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Letter to the Editor

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Frances Klatzel
Kathmandu, Nepal

In the wake of the tragic events in the United States, email messages have become a means of sharing our thoughts, grief, and condolences. In these sad times, can I share a little story of hope.

Last April, two friends and I brain-stormed a small peace campaign to address the insurgency situation here that was seeming more and more hopeless. We visualised blue bumper stickers with a little white dove holding the Nepali flag. The initial text in Nepali is that "negotiation is the first step towards resolution and peace."

This brain storming session grew to become a loose network of concerned individuals who contributed wording, design, inspiration, printing, distribution, and financial and moral support to produce large and small stickers that are attached to the end of this message.

Our motivation: peace here in Nepal is now a personal issue. It could soon affect our daily lives, our friends, our families, our colleagues, our places and people of inspiration, our own internal peace, and our livelihoods .

Many of us have often pondered the notion that the Kathmandu valley sometimes seems to be a microcosm of the world. What is happening in the world is often happening here on a micro-scale. Certainly, the royal massacre of June 1 shook this Himalayan nation with an intensity that rattled from the inside out everyone's daily lives and their perceptions of their country and its leadership.

Suddenly and just as unexpectedly, the events in New York and Washington have totally shaken the everyday lives of ordinary people in the United States, North America and the world. Suddenly, we are all vulnerable. Peace and an ultimate resolution to world issues are now a personal issue. They affect you and I whether we live in Asia, Africa, Europe, or North America.

Today, we hope and pray that perhaps the Kathmandu valley here is a microcosm of the world. The bumper stickers have been very popular and we have distributed over 9,000. Versions of the dove and flag with new text have been done by various groups. The little dove of the bumper stickers was adopted by the organizers of a peace march that 15,000 people attended on Friday, September 14. There was another peace march on September 27. A new prime minister has suggested programs to address the vast inequities that have led to the insurgency, and a cease fire between the insurgents and the government is tenuously holding even after an inconclusive second round of talks. Resolution is still a long ways off, but there is more hope that the public will become more vocal about their desire for a peaceful resolution to the troubles here.

I hope and pray that on the larger world scale, there will be resolution rather than simple retribution. That there will be thoughtful analysis of circumstances that lead to any terrorism in order to finally find resolutions to the on-going conflicts. Just as many of us in Nepal realized during the first six months of this year that peace has become a personal issue - now it is a worldwide issue.

If the "powers that be" let the bombs start to fall, all of us are vulnerable until all of us are safe. There is no justification for any terrorism, whatever the scale, or whoever the perpetrator. While every act of violence can grow exponentially, we are seeing here in Nepal that a simple act of peace can also spread ripples. We called our little network "shanti-shakti" - peace power. Please, let's do simple acts of peace - and hope that the ripple spreads.

"The future is a creation of the energy of our minds." Joseph Campbell

