

INTERCONNECTIONS 21

Newsletter

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SPECIAL REPORT

IC 21 and Associated Schools Mount Education and Support Efforts Following September 11 Attacks on New York City and Pentagon

Following the tragic events in New York City, the Pentagon and western Pennsylvania on September 11th, InterConnections 21 has taken a leadership role in education and support efforts in schools and communities where it is active around the US. From its headquarters in Jackson Hole, IC 21 President Susan Rauch—in collaboration with former foreign correspondents Joe Albright and Marcia Kunstel and South Asia specialist Brot Coburn—organized a community forum and two presentations at Jackson Hole High School and compiled a resource list with different points of view on Islam, Afghanistan and terrorism. The list is posted on IC 21's web site. ASPnet/USA member schools, whose work IC 21 coordinates nationally, also conducted special events. The report that follows outlines these efforts.

IC21 Forum

On October 9, a crowd of over 350 people gathered in the Jackson Hole High School auditorium to listen to Central Asia scholars discuss "Towards Understanding September 11 and its Aftermath: Some Basics about Islam and Afghanistan." The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Marianne Kamp, a University of Wyoming associate history professor who specializes in Middle Eastern and Islamic cultures.

Dr. Kamp began her presentation with basic definitions: Islam means submission to God. A Muslim is someone who submits to God. Muslims believe The Koran is the word of God. "Stan" means "land of." Thus, Turkestan is the land of the Turks, Uzbekistan is land of the Uzbeks, etc.. Pakistan, created in 1947 as part of the World War II political settlements, means "Land of the Pure."

Kamp then outlined the last two decades of po-

litical unrest in Afghanistan. The stage was set for today's events in the late 1970s when communists attempted to overthrow the Afghanistan king. Afghan Muslim mujahedeen (literally, "holy strugglers") rose up against the communists, who didn't subscribe to Muslim beliefs. Losing their bid for political control, the communists appealed to the USSR for help. Soviet troops invaded in 1979, an action that prompted



Dr. Kamp refers to a map made by Western Wyoming High School students as she addresses students at Jackson Hole High School.

the US and Saudi Arabia to support the mujahedeen through financial assistance, weapons and troop training in neighboring Pakistan.

The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, defeated, in 1989. They left a poverty-stricken, war-torn country struggling to cope with a destroyed infrastructure. The US simultaneously withdrew its support from the mujahedeen. The ensuing power vacuum resulted in a civil war that ended with a negotiated settlement among Afghan warlords in the early 1990s. In 1994, this internationally recognized government was

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InterConnections 21, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization (EIN: 84-1379499), coordinates the American chapter of the Associated Schools Project (ASPnet/USA). Contributions are gratefully received and tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Checks should be made out to InterConnections 21 and sent to P.O. Box 960, Wilson, WY 83014. Information about our organization is found on our Web site at www.ic21.org.

Special Report: Education and Support Efforts Following the Attack



Afghanistan's Neighbors



Source for demographic data: National Geographic Society,

Iran: Pop. 64 mil. Per capita income: \$5,200. Kamp: Iran dislikes Taliban for generating drug and arms smuggling, a refugee problem and persecution of Shiite Muslims in mostly Sunni Muslim Afghanistan.

Pakistan: Pop. 142 mil. Per capita income \$2,300. Current president, Musharraf, took power not through election but through a military coup. Kamp: Pakistan bears brunt of the refugee problem. Osama bin Laden draws support from growing Pakistani population of Muslim fundamentalists educated in Taliban-run schools for the refugees, leading to rumblings of an Islamic revolution threatening Musharraf's rule.

Turkmenistan: Pop. 4.7 mil. Per capita income, \$2,840. President Niyazov has been president since Turkmenistan became independent in 1991 and has named himself president for life. Kamp: Turkmenistan's wealth is in natural gas. The country desires peace so they can construct a pipeline through Afghanistan to sell gas to India and Pakistan.

Uzbekistan: Pop. 24 mil. Per capita income, \$2,430. President Karimov has been president since Uzbekistan became independent in 1991, and has altered the constitution to permit his own continuation in office. Kamp: Faced with their own fledgling, weak political base, Uzbekistan leaders are terrified Islamic fundamentalists could marshal political opposition that would topple their government.

forced into exile by the Taliban, an un-elected council of fundamentalist Islamic scholars. The Taliban seized control with the assistance of troops that sprang from the refugee camps—a generation of young boys schooled in austere Islamic beliefs and trained as warriors.

Exiled from his native Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Laden—who follows a fundamentalist Islam sect called Wahhabism—helped train these young warriors and has since been based first in Sudan and now in Afghanistan, sheltered by the Taliban.

While his followers may dislike the West for its cultural beliefs, Kamp believes bin Laden's acts of terrorism are political, not cultural grievances, and that his ultimate goal may be to establish a pure Islamic nation centered in Saudi Arabia. Kamp's observations included a political assessment of Afghanistan's immediate neighbors (see sidebar).

Her remarks were followed by brief statements from Al Read and Marcia Kunstel. Read, a former U.S. Diplomat in Nepal who has traveled widely in the region, characterized our foreign policy in the Middle East as hypocritical, saying the US chastises others for human rights violations, but ignores grievances when its own interests are at stake. Kunstel, a former foreign correspondent in Afghanistan, Lebanon, South Africa and the Gulf War, questioned the Bush administration's curtailment of information on its war on terrorism. She cautioned that choking off the freedom of the press may later leave Americans wondering "what we were fighting for."

A question and answer period from the audience, moderated by Joe Albright, concluded the thought-provoking forum. While in Jackson, Kamp also gave presentations to several high school classes, reaching an additional 200 students.

Hawaii Forum

The Hawaii Institute for Human Rights (HIHR) also sponsored a community forum in response to the September 11 attack. Titled, "Healing Our Humanity: A Psychological, Historical, Religious and Political Perspective," the forum featured Joshua Cooper and three other professors. Cooper taught at the International Training Center for Teaching Peace and Human Rights in Geneva while working for the UN. Each panelist shared his insights and led an audience discussion following his presentation. The program aired on community television to maximize audience size.

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Sussex School, Missoula, Montana

In response to the September 11th attacks and subsequent US action, Sussex K-8 students collaborated on making peace flags. Students' wishes for the world, hopes, and art were woven into flags that will adorn the school's entrance. The students hope their thoughts for a peaceful resolution will be carried far.

Colter Elementary, Jackson, Wyoming

Forty 4th and 5th grade students in the IC 21 Global Connections Club at Colter Elementary decided they wanted to do something for a New York City child of the victims of September 11. They braided friendship bracelets out of red, white and blue string and wrote letters sending their love, understanding and hope for the future. Ten-year-old Natalie Meadows said, "If someone was writing to me I wouldn't want to be reminded of {the attack}, but to know someone wants to help and improve the situation. It'll help them realize we can get through this." The letters and bracelets were sent to the Superintendent of Schools in New York to be appropriately distributed.

Booker T. Washington, Tampa, Florida

On September 28, 2001, student representatives to the Model United Nations Council and students at Booker T. Washington Middle School for International Studies participated in an outdoor rally to express their views on peace, human rights, respect for diversity and environmental integrity.

The rally was organized in August to mark the historic launching of the Earth Charter. In light of the terrorist attacks the themes of the rally became more meaningful to all participants. Events included student speeches, poetry readings and pledge statements that were color coded to represent rally themes. White represented peace, green the environment, yellow and orange a commitment to respect diversity, and blue support for human rights. The color-coded strips were linked to make chains throughout the school.

Community partners shared how they make a local



Students at Booker T. Washington held a rally promoting peace, respect and human rights.

and global difference through their careers. Student speeches and poetry from the rally are featured on www.YouthPress.org.

Friends School, St. Paul, Minnesota

Friends School students have met with Muslim and community leaders in the aftermath of the attacks. Middle schoolers expressed their wish for peaceful resolution in writing. One poem is reprinted below.

Untitled, by Elsie Lewison, grade 8

I am full of whats and wheres and whens and hows.
But mostly full of whys.
To which I find no answers,
Among the anger and the lies.

"What Monsters!" voices cry, "could do such to us!"
We who are so noble, and so very just."

"Vengeance!" the voices come again.
"Vengeance to these loathsome men!"

But is their thinking not so clear?
Dimmed by ever present fear?
Because I ask hand poised with knife,
Since when has death times two, ever equaled life?

FLASH!

The Fourth Annual UN Student Human Rights Conference will take place in NYC on December 7, 2001. Due to recent events, participation in New York will be limited to 30 or 40 students rather than the usual 400-500, with video conferencing hook-ups available at a number of sites across the USA, in Canada and Mexico. IC 21 is organizing for 10 students to participate in NYC and for video-conferencing opportunities for as many schools as possible. Please check out our web site at www.ic21.org for further information.

Juan Elias Uribe, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, to speak in Montana, Wyoming



Juan Elias Uribe, a 20-year leader of the Columbian Children's Peace Movement and two-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, will keynote the annual Peacemaker Award Celebration organized by The Community Mediation Center in Bozeman, Montana. The event will be held on February 2, 2002. IC 21 is presently orchestrating a follow-up visit to Jackson Hole.

Uribe was contacted following the UNESCO ASP/IC 21 International workshop on Promoting Peace and Conflict Resolution Education in Schools last spring. CMC's Kathryn Strickland remarked that, "hearing Juan Elias Uribe's peacemaking efforts as a rural teenager in war-torn Columbia is a rare opportunity for Bozeman's rural community. Juan's powerful message that children can work to better our world will deepen the resolve of Bozeman students working towards peace."

The Community Mediation Center initiated its first annual Peacemaker Award Celebration last year to honor student peer mediators. The event's purpose was to demonstrate to students that the Bozeman community values their work promoting peace and cooperation in its schools. Mayor Marcia Youngman keyed the celebration, which was attended by over 300 people. Senator Conrad Burns and Senator Max Baucus acknowledged the work of each honored student in personal letters. The awards were followed by a jazz quartet and dessert extravaganza made pos-

sible by the efforts of over 25 local businesses.

This year the community is invited to participate in the February awards by nominating peacemakers in their lives. Three to five award recipients will share the stage with the student honorees. The open nomination is a grassroots effort to provide an opportunity for the community to publicly thank community members involved in peacemaking activities.



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