

Macabre Mathematic

by Cecile Pineda

(Three hundred gather to memorialize 3455 combat deaths in Lafayette, California, May 29, 2007)

Ten men (or women)
per day equals
not quite one year
of killing, give or
take away 20 days,
or so. Killing one
man (or woman) per
day equals not quite
ten years, give or
take away 200
men (or women)
or 200 days.
Killing 655,000
men, women or
children since
March 19 of 2003
equals four years
and sum of killings
or 162,500 killings
per year; or 13,540
killings per month
or 451 killings per day
of men, women and—
possibly—children.
451 killings per day
does not equal
2.37 killings per day.
655,000 killings at
2.37 killings per day
equals 234,120 days
of killings or
641 years of killing

which does not
equal 4 years of killing.

You can see 3455
crosses (some armless)
from the BART station
at Lafayette—or you
can look away.
And at this sunset
Memorial Day you can
read the sign
I hold as high as
my short arms can
carry it: 655,000
Iraqi dead since
the invasion of
March, 2003, of
men, women, and—impossibly—
children. An unstable
sign. The reverse:
To equal the same percentage,
seven million
five hundred thousand
US citizens would
have had to die.

A woman approaches
me in a safety vest,
her monitor's role at
the ready: "It's up
to you," she says, "but
there are to be no

politics." I say,
"But this is a
memorial. One
Iraqi death
does not equal
one US death.
One US death
equals 189
Iraqi deaths.
And I am only one
here to represent them.
Whereas
each one of you
represents only
eleven point 5 deaths.
Why is it that I am
only one,
yet you are
many?"

Taking a reading at
the base of an incline
of 45°, 3455 crosses
(some rise perpendicular
to the ground—armless,
and Islamic) appear
numerous, unfathomable as
655,000 armless markers.
might appear,
It's all according to
the angle of incline.

- May 30, 2007