

CULTURAL CROSSROADS

A PUBLICATION OF THE MAYOR'S MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ▪ CITY OF LINCOLN, NEBRASKA ▪ SPRING 2002

Reflections

On September 11TH

Introduction by

Mayor Don Wesely:

In the few months since the attacks of September 11th, we have had time to reflect on how the tragedy has affected our lives, our city and our nation. In this nation founded on diversity and freedom, our enemy is intolerance. True Americans of all faiths and races know that racism, prejudice and hatred must be opposed. We must not allow the events of September 11th to divide us.

In an effort to spark discussion of the issues surrounding September 11th, I have asked members of the Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee to share their thoughts in this newsletter.

Amir Azimi

Looking at the history of the U.S. reminds me of "musical chairs." One group always ends up **STANDING!**

It is the pattern of treatment that concerns me -- treatment of Native Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, African Americans, women, gays/lesbians, and now, Muslim Americans.

It amazes me that this vast, rich country with its technological achievements is so sadly lacking in its cultural achievements that we cannot find room for everyone in our hearts. As human beings, we have more similarities than differences. Physically, we need food, shelter, clothing, air and sun. Emotionally, we need love, caring, self-expression, idea sharing and recognition. Unfortunately, our differences are always emphasized.

Minorities have always been at the forefront of volunteers in serving this country through hard times and

wars. Once again, there is a need to be united and, as the slogan says, "UNITED WE STAND." Minority groups have already been **STANDING!**

Thomas Christie

The terrorist acts of September 11th leave me with mixed emotions and reactions. I was in shock and was very concerned as to how my country's government would react. My fear continues for several reasons. My main concern is how we define "We the People" under these trying times. What rules will be changed, for whom, and against whom? Right now I can only think that the rules will be changed for our Arab and Muslim

**Resolution Number A-81160 adopted
unanimously by the Lincoln City Council
October 15, 2001:**

Whereas, the events of September 11th, 2001 have affected all Americans; and

Whereas, it has particularly affected Arab and Muslim individuals, among others; and

Whereas, the City of Lincoln has a responsibility to maintain peace, protect the public health and safety, and legislate appropriately; and

Whereas, the country was founded on the principle that all people are created equal; and

Whereas, it is un-American and unpatriotic to treat people in a vexatious or derogatory manner based on religious, racial or difference of national origin.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council that all citizens remember the teachings and holdings of the United States Supreme Court:

"Distinctions between citizens solely because of their ancestry are by their very nature odious to a free people whose institutions are founded upon the doctrine of equality."

Hirabashi v. United States, 320 U.S. 81 (1943)

The City Council asks all citizens to make careful distinctions between the individuals responsible for the September 11th attacks and others thought to be linked to the terrorists based on national origin, religion or ethnicity.

Signed by Annette McRoy, Jonathan Cook, Jon Camp, Terry Werner, Coleen Seng, Glenn Friendt, Ken Svoboda and Mayor Don Wesely.

American citizens. Then I wonder, who will be next?

My history lessons guide me to believe that we must be careful how we react in order to protect our democracy for all. The images allowed by our freedom of the press seem to be socializing our citizenry

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out of a revenge mode. When my colleague and friend gets taunted because he is perceived to resemble Osama bin Laden by college students, and when the market place promotes Osama bin Laden punching dolls for Christmas, it's time to ask questions: Do we want to teach hate? Do we realize that this is how those who committed these hateful acts developed their perspectives?

We must pay serious attention to these questions in order to prevent Americans from reacting in the way of the terrorists.

It's imperative for Lincoln to have a resolution supporting tolerance. We need to send the message that our city wants to maintain rights for all. We need to open the door for educating all of us about the diverse world in which we live.

James Weldon Johnson, writer and poet, said it best, "Every race and every nation should be judged by the best it has been able to produce, not by the worst."

Charlene Flood-Johnson

Since September 11th, we have seen the American flag in all sizes and in almost every conceivable fashion from lapel pins to t-shirts. We have witnessed crowds of remorse, tear-filled eulogies, outspoken declarations of angry thoughts, and importantly, clarifications of religions and cultural actions. What we haven't taken apart and analyzed is the concept of

"patriotism." Americans who have been here for one or two generations do not have the same concept of patriotism as those who have ancestry of four and five generations. Why? Because their

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— Greene



learned connection to their mother country is different. There are many factors to consider in one's definition of patriotism. Patriotism means something different to a veteran of a foreign war, a student protestor and an elementary pupil hearing for the first time that his or her country is at war.

Our country, at 225 years old, is a youngster. Here, for perhaps the first time, is a declared war not based on our adversary's love for their country, but on perceived religious conflict. This was made clear to me by a five-year-old who said, "I don't get it. Are these guys mad because they think our God is wrong, or because they want to live in our country?"

So what does this have to do with patriotism? Patriotism only applies to a country. The term "zealot" applies to

religious convictions. It's clear to at least one five-year-old that we are not concerned about the same thing and are not on the same playing field.

Charles Greene

The idea that America, the land of the "free," is under attack by those who would have us be a "slave" society similar to the one that possessed America in the past, is unthinkable and totally unacceptable. This time, the slavery process is based on religion. It is important for all Americans to look at their roots and decide for themselves that the way we now live in freedom is far better than to live in fear and as a slave. As citizens of this nation, we must stand together or fall like an unsteady deck of cards. God bless America, its citizens and LEADERS.

Holly Le

Like most other Americans, I have been struggling to digest the events of 9-11. It has taken a while to realize how psychologically numbed many of us are. In the space of a few hours, our world changed. We do not yet know what those changes will mean, but the most important long-term ones may well be psychological.

Americans have always understood the United States to be a special and uniquely privileged place. In many parts of the globe, the 21st century has been particularly horrible,

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Lincoln attorney Susan Ugai was the keynote speaker for the 2002 Freedom Breakfast January 18TH. *The following is an excerpt from her remarks:*

We have all been changed forever by the events of September 11th, 2001. The sense of safety and security we felt is badly shaken, if not gone forever.

Discrimination and the loss of civil rights have often followed violent or wartime incidents. During these times of uncertainty, we allow fear to overcome our rational judgement. It is somehow comforting to have someone to blame, to believe that one ethnic group, one religion, one country, one race, one gender or one person is to blame for all our fears, problems and uncertainties, and that if we can imprison or eliminate these individuals, everything will be fine.

In these uncertain times, it is easy and tempting to stereotype individuals and look for easy answers. But I am troubled by the anti-Arab sentiments we are seeing, by decisions to detain Arab Americans without hearings, by the government's proposed plan to try individuals in secret military tribunals rather than in open, civilian courts. Certainly, extraordinary efforts need to be made to stop terrorism, but not at the price of the loss of our civil liberties.



but the continental United States has been so insulated from these tragedies that we have come to think of ourselves as immune to them, although we have often contributed to them.

That confidence has been abruptly shattered. We have discovered that the borderless world of globalization allows us no refuge from the hatred and violence that predominates in many parts of the world.

Every death reminds us of our own, and sudden, unexpected death on such a large scale makes it harder to repress awareness of our own mortality. Our obsessions with such things as money, consumerism, and professional sports have been revealed for what they are -- unworthy of all the attention we devote to them. There is something valuable to learn here, but this reality nonetheless makes us quite uncomfortable. We do not like to think about death. We usually prefer to be distracted.

Amrita Mahapatra

Crisis brings out the best and the worst in people. Under extreme duress, we tend to gather ourselves, both literally and figuratively, into familiar groups for security. The tragedy of September 11th, 2001 was such an event. It will remain as a watershed milestone in our psyche for all times to come. It shook our sense of security and maybe, in small measure, our trust in humanity. But as a nation, we came through this *Agni Pariksha* (test by fire) with grace. The ugly head of prejudice tried to surface but was shamed back into hiding by the collective justice of the majority. It is a proud time to be an American.

The past few months have been of great turmoil for all of us. We have had to constantly take stock of our actions and motives against the backdrop of threat to our freedom, and we needed to weigh these against our faith. Our "unity in diversity" has been sorely tested. We have had to reaffirm our Americanism

to ourselves and to others. But just a few months later, we all look at ourselves and feel proud. It is a good time to be an American.

There is new energy in the air. The ever present threat of terrorism and need for alertness has woken us up from our complacency. I hope we can use this to help our nation grow into the lofty ideals promised in the Constitution. I hope we can all grow into a mature nation where our different faiths, cultures and religions unite us rather than divide us. I hope we can all make the needed sacrifice to create room for "others" in our hearts and become one. I hope we can turn this tragedy into a stepping stone for world peace.

Marty Ramirez

September 11th, 2001 has added a new chapter in U.S. history. There is no doubt that the American psyche and experience will never be the same. Such horrific action cannot be ignored in the international sense of justice.

However, seeking justice does require a sense of fairness. Seeking justice does not condone casting a "net" to all those who "look like terrorists." Surely, we have learned about the internment of the Japanese during World War II. There are many lessons to be learned from September 11th. One is that we, as a nation, are equally vulnerable to the evils of mankind.

Carlos Serván

We must handle September 11th with maturity. To the extent one ranges backward in time to understand causes of present conditions, and to the extent one ranges forward to anticipate future consequences of present acts, one is mature. Maturity is intelligence in depth. Not only do individuals need maturity, but civilizations, organizations and cultures need it as well. Whether a society can reach maturity depends on the maturity of the people within it and its capacity to

internalize their maturity.

If a society is to mature, it must balance two competing interests. It must welcome diversity and experimentation and at the same time maintain stability and order. Diversification and experimentation are essential for growth. It is difficult to balance both elements because they require change and effort. Individuals and societies that are unwilling to expend efforts or tolerate change to achieve a desirable goal in the future cannot attain maturity.

The maturity of the individual and the maturity of the society are related. One cannot develop without encouraging the other. One cannot diminish without inhibiting the other. To build a strong society, it is essential to enhance the maturity of its members, to incorporate that maturity into the group as a whole, to tolerate change in the interest of achieving desirable goals, to welcome diversity, and to maintain order.

In the mind of some individuals after September 11th, immigrants or their descendants are regarded as a dread and are not welcome. The leaders of our city must take the lead to make our community understand the importance of stability and order by working with diverse groups. The history of this country must teach us that we need to act in a better way than those days in which Japanese descendants were jailed during World War II. We must mature and let all of us work together so the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. can come true, in which we all hold hands to work for the desirable society.

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-- Ramirez

MEET THE MAC

working for full and equal partnership of people of diverse racial, cultural, economic, gender and disabled communities

NEW MEMBER



**Carlos
SERVÁN**

Carlos Serván

Carlos Serván is originally from Lima, Peru and has been Deputy Director of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired since 1998. While training to be a detective in Peru, he was blinded by a grenade explosion. He came to the United States for surgery to restore his sight. After doctors said there was no treatment, he started studying alternative techniques for the blind in Alamogordo, New Mexico in August 1989 and finished in January 1990.

For the next six months, Carlos took intensive English as a Second Language classes. In August of 1990, he started college at the University of New Mexico (UNM) and graduated in May of 1993 with honors in both Political Science and Latin American Studies. He also earned a law degree and a Masters in Public Administration at UNM.

He served as President of the New Mexico Association of Blind Students and of the National Association of Blind Students. In 1992, he was recognized as the blind scholar of the year by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). In 1993, he was named the UNM foreign student of the year and received the outstanding citizen award in Albuquerque. He served on the Boards of Directors for the NFB-New Mexico and Latinos Unidos, New Mexico. He is currently the President of the NFB of Nebraska. He was named Supervisor of the Year for the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. He has also worked for the New Mexico Commission for the Blind.

NEW MEMBER



**Kevin
BROWN**

Kevin Brown

Kevin Brown, a native of Columbus, Mississippi, graduated from Hastings College in 2000 and has lived in Lincoln for two years. He is a Public Health Educator in Tobacco Prevention for the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department. He is Co-Chairman of The Juneteenth Celebration; Vice President of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.; and serves on the pedestrian and bicycle advisory committee. Kevin is also working on his masters degree at UNL.

NEWS BRIEFS

LINCOLN HOME TO MANY REFUGEES

A recent study by UNL Associate Professor Dr. John Gaber shows that Lincoln has resettled more than half the state's refugees over the last 18 years. The study shows that between 1997 and 2000, more than 80 percent of all refugees resettled in the state came to Lincoln, and last year the figure was 90 percent.

In his report, Dr. Gaber says Lincoln has done an excellent job of resettlement, but he expresses concerns about the city's health and human services system and educational system being overburdened.

IMMIGRATION MYTHS

The American Immigration Lawyers Association seeks to clarify what it calls "immigration myths" on its web site (www.aila.org). Among its findings:

Immigrants are not a drain on the U.S. economy, collectively earning \$240 billion a year, paying \$90 billion in taxes and receiving \$5 billion in welfare.

Immigrants create jobs. They are more likely to be self-employed and start new businesses. Small businesses account for up to 80 percent of the new jobs available in the U.S. each year, and 18 percent of the small businesses are started by immigrants.

Immigrants are just as likely as natives to hold a college degree (20 percent) and are twice as likely as natives to hold Ph.D.s.

NEWS BRIEFS

Congratulations

...to the 2001 Martin Luther King Junior Scholarship Award winners, who were recognized at this year's Freedom Breakfast January 18th: Nicholas Anno and Thong Dao, both Northeast High School graduates now attending UNL; Julie Dolezal, a Pius X High School graduate now attending UNL; and Natasha Marshall, a Southeast High School graduate attending Nebraska Wesleyan.

A NEW ORGANIZATION

A new organization for Lincolniters of Chinese descent has been formed. For information on the Lincoln Chinese Cultural Association, contact Charles Wood, 472-4550.



CITY PROVIDES SNOW INFORMATION IN OTHER LANGUAGES



The City of Lincoln has partnered with four community centers and the Lincoln Action Program (LAP) to provide the latest information on snow operations to residents of Lincoln who do not speak English. Students from Culler Middle School explain the new service in public service announcements, now airing on 5 CITY-TV.

“We know that a high percentage of the refugees coming to Nebraska are being settled in Lincoln, which add to the number of people in our community who have not learned English,” said Mayor Wesely. “This effort will provide these residents with information about snow removal and parking bans. We hope this is just one step in providing those who do not speak English with more information about government services and programs.”

The Citizen Information Center (CIC) currently provides the latest information on snow operations to the media. CIC has added LAP to its notification list along with the Asian, Arabic, Hispanic and Russian

Community Centers. The public service announcements, recorded in Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish and Russian, direct those who do not speak English to contact the centers for information in their language.

“We want to thank the community centers, LAP, the Lincoln Public Schools and the Public Works and Utilities Department for their cooperation,” said City of Lincoln Diversity Fellow Benjamin Avila, who developed the outreach program. “I especially want to commend the Culler students who shared their knowledge in other languages to help people in their community.”

The students featured in the announcement are Dieu My Tran (Vietnamese); Rawa Al-Helfi (Arabic); Daniel Legorreta Villegas (Spanish); and Yuriy Konovalchuk (Russian).

The phone numbers to call for information are: LAP, 471-4515; Asian Center, 477-3446; Arabic Center, 474-6223; Hispanic Center, 474-3950; and Russian Center, 327-0527.



Culler Middle School student Rawa Al-Helfi tapes a snow operations message in Arabic at the 5 CITY-TV studios.

FAIR HOUSING CONFERENCE SET

In observance of Fair Housing Month in April, a conference has been scheduled for Thursday, April 11th at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln. The Fair Housing Conference 2002 is sponsored by the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights in partnership with city, state and federal agencies.

“Recent testing in Lincoln, conducted by the Fair Housing Center and the NEOC, indicates we have to face the issue of housing discrimination in Lincoln,” said Mayor Don Wesely. “This conference will

provide information to all citizens as we seek to eradicate all forms of discrimination within our community.”

Keynote speaker Kenneth L. Marcus with Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C. will address “Issues and Challenges in Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.” Other sessions include insurance redlining, fair housing in publicly assisted units and predatory lending.

To register, call 441-7625.

Have You Faced Bias In The Court System?



The Minority and Justice Task Force held a public hearing January 22nd at the Malone Center in Lincoln to take testimony on racial and ethnic bias and/or discrimination in the Nebraska Court System. It was one of eight hearings to take place across the state. The Task Force was formed in 2000 by the Nebraska Supreme Court and the Nebraska State Bar Association with the assistance of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center. The Task Force will make recommendations to the Nebraska Supreme Court on how to address identified inequities.

For information on the hearings, contact Dr. Judd Choate at the Nebraska State Bar Association, 475-7091. Testimony may also be submitted in writing to: The Minority and Justice Task Force, attn. Elizabeth Neeley, The Public Policy Center, 121 South 13th Street, Suite 303, Lincoln, Ne 68588.

MAYOR'S MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Web site:

www.ci.lincoln.ne.us

**Click on *City of Lincoln Departments*,
then *Mayor's Office*,
then *Multicultural Advisory
Committee*.**

Mayor Don Wesely's Office

441-7511

Designed by Citizen Information Center

The mission of the Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee is to identify and recommend policies and strategies that enhance and support the full and equal partnership of people of diverse racial, cultural, economic, gender and disabled communities in city government and Lincoln community affairs.

Editorial Policy

This is a publication of the Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee of the City of Lincoln. Material appearing in this publication shall be in accordance with the purpose, goals and official positions of the committee.

Submissions by community groups and individuals are welcome and will be considered for publication based on the following criteria: the article's compliance with the goals and official positions of the committee; the article's relevancy to the designated theme of that quarter's newsletter; and the length of the article. Articles may be accepted as written, edited or declined for publication.

Responsibility for final decisions lies with the committee chair and newsletter editors. Inquiries about this publication may be directed to the Chair of the Mayor's Multicultural Committee, Thomas Christie, or Vice-Chair, Amrita Mahapatra.



If you need translation assistance for Cultural Crossroads, please call 474-3950 for referral information.

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