Collage of Poems on College Walk Affirms U.S. Values

BY LAUREN MARSHALL

In the wake of the World Trade Center Tragedy, many Columbia students have wanted to help, but there have been few outlets.

Marcus Bleyer, GS ’04, found a way to reach out in support of relief workers, express his grief and confusion over the attack, and ultimately strengthen the student community through art.

On Thursday afternoon, Sept. 13, Bleyer, an art history student, lined College Walk with a 50-foot-long butcher paper letter addressed to downtown relief workers.

As students walked past Low Library on their way to and from class, they picked up colored markers and showed their support from Columbia students.

"It struck me that there was some way to reach out in support of relief workers, students手套表达感谢, poems and thanks from Columbia students."

"The project itself, sprawled across College Walk, is an expression of America's core values of freedom, security, justice and unity, things that Americans often take for granted, but have heard much talk of in recent days. Students coordinating the project hope that by examining those values they will be reinforced in the difficult days to come, as anger and the possibility of retaliation against Arab Americans grips the country.

"Marcus is Jewish and I am Arab American," said Osama, a student who helped with the project. "Marcus wanted to do this to slow people down from acting blindly against the American Arab population, who came to this country to get away from oppression. We can let this crisis degenerate our society or use it to reaffirm our values. Our country needs to be shining right now."

Osama pointed to a poem by the Persian poet Sa'ad written on a corner of the College Walk letter that sums up the sentiment expressed by relief workers, students, and Americans alike:

"Human beings are parts of the same body, of one essence, and if one part should feel pain, the rest should not be calm or still."

The relief workers letter is one of several creative projects that Columbia students began in their desire to show their support for New York City and those directly involved in the relief efforts.

In addition to donating blood and submitting their names for volunteer service, other efforts included a bake sale by Barnard College to raise donations for relief efforts and a drive to collect supplies for relief workers.

Hundreds of Columbians signed a 50-foot long thank-you card for World Trade Center rescue workers.

Columbia Mourns Alumni Lost

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Joseph Mathai, Business '76, who had worked for many of the country's leading financial and technology firms, was a managing partner with Cambridge Technology Partners and lived in Arlington, MA., outside of Boston. His company is active in the city's technology circles and had won the Cambridge Technology Award for those years in a row. Born in Trivandrum, India, he earned the bachelor's degree at Kerala University. After graduating from Columbia with an MBA, he worked in New York for 17 years, first for Paine Webber, then Merrill Lynch and the New York Stock Exchange. He moved to Boston in 1994, joining Fidelity Investments and switching to Cambridge Technology Partners in 1998. He was a member of the technology committee at Bucking-ham Browne & Nichols School in Cambridge, where he and his daughter attend. Besides the children, he is survived by his wife, Teresa, and four brothers and his mother.

Leah Oliver, SEAS '98, had assisted the family in Dartmouth, MA, the week-end before the attacks. "She had an early birthday party for her," said Norman Ben-jamin, a friend of her mother, Elizabeth Rego. Oliver would have turned 25 on Sept. 12. She had just started her job in risk management for Marsh USA, an insurance company, about two months ago. "She had a lot of drive," Benjamin told the Boston Herald. "She did a lot in her short life."

Oliver, who lived in Brooklyn Heights, worked on the 96th floor of the north tower.

Harry Taback, a 1984 graduate of Columbia Business School, was executive vice president in risk control strategy and consulting and a managing regional director of Marsh & McLennan, where he worked for 30 years. His office was on the 100th floor of the north tower.

At the top of his field, his work took him all over the world and he often gave lectures on risk management during his travels. He had planned to teach after his retirement, according to his daughter, Cheryl Taback. "He loved what he did," she said. "He had a passion for it. It was a chosen lifelong career, not just a job." Taback served on the National Safety Council's Risk Management Board.

Taback, 56, was a lifelong New Yorker who resided on Staten Island. He was a faithful Catholic, and the loving family was one that had been grateful for much in life. "I think it reminded him of Greece," she told the New York Times.

The family had arrived in America a few years ago, and the son was proud of his Greek heritage. "He loved the building," said Harry Taback, his father.

The father was remembered for the "August heat of the summer and then it was soothing." Taback continued working at the Trade Center after surviving the 1993 parking garage bombing. "He loved the building," said a family member. "That was his place."

James Devitt contributed to this story.