international campaign to end the manufacture and sale of land mines. Out of this discussion, a few students formed an “Action Research Group.” After a few recess sessions of research on the Internet ([www.banmines.org](http://www.banmines.org)), they made a poster with pictures of victims of land mines, maps locating the world’s 110 million land mines, an essay about land mines, and facts about land mines such as: “Over 120 countries have signed a treaty to ban land mines, but the United States has refused to sign the treaty.”

A couple of weeks later I used information about land mines in a math lesson on fractions and percent. I posted on my overhead projector a picture of a sign that reads, “Every twenty-four hours seven people step on mines in Afghanistan. Be careful not to be one of them today and tomorrow.” The sign hangs on a wall at a customs station as one enters Afghanistan ([www.iranian.com/Opinion/2001/June/Afghan/](http://www.iranian.com/Opinion/2001/June/Afghan/)).

We figured out how many accidents happen per week, per month, and per year. I then shared that 30

percent of the victims of land mines in Afghanistan are children. We did more calculations. One student said he heard that the United States was dropping yellow mines on Afghanistan. Another responded that the yellow things were food, not bombs. I explained that unfortunately both students were right and we were dropping both food and bombs.

“That doesn’t make sense!” one student said. “If we want to help them why do that?”

## GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

As part of social studies and math, students do activities that alert them to the inequities in the world’s wealth and power. We look at child labor, hunger, colonialism, and the UN’s Declaration of the Rights of the Child. While I have always done such lessons, after Sept. 11 they became more useful in helping students understand why some might resent the United States. While our attention currently is focused on the U.S. war in Afghanistan, I frame such involvement in broader issues of global exploitation.

One good resource is a short video from the Canadian organization, Adbusters, explaining that while North Americans constitute only 5 percent of the world’s population, we consume 33 percent of the world’s resources and produce 50 percent of the world’s non-organic waste.

We also do a lesson on “World Poverty and World Resources” (explained in detail in *Rethinking Our Classrooms*, Vol. 1). Groups of children each represent an equal percent of the world’s population and each group is given chocolate chip cookies to reflect the distribution of resources. Needless to say, some groups get more cookies than others, and emotions run high. The students make graphs, write about their feelings about such inequities, and most importantly ask questions such as, “Why does Asia have so many people and so little resources?” “How did Europe and North America get to be so wealthy?” “Why are things so unfair?”

## SEPT. 11 AND THE WAR

Students have polled their families and we’ve graphed our own opinions about the U.S. war in Afghanistan. At the time of this writing, more supported the war than opposed it, although most see both “good and bad” in what the United States is doing. Virtually all say they are scared.

News commentators have consistently argued that Sept. 11 changed the world forever. Working with preadolescent children, I see matters differently. These fifth graders are just becoming aware of the world around them, so they have little to compare to the current situation. For them, the world isn’t so much changed as it is, for the first time, out there in front of them — in their face, so to speak.

For those working with this age group, current events are full not only of heartaches but incredible opportunities. As teachers, we have two formidable responsibilities: to help this emotionally volatile age group to express their feelings and thoughts and to help these developing minds examine underlying issues of global injustice.

One girl who said she supported the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan when it started later wrote this poem.

Twisting  
Turning  
Turning  
Twisting  
Twisting and Turning  
My feelings are burning  
Like the Twin Towers  
My heart is broken  
from all the hating  
All the killing in Afghanistan  
has made my brain to start  
twisting, My feelings are burning  
My heart is broken.

She gave it to me and said, “We need to keep learning about this stuff so I can really understand what’s going on over there.” ■

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Rally in Islamabad, Pakistan on Sept. 15.



Afghan refugee injured from U.S. led attacks in late October.



Woman led to safety on Sept. 11.

# Images of War

**A bilingual elementary teacher helps students think about the images of war that they see — and don't see — in the U.S. media.**

BY KELLEY DAWSON

On Monday Oct. 9, the day after the U.S. government began to bomb Afghanistan, I asked my fourth grade students about the images they remembered from the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center. I approached the discussion with both enthusiasm and apprehension.

I know it is important for students to understand world events and different perspectives on what is happening. But I teach all subjects in Spanish in a two-way bilingual program with Spanish- and English-dominant children, and I know that sometimes the English-dominant children have difficulty when they must use Spanish to understand and express complex ideas.

It was not the first time we had talked about Sept. 11. We had also discussed the actual events and students' feelings, and stereotypes and hate crimes against Arab Americans.

However, this was the first time I specifically asked students to talk about the images they had seen. Part of my focus on images was logistical. In the absence of sufficient Spanish language material, I gravitated toward images, which can be discussed in any language one chooses. I also felt compelled to help students examine photos of the war on Afghanistan because, especially in those early days of bombing, the media did not portray with either words or pictures the suffering that must have been occurring in Afghanistan as a result of the U.S. attack. Through our discussion, I hoped to help students develop a critical perspective on the stories and images that they and their families are consuming everyday.

Even though the images of Sept. 11 were almost a month old, when I asked students about images from that day, an animated conversation ensued. Native speakers of Spanish and Spanish-language learners shared their memories in Spanish.

"Yo via las personas saltando de los edificios," said one student ["I saw the people jumping from the buildings."]

"Yo vi la gente en la calle corriendo y tratando de escapar," said another ["I saw people in the streets running and trying to escape."]

"Vi los bomberos que se murieron tratando de salvar a las personas," remembered a third student ["I saw the firefighters who died trying to save people."]

After several comments about people, I asked if they remembered images that did not involve people. More hands.

"Los edificios cuando el avión chocó" ["The buildings when the plane crashed into them."]

"Los edificios cuando se cayeron" ["The buildings when they collapsed."]

"Los zapatos de una mujer que se quedó atrapada" ["The shoes of a woman who was trapped."]

I then asked the students what they had seen on TV or in the newspaper since the United States began attacking Afghanistan.

"Los soldados" ["Soldiers."]

"Bombas listas para lanzarse" ["Bombs getting ready to be launched."]

"Fotos de Osama bin Laden" ["Pictures of bin Laden."]

I then asked the students if they had seen

any of the people in Afghanistan since the attacks began. No hands. I asked if they had seen any pictures of Afghanistan. One student raised his hand and mentioned something about a bomb dropping in the middle of a barren field.

"Piensen en esto mientras ven las noticias en los días que vienen. Presten atención y vean si hay personas," I said. ["Keep this in mind as you watch the news in the next few days. Look closely and see if you see any people."]

That Friday, five days after the bombing began, I brought all the newspapers I had received since the U.S. attacked Afghanistan. In groups of four, students studied the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* or the *New York Times*. Their task was to look at all the images and pick out one image of the war in Afghanistan that impressed their group.

When they were done, we gathered as a class to look at the images. Two groups shared pictures of bombs ready to be launched. One group shared a picture of an anti-U.S. demonstration in Pakistan where a Pakistani demonstrator had set himself on fire while burning a U.S. flag. Another group showed a picture of an Osama bin Laden target available at a firearms store for \$10. ("Por qué hay tiendas que venden armas?" one student wanted to know ["Why are there stores that sell guns?"])

One group found a page that had two different pictures of planes: one plane that dropped bombs and another that dropped food. One student offered a thoughtful

response: "Después de bombardear, van a tener que mandar comida para los niños que perdieron sus padres" ["After they bomb, they will need to send food in for the children who lost their parents in the bombing."]

We finished looking at the pictures. "¿Hay algo que no estamos viendo?" I asked ["Is there anything we're not seeing?"]

A few hands went up slowly. Rosana said: "No estamos viendo las personas de Afganistán que se están muriendo" ["We're not seeing the people from Afghanistan who are dying."]

Roberto spoke next: "No estamos viendo la guerra" ["We're not seeing the war."]

Throughout the war in Afghanistan, pictures of human suffering have remained scarce. In our local paper the images were dominated by photos of fighters from the Northern Alliance and maps with dots and starbursts to show where the bombs fell. (*The New York Times* has done a better job, but most students only see those photos if I bring them to class.)

On the anniversary of Sept. 11, I want to help my students to expand their compassion beyond those who died in the World Trade Center attacks and develop a sense of empathy for victims of the U.S. bombing in Afghanistan. I also want my students to ask whether the U.S. media are reliably reporting what is happening around the world. ■

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**There are some people who have said publicly that while they have been opposed to previous American military interventions, they consider the present action in Afghanistan as a "just war."**

**I have puzzled over this. How can a war be "truly just" which involves the daily killing of civilians, which is terrorizing the people of Afghanistan, causing hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children to leave their homes to escape the bombs; which has little chance of finding those who planned the Sept. 11 tragedy (and even if found, no chance that this would stop terrorism); and which can only multiply the ranks of people who are angry at this country, from whose ranks terrorists are born?**

**I believe the supporters of the war have confused a "just cause" with a "just war." A cause may be just — like ending terrorism. But it does not follow that going to war on behalf of that cause, with the inevitable mayhem that follows, is just.**

— Howard Zinn, historian and author of *A People's History of the United States*.

# Whose “Terrorism”?

**A classroom activity enlists students in defining terrorism and then applying their definitions to world events.**

BY BILL BIGELOW

Shortly after the horrific Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush announced these as acts of war, and proclaimed a “war on terrorism.” But what exactly was to be the target of this war? What precisely did the president mean by terrorism? Despite uttering the words terror, terrorist or terrorism 32 times in his Sept. 20 speech to the nation, he never once defined terrorism.

Teachers need to engage our students in a deep critical reading of terms — such as “terrorism,” “freedom,” “patriotism,” and “our way of life” — that evoke vivid images but can be used for ambiguous ends (see sidebar, page 13 for definitions of “terrorism”).

## LESSON ON TERRORISM

I wanted to design a lesson that would get students to surface the definitions of terrorism that they carry around — albeit most likely unconsciously. And I wanted them to apply their definitions to a number of episodes, historical and contemporary, that involved some kind of violence or destruction. I didn’t know for certain, but my hunch was that as students applied definitions consistently they might be able to call into question the “We’re Good/They’re Bad” dichotomies that have become even more pronounced on the political landscape.

I wrote up several “What is Terrorism?” scenarios, but instead of using the actual names of countries involved I substituted Country A, Country B, etc. Given the widespread conflation of patriotism with support for U.S. government policies, I had no confidence that students would be able to label an action taken by their government as “terrorism” unless I attached pseudonyms to each country.

In the following scenario I used the example of U.S. support for the Nicaraguan contras in the 1980s. Country A is the United States, B is Nicaragua, and the country next door is Honduras:

“The government of Country A is very unhappy with the government of Country B, whose leaders came to power in a revolution that threw out the former Country B dictator. Country A decides to do everything in its power to overthrow the new leaders of Country B. It begins funding a guerrilla army that attacks Country B from another country next door. Country A also builds army bases in the next door country and allows the guerrilla army to use its bases. Country A supplies almost all of the weapons and supplies of the guerrilla army fighting Country B. The guerrillas generally try to avoid fighting Country B’s army. Instead, they attack clinics, schools, cooperative farms. Sometimes they mine the roads. Many, many civilians are killed and maimed by the Country A-supported guerrillas. Consistently, the guerrillas raid Country B and then retreat into the country next door where Country A has military bases.”

Question: 1. Which, if any, of these activities should be considered “terrorism” according to your definition? 2. Who are the “terrorists?” 3. What more would you need to know to be more sure of your answer?

I knew that in such compressed scenarios lots of important details would be missing; hence, I included question number three to invite students to consider other details that might influence their decisions.

Other scenarios included Israeli soldiers taunting and shooting children in Palestinian refugee camps, with the assistance of U.S. military aid; Indian farmers burning Monsanto-supplied, genetically-modified cotton crops and threatening to destroy Monsanto offices; the 1998 U.S. cruise missile attack on Sudan’s main pharmaceutical plant; and sanctions against Iraq that according to the UN reports have killed as many as a half million children. (See article, page 21.) The full list of situations can be found at: [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11).

## DEFINING TERRORISM

As I’m on leave this year, my colleague, Sandra Childs, invited me into her Franklin High School classroom to teach this lesson to her 11th grade Global



**Top: Firefighters work their way through steel and rubble at ground zero. Bottom: Kabul residents search for belongings amid rubble from the U.S. led bombings.**

Studies students. I began by asking students to write down their own personal definitions of terrorism, and to keep these questions in mind: Does terrorism need to involve the killing of many people or can it affect just one person? Can it involve simply the destruction of property, with no injuries? Can governments com-

mit acts of terrorism, or is the term reserved only for people who operate outside of governments? Must terrorism involve the people of one country attacking citizens of another country? Does motive make a difference? Does terrorism need to be intentional?

Immediately following, I explained to students that, in preparation for an activity, I’d like them to get into small groups and read their individual definitions to one another to see if they could build a consensus definition of terrorism. They could choose an exemplary definition from one member or, if they preferred, cobble one together from their separate definitions.

Some groups quickly agreed upon definitions; others would have spent the entire 83-minute class if Sandra and I had let them. In most cases, the definitions were simple, but thoughtful. For example, “intentional acts that create terror, targeted towards a specific group, or innocent people. Not just directly, but indirectly.”

I distributed the “What is Terrorism?” scenarios to students, reviewed the instructions with them, and emphasized that all the scenarios were real. Their main task was to read each situation and to decide whether any of the actions described met their group’s definition of “terrorism.” I made sure they understood that Country A in one situation would not necessarily be the same Country A in the next situation, and gave them permission to approach the situations in whatever order they liked.

**The challenge for social justice movements is to connect economic inequality with the security concerns that now grip us all — insisting that justice and equality are the most sustainable strategies against violence and fundamentalism.**

— Naomi Klein, author and global justice activist, writing in *The Nation*, Oct. 22.

## Enduring Terrors

- Number of people who die of hunger every day: 24,000
- Number of children killed by diarrhea every day: 6,020
- Number of children killed by measles every day: 2,700
- Number of malnourished children in developing countries: 149 million
- Number of people without access to safe drinking water: 1.1 billion
- Number of people without access to adequate sanitation: 2.4 billion
- Number of people living on less than one dollar a day: 1.2 billion

- Number of African children under 15 living with HIV: 1.1 million
- Number of children without access to basic education: 100 million
- Number of illiterate adults: 875 million
- Number of women who die each year in pregnancy and childbirth: 515,000
- Annual average number of people killed by drought and famine 1972-96: 73,606
- Annual average number of children killed in conflict 1990-2000: 200,000
- Annual average number of children made homeless by conflict 1990-2000: 1.2 million

\*All figures are approximate.

Source: *New Internationalist*, Nov. 2001. [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org)

Watching students attempt to apply their definitions of terrorism, I was impressed by their eagerness to be consistent. As Sandra and I wandered from group to group, we heard students arguing over whether there was a distinction between oppression and terrorism. Most groups wanted more information on the motives of various actors. Some insisted that if a country supported terrorist acts in another country, then it too was a terrorist; others held that a supporting country could not be held fully responsible for the actions of the actual perpetrators — but if a country knew about terrorism enabled with its funds, and did nothing to prevent it, then it too could be considered guilty of terrorism.

Although this activity was far too involved to be neatly contained in an 83-minute class, by the end many students came to important insights. One student said, “Ever since they announced that we were going to have a war on terrorism I have wondered who or what a terrorist is. And ... it’s suspicious that they still haven’t defined terrorism.” I asked students why they thought the U.S. government had failed to offer a clear definition of terrorism. One student said, “If you don’t have any boundaries, then anyone can be a terrorist.” Another said, “The U.S. government won’t define terrorism because they don’t want to be able to be considered terrorists.”

These comments echoed Eqbal Ahmad’s insight that countries that have no intention of being consistent will resist defining terms. As one student wrote after the activity: “I also realized how many terrorism acts the U.S. has committed. When our government doesn’t define terrorism, it makes me think that they just want a free shot to kill anyone they want.” Wrote another student: “Bush *needs* to define terrorism in front of our nation before he does anything else, and then he needs to stick with the definition, not bend it to suit the U.S.”

But then there was this student comment: “I, myself, am really tired of hearing about it. If I go to war, so what, I’ll fight for my country. What does this have to do with global studies?” And this young man: “I feel if we don’t get our revenge against these ‘terrorists’ it will diminish the trust of our nation towards our government.”

These remarks reminded me of being in the classroom during the fall of 1990, after Iraq had invaded Kuwait and the United States was assembling its military attack force. Many students resisted critical analysis, sensing that critique eroded the “patriotic” unity then building in the country — that appending a “not so fast” onto the flag-waving interrupted a sense of collective purpose that felt good to many of them. At least that was how I read some students’ resistance. During times of war, students may regard even the mildest critical examination of government policy as unpatriotic or even subversive. Nonetheless, I was impressed by how many students in Sandra’s classes appeared eager to question their government’s framing of key issues.

As we wrapped up in one class, Sandra asked a wonderful question: “What difference do you think it would make if students all over the country were having the discussion that we’re having today?”

There were two quick answers before the bell rang: “I’d feel a lot better about the U.S.,” and “I think we’d lose a lot of people who’d want to go fight for the country.”

My interpretation: The more students understand about the exercise of U.S. power in the world — both

military and economic — the less likely they are to want to extend it.

### ECONOMIC TERRORISM

After I’d used the “What is Terrorism?” situations with Sandra’s classes, I realized that, with the exception of sanctions, all of them were incidents of direct attacks on civilians or property. Did my examples narrow students’ consideration of “terrorism”?

In her article “Solidarity Against All Forms of Terrorism,” Indian environmentalist and scholar Vandana Shiva urges us to embrace a more expansive notion of terrorism. She asks us to consider “economic policies which push people into poverty and starvation as a form of terrorism,” such as International Monetary Fund/World Bank-mandated structural adjustment programs that force governments to cut food and medical programs, with the full knowledge of the misery this will engender. In India, Shiva writes:

50 million tribals who have been flooded out of their homes by dams over the past 4 decades were also victims of terrorism — they have faced the terror of technology and destructive development. ... The whole world repeatedly watched the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, but the destruction of millions of sacred shrines and homes and farms by forces of injustice, greed, and globalization goes unnoticed.

To help students consider whether some situations could be considered economic terrorism, I’ve added several new “What is Terrorism?” scenarios. One deals with deaths in southern Africa from AIDS, where, for instance, international banks have forced the Zambian government to pay annual debt service charges greater than spending on health and education *combined* and where, according to the United Nations, life expectancy will soon drop to 33 years, a level not seen in the Western world since medieval times. Another new scenario focuses on transnational corporations that knowingly pay wages that are insufficient to sustain life.

## Definitions of Terrorism

In a 1998 speech on terrorism, the late Pakistani scholar/activist Eqbal Ahmad described his examination of at least 20 official documents dealing with terrorism. “Not one defines the word,” he said. “All of them explain it, express it emotively, polemically, to arouse our emotions rather than exercise our intelligence.”

For example, in a 1984 speech, Reagan’s Secretary of State, George Shultz offered four different “definitions”:

1. “Terrorism is a modern barbarism that we call terrorism.”
2. “Terrorism is a form of political violence.”
3. “Terrorism is a threat to Western civilization.”
- And
4. “Terrorism is a menace to Western moral values.”

The first is simply a useless tautology, defining a word with that same word. The second is a kind of definition, but is too broad to be meaningful. And the third and fourth “definitions” propose that terrorism is a Really Bad Thing done by Other People — Other People, presumably, who are not Westerners.

### TERRORISM’S GHOSTS

The U.S. government is ill-placed to lecture the world about terrorism, especially when it has never bothered to define it. Writing in the British daily *The Guardian*, Indian novelist Arundhati Roy offered the perspective of an individual who is on the receiving end of U.S. global power:

The Sept. 11 attacks were a monstrous calling card from a world gone horribly wrong. The message may have been written by bin Laden (who knows?) and delivered by his couriers, but it could well have been signed by the ghosts of the victims of America’s old wars. The millions killed in Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia, the 17,500 killed when Israel — backed by the U.S. — invaded Lebanon in 1982, the 200,000 Iraqis killed in Operation Desert Storm, the thousands of Palestinians who have died fighting Israel’s occupation of the West Bank. And the millions who died, in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Panama, at the hands of all the terrorists, dictators and genocidists whom the American government supported, trained, bankrolled and supplied with arms. And this is far from being a comprehensive list.

It’s not our role as teachers to climb on our soapbox to rail about U.S. foreign policy. And yet without an honest examination of events like those listed by Roy, how can we expect students to maintain any critical perspective on the U.S. “war against terrorism”? Let’s clarify with students what precisely we mean by terrorism. And then let’s encourage students to apply this definition to U.S. conduct in the world.

Underlying this curricular demand for consistency is the basic democratic, indeed human, premise that the lives of people from one nation are not worth more than the lives of people from another. A Pakistani university student, Nabil Ahmed, expressed this sentiment to the *Christian Science Monitor*: “There is only one way for America to be a friend of Islam. And that is if they consider our lives to be as precious as their own.” ■

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(Mahatma Gandhi, a victim of what might well be considered the terrorism of British colonialism, was once asked what he thought of Western Civilization. “It would be a nice idea,” was his famous reply.)

Searching for definitions is not just word play. If the United States is waging a war against “terrorism” and yet has not clarified what terrorism is, then the terrorists can simply be whomever the U.S. government says they are: U.S. enemies are terrorists, and friends are not — no matter how despicable their actions. Regimes that generally cooperate with U.S. foreign policy initiatives, even the most internally repressive and undemocratic — Saudi Arabia, for example — are consistently awarded the “moderate” label. And, of course, like the war on drugs, terrorism can never ultimately be defeated, so a “war” against it signals war without end. Thus not defining terrorism has dangerous political uses. Without a definition, there are no limits on the measures that can be taken against it, nor accountability for U.S. global behavior.



Jean-Claude Lelanne

# ‘Stand Up! It’s the Law!’

**An elementary teacher asks her students what the Pledge of Allegiance means to them, and strives to protect the rights of those who choose to sit out the Pledge.**

BY KATE LYMAN

**M**y seven-year-old grandson is the only one who remains seated while his classmates recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Ever since he could talk, Caetano has been proud of his Brazilian heritage. When people would stumble over the pronunciation of his name, he’d say, “It’s Caetano, Cae-ta-no. After a famous Brazilian singer.”

Sitting out the Pledge was a difficult decision for Caetano, one he lost sleep over. Despite peer pressure (“You have to stand up. It’s the law!” other children told him) he has stuck with his decision.

But what of other children who — whether for family, religious or political beliefs — do not equate being a good citizen with saying the Pledge? Will they also be allowed to stand by their beliefs?

Under Wisconsin law, all public schools are required to offer the Pledge or the national anthem every day. Although students are not to be “compelled” to do so, reality is far more complicated.

In my school, on Friday, Sept. 28, teachers were told to send a note home about the new state law. The daily routine was to begin the following Monday.

That Monday, a fourth-grader recited the Pledge over the school intercom. I watched the reactions of my students, who are in a combined second- and third-grade classroom. About half my students mumbled some of the words. Several had their hands on their hearts. Two Hmong girls merely smiled. One boy, Jeremy, was sitting cross-legged, head down, with the hood of his sweatshirt over his face. Ceci was the only one standing up. She was also saluting and after the pledge was over, she broke into a vibrato rendition of “God Bless America.”

## WHAT DOES THE PLEDGE MEAN?

Watching my students, I wondered what the Pledge meant to them. Did they understand the words (even the fourth-grader had said, “one nation, invisible”)? Could they understand why some might choose not to say the Pledge? How could I protect the rights of those who don’t want to take part, while at the same time not let my beliefs interfere with students who want to participate?

I decided to approach these questions by holding a class discussion. I first asked my students what they thought the Pledge meant. Most echoed the thoughts of adults. They said it was a way to remember the people who had died in the Sept. 11 attack. They said it was about “respecting other people, respecting the world, world peace, and not fighting.” It was clear that the meaning they interpreted had little to do with the actual words.

I decided to move on to the next part of my lesson plan: defining the words used in the Pledge.

Ceci said that “Pledge” means “that I stand up for the flag” and “for the Army.” She added that it means to “be proud of yourself.” Jeremy said it meant “you gave loyalty to the flag.”

Ceci, meanwhile, defined “liberty” as, “All the people in the world are very special and should get the same things and be treated the same.” Justice was similarly defined as, “We’re going to give liberty to everyone in the whole entire world.”

None of the students understood the word “indivisible.” They thought they were supposed to say “invisible,” or “invincible.” I tried to clear up the confusion, but I couldn’t shake the feeling that overall, my students had little idea of what they were saying when they recited the Pledge.

Then I asked the class why they thought some people might choose to not participate in the Pledge. The answers that followed were insightful, I thought, for seven-

and eight-year-olds. Some of their comments:

“They might not like the U.S.” said Keema.

“They don’t think it’s true that one nation is under God,” offered Jeremy. “There’s more nations under God.”

“Maybe they don’t believe in God,” said Tyasha.

“They might be from a different country,” suggested Kelly, “And be forced to move here.”

“Or maybe the countries they’re from don’t do this. They’re not used to it,” added Emily.

I asked if people might disagree with the “liberty and justice for all” part.

“It’s not true that people are treated the same,” Ceci said.

“It’s not true that we have justice for all,” Jeremy noted. “How can we say that when we’re bombing right now? The people in Afghanistan aren’t getting liberty or justice. They’re just getting bombed!”

“Now, my friend, Stephen, across the hall, he don’t believe in saying it. He says it’s white people’s crap,” Ceci said. “Now I’m not saying I agree or nothing,” she added quickly, “That’s what he says. My family says the Pledge.”

I asked the class to think about what Stephen might have meant, even if he used words deemed inappropriate in school. Ceci responded, “Some people can’t afford the money. They say your family can’t get a job.”

“Some people don’t want Black people to do what they want to do,” Tamarra said. “They treated them like slaves. That’s not equal when white people treat Black people different.”

I told the students there would be a school board meeting that night to discuss different opinions about the Pledge (I teach in Madison, where for a brief while, the school board required only an instrumental version of the Star Spangled Banner; after public protest, it reverted to a policy that instructs each principal to implement the state law through a daily recital of the Pledge of Allegiance or the singing of the National Anthem.)

One of the more insightful comments came from Ashle, who said: “We should just take a minute of silence to think about that crash stuff.”

Ceci reflected what many in the Madison community seemed to be thinking and said, “People who don’t like it can go out of the room. They can go in the closet and shut the door.”

Overall, I felt that our meeting was successful. Above all, students had been able to express their opinions about what the Pledge meant to them, and had analyzed why the Pledge might not mean the same thing to everyone.

A full month after the daily Pledge was instituted, more children felt the peer pressure and joined in. Jeremy, however, remained adamant in not saying the Pledge, and I told him I supported his right to do as he believes.

As I write, the sunlight streams through my classroom “flag,” a stained-glass rainbow sign. In the hallway, students’ peace posters decorate the lockers and doorways. I find such symbols of acceptance of diversity and world peace far more appealing than those of national pride. But these are strange times.

I feel for Jeremy and Caetano and all the other students who choose not to say the Pledge. I hope the cheers and jeers of patriotic fervor will not silence their rights. ■

*Kate Lyman teaches a combined second- and third-grade classroom in Madison, WI. The names of the students have been changed.*

# The Supreme Court on The Pledge

The last time the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the Pledge of Allegiance was in June 1943 in *West Virginia State Board of Education vs. Barnette*. In 1942, West Virginia's State Board of Education mandated that the flag salute become "a regular part of the program of activities in the public schools." Any student failing to comply could be charged with insubordination and expelled. For religious reasons, Walter Barnette, a Jehovah's Witness, refused to allow his children to salute the flag and say the Pledge. In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court ruled in his favor. Below are excerpts from the decision, which can be found at <http://laws.findlaw.com/us/319/624.html>.

To sustain the compulsory flag salute we are required to say that a Bill of Rights which guards the individual's right to speak his own mind, left it open to public authorities to compel him to utter what is not in his mind. ...

Struggles to coerce uniformity of sentiment in support of some end thought essential to their time and country have been waged by many good as well as by evil men.

As first and moderate methods to attain unity have failed, those bent on its accomplishment must resort to an ever-increasing severity. As governmental pressure toward unity becomes greater, so strife becomes more bitter as to whose unity it shall be. Probably no deeper division of our people could proceed from any provocation than from finding it necessary to choose what doctrine and whose program public educational officials shall compel youth to unite in embracing. Ultimate futility of such attempts to compel coherence is the lesson of every such effort from the Roman drive to stamp out Christianity as a disturber of its pagan unity, the Inquisition, as a means to religious and dynastic unity, the Siberian exiles as a means to Russian unity, down to the fast failing efforts of our present totalitarian enemies. Those who begin coercive elimination of dissent soon find themselves exterminating dissenters.

Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard.

It seems trite but necessary to say that the First Amendment to our Constitution was designed to avoid these ends by avoiding these beginnings. ...

We set up government by consent of the governed, and the Bill of Rights denies those in power any legal opportunity to coerce that consent. ...

To believe that patriotism will not flourish if patriotic ceremonies are voluntary and spontaneous instead of a compulsory routine is to make an unflattering estimate of the appeal of our institutions to free minds. ...

But freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much. That would be a mere shadow of freedom. The test of its substance is the right to differ as to things that touch the heart of the existing order.

If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. ...

We think the action of the local authorities in compelling the flag salute and pledge transcends constitutional limitations on their power and invades the sphere of intellect and spirit which it is the purpose of the First Amendment to our Constitution to reserve from all official control. ■

## Teaching Ideas

In your own words, summarize why the Supreme Court found that no one could be compelled to salute the flag or say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Choose several quotes and write your reactions. This can be agreement, argument, questions, or other observations.

What is the relationship between patriotism and saying the Pledge? Novelist Barbara Kingsolver wrote after Sept. 11 that, "Patriotism seems to be falling to whoever claims it loudest..." Have students write definitions of patriotism. Ask them to give examples of "patriotism in action."

**It occurs to me that my patriotic duty is to recapture my flag from the men now waving it in the name of jingoism and censorship. This isn't easy for me. The last time I looked at a flag with unambiguous pride, I was 13. Right after that, Vietnam began teaching me lessons in ambiguity, and the lessons have kept coming. ... I search my soul and find I cannot love killing for any reason. When I look at the flag, I see it illuminated by the rocket's red glare."**

— Novelist Barbara Kingsolver, in an essay, shortly after Sept. 11, on jingoism vs. patriotism

An early 20th Century leader of the U.S. Socialist Party, Eugene Debs, once said, "I have no country to fight for; my country is the earth, and I am a citizen of the world." Can one be patriotic to a nation-state but also be a citizen of the world? Explain.

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

## An Alternative to War

Continued from page 5

put forth a legitimate self-defense claim, it is still to the UN Security Council where they ought to turn. Even in cases of self-defense, and particularly when there is sufficient time, turning to the Security Council may be required. It is certainly better policy and more in keeping with the UN Charter to do so.

2. The UN Security Council has the authority and the responsibility at all times "to take any actions as it deems necessary in order to restore international peace and security." Article 51.

The Security Council can establish an international tribunal to try those suspected of involvement in the Sept. 11 attacks as it did with regard to Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and request the extradition of suspects. It could apply sanctions to countries that refuse to comply as it did successfully against Libya — a strategy that resulted in the trials in Scotland. It can establish a UN force to effectuate arrests, prevent attacks or to counter aggression. Articles 41-50. Measures the Security Council can employ include interruptions of economic relations, rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio communications and severance of diplomatic relations. Article 41. It could apply sanctions to banks that refuse to cooperate in a freeze on the assets of suspects.

As a policy matter, all of these alternatives seem superior to that currently contemplated by the U.S. — the unilateral use of force against targets in Afghanistan and other countries. The UN may well offer a peaceful means of bringing the perpetrators to justice; it will make the fight against terrorism a worldwide responsibility and will hopefully lessen the resentment that unilateral U.S. action frequently engenders.

In light of these principles these are the actions the U.S. should immediately undertake:

1. Convene a meeting of the Security Council.
2. Request the establishment of an international tribunal with authority to seek out, extradite or arrest and try those responsible for the Sept. 11 attack and those who commit or are conspiring to commit future

attacks.

3. Establish an international military or police force under the control of the UN and which can effectuate the arrests of those responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks and those who commit or are conspiring to commit future attacks. It is crucial that such force should be under control of the UN and not a mere fig leaf for the United States as was the case in the war against Iraq.

We are hopeful that the UN alternative offers a way out of the violent course our nation is currently embarked upon. We see little risk in taking the steps we have outlined. We see great danger in ignoring the process that provides a path away from violence and toward peace. ■

*Michael Ratner is a former director of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City and Jules Lobel is a professor of law at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Both are active with the Center for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild. The above article was originally posted on the website of the National Lawyers Guild (<http://www.nlg.org>). Reprinted with permission.*

## Teaching Ideas

Divide students into small groups. Ask students to imagine that they are responsible for bringing to justice the perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks. Their one requirement is that they must obey international law. Each group should devise a detailed plan.

Based on the information in this article, what principles of international law, if any, does it appear that the United States government has violated after Sept. 11?

Why do you think that the U.S. government chose not to work through the United Nations?

Stage a Tribunal on Terrorism. Divide students into small groups. Using evidence that they locate — including articles in this issue of *Rethinking Schools* — students should address three questions: What is terrorism? What is the root cause of terrorism? What can be done to eliminate terrorism?

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

## History of the Pledge

The pledge was written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's first voyage to the Americas. President Benjamin Harrison proclaimed Oct. 21st — the original Columbus Day — a national holiday, and designated schools to be the main sites of celebration. Why Columbus? Because he symbolized America's supposed pioneer spirit and his voyage had made possible 400 years of "progress and freedom."

The original "Pledge to the Flag" was included in "The Official Programme for the National Columbian Public School Celebration of October 21, 1892." On that day, with increasing numbers of eastern and southern European immigrants entering the United States, an estimated 10 million children first recited the pledge.

Children were instructed to stand hands to the side, to face the flag, and then to give the flag a military salute with "right hand lifted, palm downward, to a line with the forehead and close to it."

Standing thus, the Official Programme tells students to "all repeat together, slowly, 'I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands; one Nation indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.' At the words, 'to my Flag,' the right hand is extended gracefully, palm upward, toward the Flag, and remains in this gesture till the end of the affirmation; whereupon all hands immediately drop to the side."

Students were then to declare: "One Country! One Language! One Flag!" Presumably, the "One Language!" was English.

The arm-extended flag salute was the norm in American schools until 1942, when the similarity with the fascist salute became uncomfortable. The hand-over-heart salute was then introduced.

The words "under God" do not appear in the original Pledge. They were added during the Eisenhower administration in 1954 at the height of anti-communist hysteria. ■

The above is condensed from a longer article that appeared in *Rethinking Schools*, Vol 13, No. 3, Spring 1999. For the complete text go to [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11).

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)



AP/Wide World Photos

Protesters at School of the Americas decry U.S.-led terrorism. Under the USA Patriot Act, will such protests be deemed “domestic terrorism”?

# Bush Signs Anti-Terrorism Law

## Will USA Patriot Act foster harassment of legitimate political dissent?

President Bush signed an “anti-terrorism” law Oct. 26, 2001 that grants law enforcement authorities sweeping new surveillance powers that are not limited to terrorism investigations but also apply to criminal and intelligence investigations and to investigating instances of political dissent. The American Civil Liberties Union’s website includes factsheets on various aspects of the new terrorism law, including the one printed below on the Anti-Terrorism Law and the Right to Dissent. For more information go to: [www.aclu.org/congress/archives.html](http://www.aclu.org/congress/archives.html).

BY THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

Section 802 of the final version of the anti-terrorism legislation, the Uniting and Strengthening America By Providing Appropriate Tools Required To Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (H.R. 3162, the “USA PATRIOT Act”) creates a broadly defined new crime of domestic terrorism.

We oppose this definition of terrorism because it is unnecessary and could be used to prosecute dissidents. Under federal law there are already three definitions of terrorism — international terrorism, terrorism transcending national borders, and federal terrorism. The Sept. 11 attacks violated all three of these laws.

Under Section 802 of the USA PATRIOT Act, a person commits the crime of domestic terrorism if within the U.S. they engage in activity that involves acts dangerous to human life that violate the laws of the United States or any state and appear to be intended: (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.

The Administration has not adequately explained why this new crime should be created or why the definitions in existing anti-terrorism laws are insufficient. This over-broad terrorism definition would sweep in people who engage in acts of political protest if those acts were dangerous to human life.

People associated with organizations such as Operation Rescue and the Earth Liberation Front, and the World Trade Organization protesters, have engaged in activities that could subject them to prosecution as terrorists.

Under the USA PATRIOT Act, once the government decides that conduct is “domestic terrorism,” law enforcement agents have the authority to charge anyone who provides assistance to that person, even if the assistance is an act as minor as providing lodging. They would have the authority to wiretap the home of anyone

who is providing assistance. Also, the government could prosecute the person who provided their home under a new crime of “harboring” a terrorist (Section 803) or for “providing material support” to “terrorists.”

The ACLU does not oppose the criminal prosecution of people who commit acts of civil disobedience if those acts result in property damage or place people in danger. That type of behavior is already illegal and perpetrators of these crimes can be prosecuted and subjected to serious penalties. However, such crimes often are not “terrorism.”

The legislative response to terrorism should not turn ordinary citizens into terrorists. In addition, this provision gives the federal government the authority to prosecute violations of state law, which should be prosecuted in state courts, not in federal court. ■

### Additional Factsheets

- The ACLU website has update factsheets on how the new anti-terrorism law:
- Expands Law Enforcement “Sneak and Peak” Warrants
  - Puts Student Privacy at Risk
  - Permits Indefinite Detention of Immigrants Who Are Not Terrorists
  - Puts Financial Privacy at Risk
  - Limits Judicial Oversight of Telephone and Internet Surveillance
  - Allows for Detention of People Engaging in Innocent Associational Activity
  - Enables Law Enforcement to Use Intelligence Authorities to Circumvent the Privacy Protections Afforded in Criminal Cases
  - Puts the CIA Back in the Business of Spying on Americans

### Teaching Ideas

Divide students into nine different research groups and have them read the portion of the law referred to in the ACLU factsheet/critique, along with the factsheet itself. Perhaps students could also locate one or two additional sources.

Each group should be responsible for teaching the rest of the class about its portion of the bill, and raising critical questions for discussion. Teachers might also encourage students to come up with a number of hypothetical situations to exemplify how the law could play out in practice. Or teachers might write up some situations of their own and have students apply the law.

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

# Bush Initiatives Threaten Basic Rights

Following are recent federal initiatives that present a long-term threat to democracy and to civil liberties in the United States. These moves are in addition to the USA Patriot Act (see article this page), which vastly expands government surveillance powers.

- President Bush issued an executive order Nov. 13 allowing special military tribunals to try non-citizens whom the government has “reason to believe” are connected to terrorism. The tribunals would even apply to non-citizens in the United States, including lawful, permanent residents. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, it is unprecedented to establish such military tribunals when Congress has not declared war.

The tribunals would severely limit the rights of a defendant. For example, the tribunals will not call for proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and will allow hearsay and evidence deemed illegally obtained

in civilian courts. The tribunals can take place in secret, and can also take place outside the United States, even on ships. According to conservative columnist William Safire in the Nov. 15 New York Times, “His [Bush’s] kangaroo court can conceal evidence by citing national security, make up its own rules, find a defendant guilty even if a third of the officers disagree, and execute the alien with no review by any civilian court.” Bush alone will be able to decide who can be tried before the tribunals.

- The U.S. Bureau of Prisons issued a regulation on Oct. 31 allowing the government to listen in on conversations between prison inmates and their lawyers and legal counsel whenever the Attorney General believes there is “reasonable suspicion” that the conversation is connected to “terrorist activity.”

- The Justice Department issued a Nov. 9 memo outlining an unprecedented plan to interview foreigners in

this country legally. The plan calls for interrogations of some 5,000 men aged 18 to 33 who entered the United States on non-immigrant visas since Jan. 1. Because those interviewed will largely be from Middle Eastern countries, the move has raised fears of intensified racial and ethnic profiling.

- The Bush administration continues to hold an undetermined number of the approximately 1,200 people detained shortly after Sept. 11 on immigration violations as “material witnesses.” Their identities have not been revealed, nor have the charges against them. As of mid-November, FBI director Robert Mueller III had refused to grant those detained access to lawyers or family members. He would not even disclose where they are being held. ■

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

# “Stimulus” Money Grab

One of the features of post-Sept. 11 initiatives has been the effort of powerful companies to enhance their wealth and influence. The following article outlines some of the beneficiaries of the House-passed tax-cut bill designed to stimulate the economy after Sept. 11. A final version of this legislation became law in March 2002. This article along with materials on the subsequent corporate scandals with Enron, WorldCom, etc. may be useful in helping students examine the interplay of taxation and power in the United States.

## BY CITIZENS FOR TAX JUSTICE

The “stimulus” tax-cut bill approved by the House calls for some \$25 billion in immediate tax rebates to large profitable corporations that paid the low-rate “alternative minimum tax” over the past decade and a half because loopholes cut their regular income tax bills to little or nothing.

Some \$7.4 billion of these corporate rebate checks would be made out to just 16 tax-avoiding Fortune 500 companies — each of which would get more than \$100 million in rebates. These companies reported a total of more than \$42 billion in pretax U.S. profits last year. [New York Times columnist Paul Krugman noted Oct. 31, 2001 that many of those who will benefit from the House bill are based in or near Texas and are in the energy or mining businesses. Above all, Krugman wrote, “the big winners in all this seem to be companies that gave large, one-sided donations to the Republican Party in the last election.]

Topping the list of beneficiaries in the House bill is IBM, which is slated to get a \$1.4 billion rebate check. Ford is next at \$1 billion, followed by General Motors at \$833 million, General Electric at \$671 million, TXU (Texas Utilities) at \$608 million, Daimler-

Chrysler at \$600 million, and ChevronTexaco at \$572 million.

The 16 low-tax companies that would get more than \$100 million each under the GOP-backed bill include five in the energy business, along with the three largest U.S. automakers. Two companies are in the airline industry, which is receiving \$15 billion in grants and loans under already passed legislation.

The bill’s proposed total of \$25 billion in instant rebates for profitable tax-avoiding corporations is almost twice as big as the \$13.7 billion in added individual rebates that the tax committee decided to provide to 37 million, mostly low-income families and whose 2000 earnings were too low to qualify for the previous round of personal tax rebates.

Under the bill, the AMT would be repealed (to facilitate future tax sheltering) and corporations would be entitled to an immediate rebate of any alternative minimum tax paid since the tax was established in 1986. In contrast, under current law, a company that pays the AMT can get a refund in a later year only if its regular income tax payments exceed the AMT that year. Many profitable companies have so many loopholes that they never pay enough in regular income taxes to use these “AMT credit carry forwards.” ■

For more information from Citizens for Tax Justice go to [www.ctj.org](http://www.ctj.org)

## Teaching Ideas

Ask students to make a list of all the groups of Americans hurt by the Sept. 11 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. Ask: Which of these groups will benefit by the “stimulus” tax-cut bill? Which will not?

Divide the class into pairs. Assign to each group one or two of the 16 corporations that will receive at least \$100 million in tax rebates. Working on the Internet, each pair

## Corporate Profiteering

Following is a list of 16 corporations and the amount of their rebate under the House “economic stimulus” bill.

Company	Rebate
IBM	\$1.4 billion
Ford Motor Co.	\$1 billion
General Motors	\$833 million
General Electric	\$671 million
TXU (Texas Utilities Co.)	\$608 million
DaimlerChrysler	\$600 million
ChevronTexaco	\$572 million
UAL (United Airlines)	\$371 million
Enron	\$254 million
Phillips Petroleum	\$241 million
AMR (American Airlines)	\$184 million
IMC Global	\$155 million
Comdisco	\$144 million
CMS Energy	\$136 million
Westvaco	\$112 million
Kmart	\$102 million

Source: Citizens for Tax Justice

should research and write up a brief profile of its corporation, including net profit in 2000 and salary of top executives (if available). What is a rationale for why this company would deserve a rebate of over \$100 million? What is a reason why this company does not deserve such a rebate?

# Attacks on Muslims and Arab Americans

Following is a sampling of the anti-Arab, anti-Muslim backlash that surfaced following the Sept. 11 tragedy. The list actually understates the number of threats and attacks, because it does not include crimes against Indian-Americans, Sikhs, and South-Asian-Americans.

The list was compiled by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

- Sept. 11. Chicago, IL: Three hundred people shout-

ing anti-Arab insults were turned back by police as they attempted to march toward a mosque southwest of the city. (*Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 13.)

- Sept. 12, Gary, IN: A Yemeni-American gas station owner survived an attack by a gunman who opened fire directly and fired more than 21 shots from a high-powered assault rifle. The owner was protected by one-inch thick glass. (*The TimesOnline.com*, Sept. 13.)

- Sept. 12, Atlanta, GA: Four men attempted to stab a Sudanese man, telling him, “You killed our people in New York.” (*Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Sept. 13.)

- Sept. 14, Tulsa, OK: Police investigated an attack on an Arab American who was beaten while leaving his apartment. Three people jumped on him, knocked him down, covered his eyes and beat him. After addressing him with an expletive, the men threatened, “We are going to cut you like you cut our people.” (*Tulsa World*, Sept. 15.)

- Sept. 17, Meadville, PA: A man with a knife attacked a female high school student of Middle Eastern descent, yelling at her, “You’re not an American. You don’t belong here.” (Associated Press, Sept. 25.)

- Sept. 18, Palmdale, CA: A note sent to a public high school said the World Trade Center attacks would be avenged in a “massacre” of Muslims, with the names of five students listed beneath. (Associated Press, Sept. 20.)

- Sept. 19, Lincoln Park, MI: Ali Al Mansouri, orig-



Michigan store clerk and Lebanese native Ramzi Chammout says he fears that the violence of Mideast has come to the United States.

inally from Yemen, was shot 12 times in the back while fleeing from his attacker. The victim was asleep when his attacker broke in, dragged him out of bed and, according to his own police confession and his girlfriend’s statements, threatened, “I’m going to kill you for what happened in New York and D.C.” (WDIV Detroit, Sept. 21.) ■

If you are aware of any incidents or hate crimes, contact the ADC Legal Department at 1-202-244-2990, or send email to [legal@adc.org](mailto:legal@adc.org)

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

## We and They

BY LUCILLE CLIFTON

Boris and Yuki and Sarah and Sue  
and Karl and Latanya, Maria too  
dreamed of the world  
and it was spinning  
and all the people  
just talked about winning  
the wind was burning  
the water was churning  
the trees were bending  
Something was ending  
and all the talk was “we” and “they”  
the children all hugged themselves  
waiting for the day  
when the night of the long bad dream  
is done  
and all the family of humans  
are one  
and being and winning are not the  
same  
and “we” and “they” is just a game  
and the wind is a friend that  
doesn’t fuss  
and every They is  
actually Us.



An Afghani funeral service on Oct. 27 for a 20-year old woman killed by U.S. bombing north of Kabul.

# New World Disorder

**The questions must be asked: Does Infinite Justice for some mean Infinite Injustice for others?**

*The following is condensed from an essay by prize-winning Indian novelist Arundhati Roy. Her writings on Sept. 11 and its aftermath have appeared widely in publications around the world. However, as of Nov. 3, no major U.S. newspaper or magazine had agreed to publish her recent essays, according to a report in the New York Times.*

BY ARUNDHATI ROY

**N**EW DELHI — Nothing can excuse or justify an act of terrorism, whether it is committed by religious fundamentalists, private militia, people's resistance movements — or whether it's dressed up as a war of retribution by a recognized government.

The bombing of Afghanistan is not revenge for New York and Washington. It is yet another act of terror against the people of the world. Each innocent person that is killed must be added to, not set off against, the grisly toll of civilians who died in New York and Washington.

When he announced the air strikes, President George W. Bush said, "We're a peaceful nation." America's favorite ambassador, Tony Blair (who also holds the

portfolio of British prime minister), echoed him: "We're a peaceful people." So now we know. Pigs are horses. Girls are boys. War is peace.

Here is a partial list of the countries that America has been at war with — overtly and covertly — since World War II: China, Korea, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, the Belgian Congo, Peru, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, Sudan, Yugoslavia. And now Afghanistan.

Certainly it does not tire — this, the most free nation in the world. What freedoms does it uphold? Within its borders, the freedoms of speech, religion, thought, of artistic expression, food habits, sexual preferences (well, to some extent), and many other exemplary, wonderful things. Outside its borders, the freedom to dominate, humiliate and subjugate—usually in the service of America's real religion, the "free market." So when the U.S. government christens a war "Operation Infinite Justice," or "Operation Enduring Freedom," we in the Third World feel more than a tremor of fear. Because we know that Infinite Justice for some means Infinite Injustice for others. And Enduring Freedom for some means Enduring Subjugation for others.

The International Coalition Against Terror is largely

a cabal of the richest countries in the world. Between them, they manufacture and sell almost all of the world's weapons, and they possess the largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological, and nuclear. They have fought the most wars, account for most of the genocide, subjection, ethnic cleansing, and human rights violations in modern history, and have sponsored, armed, and financed untold numbers of dictators and despots. Between them, they have worshipped, almost deified, the cult of violence and war. For all its appalling sins, the Taliban just isn't in the same league.

The Taliban was compounded in the crumbling crucible of rubble, heroin and land mines in the backwash of the Cold War. Its oldest leaders are in their early forties. Many of them are disfigured and handicapped, missing an eye, an arm or a leg. They grew up in a society scarred and devastated by war. Between the Soviet Union and America, over 20 years, about \$40 billion worth of arms and ammunition was poured into Afghanistan. The latest weaponry was the only shard of modernity to intrude upon a thoroughly medieval society.

More than a million Afghan people lost their lives in the 20 years of conflict that preceded this new war. Afghanistan was reduced to rubble, and now, the rubble is being pounded into finer dust.

Put your ear to the ground in this part of the world, and you can hear the thrumming, the deadly drumbeat of burgeoning anger. Please. Please, stop the war now. Enough people have died. The smart missiles are just not smart enough. They're blowing up whole warehouses of suppressed fury. ■

*Arundhati Roy is the author of **The God of Small Things**, for which she received the Booker Prize, and **The Cost of Living**. Her latest book of essays, **Power Politics**, was published by South End Press.*

*This article originally appeared in The Guardian newspaper in Britain on Oct. 23. A complete copy of the text is available at [www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4283081,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4283081,00.html). Reprinted with permission.*

## Where Does the Violence Come From?

BY RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

**T**he people who did this attack [on Sept. 11] are a real threat to the human race. The perpetrators deserve to be punished, and I personally would be happy if all the people involved in this act were to be imprisoned for the rest of their lives. But that is quite different from talk about "eliminating countries" which we heard from Colin Powell in the days after the attack.

The narrow focus on the perpetrators allows us to avoid dealing with the underlying issues. When violence becomes so prevalent throughout the planet, it's too easy to simply talk of "deranged minds." We need to ask ourselves, "What is it in the way that we are living, organizing our societies, and treating each other that makes violence seem plausible to so many people?" And why is it that our immediate response to violence is to use violence ourselves—thus reinforcing the cycle of violence in the world?

We in the spiritual world will see the root problem here as a growing global incapacity to recognize the spirit of God in each other—what we call the sanctity of each human being. But even if you reject religious language, you can see that the willingness of people to hurt each other to advance their own interests has

become a global problem, and it's only the dramatic level of this particular attack which distinguishes it from the violence and insensitivity to each other that is part of our daily lives.

We live in one world, increasingly interconnected with everyone, and the forces that lead people to feel outrage, anger and desperation eventually impact on our own daily lives.

If the U.S. turns its back on global agreements to preserve the environment, unilaterally cancels its treaties to not build a missile defense, accelerates the processes by which a global economy has made some people in the third world richer but many poorer, shows that it cares nothing for the fate of refugees who have been homeless for decades, and otherwise turns its back on ethical norms, it becomes far easier for the haters and the fundamentalists to recruit people who are willing to kill themselves in strikes against what they perceive to be an evil American empire represented by the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. Most Americans will feel puzzled by any reference to this "larger picture." It seems baffling to imagine that somehow we are part of a world system which is slowly destroying the life sup-

continued on page 19

# Backyard Terrorism

Washington has been training terrorists at a Georgia base for years and is still at it.

BY GEORGE MONBIOT

**I**f any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents," George Bush announced on the day he began bombing Afghanistan, "they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril."

I'm glad he said "any government" as there's one which, though it has yet to be identified as a sponsor of terrorism, requires his urgent attention. For the past 55 years it has been running a terrorist training camp, whose victims massively outnumber the people killed by the attack on New York, the Embassy bombings, and the other atrocities laid, rightly or wrongly, at Al Qaeda's door.

The camp is called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC). It is based in Fort Benning, Ga., and it is funded by Mr. Bush's government.

Until January, 2001, WHISC was called the "School of the Americas," or SOA. Since 1946, SOA has trained more than 60,000 Latin-American soldiers and policemen. Among its graduates are many of the continent's most notorious torturers, mass murderers, dictators, and state terrorists. As hundreds of pages of documentation compiled by the pressure group SOA Watch show, Latin America has been ripped apart by its alumni.

In June this year, Colonel Byron Lima Estrada, once a student at the school, was convicted in Guatemala City of murdering Bishop Juan Gerardi in 1998. Gerardi was killed because he had helped to write a report on the atrocities committed by Guatemala's D-2, the military intelligence agency run by Lima Estrada with the help of two other SOA graduates. D-2 coordinated the "anti-insurgency" campaign which obliterated 448 Mayan Indian villages, and murdered tens of thousands of their people. Forty percent of the cabinet ministers who served the genocidal regimes of Lucas Garcia, Rios Montt and Mejia Victores studied at the School of the Americas.

In 1993, the United Nations Truth Commission on El Salvador named the army officers who had committed the worst atrocities of the civil war. Two-thirds of them had been trained at the School of the Americas. Among them were Roberto D'Aubuisson, the leader of El Salvador's death squads; the men who killed Archbishop Oscar Romero; and 19 of the 26 soldiers who murdered the Jesuit priests in 1989. In Chile, the school's graduates ran both Augusto Pinochet's secret police and his three principal concentration camps. One of them helped to murder Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffit in Washington, DC in 1976.

Argentina's dictators Roberto Viola and Leopoldo Galtieri, Panama's Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos, Peru's Juan Velasco Alvarado and Ecuador's Guillermo Rodriguez all benefited from the school's instruction. So did the leader of the Grupo Colina death squad in Fujimori's Peru; four of the five officers who ran the infamous Battalion 3-16 in Honduras (which controlled the death squads there in the 1980s), and the commander responsible for the 1994 Ocosingo massacre in Mexico.



Archbishop Oscar Romero, assassinated in 1980 by graduates of the School of the Americas.

All this, the school's defenders insist, is ancient history. But SOA graduates are also involved in the dirty war now being waged, with U.S. support, in Colombia. In 1999 the U.S. State Department's report on human rights named two SOA graduates as the murderers of the peace commissioner, Alex Lopera. Last year, Human Rights Watch revealed that seven former pupils are running paramilitary groups there and have commissioned kidnappings, disappearances, murders, and massacres. In February, 2001, an SOA graduate in Colombia was convicted of complicity in the torture and killing of 30 peasants by paramilitaries. The school is now drawing more of its students from Colombia than from any other country.

The FBI defines terrorism as "violent acts... intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence the policy of a government, or affect the conduct of a government," which is a precise description of the activities of SOA's graduates. But how can we be sure that their alma mater has had any part in this? Well, in 1996, the U.S. government was forced to release seven of the school's training manuals. Among other top tips for terrorists, they recommended blackmail, torture, execution, and the arrest of witnesses' relatives.

In 2000, partly as a result of the campaign run by SOA Watch, several U.S. congressmen tried to shut the school down. They were defeated by 10 votes. Instead, the House of Representatives voted to close it and then immediately reopened it under a different name.

We can't expect this terrorist training camp to reform itself: after all, it refuses even to acknowledge that it has a past, let alone to learn from it. What should we do about the "evil-doers" in Fort, Benning, Ga.?

*George Monbiot is a weekly columnist for The Guardian and author of Captive State: the corporate takeover of Britain. The above is condensed from the Oct. 30, 2001 Guardian. A complete text of the article is available at [www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com). Reprinted with permission of author and The Guardian. ©George Monbiot*

## Teaching Ideas

George Monbiot closes his article with the question, "What should we do about the 'evil-doers' in Fort Benning, Ga.?" Ask students how they would answer that question.

Also ask students to compare the evidence linking the School of the Americas to terrorist atrocities to evidence linking Al Qaeda training camps to the attack on New York. Have students list the evidence against the former School of the Americas in one column and list evidence against Al Qaeda in another. Which evidence is stronger?

Watch the award-winning video, *School of the Assassins*, available at <http://www.soaw.org/resources.html#videos>.

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

## Where Does the Violence Come From?

Continued from page 18

port system of the planet, and quickly transferring the wealth of the world into our own pockets.

We don't feel personally responsible when an American corporation runs a sweatshop in the Philippines or crushes efforts of workers to organize in Singapore. We don't see ourselves implicated when the U.S. refuses to consider the plight of Palestinian refugees or uses the excuse of fighting drugs to support repression in Colombia or other parts of Central America. We don't even see the symbolism when terrorists attack America's military center and our trade center—we talk of them as buildings, though others see them as centers of the forces that are causing the world so much pain.

We have narrowed our own attention to "getting through" or "doing well" in our own personal lives, and who has time to focus on all the rest of this? Most of us are leading perfectly reasonable lives within the options that we have available to us—so why should others be angry at us, much less strike out against us? And the truth is, our anger is also understandable.

Yet our acts of counter-terror will be counter-productive. We should have learned from the current phase of the Israel/Palestinian struggle; responding to terror with more violence, rather than asking ourselves what we could do to change the conditions that generated it in the first place, will only ensure more violence against us in the future.

This is a world out of touch with itself, filled with people who have forgotten how to recognize and respond to the sacred in each other because we are so used to looking at others from the standpoint of what they can do for us. The alternatives are stark: either start caring about the fate of everyone on this planet or be prepared for a slippery slope toward violence that will eventually dominate our daily lives. ■

*Rabbi Michael Lerner is editor of TIKKUN Magazine and rabbi of Beyt Tikun Synagogue in San Francisco.*

*The above is condensed from an essay in TIKKUN magazine, a journal of Jewish politics and culture. Reprinted with permission. To subscribe to TIKKUN magazine, and for the text of the complete essay, go to [www.tikkun.org](http://www.tikkun.org)*

## Teaching Ideas

Michael Lerner says that "We need to ask ourselves, 'What is it in the way that we are living, organizing our societies, and treating each other that makes violence seem plausible to so many people?'" What is his answer to that question? What is your answer?

Compare the changes that Roy, Lerner, and Martin Luther King (page 24) would like to see in our society.

Lerner writes that "We have narrowed our own attention to 'getting through' or 'doing well' in our own personal lives, and who has time to focus on all the rest of this? Most of us are leading perfectly reasonable lives within the options that we have available to us — so why should others be angry at us...?" Answer that question: Should the world be angry at ordinary Americans who are minding their own business and "doing well"?

Assign each of these three readings — from Roy, Lerner, and King — to separate groups of students. Have them come together representing each of these perspectives to propose an answer to the question: What should the United States do to eliminate the roots of terrorism?

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)



Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Saudi Arabian King Fahd review U.S. troops at a Saudi Arabian base in 1996.

# The Geopolitics of War

**The current war against terrorism is firmly rooted in geopolitical issues. Oil and Saudi Arabia are the true center of the conflict.**

BY MICHAEL T. KLARE

There are many ways to view the conflict between the United States and Osama bin Laden's terror network: as a contest between Western liberalism and Eastern fanaticism, as suggested by many pundits in the United States; as a struggle between the defenders and the enemies of authentic Islam, as suggested by many in the Muslim world; and as a predictable backlash against American villainy abroad, as suggested by some on the left. But while useful in assessing some dimensions of the conflict, these cultural and political analyses obscure a fundamental reality: that this war, like most of the wars that preceded it, is firmly rooted in geopolitical competition.

The geopolitical dimensions of the war are somewhat hard to discern because the initial fighting is taking place in Afghanistan, and because our principal adversary, bin Laden, has no apparent interest in material concerns. But this is deceptive, because the true center of the conflict is Saudi Arabia, not Afghanistan (or Palestine), and because bin Laden's ultimate objectives include the imposition of a new Saudi government, which in turn would control the single most valuable geopolitical prize on the face of the earth: Saudi Arabia's vast oil deposits, representing one-fourth of the world's known petroleum reserves.

To fully appreciate the roots of the current conflict, it is necessary to travel back in time—specifically, to the final years of World War II, when the U.S. government began to formulate plans for the world it would dominate in the postwar era. As the war drew to a close, the State Department was enjoined by President Roosevelt to devise the policies and institutions that would guarantee U.S. security and prosperity in the coming epoch. This entailed the design and formation of the United Nations, the construction of the Bretton Woods world financial institutions and, most significant in the current context, the procurement of adequate oil supplies.

American strategists considered access to oil to be especially important because it was an essential factor in the Allied victory over the Axis powers. Although the nuclear strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war, it was oil that fueled the armies that brought Germany and Japan to their knees. Oil powered the vast numbers of ships, tanks, and aircraft that endowed Allied forces with a decisive edge over their adversaries, which lacked access to reliable sources of petroleum. It was widely assumed, therefore, that access to large supplies of oil would be critical to U.S. success in any future conflicts.

## OIL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Where would this oil come from? During World Wars I and II, the United States was able to obtain sufficient oil for its own and its allies' needs from deposits in the American Southwest and from Mexico and Venezuela. But most U.S. analysts believed that these supplies would be insufficient to meet American and European requirements in the postwar era. As a result, the State Department initiated an intensive study to identify other sources of petroleum. This effort, led by the department's economic adviser, Herbert Feis, concluded that only one location could provide the needed

petroleum. "In all surveys of the situation," Feis noted (in a statement quoted by Daniel Yergin in *The Prize*), "the pencil came to an awed pause at one point and place — the Middle East."

To be more specific, Feis and his associates concluded that the world's most prolific supply of untapped oil was to be found in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. But how to get at this oil? At first, the State Department proposed the formation of a government-owned oil firm to acquire concessions in Saudi Arabia and extract the kingdom's reserves. This plan was considered too unwieldy, however, and instead U.S. officials turned this task over to the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), an alliance of major U.S. oil corporations. But these officials were also worried about the kingdom's long-term stability, so they concluded that the United States would have to assume responsibility for the defense of Saudi Arabia. In one of the most extraordinary occurrences in modern American history, President Roosevelt met with King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud, the founder of the modern Saudi regime, on a U.S. warship in the Suez Canal following the February, 1945 conference in Yalta. Although details of the meeting have never been made public, it is widely believed that Roosevelt gave the King a promise of U.S. protection in return for privileged American access to Saudi oil—an arrangement that remains in full effect today and constitutes the essential core of the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

This relationship has provided enormous benefits to both sides. The United States has enjoyed preferred access to Saudi petroleum reserves, obtaining about one-sixth of its crude-oil imports from the kingdom. ARAMCO and its U.S. partners have reaped immense profits from their operations in Saudi Arabia and from the distribution

of Saudi oil worldwide. (Although ARAMCO's Saudi holdings were nationalized by the Saudi government in 1976, the company continues to manage Saudi oil production and to market its petroleum products abroad.) Saudi Arabia also buys about \$6-10 billion worth of goods per year from U.S. companies. The Saudi royal family, for its part, has become immensely wealthy and, because of continued U.S. protection, has remained safe from external and internal attack. ■

*Michael Klare (mklare@hampshire.edu) is a professor at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, with the Five College Program in Peace & World Security Studies. This article originally was published in the Nov. 5 issue of The Nation. Reprinted with permission.*

## Teaching Ideas

Michael Klare asserts that the "true center of the conflict is Saudi Arabia." What evidence does he offer to support this claim?

Klare writes that the "special" relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia "has provided enormous benefits to both sides." Who has benefited from the relationship? Who has not benefited? How has the gap between the rich and poor in Saudi Arabia contributed to resentment toward the United States and the regimes it supports in the Middle East?

Ask students to investigate the energy connections of the Bush administration. Might these connections influence U.S. foreign policy? How has oil influenced previous U.S. foreign policy?

**This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)**

**F**or most of the past 500 years, the Middle East has actually seen less violence and warfare and more political stability than Europe or most other regions of the world. It has only been in the last century that the region has seen such widespread conflict.

The roots of the conflict are similar to those elsewhere in the Third World, and have to do with the legacy of colonialism, such as artificial political boundaries, autocratic regimes, militarization, economic inequality, and economies based on the export of raw materials for finished goods. Indeed, the Middle East has more autocratic regimes, militarization, economic inequality and the greatest ratio of exports to domestic consumption than any region in the world.

—Stephen Zunes, from the article, "10 Things to Know About the Middle East," available online at [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org).

# How Many Must Die?

**An estimated 1 million people, more than half of them children, have died as a result of the sanctions against Iraq.**

BY GEORGE CAPACCIO

It was a winter's day, and I stood in an unheated room in a hospital in the ancient city of Mosul, Iraq. I was surrounded by children afflicted with a blood disease known as septicemia. I turned to our guide, a member of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, and asked him about the prognosis for the children. Normally a calm, restrained man, he turned toward me with a look I had not seen on his face before.

"Mr. George," he said, "sometimes you know because of the shortage of medicines, they are all of them going to be dead."

Then he turned away. At that moment, one of the doctors, a young woman, began to cry. Her colleague confided in English to me: "We have the skills, the training and all we can do is provide supportive care. Please understand, sometimes it is more than we can bear."

I offered a teddy bear to a little boy nearby. His mother was standing between him and his brother. Both were dying from septicemia. Two other children from the same family had already died from this disease. The woman took the toy from her son's hands and returned it to me.

"We don't want toys," she said in anger. "We want medicine."

As a delegate with various humanitarian organizations, I visited Iraq several times in 1998 and 1999. Sanctions were first imposed by the United Nations, under the leadership of the United States, in August 1990 following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. They will continue until Iraq concedes to a list of conditions, including the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction and ongoing UN monitoring of its weapons capacity.

While nominally targeted at the government of Saddam Hussein, the sanctions have imposed conditions of life calculated to maximize suffering for the majority of Iraq's citizens. In this regard, sanctions have been stunningly successful.

## UNNECESSARY DEATHS

According to the UN, more than 1 million people — including more than 500,000 children below the age of five — have died in Iraq as a result of scarcity of food and medicine. Furthermore, 3 percent of Iraqi children under five are chronically malnourished. Almost one-quarter are considered underweight, twice as high as the levels in neighboring Jordan or Turkey, according to a 1997 UNICEF report.

Every day an estimated 250 people die as a result of health problems related to the sanctions. Children under age five, who account for almost half of such deaths, are dying mainly due to diarrhea, pneumonia, and malnutrition.

Prior to sanctions, health care in Iraq was free and first-rate. Now the public hospitals lack even adequate sanitation and are forced to charge patients for most services. Furthermore, the sanctions include an "intellectual boycott," which cuts Iraqis off from international medical and scientific advances.

The economy, meanwhile, is in shambles, and the GDP per capita has plummeted. Public rations have been instituted, but food is in short supply and the rations do not provide sufficient minerals, vitamins, or nutrients.

The devastation of the sanctions follows massive destruction as a result of the 1991 Gulf War, in which the U.S. and its allies carried out more than 100,000 bombing missions against Iraq in a six-week period. An estimated 88,000 tons of bombs were dropped — equivalent to seven Hiroshima-type atomic bombs. Because of the bomb-

ing and the sanctions, water and sewage treatment plants operate at a critically reduced capacity. Waterborne diseases such as gastroenteritis, cholera, typhus, and typhoid fever are common.

## CANCERS INCREASE

On several of my visits to Iraq, I went to the Saddam Teaching Center in Baghdad. In Iraq, prior to 1990, the remission rate for leukemia and other forms of cancer was about 70 percent, comparable to what it is in the United States. Now, according to Dr. Muhammed Hillal, chief of pediatrics, it is between 6 percent and 7 percent. Dr. Hillal maintains that there has been a sixfold increase in childhood cancer since the imposition of sanctions. He attributes the increase to the toxins from the weapons of coalition forces during the Gulf War, along with all the other toxins released into the environment as a result of the war.

One child in the hospital's intensive care unit had been accidentally poisoned with insecticide. There was no hope for recovery. When his mother understood the reason for my visit, she became disturbed. "Why is the American President killing the Iraqi people?" she asked. "He doesn't hurt our government, only the little children." ■

*A longer version of this article originally appeared in Rethinking Schools, Volume 13, No. 3, Spring 1999. The full text is available at [www.rethinkingschools.org/Archives/13\\_03/iraq.htm](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/Archives/13_03/iraq.htm). George Capaccio is a writer from Arlington, MA. He has been traveling to Iraq since 1997.*

## Teaching Ideas

On the newsmagazine, *60 Minutes*, former Sec. of State Madeleine Albright acknowledged the enormous suffering and deaths of children in Iraq but said it was "worth it." Find out why Albright and other U.S. government officials believe this.

Choose one of the health care workers George Capaccio encounters in Iraq and write a conversation between this individual and Albright.

Watch the video, *One Million Postcards*, about two sisters who decide to do something about the suffering in Iraq. They launch a campaign to ask people to design postcards and send them to the U.S. government about the situation in Iraq. After watching the video, students might design postcards of their own. *One Million Postcards* and an accompanying teaching guide are available from the American Friends Service Committee: [www.afsc.org/iraqhome.htm](http://www.afsc.org/iraqhome.htm); or 215-241-7170.

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)



**Iraqi doctor examines a baby afflicted with malnutrition.**

AP/Wide World Photos

# Afghanistan: The Route to Riches

BY ANDY ROWELL

As the war in Afghanistan unfolds, there is frantic diplomatic activity to ensure that any post-Taliban government will be both democratic and pro-West. Hidden in this explosive geo-political equation is the sensitive issue of securing control and export of the region's vast oil and gas reserves. The Soviets estimated Afghanistan's proven and probable natural gas reserves at 5 trillion cubic feet — enough for the United Kingdom's requirement for two years — but this remains largely untapped because of the country's civil war and poor pipeline infrastructure.

More importantly, according to the U.S. government, "Afghanistan's significance from an energy standpoint stems from its geographical position as a potential transit route for oil and natural gas exports from central Asia to the Arabian Sea."

To the north of Afghanistan lies the Caspian and central Asian region, one of the world's last great frontiers for the oil industry due to its tremendous untapped reserves. The U.S. government believes that total oil reserves could be 270 billion barrels. Total gas reserves could be 576 trillion cubic feet.

The presence of these oil reserves and the possibility of their export raises new strategic concerns for the U.S. and other Western industrial powers. "As oil companies build oil pipelines from the Caucasus and central Asia to supply Japan and the West, these strategic concerns gain military implications," argued an article in the *Military Review*, the journal of the U.S. Army, earlier in the year.

Host governments and Western oil companies have been rushing to get in on the act. Kazakhstan, it is believed, could earn \$700 billion from offshore oil and gas fields over the next 40 years. Both American and British oil companies have struck black gold. In April 1993, Chevron concluded a \$20 billion joint venture to develop the Tengiz oil field, with 6 to 9 billion barrels of estimated oil reserves in Kazakhstan alone. The following year, in what was described as "the deal of the century," AIOC, an international consortium of companies led by British Petroleum, signed an \$8 billion deal to exploit reserves estimated at 3-5 billion barrels in Azerbaijan.

The oil industry has long been trying to find a way to bring the oil and gas to mar-

ket. This frustration was evident in the submission by oil company Unocal's vice-president John Maresca, before the U.S. House of Representatives in 1998: "Central Asia is isolated. Their natural resources are landlocked, both geographically and politically. Each of the countries in the Caucasus and central Asia faces difficult political challenges. Some have unsettled wars or latent conflicts."

The industry has been looking at different routes. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) route is 1,000 miles west from Tengiz in Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk and came on stream in October. Oil will go by tanker through the Bosphorus to the Mediterranean. Another route being considered by AIOC goes from Baku through Tbilisi in Georgia to Ceyhan in Turkey. However, parts of the route are seen as politically unstable as it goes through the Kurdistan region of Turkey and its \$3 billion price tag is prohibitively expensive.

But even if these pipelines are built, they would not be enough to exploit the region's vast oil and gas reserves. Nor crucially would they have the capacity to move oil to where it is really needed, the growing markets of Asia. Other export pipelines must therefore be built. One option is to go east across China, but at 3,000 kilometers it is seen as too long. Another option is through Iran, but U.S. companies are banned due to U.S. sanctions. The only other possible route is through Afghanistan to Pakistan. This is seen as being advantageous as it is close to the Asian markets.

Unocal, the U.S. company with a controversial history of investment in Burma, has been trying to secure the Afghan route. To be viable Unocal has made it clear that "construction of the pipeline cannot begin until a recognized government is in place in Kabul that has the confidence of governments, lenders, and our company."

*The above was condensed from an Oct. 24, 2001 article in The Guardian newspaper in Britain. Reprinted by permission of the author and The Guardian. © Andy Rowell. For the complete text, go to [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk).*

This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)

# The Palestinian Uprising: A Primer

BY THE MIDDLE EAST RESEARCH AND INFORMATION PROJECT

At the start of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire ruled much of the Arab world, including the territory that is now Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. With the Allied victory in World War I, the area came under the control of the British who made contradictory promises to Arab and Zionist leaders about how — and by whom — the Mandate of Palestine was to be governed. At the time, 90 percent of the population was Arab; the Jewish community included long-time residents and new immigrants fleeing persecution in Russia and, later, other parts of Europe. A three-year uprising in the late 1930s against British rule and increased Jewish immigration resulted in a British proposal to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. UN General Assembly Resolution 181 reaffirmed partition in 1947.

The war that followed led to the establishment of the State of Israel. Beyond the UN resolution, the creation of Israel also reflected newly widespread support for an independent Jewish state among European and American Jews as well as powerful Western governments, in response to the Nazi Holocaust.

Gaza came under the control of Egypt, and the West Bank and East Jerusalem under Jordanian control. Less than 20 years later, in the June 1967 war, Israel gained control of the rest of the former mandate of Palestine (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed in 1980), the Egyptian Sinai (since returned to Egypt), and the Syrian Golan Heights. UN Security Council Resolution 242 (November 22, 1967), still not implemented, affirmed “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war” and called upon Israel to withdraw “from territories occupied in the recent conflict.”

The 1970s and 1980s saw Arab-Israeli wars in 1973 and 1982, the 1978 Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada in December, 1987, and Yasser Arafat’s condemnation of terrorism and recognition of the state of Israel in December, 1988.

The Madrid peace conference followed the Gulf war in October, 1991. A year later, secret Israeli-Palestinian talks began in Oslo, Norway, culminating in the September, 1993 Declaration of Principles (DoP) on interim Palestinian self-government, signed by Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The DoP set out a process for transforming the nature of the Israeli occupation but left numerous issues unresolved, including the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, the disposition of Israeli settlements (whose expansion continues until today) and final borders between Israel and a Palestinian state.

Under the DoP, Israel relinquished day-to-day authority over parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank to the Palestinian Authority, headed by Arafat who returned to Gaza in 1994. However, ultimate power remained with Israel, which exercised its control by frequently sealing off the Palestinian-governed areas from the rest of the Occupied Territories and from Israel. Subsequent agreements in 1995 (Oslo II), 1998 (Wye River) and 1999 (Wye River II) failed to resolve these issues. With Palestinian-Israeli negotiations stalled, U.S. President Bill Clinton called a summit at Camp David in July 2000. After two weeks of intensive negotiation, the talks ended without a deal.

## OCCUPATION POLICIES

Israel has met the [current Palestinian] uprising with much greater force than it generally employed during the first intifada from 1987-1993. Numerous respected human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights, conducted studies that showed Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers employing excessive force in their suppression of Palestinian demonstrators. Their reports cited (among other violations): the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilians, attacks on medical personnel and installations, and the use of snipers with high-powered rifles and attacks on children. Palestinians accused the IDF of implementing a “shoot to kill” policy against



Palestinian women in the town of Nablus mark the 1st anniversary of the Intifada on Sept. 29.

the demonstrators, an accusation Israel emphatically denied. But figures compiled by the Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute of Ramallah showed that (as of December, 2000) 75 percent of intifada-related wounds treated at West Bank health facilities were upper-body wounds (35.1 percent wounds to the head and neck). In Gaza, 60 percent of wounds treated were in the head, chest, or abdomen (22.4 percent in the head and neck). International reports confirmed the preponderance of upper-body wounds.

Israel has periodically closed its borders to over 125,000 Palestinian workers — especially Gazans — who rely on jobs inside Israel for their modest income. The UN estimated that Palestinian workers lost \$243,400,000 in income from October, 2000 through January, 2001 due to closures. According to UN figures, the poverty rate in the Occupied Territories climbed from 21 percent to nearly 32 percent over the same period. The poverty rate will reach 43 percent by the end of 2001 if closures continue, says the UN. Israeli forces have imposed blockades around Palestin-

ian towns in the West Bank, sometimes causing severe shortages of necessities like flour, sugar, and gasoline.

## WHAT ARE THE SETTLEMENTS?

The Jewish settlements scattered throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip sit on Palestinian land occupied by Israel during the June, 1967 war. Since 1967, successive Israeli administrations have expanded the settlements in the name of both ideology and “security.” In ideological terms, historically endorsed by the Likud Party, settlements secure Jewish sovereignty over the entire biblical “Land of Israel,” demonstrating the power of Jewish nationalism. In security terms, historically endorsed by the Labor Party, settlements ensure Israel’s permanent military control west of the Jordan River. Regardless of rationale, settlements have been used to alter the demography of the Palestinian territories and preclude Palestinian self-determination.

The first wave of state-sponsored settlement began in 1967 under the Labor administration. Settlement growth was limited during this period, but the groundwork was laid for more. Labor used “security” arguments to justify settlement but allowed messianic groups like Gush Emunim to establish claims in the Palestinian territories. Intensive development began in 1977 under Likud, which used the ideological rationale to justify heavy investment in the settlement infrastructure. Construction increased again in the early 1990s, during which time the settler population rose by some 10 percent annually. Since the Oslo “peace process” began in 1993, the settler population has nearly doubled. Under the Labor administration of Yitzhak Rabin, settlements grew at a rate unprecedented in Israel’s occupation. Ariel Sharon’s government vows to support the “natural growth” of settlements — a term that belies both the magnitude and political context of the planned expansion that is occurring. Currently, some 400,000 Israeli Jews live in the Occupied Territories: approximately 200,000 in the West Bank, 200,000 in East Jerusalem and 6,000 in the Gaza Strip.

All settlements in the Occupied Territories violate international law and continuously infringe on Palestinian human rights. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying state from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. International humanitarian law prohibits permanent changes within an occupied territory that are not intended to benefit the local population. ■

*The above is excerpted from an essay by Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) editorial committee members. A complete text of the essay is available at [www.merip.org/new\\_uprising\\_primer/\\_intro.html](http://www.merip.org/new_uprising_primer/_intro.html). Reprinted with permission.*

**Israel has three options: revert to the previous stalemated situation; exterminate all Palestinians; or, I hope, to strive for peace based on justice, based on withdrawal from all the occupied territories, and the establishment of a viable Palestinian state on those territories side by side with Israel, both with secure borders.**

**We in South Africa had a relatively peaceful transition. If our madness could end as it did, it must be possible to do the same everywhere else in the world. If peace could come to South Africa, surely it can come to the Holy Land?**

— Desmond Tutu, former Archbishop of Cape Town and chairman of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Excerpted from a speech in Boston, Mass.

as reported in *The Guardian* on April 29, 2002.

# Resources for Further Information

## WEBSITES

### FOR EDUCATORS

#### Rethinking Schools Online

[www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org). The articles in this special "War, Terrorism and Our Classrooms" insert are available at the Rethinking Schools website, many in pdf format. The website also includes many valuable links, including this web resource guide with hotlinks.

#### Teaching For Change/Network of Educators on the Americas

[www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org). One of the best sites on teaching about Sept. 11 and the "war against terrorism." Excellent articles, links to other important sites, resource suggestions, etc.

#### ESR Metro

[www.esrmetro.org](http://www.esrmetro.org). New York City educators who focus on conflict resolution, intercultural education, and social justice education. Website has lesson ideas on these subjects as well as Iraq, Palestine/Israel, nuclear weapons, and more.

#### Educators for Social Responsibility

[www.esrnational.org/guide.htm](http://www.esrnational.org/guide.htm). Numerous resources for children of different ages for teaching about the current crisis including a guide on "Talking to Children about Violence and other Sensitive and Complex Issues in the World."

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

#### AlterNet, a project of the Independent Media Institute

[www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org). Includes some of the best alternative points of view on social issues, including special coverage of the "war against terrorism." Drawn from various publications.

#### American Civil Liberties Union

[www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org). Resources on the threat to civil liberties in the U.S. during the crisis.

#### Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting

<http://www.fair.org>. Excellent articles critiquing media coverage of the crisis. Good links.

#### Foreign Policy in Focus

[www.fpiif.org](http://www.fpiif.org). Valuable background readings on foreign policy issues — special analyses on the current crisis.

#### The Independent (UK)

[www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk). Offers some of the best reporting on war and terrorism. Articles by Robert Fisk are among the finest in the world. See also reporting by *The Guardian* in Great Britain, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), and Outlook India in India, [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com).

#### Independent Media Center

[www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org). The CNN of movements for social justice, IndyMedia has resources for linking the current crisis to issues of global inequality.

#### Media Workers Against the War

[www.mwaw.org](http://www.mwaw.org). A British site offers alternative perspectives on the current war.

#### The Nation magazine

[www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com). Well-written, provocative articles on the crisis. Some classroom-friendly. Helpful links.

#### NY Teachers, Educators, Youth Workers and Students Against the War

[www.topica.com/lists/NYTeachAgainsttheWar](http://www.topica.com/lists/NYTeachAgainsttheWar). This group has a very active list-serve of New York area educators who are organizing and teaching against the war. Click on "read this list" to see archived posts.

#### The Progressive magazine

[www.progressive.org](http://www.progressive.org). Hard-hitting investigative coverage of U.S. foreign policy and attacks on civil liberties in the United States.

#### War Times

[www.war-times.org](http://www.war-times.org). A free bilingual English/Spanish newspaper that is "dedicated to telling the truth about the 'war on terrorism.'" Issues covered include Bush's Nuclear Threat, Palestine, attacks on immigrants, and more. Accessible articles with background information. For classroom sets — 25 copies (or more) of each issue — contact [distribution@wartimes.org](mailto:distribution@wartimes.org). PDF files of articles available.

#### Z Magazine and Z-net

[www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org). A treasure trove of articles and resources from a progressive perspective. Authors include Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Edward Said.

## MIDDLE EAST/CENTRAL ASIA

#### Arabic Daily Newspapers

[arab2.com/n/a/non-arabic-daily-newspapers.htm](http://arab2.com/n/a/non-arabic-daily-newspapers.htm). Arabic daily papers in English and French.

#### Arab Film Distribution

[www.arabfilm.com](http://www.arabfilm.com). Promotes and distributes films from the Arab world.

#### Harvard University/Center of Middle Eastern Studies

[www.fas.harvard.edu/~mideast/inMERes/inMERes.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~mideast/inMERes/inMERes.html). One of the most extensive collection of links to journals, newspapers, and organizations.

#### Human Rights Watch report

[www.hrw.org/background/asia/afghan-bck1005.htm](http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/afghan-bck1005.htm). A who's who of the Northern Alliance opposition in Afghanistan, focusing on human rights records.

#### Middle East Research and Information Project

[www.merip.org](http://www.merip.org). MERIP has been around for years, providing alternative perspectives on events in the Middle East. Useful links.

#### Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)

[www.rawa.org](http://www.rawa.org). The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1977 as an independent political/social organization. Offers hard-to-find perspectives of Afghan women.

## CLASSROOM RESOURCES

#### Beyond Blame

[www.edc.org/spotlight/schools/beyond-blame.htm](http://www.edc.org/spotlight/schools/beyond-blame.htm). "Beyond Blame" is a free downloadable curriculum from Education Development Center, "in response to the terrorist tragedy of September 11 and subsequent attacks against Arab-Americans." One lesson draws comparisons between recent events and the internment of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor.

#### The Arab World in the Classroom: Who are the Arabs? by Steve Tamari.

[www.ccasonline.org/publications/teach-module\\_whoarabs.htm#classroom](http://www.ccasonline.org/publications/teach-module_whoarabs.htm#classroom). Also available in print form from [www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org), this is a short, helpful curriculum guide to teaching about Arabs.

#### American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

[www.adc.org](http://www.adc.org). An essential resource for materials countering bias and stereotypes against Arabs. Website includes many educational resources.

#### "Boondocks" comic strip

[www.ucomics.com/boondocks](http://www.ucomics.com/boondocks). The Boondocks comic strip has been critical and profound during a period when much of American popular culture seems cowed by conformist pro-war pressures. Excellent to use with students.

#### Mark Fiore Gallery

[www.markfiore.com/animation/fresh.html](http://www.markfiore.com/animation/fresh.html). A clever, student-friendly interactive cartoon called "Find the Terrorist in Your Neighborhood." Confronts stereotypes about "terrorists."

#### Maps

[www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/maps.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/maps.htm). Detailed maps of Afghanistan.

#### University of Arizona

[www.u.arizona.edu/ic/humanities/sep-11/pages/Education](http://www.u.arizona.edu/ic/humanities/sep-11/pages/Education). Curricula and teaching resources, sometimes uneven, but definitely worth a look.

#### "Scarves of Many Colors: Muslim Women and the Veil"

distributed by Teaching for Change, [www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org). An award-winning audiotape and accompanying curriculum that examine stereotypes of Islamic women who cover.

#### The Arabs: Activities for the Elementary School Level

by Audrey Shabbas, Carol El-Shaieb, and Ahlam Nabulsi. (Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services, 1991) Grade K-7/ 60 pp. \$16.00. Hands-on projects and exercises. Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services. (505-685-4533) <http://www.telegraphave.com/gui/awair-productinfo.html#notebook2>

#### Women Make Movies

[www.wmm.com/news/against\\_hate.htm](http://www.wmm.com/news/against_hate.htm) A multicultural, multiracial media arts organization which has generously offered to provide free rentals for selected titles of Middle East and Arab culture videos. Also included are two documentaries on the U.S. internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II.

## BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

**The Day of Ahmed's Secret**, by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland. (NY: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard Books, 1990) 32 pp. Ahmed carries a secret in his pocket as he spends a day wandering the streets of Cairo. Only at the day's end is the secret revealed. Illustrations provide a glimpse into the lives of the city's people. Grades 1-5.

**Oasis of Peace: Neve Shalom — Wahat Al-Salam**, by Laurie Dolphin. Photographs by Ben Dolphin. (Scholastic, 1993) 48 pp. Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam is the name — in Hebrew and in Arabic — of an Israeli village where 20 Arab and Jewish families have chosen to

live together. This is the story of two boys who come to the village school, learn each others' languages and customs, and become friends. A moving story, illustrated with color photos. Grades 1-6.

**Sami and the Time of the Troubles**, by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland. (Clarion Book, 1995). Ten year-old Sami begins to explore war-torn Beirut and finds hope in the midst of the ravages of war. Grades 1-5.

**Sitti's Secrets**, by Naomi Shihab Nye. (Four Winds Press, 1994). 32 pp. Set in a small West Bank village, this is the story of a young Arab-American girl and her Palestinian grandmother. Local traditions and some Arabic words are introduced. Grades 2-6.

## FOR OLDER STUDENTS

**The Breadwinner**, by Deborah Ellis. (Groundwood Books, 2001). 170 pp. A book about a family living under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. The central character is an 11-year-old girl who becomes the family breadwinner by cutting her hair and passing as a boy. Grades 5 and up.

**Habibi**, by Naomi Shihab Nye. (Simon and Schuster, 1997). 259 pp. When 14-year-old Liyana Abboudá's family moves from St. Louis, Missouri to Jerusalem her whole world shifts. She discovers a grandmother that she has never met before, aunts and uncles in a West Bank village and a history much bigger than she is. Grades 6 and up.

**The Man Who Counted: A Collection of Mathematical Adventures**, by Malba Takan. (W. W. Norton, 1993). 244 pp. 34 gracefully told stories, each with a mathematical puzzle to solve, set in the 10th century Islamic world. (Depicts Arab and Muslim contributions to the history of mathematics, "Arabic" numerals and algebra, for example.) Grades 5 and up.

**The Space Between Our Footsteps: Poems and Paintings from the Middle East**, by Naomi Shihab Nye (editor). (Simon and Shuster, 1998). Poems and paintings of more than 100 writers and artists from 19 countries. Exquisitely beautiful, painfully direct, and ultimately a joyful book.

## FOR ADULTS

**9-11**, by Noam Chomsky. (NY: Seven Stories Press, 2001). (Also available as an e-book from [www.sevenstories.com](http://www.sevenstories.com).) Chomsky is a brilliant analyst of global political realities. In this book he probes the roots of the Sept. 11 attacks, the historical precedents for it, and possible outcomes. **Responses to 9/11** is a free e-book from Seven Stories Press, with essays by Noam Chomsky, Russell Banks, Howard Zinn, Assia Djebar, and Alice Walker.

**Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict**, by Michael Klare. (NY: Henry Holt, 2001). U.S. foreign policy is still driven by a quest to control valuable resources. Klare's book exposes the economic roots of military interventions.

**Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia**, by Ahmed Rashid. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). By a Pakistani journalist, this is one of the best books to understand the history of the Taliban.

**Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World**, by Edward Said. (NY: Vintage, 1997). All of Edward Said's books are excellent. This one is an incisive critique of media bias and Islam.

**The Question of Palestine**, by Edward Said. (NY: Vintage, 1992). A summary of the Palestinian conflict from the perspective of world-renowned Palestinian-American scholar. ■

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# “When Silence is Betrayal”

If the United States is to get on the ‘right side’ of world events, it must declare ‘eternal hostility’ to poverty, racism, and militarism.

*On April 4, 1967, exactly one year before his assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his first major speech on the war in Vietnam. In the speech, to the group Clergy and Layman Concerned, King calls for a “shift from a ‘thing-oriented’ society to a ‘person-oriented’ society”—and insists that the “demands of inner truth” supercede unquestioning loyalty to government.*

BY MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

**A** time comes when silence is betrayal. That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government’s policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one’s own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty. But we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. ...

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that America will be led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land. ...

The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing Clergy and Laymen Concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa.

We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. ...

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a “thing-oriented” society to a “person-oriented” society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered. ...



**Martin Luther King, Jr. at a 1968 newsconference stating his “disenchantment” with President Johnson’s Vietnam policies.**

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth.

With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: “This is not just.” It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: “This is not just.” The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. ...

Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.” ...

We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate... .

Now let us begin. Now let us re-dedicate ourselves to the long and bitter — but beautiful — struggle for a new world. ■

*To read the entire text of the speech, go to the College of Social Science at Michigan State University website at [www.ssc.msu.edu/~sw/dates/mlk/brksInc.htm](http://www.ssc.msu.edu/~sw/dates/mlk/brksInc.htm).*

## Teaching Ideas

Write the speech that Martin Luther King might deliver today if he were alive. It should cover the events of Sept. 11, “terrorism” of all kinds, and the war in Afghanistan — but can cover other topics as well.

Do you think Dr. King would support U.S. policies today? What evidence from his speech supports your conclusion? What policies would he urge?

King talks about the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism. In what ways are these giant triplets at work in today’s crisis? Ask students to make charts headed with these categories and to list all the ways they see these forces at work in the current circumstances. Ask them to choose one of the triplets and design a poster illustrating it.

Write a dialogue between Dr. King and another individual: you, George W. Bush, a member of the Taliban, one of the Sept. 11 attackers, someone who fled the bombing of Afghanistan, a refugee in a camp in Gaza or the West Bank, etc.

**This article is also available as a letter-size PDF for student handouts at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11)**



**Child workers in Bombay, India.**



**Child worker with basket of coal for a lime kiln in Dronachellan, India.**

# Root Causes of Terrorism

## An interview with scholar Edward Said

The following is excerpted from an interview with Edward W. Said, a professor of English at Columbia University and a prominent scholar on Middle Eastern issues. Said was interviewed in late September by David Barsamian of *Alternative Radio*.

### Q: What are those root causes [of the current terrorism]?

**Said:** They come out of a long dialectic of U.S. involvement in the affairs of the Islamic world, the oil-producing world, the Arab world, the Middle East—those areas that are considered to be essential to U.S. interests and security. And in this relentlessly unfolding series of interactions, the U.S. has played a very distinctive role, which most Americans have been either shielded from or simply unaware of.

In the Islamic world, the U.S. is seen in two quite different ways. One view recognizes what an extraordinary country the U.S. is. Every Arab or Muslim that I know is tremendously interested in the United States. Many of them send their children here for education. Many of them come here for vacations. They do business here or get their training here. The other view is of the official United States, the United States of armies and interventions. The United States that in 1953 overthrew the nationalist government of Mossadegh in Iran and brought back the shah. The United States that has been involved first in the Gulf War and then in the tremendously damaging sanctions against Iraqi civilians. The United States that is the supporter of Israel against the Palestinians.

If you live in the area, you see these things as part of a continuing drive for dominance, and with it a kind of obduracy, a stubborn opposition to the wishes and desires and aspirations of the people there. Most Arabs and Muslims feel that the United States hasn't really been paying much attention to their desires. They think it has been pursuing its policies for its own sake and not according to many of the principles that it claims are its own—democracy, self-determination, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and international law. It's very hard, for example, to justify the 34-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It's very hard to justify 140 Israeli settlements and roughly 400,000 settlers. These actions were taken with the support and financing of the United States. How can you say this is part of U.S. adherence to international law and U.N. resolutions? The result is a kind of schizophrenic picture of the United States.

Now we come to the really sad part. The Arab rulers are basically unpopular. They are supported by the United States against the wishes of their people. In all of this rather heady mixture of violence and policies that are remarkably unpopular right down to the last iota, it's not hard for demagogues, especially people who claim to speak in the name of religion, in this case Islam, to raise a crusade against the United States and say that we must somehow bring America down.

Ironically, many of these people,

including Osama bin Laden and the mujahedeen, were, in fact, nourished by the United States in the early 1980s in its efforts to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. It was thought that to rally Islam against godless communism would be doing the Soviet Union a very bad turn indeed, and that, in fact, transpired. In 1985, a group of mujahedeen came to Washington and was greeted by President Reagan, who called them "freedom fighters." These people, by the way, don't represent Islam in any formal sense. They're not imams or sheiks. They are self-appointed warriors for Islam. Osama bin Laden, who is a Saudi, feels himself to be a patriot because the U.S. has forces in Saudi Arabia, which is sacred because it is the land of the prophet Muhammad. There is also this great sense of triumphalism, that just as we defeated the Soviet Union, we can do this. And out of this sense of desperation and pathological religion, there develops an all-encompassing drive to harm and hurt, without regard for the innocent and the uninvolved, which was the case in New York. Now to understand this is, of course, not at all to condone it. And what terrifies me is that we're entering a phase where if you start to speak about this as something that can be understood historically—without any sympathy—you are going to be thought of as unpatriotic, and you are going to be forbidden. It's very dangerous. It is precisely incumbent on every citizen to quite understand the world we're living in and the history we are a part of and we are forming as a superpower.

**Q: In your introduction to the updated version of *Covering Islam: How The Media and The Experts Determine How We See The Rest of The World*, you say: "Malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West." Why is that?**

**Said:** The sense of Islam as a threatening Other—with Muslims depicted as fanatical, violent, lustful, irrational—develops during the colonial period in what I called Orientalism. The study of the Other has a lot to do with the control and dominance of Europe and the West generally in the Islamic world. And it has persisted because it's based very, very deeply in religious roots, where Islam is seen as a kind of competitor of Christianity. If you look at the curricula of most universities and schools in this country, considering our long encounter with the Islamic world, there is very little there that you can get hold of that is really informative about Islam. If you look at the popular media, you'll see that the stereotype that begins with Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik* has really remained and developed into the transnational villain of television and film and culture in gen-



AP/Wide World Photos

**Street vendor Nabil Isror, a former theater actor, and his daughter wait for customers to buy used shoes at a street market in Gaza City, Friday, Dec. 28, 2001. Unemployment and poverty are on the rise in the occupied territories since the Israeli military crackdown. A study released in August, 2002 by the U.S. Agency for International Development found that malnutrition among Palestinian children under five is among the highest in the world.**

eral. It is very easy to make wild generalizations about Islam. All you have to do is read almost any issue of *The New Republic* and you'll see there the radical evil that's associated with Islam, the Arabs as having a depraved culture, and so forth. These are impossible generalizations to make in the United States about any other religious or ethnic group.

**Q: In a recent article in the *London Observer*, you say the U.S. drive for war uncannily resembles Captain Ahab in pursuit of *Moby Dick*. Tell me what you have in mind there.**

**Said:** Captain Ahab was a man possessed with an obsessional drive to pursue the white whale which had harmed him—which had torn his leg out—to the ends of the Earth, no matter what happened. In the final scene of the novel, Captain Ahab is being borne out to sea, wrapped around the white whale with the rope of his own harpoon and going obviously to his death. It was a scene of almost suicidal finality. Now, all the words that George Bush used in public during the early stages of the crisis—"wanted, dead or alive," "a crusade," etc.—suggest not so much an orderly and considered progress towards bringing the man to justice according to international norms, but rather something apocalyptic, something of the order of the criminal atrocity itself. That will make matters a lot, lot worse, because there are always consequences. And it would seem to me that to give Osama bin Laden—who has been turned into Moby Dick, he's

been made a symbol of all that's evil in the world—a kind of mythological proportion is really playing his game. I think we need to secularize the man. We need to bring him down to the realm of reality. Treat him as a criminal, as a man who is a demagogue, who has unlawfully unleashed violence against innocent people. Punish him accordingly, and don't bring down the world around him and ourselves. ■

A complete copy of the interview, both audio and written transcripts, can be ordered from *Alternative Radio* at <http://www.alternativeradio.org> or by calling 1-800-444-1977.

### Teaching Ideas

- What is Said's explanation for why some people in the Middle East would be receptive to what he calls "demagogues"? Make a list of these grievances.
- Said, who himself is Palestinian by birth, claims that the United States supports Israeli settlements in violation of international law and UN resolutions. Have students use the internet or articles in this issue to identify which international laws and UN resolutions Said might be referring to.
- The title of this article is the "Root Causes of Terrorism." Based on Said's analysis, how would one attack the roots of terrorism? Are there other possible roots that Said does not mention?



The British warship Southampton sails along the Suez Canal in Ismailiya, 63 miles northeast of Cairo as an Egyptian fisherman prepares to begin fishing Saturday, Sept. 22, 2001.

# Terrorism and Globalization

Teachers need to encourage students to ask the deep “why” questions.

BY BILL BIGELOW AND BOB PETERSON

The events of the past year have left us shaken: the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the declaration of war on terrorism, the bombing of Afghanistan, the anthrax scare, the erosion of civil liberties, and the prospect of endless war against enemies-to-be-named. Today’s world is a dangerous place, and our students know it.

The challenge for educators is not merely to describe these dangers, but to offer students the tools to help them explain today’s world — to help them acquire a critical global literacy. Because only explanation offers the hope of addressing root causes of social problems.

When it came to the horrific events of Sept. 11, both government and press demonstrated little curiosity about the circumstances that prompted the attacks or about the origins of Islamic fundamentalism. The position seemed to be that terrorism requires no explanation, it is simply an evil that needs to be crushed. True, major media printed occasional “Why do they hate us?” pieces — but these were few and far between. Even the best of these focused almost solely on specific U.S. policies in the region: U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, the human toll resulting from sanctions against Iraq, and U.S. aid to Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians. These accounts were valuable but neglected the profound social changes wrought by the global economy in virtually every corner of the world —

including the Islamic world.

Nor did government or press seek to establish a fuller definition of “terrorism” — one that might question whether government-promoted violence like U.S. sponsorship of the Nicaraguan Contras or support of the Chilean dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, might not count as “terrorism.” Also ignored was what might be considered corporate terrorism — for example, Texaco’s 20-year poisoning of Ecuador’s rainforests, or Union Carbide’s callous disregard for safety at its factory in Bhopal, India — site of the worst industrial accident in history.

## FREE MARKET FUNDAMENTALISM

We believe that the violence of Sept. 11 and the continuing threats from fundamentalist-inspired terrorists are inexplicable without considering how profit-driven globalization is impacting cultures around the world. In fact, the writer Wendell Berry suggests that the global “free market” has become its own fundamentalism:

The “developed” nations [have]

given to the “free market” the status of a god, and [are] sacrificing to it their farmers, farmlands, and communities, their forests, wetlands, and prairies, their ecosystems and watersheds. They [have] accepted universal pollution and global warming as normal costs of doing business.

But what is the relationship between free market fundamentalism and Islamic fundamentalism?

While scholarship linking globalization and terrorism is only beginning, it’s not too soon to suggest that economic upheavals created by globalization might lead to an unforeseen, but ferocious backlash.

For example, in a provocative *Progressive* magazine article called “The Mystery of Misogyny,” author Barbara Ehrenreich asks about the roots of Islamic fundamentalism’s deep hostility to women. She wonders if the answer might not lie in part in how globalization has posed peculiar threats to men:

Western industry has displaced traditional crafts — female as well as male — and large-scale, multinational-controlled agriculture has

downgraded the independent farmer to the status of hired hand. From West Africa to Southeast Asia, these trends have resulted in massive male displacement and, frequently, unemployment. At the same time, globalization has offered new opportunities for Third World women — in export-oriented manufacturing, where women are favored for their presumed “nimble fingers,” and, more recently, as migrant domestics working in wealthy countries.

As Ehrenreich proposes:

While males have lost their traditional status as farmers and breadwinners, women have been entering the market economy and gaining the marginal independence conferred even by a paltry wage. Add to the economic dislocations engendered by globalization the onslaught of Western cultural imagery, and you have the makings of what sociologist Arlie Hochschild has called a “global masculinity crisis.”

George Caffentzis links the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a political force in Egypt to “the impoverishment of urban workers and agriculturists. . . due to Structural Adjustment Programs and import liberalization.” He points out that “Islamic fundamentalism has distinguished itself, in addition to its unmitigated bolstering of patriarchal rule, for its attempt to win over the urban populations through the provision of some basic necessities such as schooling, healthcare, and a minimum of social assistance.”

**Both government and press demonstrated little curiosity about the circumstances that prompted the attacks or about the origins of Islamic fundamentalism.**

Research reported by the Middle East Research and Information Project ([www.merip.org](http://www.merip.org)) also chronicles the huge social dislocations occurring in Egypt, where free market reforms encouraged “the most exuberant dreams of private accumulation — and a chaotic reallocation of collective resources.”

One poignant example of this problem is what’s happening to small fishermen and their families who depend on Egypt’s lakes in the Nile delta. Historically, communities of fishermen were able to catch enough fish for their families and to sell a small surplus. According to researchers Ray Bush and Amal Sabri, a complex set of customs and rights governed fishing practices to insure sufficient time for fish to grow and breed before harvesting. But the government has supported privatization schemes, leasing lake front property to large-scale fish farms, whose guards drive small fishermen off with guns and vicious dogs. Meanwhile, women in the traditional fisher communities are forced by economic necessity to seek work in the fish processing plants. Fish production has increased enormously — as have exports, a sacred component of globalization theology — but so has the misery of fish-dependent families. The current fishing practices are enormously profitable, but also unsustainable, and are wreaking ecological havoc in Egyptian lakes.

As one 45-year-old father of six lamented: “In 1993, Lake Manzala was a source of income for all fishermen of ‘Izbat al-Burg. Now [5 years later] the farms have destroyed everything.”

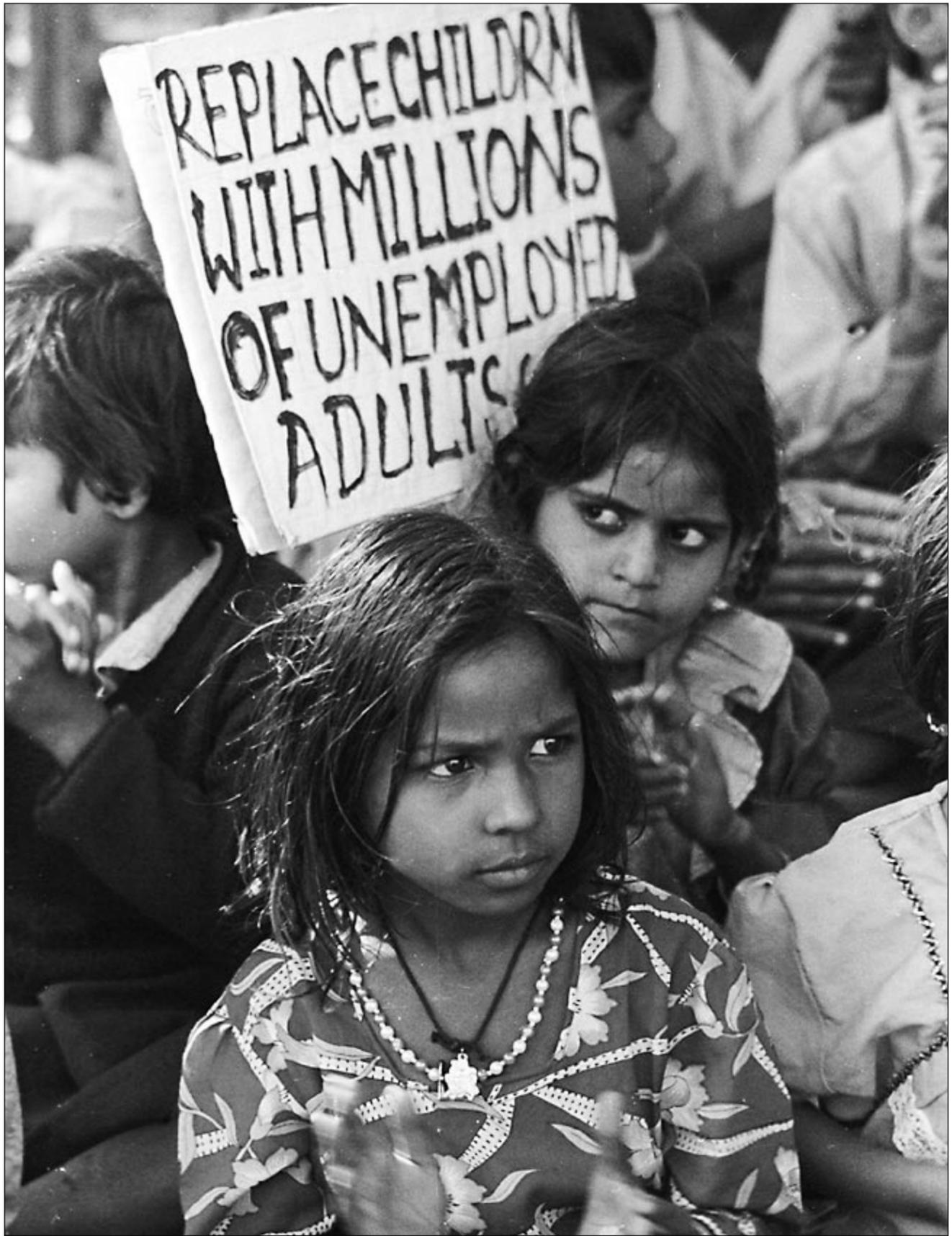
Similar “free market” reforms have been introduced in Egyptian agricultural and labor relations. In 1992, Law 96/92 was passed, overturning long-standing traditional relationships between landlords and tenants. All old contracts were abolished. Now owners are free to dispose of their property however they like. Rents tripled in the first five years, with many tenants facing eviction. In Upper Egypt landlords tend to be Coptic Christians, and most tenants are Muslims. Class tensions can turn religious, as they did in the village of Kafr Demian, where “[a] crowd of several hundred Muslims raided Coptic houses, killed their animals and burned down their stables.”

Other Egyptian laws wiped out rent controls in the cities and made it easier for employers to lay off workers. Meanwhile, the slums of Alexandria and Cairo continue to swell.

What does all this have to do with the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt and in other countries undergoing similar “free market” reforms? As writer Norm Diamond suggests:

[T]hose who have been uprooted from their communities and gone off hoping to find work in the cities, as well as those who have stayed behind attempting to fight back, are vulnerable to recruiting by Islamic fundamentalism. Their new life, their new encounters with unemployment and the merciless market, requires a new self-understanding, a new identity, a new doctrine to make sense of their new activities and surroundings. This is precisely the social grouping, peasants torn from the land and drifted into the city, that has been the basis of fundamentalist Christian growth in Latin America in recent decades.

Lest we be misunderstood: We’re not suggesting some mechanistic theory whereby an Egyptian fisherman loses his livelihood, moves to the city, and joins al-Qaida to strike a blow at global capitalism. What we propose is that the global economy is so disrupting the



Former child laborers take part in a protest against child labor in New Delhi, India in 1996.

world, that many people’s allegiances and identities are dramatically shifting — and this is true not only for peasant and working classes, but for other social strata as well.

Vandana Shiva summarizes how she sees this process working:

Economic globalization is fueling economic insecurity, eroding cultural diversity and identity, and assaulting political freedoms of citizens. It is therefore providing fertile ground for the growth of fundamentalism and terrorism. Globalization fuels fundamentalism at multiple levels:

1. Fundamentalism is a cultural backlash to globalization as alienated and angry young men of colonized societies and cultures react to the erosion of identity and security.

2. Dispossessed people robbed of economic security by globalization cling to politicized religious identities and narrow nationalisms for security.

3. Politicians robbed of economic decision making as national economic sovereignty is eroded by globalization organize their vote banks along lines of religious and cultural difference on the basis of fear and hatred. ...

We agree with Shiva: “The ‘war against terrorism’ will not contain ter-

**We’re not suggesting some mechanistic theory whereby an Egyptian fisherman loses his livelihood, moves to the city, and joins al-Qaida to strike a blow at global capitalism. What we propose is that the global economy is so disrupting the world, that many people’s allegiances and identities are dramatically shifting.**

rorism because it does not address the roots of terrorism.” Tragically, the strategy of U.S. government and business leaders is more free market reform, more global trade, more privatization — this, of course, in addition to increased military and “security” spending, and an erosion of civil liberties. We are more than skeptical about this alleged route to peace and security.

Teachers need to enlist our students in a deep inquiry about the causes of terrorism, but more importantly, about building the kind of democratic society that can address those causes.\* Given the “you’re either with us or against us” ethos, asking students to think critically about these issues and to consider alternatives, can appear “unpatriotic.” In the post-Sept. 11 world, the pressures to

conform to official stories have been intense. This simply makes it all the more important to urge students to search for the roots of global conflicts. Our teaching and our activism must insist, in writer Naomi Klein’s words, “that justice and equality are the most sustainable strategies against violence and fundamentalism.” ■

\* Links to all the articles referred to here can be found at the website for the book *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World*, [www.rethinkingschools.org/rg](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/rg).

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