

An Open Letter: To All Who Are Angry

(Sunday evening, September 16, 2001)

A few weeks ago I heard Arun Gandhi, co-founder of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence (<http://www.gandhiinstitute.org>), speak about the importance of recognizing the fact that anger is the ultimate source of violence. In his talk, Dr. Gandhi reminded us of how important it is for us to search for the sources of anger, whether it is anger directed at us or anger coming from within. For me, this advice hasn't come a moment too soon.

As the true magnitude of last Tuesday's events began to sink in, I was disturbed to find myself filling with rage . . . fueled by my anger. So as I began to examine my anger and search for its source, I was unsettled by what I found. Here are a few of the reasons I am angry today:

- I am angry at myself for not raising my voice in protest several years ago when Madeleine Albright, then the U.S. Secretary of State, was asked if an embargo was worth the price of the more than 500,000 Iraqi children who died, and she said, ". . . this is a very hard choice, but we think the price was worth it."
- I am angry at myself for not writing more letters to newspaper editors and television commentators asking them why they are so one-sided in their coverage of the war between Israel and Palestine.
- I am angry at myself for not asking my elected representatives why they went along with giving the Taliban \$43 million just two months after they destroyed those priceless, 2,000 year old statues of Buddha.
- I am angry at myself for not speaking out more loudly about the fact that not only is the United States the world's largest supplier of weapons to the world, but that the U.S. also provides much of the training in their use.

The list goes on, but I will spare you the rest of the details. I am sure that you have lists of your own. My purpose in only listing the anger directed at myself is to point out the simple fact that in a world as deeply interconnected as ours, we all must accept some responsibility for the shape it is in.

If I had spoken up more, written more letters, read more reports in the foreign press, and done all of those other little things I now wished I had done, would the situation be any different today? Most likely not, but at least I would not be so angry at myself for not doing more.

However, if all of us who feel this way, all of us who seek justice and not revenge, all of us who seek peace and not war now speak up, then hope for a better world remains alive. Personally, I don't have any answers that aren't already on the minds of millions of others. So my response is to post some of these thoughts on our website (<http://www.matrixmasters.com>). If you know of other sane voices who are able to see

the larger picture and have ideas that go beyond the reflexive reactions of those who only want more bloodshed, please send them to us, and we will post them as time permits.

There is one last thought I would like to leave you with, and that is what 'collateral damage' means in human terms. One of my closest friends lost his mother, his brothers and sisters, his grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins (not to mention most of his friends) when he was eight years old. Over 60 people, human beings with families, friends and full lives, were wiped out in an instant when a bomb, from an American B-52, was accidentally dropped in the wrong place. I didn't see the actual report of this incident, but I know from first-hand experience how they are written. It most likely said, ". . . 60+ civilians, killed in action, collateral damage of friendly fire." When I heard that over 60% of Americans now favor military action in spite of the fact that many innocent civilian lives may be lost, I began to weep. I wept not only for those innocent people who may soon lose their lives, but I also wept for our country. My only hope is that we will come to our senses before the violence reaches even more massive proportions. As a good friend of mine said today, "Killing innocent people is terrorism, no matter who does it."

Peace, love, and light to you all,

Larry Hagerty

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