

# Herland

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## VOICE

October, 2001

### **CELEBRATION OF OKLAHOMA CITY'S GLBT HISTORY!**

GayOKC.com and the Social Justice Committee of the First Unitarian Church invite Oklahoma City to celebrate Gay and Lesbian History Month and National Coming Out Day with "A CELEBRATION of Oklahoma City's Gay and Lesbian History!" at 7 PM on Thursday, October 11 at the First Unitarian Church, 600 W. 13th Street, Oklahoma City.

The main event will be a panel discussion where each panelist will reflect on his or her experience over the years as a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered Person in Oklahoma City.

Immediately following the panel discussion, audience members will be invited to Come Out, in commemoration of National Coming Out Day!

A reception will follow, and those who wish to do so are encouraged to join the panelists in "break-out" groups and engage in further discussion.

Paula Brown will moderate the panel which includes Bill Rogers, Paul Thompson, Pat Reaves, Keith Smith, Don Kay, Lee Burris, and Jacqueline Gatewood.

Interpreting for the deaf will be provided.

#### **ABOUT THE PANELISTS:**

**Bill Rogers** is currently the board chair of the Cimarron Alliance Foundation. Bill served on the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission, and was involved in organizing the very first Gay Pride Parade in Oklahoma City.

**Paul Thompson** is currently the male co-chair of the Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus and member of the board of the Oklahoma City chapter of the NAACP. A longtime GLBT Rights activist, Paul has been involved in OGLPC since its founding as Oklahomans for Human Rights.

**Pat Reaves** is a long-time member of the board of Herland Sister Resources. *(Continued on page 6)*

### **WEEK 1: GHOSTS AND ECHOES**

*Editors note: The following article is an email letter being circulated on the Internet from Robin Morgan, a noted feminist author. It offers a perspective on the aftermath of the September 11 attacks which is not readily found in the mainstream media.*

Dear Friends,

Your response to the email I sent on Day 2 of this calamity has been overwhelming. In addition to friends and colleagues, absolute strangers—in Serbia, Korea, Fiji, Zambia, all across North America—have replied, as have women's networks in places ranging from Senegal and Japan to Chile, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, even Iran. You've offered moving emotional support and asked for continued updates. I can't send regular reports/alerts as I did during the elections last November or the cabinet confirmation battles last year. But here's another try. Share this letter as you wish.

I'll focus on New York—my firsthand experience—but this doesn't mean any less anguish for the victims of the Washington or Pennsylvania calamities. Today was Day 8. Incredibly, a week has passed. Abnormal normalcy has settled in. Our usually contentious mayor (previously bad news for New Yorkers of color and for artists) has risen to this moment with efficiency, compassion, real leadership.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

**Diversity Celebration and  
Candlelight Vigil, 7 PM Thursday,  
October 4 at St. Paul's Cathedral, 127 NW  
7th, Oklahoma City, OK**

**Herland Supper Club, 5:30 PM,  
October 6 Meet at Herland**

**Herland Board Meeting, 4:30 PM  
Sunday, October 21**

**Herland is open Saturdays from 1-5 PM. We  
are located at 2312 NW 39, OKC, OK**

# SAINT SYBIL

Dear Saint Sybil,

I am really fed up to here with taxes. Federal taxes, state taxes, social security taxes, property taxes, sales taxes – practically half my income goes to some kind of tax. And I don't see that much of it is for my benefit... ok, I'm willing to pay some for defense, but other than that, what do I get? I think what bugs me more than anything is the amount of sales tax and property tax I pay, and for what? For schools! For whom? For other peoples children!

Listen, I made a reasoned, well-considered choice, and I gave up the (I might say selfish, self-centered!) option of having someone to carry on my genes, and the built-in nurse to look after me in my old age, and all that, and chose not to have kids. I don't have them, I don't miss them, I don't want them; and I sure as heck resent having to pay for everyone else's.

Every time I look up, they're raising my taxes "to improve the schools." Why is it my responsibility, Sybil, to constantly be paying for other peoples kids?

Angrily,

Miss Ann Thrope

Dear Ann,

Even if you were never a Girl Scout, I know you know that one of your major responsibilities in your short life on earth is to leave it better than you found it. How are you going to do this? Plant a garden, good. Work against poverty, great. Work for animal welfare, and for conservation, and try to stop the mad obliteration of so many different life forms; wonderful. Campaign against domestic violence and other forms of abuse to women, super. Write a book exposing the ghastly inhumane meat rendering plants – I know, Upton Sinclair already did it, but it could be done again. Go try to stop the dreadful killings of street urchins in various South American cities.

Ah, street urchins – that reminds me of those brats using your hard-earned tax money in school, in particular. The one easiest thing you can do to fulfill your responsibility to the world and its future is to take care of and educate your children – yes, *yours*. Ann. These children *are* yours. True, you are spared the "twenty-four seven" of raising them. but they are the future of the human race, and in many ways, your future.

From a practical viewpoint, these kids are going to be the ones whose taxes pay your social security checks. They are going to be the ones, in thirty years, who will oversee the

nursing home you are living in, and who will give you care there, and who will run the insurance companies that decide whether or not you are worth prescribing good medicine to. They will be the police officers and firefighters and city planners who make your life safe and pleasant. They'll be legislators passing laws of critical concern to you, and ethicists guiding the world to value, or undervalue, the old, which you will be by then: old.

But besides these self-serving reasons for happily paying more taxes to help our children, the one overriding purpose of every species, whether primate, kangaroo, cottonwood or catfish, is to further that species; and if you don't have a sense of all children as being your purpose and future and responsibility, not to mention your immortality, then you need to take a deep breath and get back in touch with the universe.... Galileo was correct, you know, when he said some five hundred years ago that the world does not revolve around us. And really, the more you think about it, don't you think maybe those people who escape the diapers and the sleepless nights and the staggering child-rearing costs should pay more in taxes for schools? Sounds fair to me....

Cordially,

Sybil

p.s. You have one more responsibility to fulfill, Ann: oversight of your school boards and local government officials, to be sure the money you will now so happily render them is used wisely, for the good of all children, not just a favored few. □

#### Herland Board of Directors:

Laura Choate  
Jacqueline Gatewood  
DTH

Ginger McGovern  
Pat Reaves  
Judy Walden

*The Voice is published by: Herland Sister Resources, Inc. 2312 N.W. 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112. The Voice is offered as an open forum for community discourse. Articles reflect the opinions of the author and not necessarily those of Herland Sister Resources. Unsolicited articles and letters to the editor are welcomed and must be signed by the writer with full name and address. Upon request, letters or articles may be printed under a pseudonym or anonymously. Subscriptions to The Voice are free upon request although a donation is requested to meet publication and distribution costs.*

[www.herlandsisters.org](http://www.herlandsisters.org)

## WEEK 1: GHOSTS AND ECHOS

(continued from page 1)

The city is alive and dynamic. Below 14th Street, traffic is flowing again, mail is being delivered, newspapers are back. But very early this morning I walked east, then south almost to the tip of Manhattan Island. The 16-acre site itself is closed off, of course, as is a perimeter surrounding it controlled by the National Guard, used as a command post and staging area for rescue workers. Still, one is able to approach nearer to the area than was possible last weekend, since the law-court district and parts of the financial district are now open and (shakily) working. The closer one gets the more one sees – and smells – what no TV report, and very few print reports, have communicated. I find myself giving way to tears again and again, even as I write this.

If the first sights of last Tuesday seemed bizarrely like a George Lucas special-effects movie, now the directorial eye has changed: it's the grim lens of Agnes Varda, juxtaposed with images so surreal they could have been framed by Bunuel or Kurosawa.

This was a bright, cloudless, early autumnal day. But as one draws near the site, the area looms out of a dense haze: one enters an atmosphere of dust, concrete powder, and plumes of smoke from fires still raging deep beneath the rubble (an estimated 2 million cubic yards of debris). Along lower 2nd Avenue, 10 refrigerator tractor-trailer trucks are parked, waiting; if you stand there a while, an NYC Medical Examiner van arrives - with a sagging body bag. Thick white ash, shards of broken glass, pebbles, and chunks of concrete cover street after street of parked cars for blocks outside the perimeter. Handprints on car windows and doors - handprints sliding downward — have been left like frantic graffiti. Sometimes there are messages finger-written in the ash: "U R Alive." You can look into closed shops, many with cracked or broken windows, and peer into another dimension: a wall-clock stopped at 9:10, restaurant tables meticulously set but now covered with two inches of ash, grocery shelves stacked with cans and produce bins piled high with apples and melons—all now powdered chalk-white. A moonscape of plenty. People walk unsteadily along these streets, wearing nose masks against the still particle-full air, the stench of burning wire and plastic, erupted sewage; the smell of death, of decomposing flesh.

Probably your TV coverage shows the chain-link fences aflutter with yellow ribbons, the makeshift shrines of candles, flowers, scribbled notes of mourning or of praise for the

rescue workers that have sprung up everywhere—especially in front of firehouses, police stations, hospitals. What TV doesn't show you is that near Ground Zero the streets for blocks around are still, a week later, adrift in bits of paper—singed, torn, sodden pages: stock reports, trading print-outs, shreds of appointment calendars, half of a "To-Do" list. What TV doesn't show you are scores of tiny charred corpses now swept into the gutters. Sparrows. Finches. They fly higher than pigeons, so they would have exploded outward, caught midair in a rush of flame, wings on fire as they fell. Who could have imagined it: the birds were burning.

From a distance, you can see the lattices of one of the Towers, its skeletal bones the sole remains, eerily beautiful in asymmetry, as if a new work of abstract art had been erected in a public space. Elsewhere, you see the transformation of institutions: The New School and New York University are missing persons' centers. A movie house is now a rest shelter, a Burger King a first-aid center, a Brooks Brothers' clothing store a body parts morgue, a record shop a haven for lost animals. Libraries are counseling centers. Ice rinks are morgues. A bank is now a supply depot: in the first four days, it distributed 11,000 respirators and 25,000 pairs of protective gloves and suits. Nearby, a mobile medical unit housed in a Macdonald's has administered 70,000 tetanus shots. The brain tries to process the numbers: "only" 50,000 tons of debris had been cleared by yesterday, out of 1.2 million tons. The medical examiner's office has readied up to 20,000 DNA tests for unidentifiable cadaver parts. At all times, night and day, a minimum of 1000 people live and work on the site.

Such numbers daze the mind. It's the details—fragile, individual—that melt numbness into grief. An anklet with "Joyleen" engraved on it—found on an ankle. Just that: an ankle. A pair of hands—one brown, one white—clasped together. Just that. No wrists. A burly welder who drove from Ohio to help, saying softly, "We're working in a cemetery. I'm standing in—not on, in—a graveyard." Each lamppost, storefront, scaffolding, mailbox, is plastered with homemade photocopied posters, a racial/ethnic rainbow of faces and names: death the great leveler, not only of the financial CEOs—their images usually formal, white, male, older, with suit-and-tie—but the mailroom workers, receptionists, waiters. You pass enough of the MISSING posters and the faces, names, descriptions become familiar. The Albanian window-cleaner guy with the bushy eyebrows.

(continued page 4)

## WEEK 1: GHOSTS AND ECHOS

(continued from page 3)

The teenage Mexican dishwasher who had an American flag tattoo. The janitor's assistant who'd emigrated from Ethiopia. The Italian-American grandfather who was a doughnut-cart tender. The 23-year-old Chinese American junior pastry chef at the Windows on the World restaurant who'd gone in early that day so she could prep a business breakfast for 500. The firefighter who'd posed jauntily wearing his green shamrock necktie. The dapper African-American midlevel manager with a small gold ring in his ear who handled "minority affairs" for one of the companies. The middle-aged secretary laughing up at the camera from her wheelchair. The maintenance worker with a Polish name, holding his newborn baby. Most of the faces are smiling; most of the shots are family photos; many are recent wedding pictures. . . .

I have little national patriotism, but I do have a passion for New York, partly for our gritty, secular energy of endurance, and because the world does come here: 80 countries had offices in the Twin Towers; 62 countries lost citizens in the catastrophe; an estimated 300 of our British cousins died, either in the planes or the buildings. My personal comfort is found not in ceremonies or prayer services but in watching the plain, truly heroic (a word usually misused) work of ordinary New Yorkers we take for granted every day, who have risen to this moment unpretentiously, too busy even to notice they're expressing the splendor of the human spirit: firefighters, medical aides, nurses, ER doctors, police officers, sanitation workers, construction-workers, ambulance drivers, structural engineers, crane operators, rescue workers "tunnel rats" . . . .

Meanwhile, across the US, the rhetoric of retaliation is in full-throated roar. Flag sales are up. Gun sales are up. Some radio stations have banned playing John Lennon's song, "Imagine." Despite appeals from all officials (even Bush), mosques are being attacked, firebombed; Arab Americans are hiding their children indoors; two murders in Arizona have already been categorized as hate crimes—one victim a Lebanese-American man and one a Sikh man who died merely for wearing a turban. (Need I say that there were not nationwide attacks against white Christian males after Timothy McVeigh was apprehended for the Oklahoma City bombing?)

Last Thursday, right-wing televangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson (our home-grown American Taliban leaders) appeared on Robertson's TV show "The 700 Club," where Falwell blamed "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists and the gays and lesbians . . . the

American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way" and groups "who have tried to secularize America" for what occurred in New York. Robertson replied, "I totally concur." After even the Bush White House called the remarks "inappropriate," Falwell apologized (though he did not take back his sentiments); Robertson hasn't even apologized. (The program is carried by the Fox Family Channel, recently purchased by the Walt Disney Company—in case you'd like to register a protest.)

The sirens have lessened. But the drums have started. Funeral drums. War drums. A State of Emergency, with a call-up of 50,000 reservists to active duty. The Justice Department is seeking increased authority for wider surveillance, broader detention powers, wiretapping of persons (not, as previously, just phone numbers), and stringent press restrictions on military reporting.

And the petitions have begun. For justice but not vengeance. For a reasoned response but against escalating retaliatory violence. For vigilance about civil liberties. For the rights of innocent Muslim Americans. For "bombing" Afghanistan with food and medical parcels, NOT firepower. There will be the expectable peace marches, vigils, rallies. . . . One member of the House of Representatives—Barbara Lee, Democrat of California, an African American woman—lodged the sole vote in both houses of Congress against giving Bush broadened powers for a war response, saying she didn't believe a massive military campaign would stop terrorism. (She could use letters of support: email her, if you wish, at [barbara.lee@mail.house.gov](mailto:barbara.lee@mail.house.gov))

Those of us who have access to the media have been trying to get a different voice out. But ours are complex messages with long-term solutions—and this is a moment when people yearn for simplicity and short-term, facile answers.

Still, I urge all of you to write letters to the editors of newspapers, call in to talk radio shows, and, for those of you who have media access—as activists, community leaders, elected or appointed officials, academic experts, whatever—to do as many interviews and TV programs as you can. Use the tool of the Internet. Talk about the root causes of terrorism, about the need to diminish this daily climate of patriarchal violence surrounding us in its state-sanctioned normalcy; the need to recognize people's despair over ever being heard short of committing such dramatic, murderous acts; the need to address a desperation that becomes chronic after generations of suffering; the need to arouse that most subversive of emotions—empathy—for "the other"; the need to eliminate hideous economic and political injustices, to reject all tribal/ethnic hatreds and fears, to repudiate religious fundamentalisms of every kind.

Especially talk about the need to understand that we must expose the mystique of violence, separate it from how we conceive of excitement, eroticism, and “manhood”; the need to comprehend that violence differs in degree but is related in kind, that it thrives along a spectrum, as do its effects—from the battered child and raped woman who live in fear to an entire populace living in fear.

Meanwhile, we cry and cry and cry. I don’t even know who my tears are for anymore, because I keep seeing ghosts, I keep hearing echoes.

The world’s sympathy moves me deeply. Yet I hear echoes dying into silence: the world averting its attention from the screams of Rwanda . . .

Ground Zero is a huge mass grave. And I think: Bosnia. Uganda.

More than 6300 people are missing and presumed dead (not even counting the Washington and Pennsylvania deaths). The TV anchors choke up: civilians, they say, my god, civilians. And I see ghosts. Hiroshima. Nagasaki. Dresden. Vietnam.

I watch the mask-covered mouths and noses on the street turn into the faces of Tokyo citizens who wear such masks every day against toxic pollution. I watch the scared eyes become the fearful eyes of women forced to wear the hajib or chodor or burka against their will . . .

I stare at the missing posters’ photos and think of the Mothers of the Disappeared. And I see the ghosts of other faces. In photographs on the walls of Holocaust museums. In newspaper clippings from Haiti. In chronicles from Cambodia . . .

I worry for people who’ve lost their homes near the site, though I see how superbly social-service agencies are trying to meet their immediate and longer-term needs. But I see ghosts: the perpetually homeless who sleep on city streets, whose needs are never addressed. . . .

I watch normally unflappable New Yorkers flinch at loud noises, parents panic when their kids are late from school. And I see my Israeli feminist friends like Yvonne, who’ve lived with this dread for decades and still (even yesterday) stubbornly issue petitions insisting on peace. . . .

I watch sophisticates sob openly in the street, people who’ve lost workplaces, who don’t know where their next paycheck will come from, who fear a contaminated water or food supply, who are afraid for their sons in the army, who are unnerved by security checkpoints, who are in mourning, who feel wounded, humiliated, outraged. And I see my friends like Zuhira in the refugee camps of Gaza or West Bank, Palestinian women who have lived in precisely that emotional condition—for four generations.

Last weekend, many Manhattanites left town to visit concerned families, try to normalize, get away for a break. As they streamed out of the city, I saw ghosts of other travelers: hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees streaming toward their country’s borders in what is to them habitual terror, trying to escape a drought-sucked country so war-devastated there’s nothing left to bomb, a country with 50,000 disabled orphans and two million widows whose sole livelihood is begging; where the life expectancy of men is 42 and women 40; where women hunch in secret whispering lessons to girl children forbidden to go to school, women who risk death by beheading – for teaching a child to read.

The ghosts stretch out their hands. Now you know, they weep, gesturing at the carefree, insulated, indifferent, golden innocence that was my country’s safety, arrogance, and pride. Why should it take such horror to make you see? the echoes sigh, Oh please do you finally see?

This is calamity. And opportunity. The United States – what so many of you call America – could choose now to begin to understand the world. And join it. Or not.

For now my window still displays no flag, my lapel sports no red-white and-blue ribbon. Instead, I weep for a city and a world. Instead, I cling to a different loyalty, affirming my un-flag, my un-anthem, my un-prayer- the defiant un-pledge of a madwoman who also had mere words as her only tools in a time of ignorance and carnage, Virginia Woolf: “As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.”

If this is treason, may I be worthy of it.

In mourning—and absurd, tenacious hope,

Robin Morgan

September 18, 2001

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*Robin Morgan is an award-winning writer, feminist leader, political theorist, journalist, and activist. She has published 17 books, including six of poetry, two of fiction, and the now-classic anthologies Sisterhood Is Powerful (Random House/Vintage Books, 1970), and Sisterhood Is Global (Doubleday/Anchor, 1984; Feminist Press edition 1996), and her own acclaimed The Demon Lover: On The Sexuality Of Terrorism (Norton, 1989). Her latest books of poetry are Upstairs In The Garden (Norton, 1990) and A Hot January: Poems 1996-1999 (Norton, 1999), and her memoir, Saturday's Child was recently published (Norton, December 2000).*

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*In response to numerous requests, the audio of these texts, read aloud by the author together with her other Reports from New York’s Ground Zero, is being made available on CD by The Engine Company, nonprofit, solely at cost (US \$6.99 including shipping and handling). To order, email [TheEngineCompany@aol.com](mailto:TheEngineCompany@aol.com).*

## CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

On October 4 at 7:00 pm a vigil to Celebrate Diversity and Stop the Hate will be held at St. Paul's Cathedral, 127 NW 7th in Oklahoma City. The vigil is a part of a national campaign against hate violence. The celebration at St. Pauls will be followed by a candlelight procession to the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

Speakers for the event include Representative Kevin Cox, member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives; Pat Fennell, of the Latino Community Development Agency; Cinda Hughes, Native American talk show host, Reverend Cathy McCallie, Pastor of the Church of the Open Arms and Ms Phonng Ahn Cong-Tran, editor of the Viet Bao Newspaper. Mary Catherine Reynolds, Sister Veronica and the Villa Teresa Children's Choir will perform.

Event organizers say the event is designed as a call for people of faith and conscience act nonviolently as individuals for healing in our communities; oppose hate violence directed at anyone; and to raise a united voice for the loving spirit of inclusion and acceptance.

The event is organized by the Oklahoma Council on Violence Prevention and the Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma. Co-sponsors include the Cimarron Alliance Group and Foundation, the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, the Human Rights Alliance of Central Oklahoma, Mayflower Congregational Church, the Pride Network Inc, Say No to Hate and the YWCA of Oklahoma City. Herland Sister Resources is one of a large number of community organizations supporting the celebration. □



LAURA FRIEND  
AGE 11

## NGLTF RESPONDS TO FALWELL

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Executive Director Lorri L. Jean issued the following statement in response to Jerry Falwell's assertion that "gays and lesbians," among others, are to blame for the tragedies in New York City and Washington, D.C.:

"The terrible tragedy that has befallen our nation, and indeed the entire global community, is the sad byproduct of fanaticism. It has its roots in the same fanaticism that enables people like Jerry Falwell to preach hate against those who do not think, live, or love in the exact same way he does.

"The tragedies that have occurred this week did not occur because someone made God mad, as Mr. Falwell asserts. They occurred because of hate, pure and simple. It is time to move beyond a place of hate and to a place of healing. We hope that Mr. Falwell will apologize to the U.S. and world communities.

"Our hearts go out to the victims of this week's tragedies and their friends and family members. We are thankful to the police officers, firefighters, paramedics and other emergency personnel who are working tirelessly to lead the relief efforts." □

## OKC GLBT HISTORY CELEBRATION

*(continued from page 1)*

**Keith Smith** is a long-time political activist who currently works as a lobbyist. Keith is one of the founders of Central Oklahoma Stonewall Democrats, and last year was the first openly-Gay delegate from Oklahoma selected to attend the Democratic National Convention.

**Don Kay** is vice president of OFFAIDS and chair of Friends of the Winds.

**Lee Burris** is well known in our community as a business owner and female impersonator. He currently owns Ingrid's Kitchen.

**Jacqueline Gatewood** is the founder of the African-American Lesbians Support Group at Herland Sister Resources. □

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of *The Voice* at  
[WWW.HERLANDSISTERS.ORG](http://WWW.HERLANDSISTERS.ORG)

# prisoner of war

by Mary Reynolds

*now they lead him down the steps of the courthouse  
people calling out his name  
there's an open wound running through this city  
and they think that he's to blame  
a little storm of people wanting answers  
hurling accusations at the center  
who silent only stares back unbelieving  
he is a prisoner of war*

*black smoke curls gently to the westward  
it's a beautiful spring day  
silence steals the screams of the afflicted  
better get out of the way  
there's silence at the checkout at the grocery store  
as people who've forgotten what they're looking for  
stand and gaze as one into the dark interior  
they're prisoners of war  
they just found out they're prisoners of war*

*sometimes this feeling catches up to me  
and i want to run and hide  
but my feet refuse to move  
my arms hang useless at my side  
cause somewhere way down deep inside  
you know it's nothing new  
up to now you've just been lucky  
it hasn't come so close to you  
i see smoke along the Washita  
at the rising of the sun  
i see the pride of East Virginia*

*rushing headlong to the guns  
Rachel weeping for her children  
Cassandra scans the skies in vain  
smoking shores of Hiroshima  
a Buchenwald bound train  
it's the halls of Montezuma  
it's the King David Hotel  
it's just another chapter  
in a book called war is hell  
and now it's playing in my living room  
at five and six and ten  
a science fiction movie  
that doesn't have the sense to end  
complete with screaming metal aliens  
and gaping maw of death  
and it's going to be a long time  
before i draw an easy breath  
i am a prisoner of war  
i am a prisoner of war*

*so once again the strong put on their armor  
and walk into the fire  
and the rest of us bring treasures up and stories  
helpless peering through the wire  
into a garden where courage and compassion  
go hand in hand with hatred and contempt  
the searing faces of a two-edged sword  
we're all prisoners of war  
we're all prisoners of war*

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