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**Pentagon Worker Sends Musical Tribute to 9/11 Victims, Families**

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9, 2004 – Three years after jet planes slammed into the World Trade Center and the building where she works, a Pentagon employee is still asking, "Why?"

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*Bonita Ruff, a program assistant in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, produced a music CD as a tribute to the victims, families and heroes of Sept. 11, 2001. Courtesy photo*  
(Click photo for screen-resolution image)

Bonita Ruff, a songwriter and recording artist, questions in her compact disc cover song the reason that so many people died on Sept. 11, 2001. She works as a program assistant in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

"Why?" is sung in both English and Spanish and is the lead song on Ruff's CD, "Straight From the Heart." She released the CD as a musical tribute to the families, victims and heroes of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Ruff is donating partial proceeds of the CD's sale to the Pentagon Memorial Fund and is slated to sing the cover song at the Jefferson Memorial on the third anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

She also sang the song at the Lincoln Memorial last year, on the second anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, and at the Pentagon's center courtyard during the kickoff of the Pentagon Memorial Fund.

Ruff, who works in the Pentagon but was at a Philadelphia recording studio on Sept. 11, 2001, said the senselessness of the attacks inspired her to write the song. She questions through her music why a beautiful day quickly turned tragic and why life will never again be the same for families of the victims.

"It's a very strong, emotional song," Ruff said, acknowledging that she broke down into tears while making the recording. "When I sing it, I want people to feel it."

Recognizing its strong impact on her audiences, Ruff said she's judicious about where she performs the song. At one memorable performance, she said she was asked to include it in her lineup of songs performed at a women's shelter during the Christmas holidays. Ruff said she initially wasn't sure the song was appropriate for the occasion, but later realized that it helped give strength to the women as they dealt with their own difficult circumstances.

"Straight From the Heart" includes other patriotic and inspirational selections. In the CD's final piece, an epilogue, Ruff sends words of encouragement to family members of the Sept. 11 victims. "We love you," she says. "We stand by you and we will forever support you."

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