



Teaching After September 11



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FACTC FOCUS 2002



The END of Critical THINKING?

Joe Safdie, English Composition, Lake Washington Technical College

We invested a gang of murderous criminals with the sovereignty of a nation-state . . . and declared war on both an unknown enemy and an abstract noun.

—Lewis Lapham, “American Jihad”

A few months ago, I hung a *Doonesbury* Sunday comic strip on the window of my office cubicle. Its sole visual icon was the White House, with George Bush asking if it was still unpatriotic to criticize him. One of his aides answered that it was, and that “the missile defense program, and corporate tax cuts, and subsidies for the power industry, and oil drilling in Alaska . . . are ALL justified by the war against terrorism!” The last panel has Bush saying “Thanks, Evildoers! They’re such jerks — if they only knew . . .”

I thought it was a fairly humorous comment on the way our politics have evolved since September 11 of last year. A few weeks ago, however, I was walking through the faculty lounge and saw the same comic strip taped to the wall. On top, one of my colleagues had written “Does anyone really think that the President would thank the terrorists for killing thousands of people?” The next day I took the strip outside my office down; after all, I didn’t want to offend the sensibilities of any of my co-workers. He or she might even have reported me to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), who on November 11 of last year issued a report that listed the names of academics along with 117 statements they had made, in public forums or in classes, that questioned aspects of the Administration’s war on terrorism. Here’s one of them, from a Professor of Religious Studies at Pomona College: “We have to learn to use courage for peace instead of war.” Pretty seditious stuff.

But truth be told, I don’t think that September 11 has greatly affected the community colleges’ collective mission, let alone that of my technical college, which seeks to prepare students for “today’s jobs and tomorrow’s opportunities.” I’ll be interested in reading the other contributions to this forum for evidence to the contrary, but I’d be surprised. For one thing, most colleges in this state are in fairly conservative demographic districts, and people in those communities would, I think, tend to support a Republican administration’s policies even if the planes hadn’t crashed into the World Trade Center. Mostly, though, I sense a retrenchment: people are just hunkering down, not even engaging the war one way or the other (even if most don’t go as far as one participant on a poetics list-serve, who preferred to leave things to “the warrior caste”).

As an English teacher, though, I’m interested in smaller things. It may be alarmist, but I sense a greater tendency to treat abstractions as material truths; most of all, I sense a greater reluctance to question authority.

Those last two words, of course, were a mantra to some of us who came of age in the sixties. Hardly unpatriotic, they were instead a challenge, a spur to always go deeper than the surface, to consider the source and potential bias of any piece of information — questioning authority was and is the method of critical thinking itself. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration, I don’t think, to say that democracy itself depends on it.

Yet I don’t see much critical thinking today. Forget the false dichotomies of Good vs. Evil, light against dark; forget, even, that as many, if not more, innocent Afghani civilians have been killed as innocent American ones. After all, this is a war for “freedom,” repeated endlessly not only by the President

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The END of Critical THINKING? *continued*

in his State of the Union address but Paul McCartney at the Super Bowl.

“The tendency to objectify and personify abstractions,” said Aldous Huxley in “Words and their Meanings” (1940) . . . “are the cause of endless intellectual confusion, endless emotional distress, endless misdirections of voluntary effort.” That’s one reason that composition teachers warn their students against using them; the term “smart bombs” may convey recognizable pictures to the mind, but “freedom” suggests different things to everyone who hears it. For example, the president (and certainly his champions on the American Council of Trustees) surely weren’t thinking of freedom of speech or the freedom against search and seizure when using that word. He might, though, have been thinking of the freedom of the fox in the henhouse, also known as “free trade.” As Lewis Lapham said, in the article in *Harper’s* cited above, a war in “freedom’s” defense against terrorism is a war that can never end: “We might as well be sending the 101st Airborne Division to conquer lust, annihilate greed, capture the sin of pride.”

Even though my politics may be clear from this article, this article isn’t about politics, but language, and its current uses and misuses. It’s important, now, to speak with as much meaning as we can muster, and not just engage in empty rhetoric. If the terrible events of last September cause our critical faculties to lapse along with those towers, many more people than just the victims and their families will ultimately suffer. Oh, and I’ve put up another comic strip on my window now, this one by Tom Tomorrow. See, there’s this penguin . . . BACK



Plague and Pestilence

Carolyn P. Bilby, Foreign Language Dept, Bellevue Community College

It was somewhat by accident that my French 200 level class is now having a literary opportunity to focus on the events of September 11th. At the end of fall quarter, they asked to add a novel to our regular coursework. After some discussion we agreed on *The Plague* (“*La peste*”) by Albert Camus, partly because I had often told them what a wonderful novel it was. I had not read it for a number of years, but now it is impossible for me to ignore the comparisons to our current “pestilence”.

Camus had written *La peste* in the 1940’s as an allegory of the German occupation of France during World War Two. He explored the good and evil of people while coping during an impossible situation. My students have also found similarities between *La peste* and our own tragedy. Rats carrying the bubonic plague have not visited us, but many of us have suffered the real or self-imposed separation from our loved ones. Some of the students in this class were out of the country on September 11th, and were unable to get home. Others have been afraid to fly to visit family and friends. Most importantly, according to my students, this work of art has been a vehicle to help them clarify some of the very confusing emotions and the uncertainty they have been experiencing since the onset of the cruel attacks. I have heard my Arts & Humanities colleagues say that the arts soothe us during difficult times in a way that is hard to obtain in any other manner.

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Plague and Pestilence (Continued)

The discussion, which the students try to carry on as much as possible in French, invariably has been framed in the context of our recent tragedy. If art does soothe our soul during trying times, this novel is a terrific choice. It is beautifully written in French. Camus won the Nobel Prize for literature during the 50s. I am certain the classroom discussion on this great novel would not have been so meaningful had it taken place prior to September 11th. BACK



HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE and the search for TERRORISTS

by Sandie Nadelsen, Nursing Program, South Puget Sound Community College.

I don't think that there has been enough discussion about the September 11 crisis and probably not enough critical thinking. More is needed. There seem to be many people who are operating on their "gut feeling" and not critically examining what is happening. Yes, listening to one's inner voice is needed, but so is an unbiased examination of facts.

Here is one way I approached the topic with my nursing students:

My students and I talk a lot about the "nursing process." It's nothing new or mystical, but is really the "scientific process" renamed. It starts with collecting data, grouping findings, drawing conclusions then developing and implementing plans and evaluating results. I encourage them to use this process in their nursing care of people.

A couple of days after the attacks, when all of the "we need to 'get' Osama bin Laden" talk had really begun, my class and I had a discussion about how important it is to gather all the information before coming to a conclusion about how to solve a problem. We were mainly talking about patient care situations, such as checking for high blood pressure. I changed the subject a bit and made the point that immediately following the attacks the conclusion about who was responsible seemed to have been made before any hard data was gathered. Then, information was found to prove that bin Laden was the person behind the terrorism. Maybe he was. I don't know. However, what if it isn't him and in our great need to find the "evil one" we have overlooked the real mastermind?

We spent some time thinking and talking about that and how "jumping to conclusions" in any matter, be it who is a terrorist or why a patient's blood pressure is high, isn't the right way to make a decision. BACK



September 11: The ESL Connection

Jacqueline Allen-Bond, English as a Second Language, Clark College

I teach non-native speakers of English who are in the U.S. to learn English and function successfully, part of which includes understanding what is happening in the U.S. and how U.S. citizens respond to world events. This is demanding, however, for students with very limited English language skills. When a student translates information, editorials, expressions of ideas printed in the media, he or she does not always accurately capture what was written, always a problem when translating word for word. Changing the way I teach and course content to reflect changes in the U.S. since September 11 has, therefore, been a challenge.

But these events also offer opportunities. Once students have learned the months of the year and how to express dates, I refer to September 11 when explaining tense usage. I use it as a common reference when asking questions like “what were you doing when...?”. I model a variety of answers reflecting the kinds of things people in the Twin Towers were doing. When introducing adjectives of emotions, I use September 11 to give classroom meaningfulness to terms like terrible, angry, sad, and so on.

Another challenge surfaces when the discussion turns to deeper issues. The topic of national security versus civil liberties is one that we deal with when students bring what is happening in their lives to the conversation circles we have at the start of most lessons. Bilingual dictionaries are used to understand key words, but some of the concepts of civil liberties are not always deeply appreciated cross-culturally. There are nods of vocabulary understanding,

but not much more.

Perhaps this is because students in the first stages of learning a language for basic survival are very attached to the immediate and the concrete. When they tell what their individual learning goals, needs and wants are, they don't express a desire to read about issues beyond their immediate surroundings.

To help broaden their focus, I encourage students to bring materials and problems from their world beyond the classroom into the class. Even simple things like family photos can prompt short stories of death, loss, homesickness, and personal tragedy that emotionally “link” them with the events of September 11. This is a good way to get them to think beyond concrete issues to the more abstract ideas connected with these events.

Since students are racially, culturally and religiously intermingled, they learn through class activities and break time chats that there are differences among them but similarities too. There is constant pressure on them from outside the classroom environment to accept what is new and to change what is familiar. This can be useful in connecting them to ideas that are important for their class work.

In the classroom, I put continued emphasis on working with different students in each activity. Through use of the classroom as a place where questions can be asked, mistakes can be overcome and understanding beyond language encouraged, students share information gleaned from outside sources, compare what one has understood with another's understanding. Through listening, sharing, translating, and further discussion, the learning community in the classroom develops a broader perspective on how recent events have affected their immediate communities and their personal cultural enclaves.

Broadening the ESL student's perspective can help them connect with others in the classroom and out-

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September 11: The ESL Connection (Continued)

side the classroom. Various ESL organizations state wide have been developing and submitting for the ESL community lesson plans and materials to bring published materials to the level of comprehension of the average ESL students, www.catesol.org. The field, in general, is interested in ensuring ESL students are not “left out of the loop” through linguistic complications or cross-cultural misunderstandings. BACK



Can we HANDLE the TRUTH?

Paul Hæder, SFC C English Instructor, Spokane Falls Community College

In times of national crisis when the war drums are being banged and hyper-patriotism becomes the crack cocaine of the media establishment, community college and university instructors need to go on a crash diet to fortify themselves against the jingoism and bandwagon reductionism which our body public uses to drown out our students' idealism and compassion. Unfortunately, a large portion of Americans demands this attack against free thought and freedom of expression in order to gain some sense of security about being one nation undivided. The problem is that the first casualty of this war is truth, as Phillip Knightley brilliantly records in his book, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Mythmaker from Crimea to Kosovo*.

Truth isn't coming from policymakers, the president or the main electronic media outlets – ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX – who are owned by global corporations bent on inculcating the same mass (self-consuming) consumerism message over and over.

Truth is the first casualty of this al Qaeda/Taliban war. Perception becomes reality for most Americans, so what they see vis-à-vis through the diffracting filters of the controlled press's filters is

anything but truth, or some long-term vision for global healing.

But how can teachers and students peel away these new perceptions that tend to cull truth?

Our job now is to nurture critical analysis of our post-9/11 world; to help guide students to develop some method of strategic planning – long-term, holistic thinking and action that truly applies democratic principles in their workplaces and neighborhood; to incubate passionate, informed and ethical citizens who might one day go into local politics and community activism to solve problems at the local level.

We do this by questioning the status quo and the reactionary mindset. We can only attempt to uncover truth, but one thing is a constant in my classroom: Students quickly realize that today's solutions will most assuredly be tomorrow's problems.

The time is now to enlist diverse, humanistic measures during desperate times. We've reached a critical mass for the average Jose or Sue who has had to juggle rampant consumerism with unchecked media duplicity and political malfeasance on a colossal scale. It's in our community colleges and universities where instructors need to become overtly engaged both politically and globally. In most cases I've observed and

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Can we HANDLE the TRUTH?

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read up on, college instructors have thus far been up to the task.

Having taught in universities and community colleges during the Contra War in Nicaragua, through Operations Just Cause in Panama and Desert Shield in the Persian Gulf and up to now during this debacle of unrestrained experimental combat and Bush's schizoid "nation-building-through-clusterbombs-and-Meals-Ready-to-Eat-while-tearing-off-burqas," I have always found students willing to engage in deeper critical thought than what is practiced by our national leaders and pundits.

It's an uphill battle, at times, attempting to derail the propaganda for which many college students have been exposed, but as a communication arts instructor who deals with mostly first-year students, I am more steeled in my resolve to use essay writing and research instruction as transformative processes so each student can learn on his or her own the complexities of our global arena before 9/11 and most tellingly because of 9/11. Before September 11, students and faculty all across the country were engaged in robust critical debates, some of which generated real meaningful change: Those Northwestern University students and faculty who have helped to overturn several wrong death penalty convictions. The cacophonous demonstrators spurred on by the World Trade Organization which has precipitated dynamic organized and grassroots protestors with cogent ideas about how economic new world order is disorder on so many levels, from global warming to cultural survival. We saw students and non-students alike protesting the makeover of the U.S. Army's School of the Americas (now deemed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) by risking criminal persecution while exercising their U.S.-given right to protest. Protestors of every ilk in Puerto Rico demanded

the U.S. Navy stop its repetitious, destructive air bombing of Vieques Island. At the start of 2001 there were still rigorous grumblings about George W. Bush illegally wrangling the presidency through unfathomable interference by the U.S. Supreme Court's wresting of our democratic voting rights. Ivy League and small state school student bodies were barricading themselves inside administration buildings in a show of solidarity for underpaid custodial and blue collar staffs, as well as rebuffing the sweatshop labor employed in Third World countries to sew and stitch school logos. Teachers at community and technical colleges may be the last bastion of alternate (not always alternative) dialogue for many of our economically-distressed students, who have been pushed by the likes of George W. Bush the governor, the candidate, the see all evil president — a man who views public education as almost being Satanic and who has never met a student for whom he didn't have a standardized test to weigh him or her down.

Truth about one country's resolve and another country's righteousness is many times just another form of vilification, and while we need diverse free dialogue in our press, instructors must rally together and allow contradictory opinions to grow within academia. Some students and instructors wanted swift retribution after the September Eleven attacks; others wanted to understand the circumstances that precipitated the attacks; yet fewer others proposed pacifism and healing. From these three fronts since 9/11, colleges and universities across the U.S. have experienced hundreds of incidents of official condemnation and collegial browbeating because of their in and out of classroom opinions.

We are in this rarified 80-plus percentage approval-rating moment, when poll after poll generates lopsided acceptance for a president who lost the popular vote and was very proud of his insular, parochial view. It is incumbent upon educators now, especially under this veil of "us versus them," "might makes right" and "love it or leave it" mentality, when all the odds seem to be against us, to allow education to undermine mistruths, lies and xenophobia.

BACK



FACING UP to Critical THINKING

Denise Vaughan, Political Science, Bellevue Community College

We cannot shirk at students' misperceptions of critical thinking skills.

Words have meaning. Some words come loaded with powerful implications. Even dates carry powerful and pervasive meanings. September 11th will always carry a meaning for Americans: a sense of vulnerability, a feeling of horror, and a sense of unity. The attacks on the United States allow instructors the rare opportunity to address an interested and attentive audience. In the same way that it provides a compelling, unique opportunity to link words and events with meaning in the classroom, it has also limited the insight students generally use when analyzing international events.

This event was close to home and unique. As such, September 11th must be viewed as an unusual event and the results not generalizable. Some good learning experiences have come out of the events of September 11th. The terrorist attacks have allowed many students to place Afghanistan on a map. Many students routinely watch the news or read papers and journals. They are demonstrating an interest in world politics which has been too often absent from the classroom.

However, it has also given many of them justification to label Afghans, as well as any Muslim group, the "other" and allowed students to distance themselves and their personal experience from that of individuals in Afghanistan and around the Muslim world. Students also reject any criticism of the present American Administration. They are resistant to discussion of possible terrorist motivation, even criticizing teachers for considering motivation of terrorists a reasonable discussion topic. Many educators have faced severe criticism in the classroom and even at round table discussions and lectures. This fundamental lack

of critical thinking in the media and the society encourages educators to drop criticism from the curriculum and focus on the simple events.

Educators should not allow that to happen. In ten years, most students will no longer be able to locate Afghanistan on a map and, perhaps, that is secondary to their education anyway. If they learn to critically examine the actions of all people involved, in every country, students will take that skill with them. This resistance to critical examination of the events of September 11th represents a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of students and educators about the word critical and its meaning.

The word critical is a loaded word. It is loaded with personal experiences and personal attacks. Critical thinking is not necessarily about finding something wrong or inadequate. Thinking critically is to examine thinking or behavior, to break an action down into its constituent parts and analyze the behavior. Sometimes, the behavior will be found to be positive and sometimes it will not. Critical thinking is not just finding something wrong. It is possible to think critically about the Bush Administration's handling of the terrorist crisis and find that it is perfectly in line, unlikely, but possible. As educators, we need to teach the students to examine the behaviors of their own government, the international actors, themselves, and, indeed, us. This is a skill that will always be of value to our students.

Critical thinking is one of the few skills educators can teach their students which will be useful for life. In order to do this, we need to move beyond the labels and into the value of words and events. September 11th has provided us with a rare opportunity to address critical international events in a personal way, a way that will forever alter the manner in which our students understand the world. We cannot be safe from criticism and still do this job. BACK



Keep a cool FROG

Karen Strickland, Social and Human Services, Seattle Central Community College

I, like just about everybody else in the U.S., was shocked by the events of September 11th, 2001. It was surreal, unfathomable, disorienting and thought provoking. I contrast that with my experience of all that has happened since then and I feel like the frog in the pot of lukewarm water, slowly coming to a boil.

While I have been troubled by many of the U.S. government's responses to the terrorist attacks, I'm a bit dumbfounded by an apparent lack of concern amongst most of the population about the infringement of civil liberties and academic freedom. Listening to NPR on a Sunday morning I heard about the "report" of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA-www.goacta.org.)

The title? *Defending Civilization.*

It's claim? *That universities in the U.S. are failing the country.*

Its conclusion? *That curriculum ought to change as they (members of the council) see fit, namely minimizing multicultural education and reinforcing an oversimplified and inaccurate view of American history.*

My response? *Huh?*

This so-called report, embarrassingly lean on substance, listed 115 comments from faculty, students, flyers and posters that provide "evidence" of their claims. Such *outrageous* comments as "Recycle plastic, not violence" or "We have to learn to use courage for peace instead of war" were included. That these statements led to a conclusion that "universities are failing America" suggests a serious lack of critical thinking on the part of those making that determina-

tion.

In addition to this report is the quick passage of the USA PATRIOT Act (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d107:h.r.03162>) and proposed legislation here in Washington state (HB2314, HB2416 and HB 2411), all posing considerable threat to civil liberties. Fortunately, none of the state legislation passed but this near-McCarthyite climate has negatively affected us, one example being an American Federation of Teachers member at the University of Florida who may be fired because of his political views. I'm hearing barely a murmur of protest and seeing even less action among my peers. I have a feeling that people are talking about their concerns but there's a sense of isolation and fear.

I decided that I needed to *do something*, so my first step was to take a resolution titled *A Resolution in Support of Maintaining Academic Freedom of Faculty and Civil Liberties of All Residents of the U.S.* to the Faculty Senate of Seattle Central Community College, of which I'm the president. We discussed the issue and passed the resolution, acknowledging in it the impact of the events of 9/11 and their aftermath on our community, students' communities and our role as educators. The next steps are to present it to college administration, the Board of Trustees, the Executive Board of the faculty union (SCCFT), the Washington Federation of Teachers (WFT), The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC).

One of the barriers to passing the resolution was the fact that our faculty is made up of people with vastly divergent views on the events of September 11th and their aftermath. Some would have sup-

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ported an anti-war position while others insisted we had no business speaking out at all. I struggled to find the common ground across this diverse group. The senate members were well aware of the need to represent the majority of faculty as we discussed the details of the resolution. My hope is that this is the beginning of a *collective* response to government actions that threaten our academic freedom and the civil liberties of the residents of the U.S.

Each of us needs to take responsibility for evaluating these events, just as we expect our students to evaluate the wealth of information to which they are exposed; in our role as educators we also have a responsibility to speak up. I'd like to see every campus in the state take a stand in support of academic freedom and civil rights and then com-

municate their position to other relevant bodies-administration, SBCTC, the AFT, your union... We need to take the lead and we must not simply get used to conditions as they gradually evolve. Let's be proactive and lift ourselves out of the situation, before our rights and freedoms are boiled away! If you're interested in seeing SCCC's resolution, email me and I'll send a copy- kstric@sccd.ctc.edu. BACK



Free WILL, unity and the end of GLOBAL Terrorism

Christopher Gilbert, Business Dept., Tacoma Community College.

This is definitely a 'teaching moment' - perhaps the greatest moment offered to this generation. In my classrooms, I found many students had little context on which to judge the circumstances of September 11th. However, it seemed imperative that as an educator I provided them a safe and intelligent haven in which to discuss the events. Toward that end, I spent the first few days of each class discussing my views of these events and allowed open forums for student conversations. What follows is a compiled and edited version of these discussions held the first months of the 2001-2002 academic year. It contains a for-

est view of these circumstances and concludes with a list of nine things students (everyone) could do to make a difference.

Albert Einstein once said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." I choose the latter in reviewing the events of September 11th. What I see in these ongoing tragedies is that the sacred gifts of Unity, Diversity and Free

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Free WILL, unity and the end of GLOBAL Terrorism (continued)

Will given to us in this world have become more valuable. I don't think anyone among us is unmoved by the daily stories of hardship and heroism, cowardice and bravery, divisiveness and unity, crisis and victory here and abroad that unfold before our eyes. But many of us are asking what it all means? Why do such things happen? How do we get through these horrible adversities? How do we feel whole?

Not to be contrite, but each of us has a wonderful gift for healing, *free will*. What we become during and after these events is what we choose to become. We have that sacred gift of choice. Each of us has choice. And in this country, we are blessed with an overabundance of choice. We must use it!

For instance, we can choose to concentrate on the travesties now, or find solace in renewed connections with our family and friends- seeing clearly how much we depend on one another. We can choose to despair at social and economic upheaval, or rejoice in the generosity of our nation and the newly emerging support of nearly all the rest of humanity. We can choose to feel terrorized by radicals lost in blinding selfishness, or feel empowered by a new, worldwide effort to finally rid us of this scourge, forever. We can choose to lose ourselves in the words and actions of global vengeance, or learn the primacy of international justice and punishment *when it is tempered* by forgiveness. These are *our* choices and thank God we have free will.

But as we witnessed September 11th, free will seems both a blessing and a curse. Certainly, the poor souls who commit terrorist acts use their free will. But no true Faith has ever preached hate or vengeance. In fact, all the great Faiths warn us that vengeance is a merciful God's alone. We are instructed to show love whether we're Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'i's, believers, or non-believers. These great Faiths teach us the need for justice and the necessity of punishment. But, they all teach us to inflict such punishment justly.

So, what does it all mean? It means we are tested by our own human failings, but we can and will succeed in overcoming them. We can choose good for ourselves and for each other.

Why do such tragedies happen? Free will brings with it the best of humanity and the worst of humanity. We are all leaves on the same tree. What we decide affects others. What others decide affects us. The tragedies in these terrorist acts renew our sense of connectedness. We must devote ourselves to creating a world of better choices. And, one person at a time we must demonstrate care for others.

How do we get through these horrible adversities? In remembering, that *through all of human history, evil has never triumphed over good- never!* We already know the outcome of a global effort for security based on justice. Hatred and injustice never triumph- love and justice do.

How do we feel whole? To demonstrate care for one another is to create unity in a confused world. If we use these adversities to unite mankind, then for the first time, America takes on a new global role. More than our leadership in

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Free WILL, unity and the end of GLOBAL Terrorism (continued)

economics, politics and social interplay, we take on spiritual leadership when we believe unity makes us whole. But we must choose to serve one another. We must use our free will to understand diversity is an attitude - not a program, not tolerance but an attitude of pure appreciation.

So out of this conversation, what can anyone really do? How about nine simple actions? And, if we do them together we achieve not only personal victory, but take precious and important steps to a more equitable world.

Nine actions you can take to create victory through this crisis.

- 1. Change your etiquette of everyday life-** Next time you ask someone, "Hi, how are you?" really listen to the answer. Interact graciously with store clerks, salespersons, your bank teller, the mailperson- everyone, as though you are grateful for what they do. Because aren't you? Bottom line- let others know they matter!
- 2. Get to know your neighbors.** Talk; help them with yard work; ask them over for dessert. Show love. The world truly changes when we invite our neighbors to join our families at the dinner table.
- 3. Pray, reflect; meditate,** not just every week in organized services, but everyday. There is palpable spiritual energy in the aftermath of crisis. Spread it!
- 4. Live as though everything around you is a miracle.** Each day is precious. Remember the last words you

speak to anyone are perhaps what you will be remembered by. Stop and notice the trees, the sky, the sea - life!

- 5. Get a copy of the Quran and read it.** Know *that* great book is about love just like the Bible, the Torah, the Kitabi'aqdas and others. They are all from the same source, One God- many paths to him.
- 6. Donate** money, food, blood, or your time to service organizations and really live the idea you cannot get anymore out of life than you give.
- 7. Smile at foreigners** and pay special attention to their needs in a time they feel vulnerable.
- 8. Listen to minorities and women with a greater ear.** Move to support their voices and their feelings, especially now. Imagine if they had been listened to in Afghanistan and other places.
9. And, lastly, **see light in this tunnel.** Every crisis holds victory in its hands. We cannot imagine the wonders that will come out of these tragic circumstances. But, we do know if we only concentrate on the immediate tragedies we lose their potency to create a better future.

I challenge you to try these nine actions. They are marvelous for healing- healing you, healing others- for healing the world. They are tangible expressions of that important portent, "Think Globally, Act Locally". Division created this hatred, but we are assured it will be extinguished by our daily choices to show love. Through these unfolding events find greater spirituality and renew your dedication to quench a world starving for unity. BACK



DEEP Discussion

Elayne Rousso, Sociology, Bellevue Community College

9/11 has proven to be the Energizer Bunny that just keeps going for my students and me. In Fall 2001, the first assignment in each of my three classes (Social Problems, Social Psychology, and Introduction to Sex and Sexuality) asked the students to connect terrorism and global realities to the perspective of the course. Again, in Winter 2002 the first assignment in each of my three classes (Social Problems, Social Psychology and Introduction to Sociology) put the students to the same task. The issue has proven to be one very powerful way to kick off the quarter. The topic also stimulated the students to look at an issue from a variety of perspectives, provide evidence supporting their generalizations and positions, and respond to challenges of their own assumptions.

In Social Problems, an online course, the first threaded discussion assignment asked students to respond to the following question: "Is terrorism related to global inequality? Explain your response. Define inequality in your response." The assignment was designed to stimulate thinking about the course's central notion of inequality, which underscores all their work for the entire course. Terrorism and global conditions were simply convenient topics for the launch.

Following is one thread from the first asynchronous discussion in Social Problems:

Person A: Is Terrorism Related to Global Inequality? Terrorism is defined as

- The unlawful use or threatened use of force of violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons.

Inequality is defined as

- Lack of equality, as of opportunity, treatment, or status.

Although inequality may seem to be a ma-

ior part of terrorism I don't feel like it's related. Around the world there are many instances of people living in poverty that don't feel the need to terrorize others. I feel that terrorism is created and perpetuated by the feeling that your life is being oppressed or controlled by someone else.

When I first looked at the question my answer was yes, global inequality and terrorism are directly related. Then I began to think of what is inequality. Just because you lack opportunity or status that doesn't mean that you will feel the need to become a terrorist. People all over the world in every country are victims of inequality but that is not what will make someone become a terrorist extremist. On the other hand Osama Bin Laden is a multi billionaire that is living in caves and is a full-fledged terrorist.

I feel like terrorism is always brought about by a feeling of being oppressed. Looking specifically at the current US situation, the entire Arab community supports

a Palestinian State. They view the US and Israel as the oppressors over the Palestinian people. Even though we have strong ties with modern Arab nations such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt they all object to Israel's occupation of the area in question. This is a perfect environment to breed and cultivate terrorism. The people in the region of Afghanistan and Pakistan are perfect recruits for terrorism. A majority of them have a feeling of helplessness and no choices. That will make a lot of people feel like they want to belong to something bigger than themselves because they have nothing. They join terrorist groups and fight for a cause that they believe is right.

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DEEP Discussion (continued)

Another major factor of terrorism is government. Many people in Afghanistan do not have a choice of joining the army or not. They do not live in a free society where they can choose to fight or not. The government can perpetuate terrorism by forcing education and propaganda to their people. The Taliban were forcing teenagers to go the front lines in the war in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, terrorism has many common factors but I feel like the main one is the feeling of oppression. Many poor people are happy, but oppressed people are not.

B: I have read through everyone's thoughts on racism and inequality. I feel that there are many diverse views that were expressed in this class's introductions. It is exciting to be a part of a class where people with different views can openly express them. I hope that everyone can have fun and wish you all the best of luck.

C: Matthew, I agree. Just about every response I have read has something to it. There is truth in every one of those. So how do we find what is really the right answer? I guess we won't as for every one of us there is something else that works.

D: I believe there is no right answer, that is what makes all of us individuals. It is commendable that everyone can express their opinions. It's when people start believing that their opinion is the only one, that is when we get racism, bombings, killings, etc.. Just by accepting that everyone is different, yet equal can make all the difference.

E: again, this is confusing. I don't agree with your statement that "everyone is equal but different". You need

to explain this in-depth. To me, it sounds like this "The numbers 2 and 3, they are different. But at the same time they are equal". How are they equal? The only equal things about You and I are that we're both Humans, it stops there. I disagree 100% with the statement that everyone is equal, because we aren't. That's a fallacy dreamed up by speech writers that trickled it's way down the line into the people of the world.

F: I think, my opinion, that every human is equal. You are no better than me, I am no better than you. That doesn't mean that we aren't different. There are a lot of things different from you and I and I haven't even seen you. With that, there are a lot of differences in everyone, yet, we are all equal. This is my opinion only, I respect and welcome yours and anyone else's as well....;)~

G: Not be aggressive or anything but do you REALLY believe that every human is created as equals? For example is the guy that just killed his family equal to you, a young college student who may help society in a great way? Is the bum that collects welfare equal to the single mother who's dead beat husband is no where to be seen but she works her ass off barely able to keep food on the table but refuses to accept government help?

F: Yes, Keith, I do believe that every person is equal. Even if Jo Blow killed his family. The actions he took may not have been just, but he is still equal to you, me and anyone else. Just like the African American who tries for the same job as you, or the lesbian who adopts a child through an agency. Even the Afghans that continue to fight with us, they are no better, no worse than us. Their actions may not be just, but they are

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DEEP Discussion (continued)

people. You may think these people are not equal, but Keith, I do. That is why we are Americans, we have the freedom of speech and the freedom to believe and express whatever opinions we want.

A: I also believe that everyone is equal but I don't believe that they have the right to terrorize others. I don't blame the Taliban soldiers for continuing to fight but I don't believe in the killing of innocent people in the name of God or Allah.

F: The killing of ANY persons is horrible, I agree with you on that.

From one short thread in a long and involved discussion (which, by the way, has continued beyond the deadline and still stimulates responses), 9/11 has proven to be a teaching moment in the Social Problems course. Students began exploring the basic meaning of inequality. They also questioned each other's perspectives and meanings. They tried seeing the issue from the perspectives of classmates, and recognized the value of utilizing a variety of perspectives. To my surprise, this initial discussion brought them to realize that the course is based on a probing discussion format, in which they were going to recognize a variety of takes on the same issue or idea. Furthermore, they began questioning the nature of "truth" in social life, cultural relativity and its boundaries in cognitive analysis, and the right of each participant to articulate ideas and opinions. And the threaded discussion format stimulated their questions, probes, and critiques, in order to provide reasoning and evidence.

I expect that this teaching moment will continue for years. What happened on 9/11 will provide me with an excellent vehicle for getting my stu-

dents in touch with the discipline and course focal points, and kicking off critical thinking exercises. I do believe that it is the most powerful example from life that I have been able to use for these purposes. It certainly starts the quarter with a bang. Repeatedly, students remarked that the question was extremely challenging yet one worthy of response.

Last quarter, one of my students included the following paragraph in her self-assessment for the quarter:

Finally, I find it ironic (or just an odd twist of fate) that I would take this class so shortly after the September 11th attacks. My feelings of shock and sadness grew into fear and anger, finally expressed with an overwhelming desire to express my patriotism. As I was waving my flag, I was also learning about our countries shortcomings. The racism, poverty and inequities in education, along with our poor showing in international comparison left me a bit unsettled with my sudden national pride. In the end, I think I have learned how to be proud of what I have while questioning ways to better our society, and the need to always demand the best.

What else could a teacher hope to hear? [BACK](#)



A TIME for THINKING

Gerard M. Smith, English Department, Clark College

Perhaps I have changed since the tragedy, but my course content and outline have not. Now I have an even more horrendous example with which to illustrate how language shapes reality.

In my composition courses, we always skeptically examine our sources of knowledge, whether it be popular or academic, historical or current. Critically reading all publications that disseminate facts and opinions should be common practice in the academy; helping students understand the rhetorical strategies, the propaganda devices, and how to discern fallacious argument from reasonable discourse should be the college teacher's vocation.

For example, in both my poetry and composition courses, I discuss the use of patriotic symbols to rally support for government action, discuss the use of terms such as "terrorist," "evil doer" and "guerrilla" to depict the opposition as "subhuman," so that moral obstacles to "collateral damage" can be overcome. Before Sept. 11th, the US government's alleged terrorists or evil doers were the Zapatistas, the Palestinians, and historically, the American Indians: these people would describe themselves as "freedom fighters" as "indigenous people" who face genocide. In class we discuss how the dominant culture uses the media to suppress and oppress the "conquered" culture through racial stereotypes and negative euphemisms, and very rarely publish the dissenting view.

Now, the events of Sept. 11th provide an example of an extremist group disrupting the "new world order." Again, because of the actions of an extreme fundamentalist group, an entire culture must undergo racial profiling. The same rhetoric that Haig Bosmajian exposes in "Dehumanizing People and Euphemizing War" must be exposed again, then from Reagan about the Soviet Union, now from Bush about the Afghan rebels who helped topple the Soviet Union. My students don't miss this irony. Unfortunately whereas Reagan's threat to use nuclear weapons was accidentally broadcast, Bush purposefully shook his very big nuclear stick.

Currently I am in three ongoing discussions about how successful the terrorists have been in making America a shadow of itself." Since most Americans value civil liberty, justice and equality, any limitation of those values throws a shadow. The new legislation broadening the powers of the FBI lengthens that shadow even further. Discussing how the federal government used a time of crisis to limit and restrict the civil liberties of its citizens has become a topic in my classes. If history repeats itself, then will Arab-American citizens be the targets of profiling, housing discrimination, and even internment like the Japanese? How long will this shadow be cast? How long will it grow?

In the sake of freeing the world of terrorists, will we target other groups who have a just cause? In the name of peace and security, will our government continue policies that make third-world countries our economic colonies? Even in a time of patriotism, I have warned, don't forget to be skeptical. Three weeks after 9/11, we finished Stanley Milgram's "Obedience to Authority" in which he concludes that even American citizens may not have the resources to individually resist an immoral or unethical order. I asked them to consider how patriotic values, religious beliefs, and a charismatic leader might make a good Christian bomb an abortion clinic or shoot a doctor. I think they get the point. No my teaching hasn't changed, just the faces and the names I use for examples. BACK



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PENTAGON World Trade Center ANTHRAX AFGHANISTAN

SIGNPOST: SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Karen Halpern, Business Department, South Puget Sound Community College.

“Do you remember where you were on November 22nd, 1963?” People my age tell stories of our reaction to the death of a charismatic president. Now my young students will have a signpost of their own: September 11, 2001.

I'll remember, too. A colleague called me that morning: “Karen, there's been a terrorist attack on the World Trade Center...” I didn't even wait for him to finish before I stammered, “Oh my god, he's supposed to be in New York this week” and hung up abruptly. The “he” was my former husband who lives in Chicago but travels regularly to New York and does business with many of the firms who were located in the World Trade Center Towers. After some hesitation, his secretary was willing to tell me only that he had not yet left for New York. Relief flooded through me. I woke our children, told them as gently as I could of the tragedy, turned on the television and watched, with them, as the twin towers crumpled to the ground. All this and we three had to go to school.

That morning, at a previously arranged faculty retreat, our vice president of instruction reminded us that we had chosen lives of service and that regardless of what was going on in the outside world, we had a duty to carry on with our work. We live in the public spotlight, he said, and we have a responsibility to show strength in times of tragedy.

Our community is adjacent to two large military bases: Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. In addition to the state of uncertainty that all Americans felt, we have been watching our students, friends, neighbors, or families being prepared to leave for war. In Fall, students left mid-quarter for training or were

unable to attend classes because their duties became heavier. Even as I write this, the colleague who called me that morning, a member of the air force reserves, is preparing to go to a base in the Middle East. His office is next to mine and I will notice his absence keenly.

It would have been comforting to retreat into a more civilized world, to escape, if only for a few hours, from the tension that surrounded me. It would have been nice, for example, to be able to teach math where the quadratic equation still works and statistical answers can be expressed within a specific degree of confidence. History would have been good: we know how those past wars ended. So much of literature deals with conflict but even after September 11th, I could have comfortably debated whether Othello, the great war hero, had consummated his marriage to Desdemona before killing her. I could even have taught economics, the dismal science. Although demand curves undeniably shifted after the terrorist attack, an equilibrium point still exists and the supply imbalances would clear if a low enough price were offered by sellers.

But I teach business, the lightning rod for all of the terrorists' hatred of us. Even before Fall term, the new edition of our textbook was outdated. The book reflected a business world that saw itself as invulnerable to anything other than competition. The main examples of globalization were outsourcing production to countries where labor rates are lower and creating trading blocs such as the European Union to facilitate regional trade. Although the business textbooks are careful not to refer to “third world countries,” they do talk about countries that are “developing” or “emerging” such as Mexico or South Korea. Little attention is paid to “pre-emergent” economies: economically isolated or war-ravaged areas that simply didn't have a place in the discussion of multinational companies and foreign trade zones. I can't remember a book that covered business in the Middle East in very much depth. The whole conti-

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SIGNPOST: SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 (Continued)

ment of Africa, many of the former Warsaw Pact nations, and all of the “-stans”: (Uzbekistan, Khazakstan, Turkmenistan, etc.) were ignored in one text we used. But after September 11th, we realize that we are not as isolated, nor as invulnerable, as we had thought. Life in the world of business will never be the same and those of us who teach the discipline scramble to help our students make sense of it, if we can.

Students used to ask simple questions about economic recessions, how companies come up with new product ideas, or the effect of a Federal Reserve rate cut on mortgage rates. I could answer those. Now they ask whether airline capacity will ever return to pre-September levels and when Boeing will stop its layoffs. I don't know. They ask how the psychological ramifications of the attack will change consumer buying patterns and how many more retailers may file for bankruptcy in the next months and years as a result of changed values. I don't know. They ask if we will allow the domestic steel companies to become a quasi-regulated monopoly in order to serve the national defense. I don't know.

Even the seemingly simple questions beg the same answer: We're in a recession and insurance costs are rising; who's going to pay for it? How will my employer keep me safe when we don't know where the next threat is coming from? How many more government regulations will result from this and what will they cost businesses – and me? Flying is such a hassle now; how will airlines get people back in the air? What happens to the industry if they don't? How will our lives change if we don't fly? If life outside of work looks all the more precious, how can I motivate the people who work for me? I'm getting tired of all the flag-waving in ads; when do we get back to normal and run funny ads again? How do you account for business that has disappeared since September 11th that may never return? Who is going to pay for all of the damage?

How did the federal government decide the

value of a human life?

That last one I can answer: it's an actuarial computation that a lot of the families haven't liked. The one sure answer I have, in the midst of many “I don't know”s, inevitably leads to the statement that “it isn't fair.” No, I sigh, a lot of it isn't fair and I don't have very many answers. In fact, there are days that I am weary from not having enough answers but that doesn't stop the questions.

At the same time that I am acting as that source of strength and calm, as I watch a colleague leave for a period of time as yet undefined, as I deal with the fragility that still surfaces in my students after five months, I have to relearn what I am teaching. There are a lot of things I don't know. I tell my students that and tell them that we are learning together now.

I suppose that's part of teaching at a community college: we learn together. BACK



Dissecting OPINION

David Hyde, Sociology Dept., South Puget Sound Community College

During the fall quarter of 2001, I had the opportunity to teach two Social Problems classes in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks. These are introductory sociology classes, in which students examine a number of different current social issues from a sociological perspective. Because these classes began just a few days after the attacks in New York and D.C., they served as powerful forums for students to engage in discussion about what the September 11 attacks mean to America. While these classes normally include a brief discussion on terrorism near the end of the eleven week quarter, this fall the classes spent an entire two weeks at the beginning of the quarter discussing the issue of terrorism and the associated issues of war, security, ideology, and international conflict, before moving on to crime and deviance, economic inequality, racism, patriarchy, and other social problems. The classes were particularly concerned with how the recent terrorist attacks have impacted our society, our national identity, our economy, our laws and security, and America's place in the world.

Although these Social Problems classes are large—two sections of 45 students each this fall, with about half of them first quarter college students—I try to operate the classes as seminars, using the Socratic method of questioning to draw students deeper into analysis. I contribute to the discussion by providing facts, sociological perspectives, and directed questions where necessary. The students do quite a bit of writing in these classes as well so that they can more fully explore their ideas, and I can help facili-

tate students' understanding of issues and their ability to synthesize, apply, and express their thoughts.

For class discussion, I collected a sampling of opinion columns, ranging from conservative to liberal to radical, for the students to analyze. Students learned to sort through the objective conditions—the facts—and the subjective concerns—the opinions—in these articles. Students also attempted to discern what in these articles was simply rhetorical and what provided information or typified diverse perspectives. Students developed a better sense of why people hold the opinions they do.

Students also scrutinized public opinion polls regarding support for military action in response to terrorism. For example, a Gallup poll asked, "Do you or do you not support the American military response to the September 11 attack?" with a consistent 87% or higher saying "yes." However, a less reported poll added an alternative to Gallup's "military response or nothing" approach. This survey asked, "Do you support a military response or an international criminal extradition approach or no response?" Students could see that the support for a military solution dropped from 87% to only about 50% (with 40% preferring the criminal justice alternative). In a sociology class, it is vital that students learn how to interpret and critically evaluate statistics and polls.

The classes also examined the symbolic use of language—images of good versus evil and the use of the word "terrorism." Specifically, students discussed how some things might be defined as terrorism while others are not, how labels are selectively applied, and how people on opposing sides of a conflict see themselves as "good" and their actions as "just". Students were asked to consider how we differentiate a terrorist from a revolutionary or freedom fighter.

Students also examined freedom of speech and peer pressure by looking at examples of backlash in academia where professors critical of the war have been fired, censured, or, as in one case in Canada, even charged with a hate crime. Students could see the clear contrast with their own opportunity to discuss thoughtfully this complex issue without being attacked for their beliefs.

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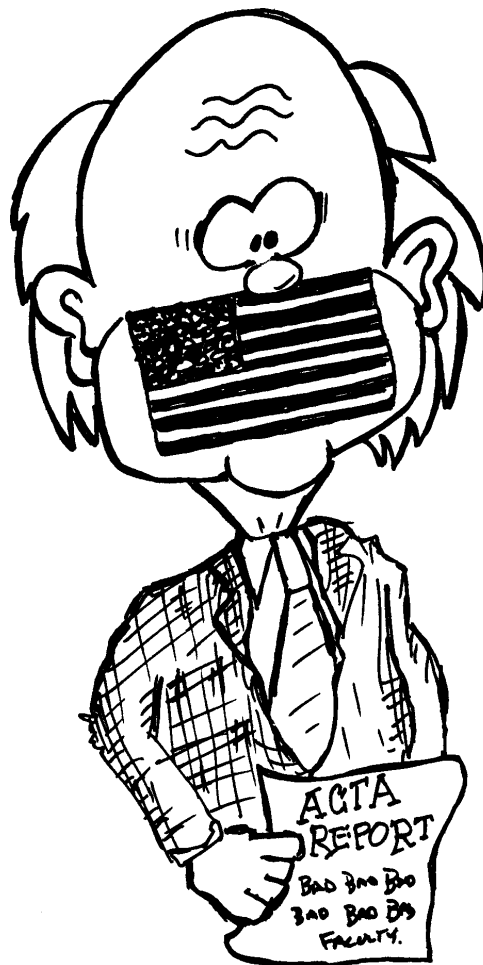


Dissecting OPINION (Continued)

A recent report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, entitled “Defending Civilization: How Our Universities are Failing America and What Can Be Done About It” claimed students nationwide were concerned about an unpatriotic response from professors, but students in these classes indicated no such concern. In fact, they appeared glad to raise the level of discussion beyond the uncritical sound bites and propaganda prevalent in the media.

Overall the students participated positively. They discussed facts and perspectives in the classroom that have been absent from discussions in the popular press and from political leaders. Some students indicated that they were sharing their discussion with friends and family. Students in these Social Problems classes expressed no extreme personal trauma as a result of September 11 that might have discouraged classroom discussion of these sensitive and emotionally charged ideas. To the contrary, the students were eager and ready to have an intellectual discussion about the September 11 attacks. Of course, two weeks was enough, and students were quite ready to move on to discussing other social problems.

The three main outcomes of the classes were that 1) students developed an understanding that the events of September 11 are not just random acts of violence, but rather that terrorist acts exist in an historical and social context, 2) students were able to dissect what they saw in the media with more of a critical eye, and 3) students are better able to ask “why” questions that go beyond simplistic understandings of social phenomena. BACK



Attacking OURSELVES

Randy Givens, Nursing Program, Clark College

I know exactly where I was on September 11: circumnavigating Mount Hood on the Timberline Trail. It was day three of my four-day hike around the mountain. I remember the day clearly, not because of the terrorist attacks—I didn't learn of those until the evening of the 12th—but because of another hiker I overtook on the trail. We greeted each other and then stared in bewilderment as the same question entered both of our heads: "What exactly does he have in his pack?" He confessed his weighed 60 pounds when he left the trailhead. I reported mine only weighed 21. We were hiking the same loop trail, each traveling solo, and both experiencing the same sensory stimuli with pretty much the same objective in mind—to distance ourselves from the routines of our culture and recapture that intimate awareness of life itself.

I am a registered nurse and teach in the second year of Clark's Nursing Program. I have chosen not to change what I teach or how I teach in response to 9/11. I could argue that the attacks on our country do not conveniently tie into my content areas. My curricular boundaries encompass those anatomical parts and processes packed snugly between the diaphragm and the pelvis. They behave in a fairly predictable manner in good times and in bad. When they get damaged they don't care what the cause was, but they will alter their behavior, again in a somewhat predictable manner. Ruptured spleens, lacerated livers, perforated bowels and failing kidneys are going to be dealt with the same way regardless of the precipitating event. One could argue that exposure to unfamiliar biochemical agents might require skills, therapies and techniques that are significantly different from the common and familiar ones. I would not disagree; however, right now I feel more compelled to deal with health issues that are killing us as we speak rather than ones

that might happen some day.

All the terrorists in the world will never accomplish what we've been able to do to ourselves. We bury tens of thousands of individuals every year who have managed to single-handedly defeat their body's ability to heal itself. Coronary artery disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, diverticular bowel disease, diabetes, stroke, hypertension . . . the majority of these illnesses are self-inflicted and highly preventable. The alarming rate of childhood obesity, not to mention the fat problem in the current adult population, ensures that our profession will not run out of customers any time soon. Diabetes is not taken seriously and now is developing in epidemic proportions—mostly due to lifestyle choices. Who do we really need to be afraid of?

We're shocked when death and illness is inflicted by others, but when it's our own doing—well, that's just bad luck. We put up with it for a little while and then demand that somebody else fix it, as if it wasn't our fault. That's what we have insurance for right?

I don't understand the priorities and value systems in our culture. To me they're seriously screwed up. Regardless, I plan to continue to convince people to be kind to their bodies. Some will listen and some won't. I guess that's what pro-choice is all about. Come summer, I'll be heading back out into the mountains—subjecting myself to blisters, contusions, lacerations, Giardia*, dehydration, skin cancer . . . that must be what I have insurance for.

** When asked what Giardia is, Givens offered*

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this explanation: Drive out to some property containing a creek or standing water where animals, domestic or wild, have direct access to it. A couple of swallows ought to do it and in a few days your intestine will become one of America's natural renewable resources of wind-turbine power. Consider the diarrhea that accompanies it as just a small inconvenience. Kilts would have a definite advantage over trousers . . . B A C K

