

*The following statement was given by Catherine Lutz, UNC Professor of Anthropology, a panel member at the Teach-In entitled "Understanding the Attack on America: an Alternative View," held at the UNC-Chapel Hill campus on Sept. 17, 2001.*

I was deeply saddened and angered, but not shocked, by the horrific events of Tuesday, September 11th. Because in the decade I have spent researching U.S. society and its military, I have learned that we have already been in a permanent state of war since the late 1930s. Mainly outsourced to the global South since 1945, this war has now come home to roost.

While this long war has sometimes drawn on elevated ideals like anti-fascism, more often it has been carried on in the name of stability for any regime that would don an anti-communist mantle and allow US business access, hiding a rotten core of systematic terrorism against its own people, often with our weapons and training. These terrorists were labeled realists, and the long reign of nuclear terror by the USSR and US -- who together targetted millions of people in skyscrapers and hovels -- was called defense or even peace, and its architects men of honor.

This new war that President Bush declares can draw on the decades long "public relations" campaigns aimed to convince us that the larger the U.S. arsenal, the safer we are. And on the idea that war elevates moral character in its supporters. But my research in a North Carolina military city has shown me that many U.S. soldiers and veterans are not nearly so sure. Some have been among war's most ardent critics and some remain soul-wounded and attached to each other in fellowships of affliction. Their experiences will never match the rhetoric and safety of the elites now planning a conflagration.

As Bush talks about "hunting the terrorists from their holes," and begins to elide terrorists and whole peoples, I am reminded of the vicious history of racial hatred that has preceded, stoked, and been inflamed by nearly every one of this century's wars from the Belgian Congo to Nazi Germany to the USSR to the US. In *War without Mercy*, John Dower powerfully reminds us that exterminationist methods and concentration camps were reserved for the Japanese in World War II, while the Germans were carefully separated into the good and bad among them. And so the Afghani people already flee, as Timothy McVeigh's hometown neighbors or his Army commanders did not. They never assumed their training or tolerance of him condemned them, too, to a burning of their flesh.

But over the past several days, I have felt hope overtake pessimism as I talked with students. They have so far refused the simplicities and the vengefulness of the voices from the electronic boxes, whose framing devices overwhelmingly ask when and where the U.S. will strike, not how that could possibly accomplish a safe future. Instead, these students were questioning and searching for meaning in these events. The instructor of one class I attended as guest speaker describe how angry she was at the perpetrators and asked people to say if they were, too. Many hands went up along with mine, but when asked why, their reasons were many and nuanced. One was angry that the New York and Washington victims had not been protected (despite a \$300 billion dollar military budget), another that human beings continue to stoop to violence, another that her world had lost its security. While the administration has reduced this all into a single feeling with one swift sword attached, these thoughtful, passionate varieties of anger are openings to reflection, learning, and a response more ethical than indiscriminate force.

The parallel of this day of infamy is not Pearl Harbor -- in 1941, a colonial outpost in a once sovereign Hawaiian nation. It is 1947, when a new kind of war was also declared via Executive Orders and the National Security Act -- a war, it was said, where the enemy would no longer fight in the open, a war requiring the sacrifice of some freedom and principle. It birthed McCarthyism, slaughters in places like Vietnam and Guatemala, and it took the fruits of our labor and our children. This generation can be defined as the one that resisted war hysteria, used our best principles of democratic openness and fairness, and built a secure future based in international law. The perpetrators of this latest terror should be identified in an open process and imprisoned. If one is Osama bin Laden, send the international police for him, and pick up Henry Kissinger and Augusto Pinochet on the way home. The weeping, surviving families of New York and Washington and Chile, Haiti, South Africa, the Somme, the Ukraine, Cambodia and Vietnam call us to bring their murderers all to account, not to send legions more to join them in their grief.