Editors’ Introduction: Special Partial Issue—Qualitative Inquiry and the Events Following September 11, 2001

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In response to the events following 11 September, we sent the following letter to a wide variety of individuals:

Yvonna and I are writing to invite you to contribute a short piece to *Qualitative Inquiry* for the issue to be put into production December 1.

As you know, from having worked with us on *Qualitative Inquiry*, or on one or the other editions of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, we are open to many different perspectives, methods, and paradigms circulating throughout interpretivist research. But we are also deeply committed personally, as we have tried to make plain in our opening and closing chapters of the *Handbook* and in our work with the journal, to a socially conscious, ethically communitarian social science radically dedicated to social justice, and “read” through the struggles of race, class, gender, indigenous status, and culture.

Yvonna and I are stunned, appalled, and grieved by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and sorrowing not only for the loss of life but for the loss of opportunity, for the loss of love, and for the temporary loss of the ability of dialogue to work through problems of hatred and religious intolerance. We know that you grieve with us and with those who have lost so much.

We are also deeply concerned about the implications for an interpretivist social science that has left us with so little by way of understanding how or why this could happen. Our invitation to you is to join with us in a special theme issue in a brief contribution of your own to talk about the terror, about its implications for an interpretivist social science, and about ways in which a radically reformulated social science directed toward communitarian ethics and social justice might address our understanding of this horror, and perhaps our ability to resolve those issues that have seemingly created the circumstances that prompted this attack.

We are not asking for long scholarly pieces. We are asking you to write brief works—two to six printed pages or 300 to 1,000 words—that capture how you have worked through these issues, whether for yourself, or as a narrative to help you understand the issues, or in class, with students immediately following the attacks.

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We would need to have the pieces no later than November 12th if we are to make the next issue. Will you join with us in this work? Please respond to both of us so that we can make plans for the next issue.

Those whom we asked represent a community for the two of us. They are not the only members of our community; this journal has granted us the opportunity to work with many new and old colleagues whose work we respect and which work has created in us new ways of thinking and new forms of thoughtfulness and insight. But those in this community are special in that their commitments to a radically reformulated social science, responsive to social justice issues, is clear in their writing, in the pieces we have published and read elsewhere. They are passionate about engaging issues of intolerance, injustice, hatred, discrimination, and inequity wherever their inquiries have led them, and they bring this engagement to their work, whether in research, writing, or teaching.

More than 20 people responded to our invitation. They had only a short period of time in which to prepare their comments. Their powerful and moving interpretations represent a shared grief, a sense of mourning, a sorrow that is almost unfathomable. It is a sorrow shared by millions, those who ache to understand that which cannot be understood, those who have suffered personal loss, and those who reach out to comfort those who have lost so much. Their essays follow in the next section.

Their statements reinforce Qualitative Inquiry’s commitment to the belief that interpretive scholars have the moral responsibility to record and analyze such events as those of 11 September and to do so because a genuine democracy requires no less. Please listen. Please participate. We welcome your presence in this conversation. We want Qualitative Inquiry to be a site for this ongoing dialogue. We will publish additional commentary in future issues.