

After words

Testify



by Avtar Singh

This past fortnight, the well-known photographer Gauri Gill released a pamphlet titled 1984. It is to do with the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi that year and their continuing fallout. The pamphlet is made up of two series: the first one of photos she shot for Tehelka in 2005, when the Nanavati Commission report was made public; the second one for Outlook in 2009, on the 25th anniversary of the riots. The captions that accompany the photos are as originally printed in either magazine. What is different is that Gill has asked artists, writers and others of her acquaintance to write something to go with the picture and caption. It is, in a sense, an updating. In another, it is a return to the original with a fresh set of eyes, a fresh perspective. Now, nine and four years on respectively, perhaps it's even a new context.

Well, not really. That hasn't changed. The criminals that perpetrated the crimes of 1984 are still, in the main, at large. One of these gents just got let off while his co-accused were found guilty. I don't even need to take his name. But what to do? Men like him are protected by their own class across the political divide, for who is going to go after Congresswalas for killing people along religious lines? The BJP? They are protected by retired justices seeking sinecures, whose actions shame those judg-

es junior to them who still continue to hand out punishments and keep old cases alive, despite the determined incompetence of governmental agencies like the CBI. Most worryingly, they are protected by a sort of collective "setting aside" that even I, a Sikh who was in Delhi during those days, seem to be conclusive in.

On the one hand, I need to see justice done. As a citizen, so that an example is made. Even if one of the big guns that the Congress still shields goes inside, it will be a victory (even if it is a hollow one, because it won't bring a single dead person back). It will be a precedent. More murkily, if I'm honest with myself, there is a need to see the balance redressed. Vengeance, in other words. I don't want them rehabilitated: they've been in government long enough to take care of that themselves. I want them punished. To eat crap food. To be denied the sunlight. To know what it's like to have no options left. I don't want them killed. That's too easy. But a prison beating or two? I'd like that.

But then, there's the chorus on the other side. "So much time has passed." "Forgiveness is better than vengeance." The funniest, in a dark way: "Haven't they suffered enough?" As if obeying court summons and being denied election tickets (after public outcry) is punishment enough for a generation of Congress functionaries who're guilty of nothing less than murder.

But that's the thing, you see. It has been so long. The majority of the Sikh community has moved on. Many are in positions of power in the Congress. They sit on committees with these men. They do business with them. Their children dream of the same apartments and SUVs. As we're reminded

in Gill's pamphlet, a Sikh leader responded to a complaint with the admonition to forget the riots. It's everywhere, this urging to put the past behind us. The same people who justified the riots with the formula "the Sikhs had it coming" now invoke its corollary, that "what happened was terrible but now it's time to move on".

That's where Gill's pamphlet is timely. Yes, it is time to move on. Most of us already have. But there are those that haven't because they can't. Women left without male relatives. Sons without fathers. Families without options, consigned to a single room in a "widow's colony". That the state ignores their plight now adds insult to their injury.

And, for those of us Sikhs that have "moved on", this pamphlet is a reminder. Do business with the unpunished, if you have to. Sit on the same committees, if you can bring yourself to. Inhabit the same apartment buildings, attend the same schools and parties, date their children. Forgive, if you can. There's nothing wrong with that. But that's your business, not the state's.

So remember. Always remember. Even when, especially when, one of them is let off again, as they will continue to be. You can move on without forgetting, never mind what all the apologists and advocates of amnesia say. And when the time comes, testify. Before a court, as a few brave women and men continue to do. Before each other and your children. Before them, when you meet them in committee, in a lift, at a party. Where'll they go? We've got all the time in the world.

Download Gauri Gill's pamphlet from www.kafila.org/2013/04/24/1984-gauri-gill.

“
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METROPOLIS Strange tales from our international brethren

Time Out Hong Kong



There are animal balloons and then there are animal balloons the size of houses. This month, six large-scale inflatable sculptures will be erected and on display at the West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong. Whether you consider a mammoth pig an eyesore or a marvel of modern art, there's no denying the shock value of the piece. Also on display at the Ocean Terminal in Harbour City, is internationally acclaimed artist Florentijn Hofman's 16.5 metre high installation "Rubber Duck", which is, as the name suggests, a giant version of the bathtub toy.

Time Out New York



More than 80 artists, writers and editors will bring their homemade publications to the second annual Brooklyn Zine Fest, a forum for self-published works. Organisers Matt Carman and Kseniya Yarosh, editors of *I Love Bad Movies*, curated the lineup, which ranges from diary-style essay anthologies to abstract collage collections. The event will also feature an outdoor pop-up library and a series of performative readings. Interesting works to look out for include *Mundane Fortunes for the Next Ten Billion Years* – comics by LA artist Yumi Sakugawa and rants and essays by James Aviaz, in his quarterly booklet *Everything Is Fucked, Everything is OK*.

Time Out Sydney



Who doesn't love a good pop-up festival? Sydney's latest four-week event organised by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority is going to be a mammoth one. Most interestingly, the events will take place at a four-storey windmill constructed for the event. The Rocks Windmill will host a 40-seater theatre space and a fully functioning wheat-grinder. Events include a hip hop/live art game show, film screenings, plays and the opportunity to grind your own flour.