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Cover: Lorie Novak, *Self-Portrait (Ellis Island)*. This photograph is from a series I began in 1983 that uses my family snapshots to explore the relationships between photographs and memory. Using several projectors to project slides of my family photographs, I create installations specifically for the vantage point of the camera. Differences in time and distance diminish as I layer projected photographic fragments of my past. *Self-Portrait (Ellis Island)* was actually created in a dark hallway in one of the nonpublic buildings at Ellis Island during the renovation of the Ellis Island National Monument. More of my work can be seen on-line at www.cvisions.cat.nyu.edu/novak.

Afghan civilians. As I write, the leaders of the Taliban are fleeing Kabul, having been deposed by the Northern Alliance and the “freedom fighters.” The Northern Alliance has begun executing and torturing members of the Taliban and others who are trying to escape. It is, according to RAWA, no less totalitarian than the Taliban.

RAWA convinced me that the bombing of the devastated people of Afghanistan would not solve the problem of terrorism; it would only bring more suffering to those who cannot flee to the hills—women, children, and the 500,000 disabled orphans (as estimated by the United Nations).

RAWA’s voice must be heard and given the respect it deserves in the UN effort to establish a humanitarian government in Afghanistan.

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Gender, Terrorism, and War

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Le *Monde* proclaimed, “We are all New Yorkers.” “We are all Yankees,” said a baseball fan in Chicago. After September 11, there seemed to be a sudden, if short-lived, consensus about who “we” were: we saw the same things at the time of the attacks, and we remembered the same images. And when an airliner crashed in Queens on November 12, we thought it, too, was a terrorist attack. As a commentator on Cable News Network pointed out that afternoon, “We can’t help but see it that way.” The appearance of a unified group identity forged by the memory of September 11 quickly dissipated with the resurgence of *other* cultural memories—particularly those inflected by nationality, race, and religion. But gender was not mentioned much, at least in public responses to the attacks. Amid all the attention to the apparent religious and political motivations for the attacks, the media didn’t find it particularly significant that the perpetrators were all men. I suppose I shouldn’t have been surprised; since wars and terrorist attacks are virtually always initiated and carried out by men, this was not exactly news. But wasn’t it noteworthy

that young male Muslim suicide bombers “are usually . . . told that they will be greeted by 70 dark-eyed virgins in heaven”?¹ That the three hijackers who were at a Daytona Beach strip club and sports bar on Monday night and who had attracted FBI attention by allegedly saying “Wait until tomorrow, America is going to see bloodshed” had just “spent a few hundred dollars on lap dances and drinks”?² *USA Today* commented on the apparent hypocrisy of Islamic fundamentalists engaging in such decadent Western behavior but not on what such behavior means when routinely engaged in by “our” men. Why, I wondered, was so much attention being paid to the influence of Islam on the suicide hijackers and virtually none paid to the influence of gender norms? The perpetrators were Muslim men. Why did women of color in the United States have to fear being victims of hate crimes if they identified themselves as Muslim by wearing scarves in public, while white men here felt free, as always, to go wherever they wanted?

Of course, I am not suggesting that all men are somehow more culpable than women in this attack, any more than I would suggest that all Muslims are more culpable than non-Muslims. Although only men were apparently implicated in this attack, to hold all men responsible would be just as misguided as the view of those who considered the attack to justify perpetrating hate crimes at home—and waging war abroad—against Muslims.

This is not to say that we should ignore the gendered aspects of the attack and our responses to it: the *Times* of London reported, on October 9, in an article titled “Elated Airmen Feel like Football Heroes,” that “for one U.S. airman, dropping some of the first bombs on Afghanistan from a B1 bomber was ‘like being a football player on Super Bowl day,’” and that “an aircraft commander described the start of the war as ‘pretty dog-gone exciting.’”³ In a November 23 article in *USA Today*, we learned that “the Miami Dolphins cheerleaders arrived Wednesday to sign autographs, pose for pictures and dance on the ship’s hangar deck.”⁴ When I was in high school, during the final years of the Vietnam War, football was talked about as if it were war (“Kill Rahway!” “Kill Rahway!” shouted the cheerleaders at the pep rallies). Now war is talked about as if it were football.

Afghan fighters’ ideals of masculinity were also in evidence: when Kabul

fell, the *New York Times* ran a series of photos of a captured Taliban who had been tortured, beaten, shot, and beaten some more: although it was not mentioned, one photo showed him naked and bloody from the waist down—clearly the victim of sexual violence, most likely castration. The accompanying article said there was some concern on the part of U.S. officials that the Northern Alliance *might* be getting a little out of hand. And on December 11, *USA Today* reported that the battered al-Qaida soldiers remained “cocky and belligerent”—“My dear brothers, your sisters could fight better than you!” blared a voice over a walkie-talkie, an insult conveyed to the anti-Taliban forces.⁵

That “boys will be boys” in a time of war was taken for granted, although journalists did seem to see the misogyny in Mohammed Atta’s suicide note, and Robert McElvaine, a history professor, wrote in the *Washington Post* that “a kind of religion motivates the Taliban, but the religion in question, I’d say, is not Islam [but] insecure masculinity. These men are terrified of women.”⁶

But if the enemy’s masculinity was “insecure,” back home in the United States, masculinity, having been sorely tested, emerged newly secure and celebrated. What women *really* want, we were told, is brawny firefighters and police officers—strong men to protect them (against whom? other strong men?). Michael Kimmel, in a piece in the *Chronicle*, observed that these masculine men, who were so recently maligned by feminists for excluding women from their ranks, turned out to be heroes, saving lives, risking and losing their own.⁷ Yes, *and* they also fought long and hard to keep women out of their ranks. Why can’t we keep these two thoughts in our heads at once?

I don’t really think we’re all New Yorkers, and I’m not a fan of the Yankees or any other sports team for that matter. But I do think that all of us—including the women who were kept out of the firehouses and the 343 firefighters who were killed by the suicide hijackers, the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, and the lap dancers and the fighter pilots—are victims of oppressive gender norms. Some of us are murdered because of them. I can’t help but see it that way.

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¹ Kevin Sacks, with Jim Yardley, “After the Attacks: The Suspects; U.S. Says Hijackers Lived in the Open with Deadly Secret,” *New York Times* (September 14, 2001), 1.

² Jodi Wilgoren, “After the Attacks: The Hijackers; A Terrorist Profile Emerges That Confounds the Experts,” *New York Times* (September 15, 2001), 1.

³ Damien Whitworth, *Times* (October 9, 2001), 9.

⁴ Andrea Stone, “No Turkey on Carrier until Bombing Day Is Through,” *USA Today* (November 23, 2001), 4A.

⁵ Jack Kelley, “‘Chaos’ in War’s Final Push,” *USA Today* (December 11, 2001), 1.

⁶ See Maureen Dowd, “Liberties: Cleopatra and Osama,” *New York Times* (November 18, 2001), sec. 4, 13.

⁷ Michael Kimmel, “Declarations of War,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 26, 2001), B18–B19.