

Dead Woman Home

Dramaturg's Notes

Serving as the dramaturg for *Dead Woman Home* has been a meaningful experience for me, having been surrounded by the exceptional creative efforts of everyone involved. While any consideration of the United States' 2003 war in Iraq is often discomfiting, the rewards of delving into this difficult material proved politically as well as artistically worthy. The usual dramaturgical pleasures of script development, historical investigations, and contextual research have been accompanied, however, by some surprises.

Most disturbing was the process of choosing additional violent events with which to supplement our main dramatic focus -- the Iraq UN bombing of August 19, 2003. Initially, after reading widely about Iraqi history and the surreality of war in general, I expected this research to be fairly routine. But I found this task, more than any other I undertook for *Dead Woman Home*, to be unpredictably emotionally taxing. The sheer surfeit of violence following August, 2003, required us to exclude reference to many more bombings or shootings than even the large numbers that we *did* include throughout the production. In this selection process, I began to feel as though I was personally ranking some deaths as less important than others -- because a given bombing wasn't "spectacular" enough, or because not "enough" people died in that particular attack -- for the purposes of dramatic expediency, which was a very uncomfortable ethical position.

Fortunately, as a production team, we also made the effort to study innumerable informational resources compiled by dedicated researchers, as well as to explore the inspirational work of countless artists and activists. As part of our ethical response to our nation's actions in Iraq, we have taken the opportunity in this program to share these with you. Through our encounters with these scholars and artists, we have been continually reminded of the unlimited ways in which we Americans might work to make our nation more deserving of a vaunted place in the world community. It is to that goal that I dedicate my work on *Dead Woman Home*.

Roxanne Ray,
Dramaturg