



# University of Denver FACULTY FORUM

VOL. XV No. 2

SEPTEMBER 2001

At noon on Friday, September 14, 2001, the carillon tolled, and the DU community, together with other communities around the world, remembered those whose lives had been taken or altered forever by the terrorist attacks a few days before. For a brief moment, the world was silent as the process of understanding and healing began.

At the luncheon taking place to welcome new faculty to the University of Denver, Professors Sandra Dixon, Carl Raschke, and Liyakat Takim from the Department of Religious Studies, Professor Nancy Reichman from the Center for Judaic Studies, and Professor Susan Sadler, President of the Faculty Senate, spoke briefly across a spectrum of religious and spiritual perspectives. Their words are below.

**Carol Nappholz**  
Editor

## **We Remember Them**

*A prayer for healing*

**Nancy Reichman**  
Center for Judaic Studies

Jews around the world are preparing for the days of awe, a time when our tradition tells us that the fate of human beings and nations are weighed in the balance. Today, we feel the added burden of the tragic events of this week.

We pray that healing and comfort come to survivors and their families and that the memories of those who perished be forever a blessing. We pray for the wisdom for our country's leaders and for the strength to bind our nation's wounds and reweave our social fabric.

I would like to share a Jewish prayer of mourning, a prayer in which death is never mentioned, a prayer that affirms the sanctity of life. We say this prayer in memory of those lost their lives this week. It is a prayer for all of us.

*We remember them.*

*At the rising of the sun and at its going down,*

*We remember them;*

*At the blowing of the wind and at the chill of winter,*

*We remember them;*

*At the opening of the buds and at the rebirth of spring;*

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*We remember them;  
At the blueness of the skies and the warmth of  
the summer,*

*We remember them;  
At the rustling of leaves and the beauty of the  
autumn,*

*We remember them;  
At the beginning of the year and when it ends.*

*We remember them  
For they are a part of us, As we remember them.*

*When we are weary and in need of strength,  
We remember them;*

*When we are lost and sick at heart,  
We remember them;*

*When we have joy we crave to share,  
We remember them.*

*When we have decisions that are difficult to  
make,  
We remember them.*

*When we have achievements that are based on  
theirs,  
We remember them.*

*As long as we live, they too will live,  
For they are a part of us, As we remember them.*



(Source: [Gates of Prayer](#),  
The New Union Prayerbook, Central Conference of American  
Rabbis)

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*“We pray for the wisdom for our  
country’s leaders and for the strength to  
bind our nation’s wounds and  
reweave our social fabric.”*

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## **Christian Perspectives on the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001**

*A call for reflection*

**Sandra Dixon**

Department of Religious Studies

As a Christian and a professor of Religious Studies, I find that I have almost too many resources to speak to the tragedies of last Tuesday, for the history of Christianity and of most major religions is full of stories and experiences of violence and tragedy. Religions raise for our reflection and action problems of suffering and offer us traditions of response. I would like to choose three themes out of the Christian tradition that have not received a lot of attention in response to this week’s terrorist attacks, but that I hope will be helpful for us to consider together.

First, major tragedies have often been construed in the Christian tradition as calls to conscience. In this case, the call is not just to the terrorists’ consciences, but to ours. Have we—however inadvertently (and let’s say for the sake of argument that it was inadvertently)—acted in ways that have encouraged the conditions that lead to such terrorism? As one of my colleagues pointed out, the terrorists attacked us, not Sydney, Australia. What might we have done to contribute to the situation in which these tragedies occurred?

The call to conscience is not just a matter of self-blame or exhortation. Instead it can promote self-examination that will in the long run show us what is best and strongest in our selves, our nation, and our world so that we can work toward a world in which such actions are not felt to be necessary or wanted by anyone.

Second, Christianity views tragedy, like everything else in life, as a call to a closer relationship with the Maker and Sustainer of the universe. And if we have that, we have everything we need to face this or anything else.

Third, similar to Dr. Takim’s comments with respect to Islam, these attacks are a call for us to reach out in a universal love and compassion for all those who have suffered—some for many, many years—with the effects of violence and terror in their lives.

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I'd like to close with the words of a hymn from the mainline Protestant traditions, spoken as a prayer and slightly edited and rearranged for this occasion.

*Lead us, Maker, into freedom, from  
despair thy world release,*

*That, redeemed from war and hatred, we  
may come and go in peace.*

*Show us how through care and kindness  
fear may die and hope increase.*

*For the healing of the nations, God, we  
pray with one accord,*

*For a just and equal sharing of the things  
which earth affords.*

*To a life of love and action help us rise and  
pledge our word.*

Amen. ❖

Source: "For the Healing of the Nations," Fred Kaan, Hope Publishing (1968).

## United Under The Banner of Humanity

*A prayer for healing*

### Liyakat Takim

Department of Religious Studies

First of all, let me say that I am appalled by the tragic events of September 11. Muslims in many parts of the world have expressed outrage and anger at this tragedy. Many Muslims in America have responded to the tragedy by donating blood and helping in the relief work. Muslims share in the grief of their fellow American citizens.

Human beings are differentiated by diverse forms of identities. Ethnic, religious, sectarian and cultural identities have often engendered the segregation of communities that share common space. Yet there is one level of identity that unites diverse groups that live

together. This identity is what I call the primary identity, the identity of humanity. It often transcends the secondary identities.

Coming from an Islamic background, I would like to share with you the Qur'anic pronouncement on this common human identity. For the Qur'an, all human beings emerge from a common origin, a single self or soul (4:1). Due to their common background, the challenge for human beings is not to establish relations with 'the other' as much as to recognize they already exist when they were born.

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**"There is one level of identity that unites diverse groups that live together . . . the identity of humanity."**

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This singular origin of the human race is complemented by an innate disposition that, according to the Qur'an, is ingrained in all human beings. All human beings, regardless of their religious or ethnic background, have an innate ability to differentiate between good and evil independent of Prophetic revelation and scripture. It is this common sense of values that unites human beings despite their diverse identities that are often imposed on them by their social affiliations.

The common humanity and value system premised by the Qur'an means that through their innate faculties, human beings are able to readily apprehend the universal values of acts. The Qur'an further challenges all human beings, based on the principle of a universal ethical/moral system, to establish a just social order. Verse 49:13 states that despite their differences, human beings are challenged to understand and know each other.

It is with this background that we can understand Muslim reaction to the events of September 11. Muslims identify themselves with their fellow Americans who suffered much pain and anguish following the terrorist attacks against America.

As I always tell my fellow Muslims: 'We cannot be good Muslims until we become good human beings first. For that, we need to share and feel the pain and suffering of others.'

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Muslims are outraged not only because of the extent of the loss of innocent human lives but also because the terrorists used Islam and the concept of 'holy war' to vindicate their acts. I had a call from a reporter who said that Muslims believed that paradise is earned by killing people. Quoting verse 5:32 from the Qur'an, I mentioned that paradise is earned by saving rather than killing innocent human beings. As the verse states, 'Whoever kills one innocent soul has killed the whole of humanity, whoever saves one soul has saved the whole of humanity.'

At this moment of grief, it is important that we reflect on the next step. We cannot fight terror by terrorizing innocent civilians. More specifically, it would be wrong for us to stereotype and demonize Muslims. Engaging in inter-faith dialogue and holding joint services will reassure many Americans that Muslims are totally opposed to acts of terror. Like all Americans, Muslims want to see the perpetrators of this crime brought to justice.

It is also important to realize that despite our religious, cultural and even national differences, we are

united under the banner of humanity. Unity does not entail uniformity. Muslims and non-Muslims alike must come together to fight all forms of terrorism.

Since today (Friday) has been designated the day of prayer, please join me in prayer:

*O Lord, We pray for the souls of those who died in this tragedy*

*O Lord, grant us patience to bear this calamity with fortitude and unity*

*O Lord, unite our hearts and give us strength at this time of great adversity*

*We pray for the complete recovery of those injured*

*O Lord, We pray for the families of the deceased,*

*Amen. \**

## Religious Pluralism and National Diversity

*The Spiritual Nature of American Political Identity*

**Carl Raschke**

Department of Religious Studies

I was supposed to have traveled this week to a conference on religious pluralism in America and the promise of our national diversity. Obviously, with the grounding of all flights by the FAA, I was unable to go. But the shocking and grievous events of the week brought me to a realization. The remarks I had prepared for that occasion were not only timely, but now have significance I had not anticipated. The response of the American people to this tragedy underscores the way in which our religious values and heritage continue to be of enduring consequence.

First, despite what secularists argue, the United States is essentially a religious nation. Unlike other nations, America was founded not as an ethnic entity, but as an idea.

America began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an experiment for the dwelling side-by-side of peoples with diverse, and often contradictory, religious aspirations and commitments. Many of these people were considered radicals and malcontents by the political and religious establishments overseas, from whom they fled. When they arrived in America, they didn't necessarily like each other, or even get along. Rhode Island, for example, was started right next door to the colony of Massachusetts by a fugitive who considered the Boston theocracy mean-spirited, unjust, and intolerable. But they respected each other's boundaries and eventually

came to fight alongside each other in the War of Independence, out of which the idea of America was forged in blood and fire.

Second, religious diversity and mutual regard for each other's deep-held beliefs is what we would call the "American way." There are two famous mottoes which appear on currency and with which we are all familiar. The one is "in God we trust." The other is the Latin phrase *e pluribus unum* – "out of many [comes] one."

The first affirms the spiritual nature of American political identity. The second emphasizes the importance of religious diversity while at the same time expressing the conviction that in our respective faiths we all stand on "common ground," whether we are Pentacostal, Christians, Orthodox Jews, Vaishnavite Hindus, Tibetan Buddhists, or Shiite Muslims.

Third, the common ground is "religious" in its own manner of speaking. The famous sociologist Robert Bellah over a generation ago called this common ground America's civil religion. Whether we used that term or not, the point is that America's religious pluralism has no basis, or makes no sense, apart from the unifying ideal of a common spiritual culture and a set of political ideals, inherently democratic in scope, that we all subscribe to implicitly.

The strength of that implicit culture has been shown in the American response to the terrorist attacks on New York. It is not, and should not be, a war in the national mind at least of us against them, Christians against Muslims as it was at the start of the last millennium, but the American ideal of *e pluribus unum* against all sectarian, fanatical, and totalitarian ideologies that assert the "one" in isolation from the "many."

That is what is really going on today. \*

## The Sanctity of Community

*Closing Comments at the New Faculty Luncheon*

**Susan Sadler**

President, Faculty Senate

You can imagine how very difficult it has been to even try to weave words together into any substantive fabric of sentiment and thought in the shadow of our nation's tragedy and mourning. Just this morning, as time was running out, I settled on one enduring aspect of academic life that I would like to share with you today. That is the sanctity of community.

I actually pulled my old Webster's Dictionary from the shelf to make sure I was appropriate in using the idea of sanctity. According to Webster, sanctity is "a holiness of life and character". In this sanctity that we call University of Denver, we are in many ways also a sanctuary – where all are welcomed and all are safe – protected from the evils of hatred and destruction. If, like me, you have been working with our first-year students this past week in their first quarter of academic life away from home, you have been struggling with words to help the students feel safe on our campus.

Our sanctity and our sanctuary rely on the strength of our community.

We are an academic community. Let's think about what those two words mean. Academic . . . community. On the academic side, the strength of our community and the reputation of our university are built on the individual accomplishments of our faculty in scholarship, research and creative expression, working in or individual disciplines. As you join us with aspirations for building yourself a national and international reputation in your own discipline, don't lose sight of the second important aspect of our academic *community*. We are a community, and our community is founded on our shared life of the mind and shared campus interactions.

I am convinced that the opportunity to make the most enduring difference in our world is through the personal connections that we make with our students and with each other. Take time to be available. Take time to be a person. Take time to be a vibrant member of our community. Take time to really become a part of the University of Denver. We welcome you. We look forward to living and working with you.

Welcome to the University of Denver. ❖

