

# ICWA LETTERS

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Four West Wheelock Street  
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SOUTH ASIA

*Leena Z. Khan is an Institute Fellow studying the intersection of culture, customs, law and women's lives in Pakistan.*

## A Woman's Call for Restraint, Reflection and Introspection

By Leena Z. Khan

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*Patience, my heart*

*Night's length will pass*

*And we*

*Shall see tomorrow rise*

*With Shining Faces*

— Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) Pakistani Poet

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OCTOBER, 2001

KARACHI, Pakistan—The regularity with which Pakistanis find themselves in a state of crisis at any given time is startling. From military takeovers, to Generals declaring themselves Presidents, to escalating sectarian violence, to conflicts with India, to fighting a war in Kashmir, and most importantly the on-going crisis in Afghanistan, I have marveled at how Pakistanis have survived crisis after crisis and resurfaced with resilience.

At first glance, Karachi seems to be the same bustling city, with the same set of problems as it had one month ago. But go a bit deeper, and you begin to realize that Pakistan, like the entire world community, is no longer the same. There is a profound sense of loss and uncertainty for the future, mixed with distrust, some optimism and some hope that things can only get better from here. Before September 11 Karachiites were uncertain about internal terrorism, which in appreciable measure is a direct consequence of General Zia ul-Haq's support of extreme right-wing groups 20 years ago. But today the uncertainty stretches beyond its borders, its waters and its imaginations.

Not only did the world change a month ago — for better or for worse, only time will tell — but Pakistan has had to take center stage, albeit reluctantly, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on America. No time was wasted when President George Bush made his call to President Perez Musharraf asking if Pakistan was “with the U.S. or with the enemies.” Pakistan was faced with a defining moment — it could now distance itself from alliance with the Taliban regime, begun under General Zia, and join the U.S. in its “war against terrorism.” Or it could run the risk of being called a terrorist state because of its relations with the Taliban regime.

Many in Pakistan viewed President Bush's call for help as less a request than an arrogant demand. Under enormous pressure President Musharraf made the most difficult decision for Pakistan since he came to power in October 1999. As part of the consultation process in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Musharraf called upon a delegation of women from various parts of the country, including the disputed territory of Azad Kashmir. The women, who represented different political parties, ex-parliamentarians,

doctors, lawyers and *nazimat* (mayors) of local bodies, concluded that in light of Pakistan's grim economic circumstances and desire to finally cut ties with the Taliban, the President had made the right decision by joining the U.S.

The prospect of war began to sink slowly into the minds of Karachiites as their born-again ally, so friendly when the Russians were in Afghanistan and so fickle when they left, began to sail once again toward their shores. In the days following President Musharraf's decision to aid the U.S. in fighting terrorism, resentments within Pakistan grew as we heard President Bush make ferocious statements about "smoking out" the enemy and capturing the perpetrators "dead or alive."

Such statements did not sit well, not only with extreme elements in the country, but also with moderate, educated Pakistanis (that well-known "silent majority"). While this majority took the position that President Musharraf made the correct decision, they maintained that the decision was made under duress. I spoke with two women who represent this silent majority.

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Directly or indirectly, most Pakistanis believe that the terrorist attacks of September 11 are linked to American foreign policy — in particular, the American government's support of the *mujahideen* (freedom fighters) in Afghanistan in the 1980s against the Soviets. This view is held by Amina Islam<sup>1</sup>, a neighbor who has become a good friend over the past few months. Amina helped me settle into my home by taking me to all the local markets. She accompanied me to purchase everything from towels, pots and pans and curtains, to a refrigerator and air conditioner. Most importantly Amina helped me find a good tailor<sup>2</sup>.

Perhaps the most important thing I learned from Amina is the art of haggling with merchants. Just as we were about to enter a shop, Amina would remind me, "just tell me quietly what you want, and leave the rest to me." It's a good thing that I did. Amina ended up saving me hundreds of dollars with her take-it-or-leave-it approach with shopkeepers. It would work like this: I would discreetly point out what I liked to Amina, and she would act like the interested buyer. The merchant would tally up the prices of the items she (rather I) had selected, and hand Amina the "receipt." She would take a look and say "*bhai*,<sup>3</sup> well this is very interesting, but this is not what I will pay you." Amina would proceed to draw a line

through each amount and write what she believed to be the correct price. Then with an air of confidence she would say, "may I have a calculator please?" I watched with silent amusement as she tallied up the prices and handed the paper back to the merchant, now reading a significantly lower amount. As he pondered the lower price, she would then ask me to hand him the total amount of money she came up with and say, "this is all we have." It worked every time.

Thanks to Amina, I was settled into my home within a few short weeks. Not only did she make certain that all of my basic physical needs were taken care of, I have absorbed a tremendous amount of strength from her. Amina, a retired department manager for a large corporation, is in her fifties. She chose not to marry. Amina does not have any complaints about being single in a society where marriage is expected of all women. She says without hesitation, "I never found anyone I was mentally compatible with. I could never imagine myself with someone who I couldn't relate to on a mental and emotional level." Despite societal pressures to marry by a particular age, the phenomenon of women choosing to remain single is becoming more and more common in large cities in Pakistan. "Single women are not as stigmatized today as they were in the past," says Amina. "I have a number of single female friends. Off-color comments have been made to me in the past, but I have learned how to respond in a way that puts people in their place. Women in our society are redefining boundaries and pushing the limits. Women *have* changed, even if society is not willing to accept this."

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On the night of September 11, Amina and I flipped back and forth between BBC and CNN for nearly four hours. There are not enough words in the English language to describe the horror we experienced as we saw the World Trade Center collapse on live television. Still shaking and reeling from the shock of it all, I found that sleep came with tremendous difficulty that night. I woke up hoping that what we had just witnessed the night before was a terrible nightmare.

From liberal Muslims such as Amina to those with a more rigid interpretation of Islam, resentments began being voiced as the media laid blame on various international Muslim organizations and individuals of Arab descent. Amina fumed several days after the attacks. "The media seem to forget that every philosophy, every religion has had its fair share of bigots, but have selec-

<sup>1</sup>The name is fictitious. She asked that her name be withheld.

<sup>2</sup> Most women in Pakistan have tailors who sew *shalwar kameez* (loose-fitting baggy trousers and shirt). Despite the dependence on a tailor, there is a common saying here: "There are three people you can't trust in Pakistan, the butcher, the goldsmith and your tailor."

<sup>3</sup> *Bhai* means brother. I have noticed that conversation and interaction is made easier with a male stranger after referring to him as *bhai*. I was advised by several people that once a woman makes someone her *bhai* there is an immediate respect accorded to her. I have found this to be one of the most useful, and accurate, words of advice since my arrival.

tively chosen to tarnish Islam as being a religion predisposed to violence. I do not remember Irish or Christians defending their religion or ethnicity following the Oklahoma City bombing by Timothy McVeigh.

"U.S. foreign policy is to blame," she continued. "The chickens have come home to roost." She told me of the number of dictators the CIA had supported in recent years from, Pinochet to Marcos, Zia ul-Haq, Idi Amin, the Shah and Sukarno. She also strongly opposed U.S. support of Israel's illegal military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza for the past 34 years. "Now they are saying that Osama bin Laden is responsible for these attacks. Have they forgotten that the CIA trained the Afghan Mujahideen and Osama bin Laden to fight the Soviets in Kabul at a time when women were allowed to work and girls were going to school?"

The media have certainly evoked strong emotions in all of us as we watched New York City firefighters and rescue workers working 'round the clock hoping to find survivors. "Sadly, it took the death of six thousand innocent Americans to stir the collective consciousness of the world," Amina said. "The losses of five hundred thousand Iraqi children over the past decade and thousands of Bosnians were no less tragic. There was no call on the 'civilized world' when those hellish tragedies took place."

While condemning U.S. foreign policy, Amina saw

strong linkages between the Taliban and the attacks on the U.S. "This attack on the U.S. is consistent with the Taliban's outlook on women, minorities, historical monuments, education, religion. They have been terrorizing their own people, so what's to stop them from terrorizing others? Osama bin Laden stands for hate, not for Islam. I value my independence greatly and I am not willing to give it all up for Osama bin Laden and sit at home with a chador on my head," Amina continued. "He has maligned Islam with his intolerant views on everything. I find him offensive and repugnant to everything Islam stands for, which is peace, tolerance and compassion."

In the days following the September 11 attacks, the entire country sat gripped in tension. Amina and I continued to discuss bin Laden and the Taliban's involvement in the September 11 attacks as the prospects of U.S. retaliation close to Pakistan's borders grew each day. "If Osama bin Laden is responsible, let us not forget who armed him in the first place," she challenged. "The U.S. cannot continue to support ruthless dictators on the one hand and scream democracy and human rights on the other. It must start to ask larger questions, and begin by looking into their history. I can't blame the average American being shocked and not understanding the hatred millions of people have toward U.S. foreign policies. They have been deliberately kept inside a bubble by their own media. While I condemn these acts, I can understand the feeling of dispossession all over the Muslim world. This



was an act motivated by desperation, compounded by years of unjust policies. Perhaps Marx was correct when he said, 'workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose except your chains.'

Amina now divides her time between Pakistan and the U.S. "We here in Pakistan know more about the oppressed condition of Palestinians, Kashmiris, Bosnians and Iraqi women and children than do most Americans," she said.

There is a sense that the individuals who committed these acts of terror have lost faith in the international system of justice and have come to symbolize a collective sense of injustice in the Arab and Muslim world. Something surely has gone gravely wrong in our international policies which led these ideologically-motivated, self-righteous people commit these brutal acts of terror on innocent civilians.

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Amina believes that Islam's image has been tarnished by Muslims themselves, in particular by the gross opportunism displayed by many of Pakistan's leaders. She told me that the term *jihad* (to strive or to struggle, in Arabic) has been so misused, that most people do not even know the real meaning of the word. "The killing of innocent civilians can never be a jihad," she stated emphatically. "The extremists in Pakistan are screaming jihad this, and jihad that. Who are these jihadis fighting for? Which *alim* (Muslim scholar) has condoned this jihad? Jihad can only be declared by the religious leader of a country where Islam is under threat. There are strict conditions that must be met. These fanatics don't understand the real meaning behind jihad. They do not represent my faith, my belief system in any way. I feel disgusted when I see these self-proclaimed *mullahs* (religious leaders), preaching messages of hate on loudspeakers during the Friday *khutbas* (sermons). They are destroying and brainwashing our youth, who already have very little to lose. They have no jobs, no education, no hope for the future, so they are more than willing to go out and die for these causes."

After doing some research on the jihad myself, I came across an article entitled "The Genesis of International Terrorism" by Dr. Eqbal Ahmad<sup>4</sup>. "Jihad" he writes, "is an Arabic word that means, 'to struggle.' It could be a struggle by violence or struggle by non-violent means. There are two forms, the small jihad and the big jihad. The small jihad involves violence. The big jihad involves the struggles of self. Those are the concepts. The reason I mention it is that in Islamic history, jihad as an international violent phenomenon had disappeared in the last

four hundred years, for all practical purposes. It was revived suddenly with American help in the 1980s. When the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, Zia ul-Haq, the military dictator of Pakistan, saw an opportunity and launched a jihad there against godless communism. The U.S. saw a godsent opportunity to mobilize one billion Muslims against what Reagan called the Evil Empire... CIA agents starting going all over the Muslim world recruiting people to fight in the great jihad. Bin Laden was one of the early prize recruits. He was not only a Saudi. He was also a multimillionaire, willing to put his own money into the matter. Bin Laden went around recruiting people for the jihad against communism."<sup>5</sup>

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While Pakistan's motives for aiding the U.S. in its war against terrorism may have been prompted by its grim economic situation, Amina, like most Pakistanis, supports President Musharraf's decision and sees an opportunity for Pakistan to turn over a new leaf. "Musharraf had no other choice, so he chose the lesser of two evils. This could even be a blessing in disguise," she says with tempered optimism. "I just hope that we can use this as an opportunity to reflect on our own problems of fighting terrorism within our own borders. After many years, we have a leader in our country we can be proud of. Musharraf has risen to the level of an international statesman. He is the voice of reason and is leading his country from the front, not from the sidelines. This is the sign of a true leader.

"Look at what Hosni Mubarrak did with the terrorist elements in Egypt," she continued. "It was so bad there that he rounded up the criminals, held trials and sent them off to prison. It was a harsh position to take, but he did so in the national interest. Despite protests by western countries that he was committing human-rights abuses, he did the right thing for his country."

Terrorism within its own borders is a large thorn in Pakistan's side. Because of widespread unemployment and illiteracy, Amina explained that it has become easy for religious leaders to rally support from the masses. Many of today's problems can be traced back to the days of General Zia, from drugs, kalashnikovs and sectarian and ethnic violence to over three million Afghan refugees living within its borders. "Whether it is sectarian motivated killings or the murders of philanthropists, lawyers, writers, intellectuals, it's all terrorism." Amina, while remaining cognizant of U.S. foreign policy, believes that unity among all Pakistanis is the most important issue at hand. "The lack of unity among Muslims is one of Pakistan's biggest problems. I do not want an upheaval in this country and I don't want America to

<sup>4</sup>Dr. Ahmad was a renowned scholar, educationalist and political commentator. In this paper, originally presented as a seminar at the University of Colorado in October 1998, Dr. Ahmad examined the nature of international terrorism, its root causes, and the most effective way of dealing with it.

<sup>5</sup>Excerpt from "The Genesis of International Terrorism: Why Practice Double Standards?" by Eqbal Ahmad.

declare Pakistan a terrorist state. But I would caution the U.S. that unless the root causes of terrorism are addressed, this war against terrorism will fall flat on its face.”

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I met Samina Zulfiqar recently at a conference on The National Commission for the Status of Women<sup>6</sup> held in Karachi. Samina is a social activist who currently works for a women’s NGO in Karachi dealing with poverty alleviation and income-generating schemes for women. Samina and I became friends and have stayed in contact since the conference.

Samina told me half-seriously, half-jokingly, that she intends to run for city *nazim* in Karachi’s next elections, to be held in three years. “I want to be a part of the solution to our city’s problems. I am tired of the lies our politicians keep feeding the public,” she told me one afternoon over lunch. Samina has had a passion for politics since her student days at Karachi University, where she received a Masters in Political Science. Three years later she received an LLB (law degree) from Sindh Muslim College. “I was very outspoken on the issue of rights for Mohajirs [Urdu-speaking immigrants to Pakistan from India]. During those days, I was constantly being approached to join the MQM<sup>7</sup> and the Pakistan Peoples Party. [MQM leader] Altaf Hussain personally approached me to join the MQM. Although I was one of the most outspoken women in my university for the rights of Mohajirs, I chose not to affiliate myself with any political party. I don’t trust party politics.”

Samina told me about the quota system for ethnic minorities in government jobs, still in existence today. The MQM, she explained, worked to eliminate the quota system, which she believes discriminated against Mohajirs. “In post-partition Pakistan, the individuals with the highest level of education were Mohajirs, giving them immediate access to positions vacated by Hindus and Sikhs who had left for India.” This led the government to introduce two questions on the application forms. One was the nationality of one’s father, and the other was one’s mother tongue. “What difference does it make what country my father is from? My father was born in India, but I am a Pakistani. But the government has set up a quota system for Mohajirs, Punjabis and Sindhis and Pathans. One should be hired on merit, not ethnic background. I can understand giving special consideration to underprivileged classes, but resentment begins to build when a well-qualified person does not get the job because of the quota system,” she said. “While I did not officially join the MQM, I could relate to the resentment experienced by Mohajirs who were constantly being de-

nied jobs in spite of being the most qualified person.”

Samina told me that Zia ul-Haq supported the creation of the MQM as an extension of his divide-and-rule policies, using ethnic politics for his own political advantage. Instead of addressing the grievances of Mohajirs, General Zia encouraged MQM leaders such as Altaf Hussain to stir up an already disgruntled populace. Through his support of the MQM, Zia ul-Haq did not attempt to pacify ethnic tensions, but instead pitted Urdu-speaking individuals against Punjabis and Sindhis. This led to unprecedented violence in Karachi in the mid to late 80s.

Samina also told me of the double standards in General Zia’s Islamization policies. “He used Islam to gain popularity and legitimize his government. One way he did this was through the Hudood Ordinance, which had a provision that anyone who consumed alcohol would be punished with one hundred lashes. The hypocrisy was that all the army generals drank but were not subject to punishment. The only individuals who were ever punished were from the poor classes. The laws did not apply to the rich and influential. If you want to reform society, you need to start from the top. If our generals and politicians are abusing the laws, then why should the public be expected to be law-abiding citizens?”

“It really is a miracle that Pakistan has survived after Zia, Benazir and Nawaz Sharif,” Samina continued. Nawaz Sharif introduced the motto *karz uttaro mulk savaro* [donate money to lesser the national debt], where the public was encouraged to donate money to reduce Pakistan’s debt to World Bank and IMF. “To this date we don’t know where the money donated went, since not a dent was made in the national debt. I can say with certainty that the money went directly into the personal bank accounts of our leaders. We have taken corruption to a higher level.”

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Samina believes that the greatest threat to Pakistan today is not the danger of Talibanisation or leaders propagating rigid interpretations of Islam, but the sense of hopelessness and demoralization that prevails in much of the country. She believes that CNN and BBC, with their round-the-clock coverage of the sensational, is partly to blame. “I have seen that one Jamat-I-Islami protest in Quetta or Karachi gets repeated coverage on CNN. Images of bearded mullahs and angry youth burning U.S. flags and effigies of President Bush are played over and over. To me, this is propaganda. These demonstrations are not representative of what’s really going on. I have not seen a single anti-U.S. demonstration since Septem-

<sup>6</sup> On March 8, 2000, Pervez Musharraf announced the setting up of the National Commission on the Status of Women, a permanent and independent commission for monitoring women’s rights.

<sup>7</sup> Mohajirs founded the MQM, or Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz (Refugee People’s Movement), which has become a key player in Sindh politics.

ber 11. Pakistan is not the land of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. These radicals are in the minority, less than 10 percent.

“Islam is not in any danger,” she continued. “The mullahs are the only ones who would like for us to believe that it is. If Muslims were unified, we would have nothing to fear. The problem with Muslims is that they become very emotional over the subject of religion. As long as there are divisions in our religion, we will continue to be slaves to the west. There is a saying in Urdu that goes, ‘so long as a dog remains loyal to his master, the master is happy. Once the dog goes crazy, his master will have to kill him.’ Is that not what we have today?”

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Like many Muslims I have spoken to on the subject of religion, Samina passionately defends her faith. “Life is the most sacred thing in Islam. Anyone who speaks of killing another human being cannot be a Muslim. Islam is a religion of peace. Suicide is forbidden in Islam. In Islam it says to be good and just to your neighbor, but doesn’t define which religion the neighbor belongs to. Even if my neighbor is a Hindu, a Sikh or a Christian, I must behave with compassion towards him. If my neighbor goes hungry then I will be accountable.”

Islam is a misunderstood religion, mostly because of the political motives of Muslims themselves. In Pakistan’s own history, General Zia exploited Islam to fulfill his own political agenda. Today Pakistan is witnessing a breed of young men and hardened fighters for whom jihad is believed to be the key to paradise. But according to Samina the true spirit of jihad is not by the sword, but occurs on a much higher intellectual level. “Jihad is speaking the truth and standing up against all forms of oppression. We do need to fight a jihad in Pakistan, but not the kind these extremists are talking about. A modern-day jihad for me means cleaning up the garbage in our city, teaching the masses about hygiene, fighting poverty, educating our children and teaching women about their rights.

“The religious parties were screaming jihad twenty years ago. I didn’t see the first war, where the *mujahiddin* were fighting communism, as a jihad either. Look at the number of Afghan children you see roaming the streets of Karachi. Because of that so-called jihad twenty years ago, today Karachi has thousands of Afghan children without parents, many of whom are drug addicts and beggars. How was that a jihad?”

While on the subject of jihad, Samina is sympathetic to the plight of Afghans and Kashmiris, but believes that Pakistan’s priorities are misplaced. “We need to first put out the fire in our homes, then that of our neighbors. I believe that Kashmiris are entitled to independence. But Pakistan is not in a position to fight a war outside of its borders. These leaders who are screaming jihad today

never raise their voices when a sectarian or ethnic murder takes place within its borders. What about the lives lost within our country in the name of religion? Where were the mullahs hiding then?”

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Pakistan, by falling in line with the U.S. war on terrorism, is attempting to acquire a new world image. Some say Pakistan has been given a chance to remove its terrorist stain. Samina, unlike Amina, is not as optimistic, and takes a more cautionary stance. “The U.S. has been eying Central Asia because of its rich natural resources for some time. Now, allied with Pakistan, it is one step closer to establishing a permanent presence in the region. I do not think the outcome will be a good one for Pakistan,” she concluded.

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There is much ambivalence in Pakistan today about the role it ought to play in America’s “Operation Enduring Freedom.” To say that terrorism within and outside of Pakistan is complicated would be an understatement. Today’s terrorists — for example, the Afghan *mujahiddin* — were once labeled “freedom fighters” in 1985 by former President Ronald Reagan. As political realities and leaders change, the terrorists have also changed. The heroes of yesterday are the terrorists of today, and vice versa. In this constantly changing world, if world leaders are not cognizant of this reality, they are bound to keep running around in circles as they go about their “crusades,” their wars, their operations for preserving freedoms.

Americans are understandably angry and want some answers. But as stated by Robert Fisk (*The Independent*, London) today we have “the most powerful military force on earth bombing the world’s poorest nation.” As the U.S. continues its attacks on Afghanistan, questions are being asked on this side of the world. How productive will military action be in bringing those responsible for these heinous acts? Will this selective war against terrorism produce a more just, humane and compassionate world? If the Taliban leadership is eliminated, how will its supporters in Pakistan react? Long after the Taliban are removed from power, what will be the implications for the region once the U.S. has gone? Can terrorism be eliminated by unleashing counter-terrorism? Would a military retaliation address the root causes of terrorism or result in economic, social and political equality? Will the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan really help in capturing Osama bin Laden?

In spirit I joined New Yorkers and rest of the country as they mourned the deaths of those killed in the attacks. For many days, my mind replayed images of New Yorkers running for their lives as the World Trade Center collapsed. I, along with so many others, broke down and wept as I heard about the frantic calls being made to loved ones from passengers on board the planes moments be-

fore the planes crashed into the World Trade Center.

How does the world begin to pick up the pieces and move forward? As difficult as it may be, the only way any sense can be made of this cruel and inhumane act is by staying focused on the larger perspective. While the September 11 attacks on America were unjustifiable, they beg a larger issue. Having been in Pakistan over the past several months, I have developed a heightened sense of awareness of the domination of rich, strong nations over

the weak and developing countries, and the resentment this breeds. Resentment has also been fueled here in Pakistan by the west's definition of terrorism only as applicable to its enemies. Pakistanis have accused the U.S. of practicing double standards, while condemning terrorist activities in some countries and turning a blind eye to others. As Amina, Samina and others have expressed to me, without serious introspection and a dramatic shift in U.S. foreign policy, the call for a "war on terrorism" will fall on deaf ears. □



*"A Call For Peace": Women participating in a rally organized by the Pakistan Peace Coalition carrying a placard denouncing violence.*

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*It is easy to become a mullah, but hard to become a human being.*

—Persian saying

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# INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

## Fellows and their Activities

### **Shelly Renae Browning** (March 2001- 2003) • **AUSTRALIA**

A surgeon specializing in ears and hearing, Dr. Browning is studying the approaches of traditional healers among the Aborigines of Australia to hearing loss and ear problems. She won her B.S. in Chemistry at the University of the South, studied physician/patient relationships in China and Australia on a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship and won her M.D. at Emory University in Atlanta. Before her ICWA fellowship, she was a Fellow in Skull-Base Surgery in Montreal at McGill University's Department of Otolaryngology.

### **Wendy Call** (May 2000 - 2002) • **MEXICO**

A "Healthy Societies" Fellow, Wendy is spending two years in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec, immersed in contradictory trends: an attempt to industrialize and "develop" land along a proposed Caribbean-to-Pacific containerized railway, and the desire of indigenous peoples to preserve their way of life and some of Mexico's last remaining old-growth forests. With a B.A. in Biology from Oberlin, Wendy has worked as communications coordinator for Grassroots International and national campaign director for Infact, a corporate accountability organization.

### **Martha Farmelo** (April 2001- 2003) • **ARGENTINA**

A Georgetown graduate (major: psychology; minor, Spanish) with a Master's in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, Martha is the Institute's Suzanne Ecke McColl Fellow studying gender issues in Argentina. Married to an Argentine doctoral candidate and mother of a small son, she will be focusing on both genders, which is immensely important in a land of *Italo/Latino machismo*. Martha has been involved with Latin America all her professional life, having worked with Catholic Relief Services and the Inter-American Development Bank in Costa Rica, with Human Rights Watch in Ecuador and the Inter-American Foundation in El Salvador, Uruguay and at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.

### **Gregory Feifer** (January 2000 - 2002) • **RUSSIA**

With fluent Russian and a Master's from Harvard, Gregory worked in Moscow as political editor for *Agence France-Presse* and the weekly *Russia Journal* in 1998-9. He sees Russia's latest failures at economic and political reform as a continuation of failed attempts at Westernization that began with Peter the Great — failures that a long succession of behind-the-scenes elites have used to run Russia behind a mythic facade of "strong rulers" for centuries. He plans to assess the continuation of these cultural underpinnings of Russian governance in the wake of the Gorbachev/Yeltsin succession.

### **Curt Gabrielson** (December 2000 - 2002) • **EAST TIMOR**

With a Missouri farm background and an MIT degree in physics, Curt is spending two years in East Timor, watching the new nation create an education system of its own out of the ashes of the Indonesian system. Since finishing MIT in 1993, Curt has focused on delivering inexpensive and culturally relevant hands-on science education to minority and low-income students. Based at the Teacher Institute of the Exploratorium in San Francisco, he has worked with youth and teachers in Beijing, Tibet, and the Mexican-American agricultural town of Watsonville, California.

### **Peter Keller** (March 2000 - 2002) • **CHILE**

Public affairs officer at Redwood National Park and a park planner at Yosemite National Park before his fellowship, Peter holds a B.S. in Recreation Resource Management from the University of Montana and a Masters in Environmental Law from the Vermont Law School. As a John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow, he is spending two years in Chile and Argentina comparing the operations of parks and forest reserves controlled by the Chilean and Argentine governments to those controlled by private persons and non-governmental organizations.

### **Leena Khan** (April 2001-2003) • **PAKISTAN**

A U.S. lawyer previously focused on immigration law, Leena is looking at the wide-ranging strategies adopted by the women's movement in Pakistan, starting from the earliest days in the nationalist struggle for independence, to present. She is exploring the myths and realities of women living under Muslim laws in Pakistan through women's experiences of identity, religion, law and customs, and the implications on activism. Born in Pakistan and immersed in Persian and Urdu literature by her grandfather, she was raised in the States and holds a B.A. from North Carolina State University and a J.D. from the University of San Diego.

Institute Fellows are chosen on the basis of character, previous experience and promise. They are young professionals funded to spend a minimum of two years carrying out self-designed programs of study and writing outside the United States. The Fellows are required to report their findings and experiences from the field once a month. They can write on any subject, as formally or informally as they wish. The result is a unique form of reporting, analysis and periodic assessment of international events and issues.

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Phone: (603) 643-5548

Fax: (603) 643-9599

E-Mail: [ICWA@valley.net](mailto:ICWA@valley.net)

Web Site: [www.icwa.org](http://www.icwa.org)

Executive Director: Peter Bird Martin  
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