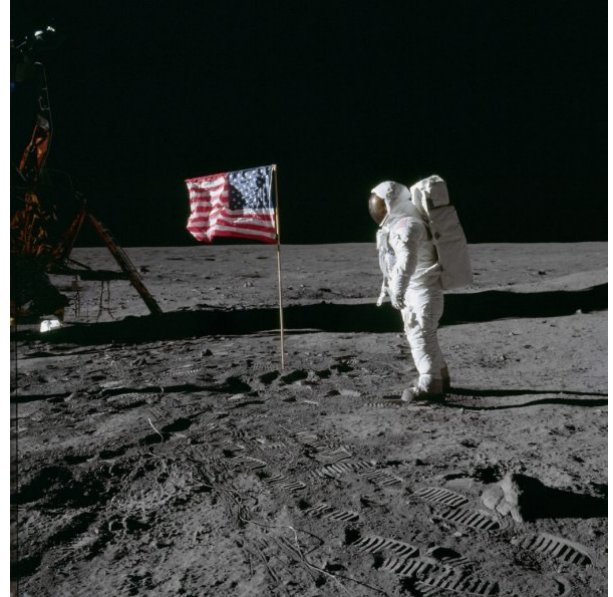


CYNTHIA F. DAVIDSON

author & mystic



I'm feeling sad on this Full Moon Sunday, July 5th, 2020. New Covid-19 cases are skyrocketing to more than 55,000 per day now in the US. This made for a subdued Independence Day yesterday. Our rates are the worst in the world, nearly 3 million cases, more than 132,000 deaths, climbing higher every day.

In need of hope, I looked at these transformative photographs. Taken in 1972, the year I graduated from the American Community high school in Beirut, Lebanon, they marked not just the date of my personal coming of age, but also humanity's. Or so I thought when astronaut Neil Armstrong said walking on the moon was a small step for him as a man, but it represented a "giant leap for mankind."

That picture of Earth from space meant a lot to me when living overseas as an expatriate American because it drove home the inescapable fact that ours is a shared fate. Whoever snapped our global group photo was less important than the incontrovertible proof, we are all one tribe of fellow Earthlings.

Yet on the 244th anniversary of the 1776 Declaration of Independence, Americans seem in retreat, headed in the opposite direction. The complex reasons can be debated but unless the center holds, we may lose everything.

Publishing News

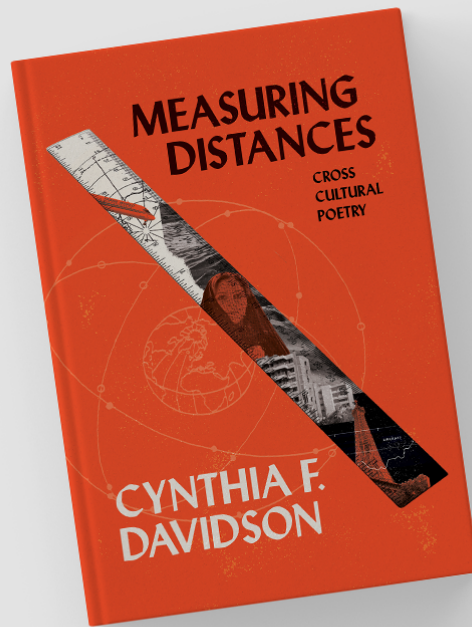
While living and working abroad, I understood firsthand why people need an expanded sense of identity, the umbrella of an idea large enough to fit everyone under. Otherwise we risk being dismissed, by anybody's racism or jingoistic nationalism, anywhere. Part of me believed Americans had a global advantage because we had tried to build a more inclusive system. Taking people in from the world over, and making it work albeit imperfectly, had convinced me the ideals expressed in our Declaration of Independence had inspired the cooperative spirit. Hadn't this also helped us get to the moon first?

"...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

But while reading the words of another astronaut in 1985, I learned one did not have to be an American or an expatriate, to experience these global epiphanies.

"The first day or so we all pointed to our countries. The third or fourth day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day, we were aware of only one Earth."

The man who expressed these sentiments was the world's youngest astronaut. Only 28 years old, he was also the first Muslim, the first Arab and the first prince to fly into space, Saudi Royal Air Force pilot, Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud. He was a payload specialist on the 18th flight of NASA's Space Shuttle program. His comments made me wish we could afford to launch everyone into outer space to initiate a massive global coming of age. Maybe then we'd appreciate the miracle of life on this Blue Marble and be better at collaborating.



Measuring Distances

To measure the distances between our stated ideals, and the truth of how much further we have to go, is the moral dilemma explored in my poetry book. One would think a nation cobbled together from people who came from all over the world would have had plenty of practice with diversity and excel at getting along. With all our opportunities, what holds us back? It generates the ongoing protests over income inequality, police brutality, racial, gender, and class inequalities.

Excerpt from *Measuring Distances* Introduction:

"...This collection of poems reflects my ongoing efforts to hold myself accountable to standards I had to invent by trial and error. If not for the endings of empires, I might have remained just another white Anglo-Saxon Protestant female, feeling no need to measure any kind of distances. Born in a US Naval hospital in 1954, there was nothing particularly unusual about my middle class family of origin, except that we wound up in Saudi Arabia after my flight engineer father was laid off from his job with Trans World Airlines.

For the next twenty years (1962-1982) we were foreigners in the minority, western outsiders making our home(s) in the fractious Middle East. Our family became part of a newer, less celebrated phenomenon — the American expatriate exodus. Reversing the plucky immigrant story that had captivated my Scotch Irish, French, English, and German ancestors, we went east for economic survival. And those

formative decades sent me careening around the globe for the next thirty years. Facing such complex realities without an adequate internal compass, the only things I had to guide me were the dubious prejudices of clashing cultures. What I longed for was an evolving ethos, some system of navigation that would integrate everything, within a vision of a sustainable future. But we had gone abroad before there was a word to describe the process we were part of. As globalization's early pioneers, we lived to see our efforts become a dirty word, as the pendulum of change swung backwards over the ensuing fifty years.

...my father once lamented to a friend of mine, 'I think we did the wrong thing, raising our kids abroad. They have one foot in each world and don't belong anywhere.'

Upon hearing this, I told my friend, 'But it's one world.' Having never imagined this, he had to disagree. And therein lies the conundrum.

...My peripatetic existence demanded I discover larger ideals than the ones my parents had inherited. Mine had to encompass the incongruous contradictions I was raised with or else I could not function beyond the expat enclaves. If aspiring to global citizenship sounds presumptuous, consider the less savory options. Neocolonialist. Ugly American. Imperialist. Corporatist. White supremacist..."

Events

Need a staycation? Try reading ***The Importance of Paris*** memoir. If you have a book clubs I will happily facilitate the discussion via Zoom if not in person. Contact me to set one up! Several ongoing Zoom groups continue to meet.

- Every Saturday morning 10:30 am, Westerly Writing group
 - Every other Wednesday evening 6pm, Book Writers group
 - Every Monday evening 7pm, Zoom Lodge
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Ceremonies

We continue to hold our scheduled ceremonies and on July 5th we experimented with allowing other participants to do their own rounds. Once we confirm no harm was done, we may offer this to others. See the latest updates about ceremonies on our HOPE-HOUSE Facebook page.

Hope House FB Page

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