

9-11: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE Mr. Jerry Livadas, Adjunct Instructor

SEVEN YEARS AGO TODAY, AN ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED AGAINST AMERICA THAT TARGETED SYMBOLS OF AMERICAN ECONOMIC, MILITARY, AND POLITICAL POWER:

IN ADDITION TO THE WORLD TRADE CENTER TWIN TOWERS IN NEW YORK CITY, THE PENTAGON IN ARLINGTON, VA, AND AN UNDETERMINED SITE MOST PROBABLY IN WASHINGTON, DC. WERE ALSO TARGETS. IT WAS, IN FACT, A HIGHLY COORDINATED FOUR-PRONGED SET OF ATTACKS THAT CLAIMED THE LIVES OF OVER 3,000 PEOPLE. TO PUT THIS IN SOME HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, IT WAS THE GREATEST LOSS OF LIFE ON AMERICAN SOIL IN A SINGLE DAY SINCE THE CIVIL WAR.

IT WAS NOT THE CHOICE OF TARGETS THAT MADE THIS ATTACK UNIQUE, NOR WAS IT THE FACT THAT THE ATTACKS TOOK PLACE ON U.S. SOIL.

DURING THE WAR OF 1812, THE BRITISH ARMY INVADED THE UNITED STATES, AND SET FIRE TO THE WHITE HOUSE, AND OF COURSE, THERE WAS THE SURPRISE ATTACK BY THE JAPANESE ON THE AMERICAN NAVAL BASE AT PEARL HARBOR ON DECEMBER 7, 1941.

WHAT MADE THE ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 PARTICULARLY HORRIFIC AND DEVASTATING WAS THAT ALMOST ALL THOSE WHO WERE KILLED IN THE ATTACK WERE INNOCENT CIVILIANS.

MANY AMERICANS MARK SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2001 AS THE STARTING POINT OF THE DEATH AND DESTRUCTION BROUGHT ON BY THESE TERROISTS. BUT THIS IS NOT SO. BEGINNING AT LEAST EIGHT YEARS BEFORE NINE-ELEVEN, al QAEDA OPERATIVES WERE INVOLVED IN 4 OTHER SEPARATE ATTACKS ON AMERICAN FACILITIES THAT RESULTED IN OVER TWO HUNDRED DEATHS.

THESE ACTIONS WERE ALL DEDICATED TO ONE PURPOSE-DESTROYING THIS BASTION OF DEMOCRACY CALLED AMERICA, AND IN SO DOING, SMOTHER THE BEACON OF LIBERTY'S LIGHT THAT FOR OVER 200 YEARS HAS NOT ALLOWED, WILL NOT ALLOW, THE DARKNESS OF OPPRESSION TO ENVELOP THE WORLD.

AS WE HONOR THOSE WHOSE LIVES WERE LOST, LET US REMEMBER THE INNUMERABLE ACTS OF VALOR AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER AND ON THE PLANE THAT CRASHED IN PENNSYLVANIA WHEN PASSANGERS WRESTED CONTROL OF THE AIRCRAFT AWAY FROM THE TERRORISTS.

REMEMBER THE POLICE, FIREFIGHTERS, DOCTORS, NURSES, AND OFFICE WORKERS WHO IN ACTS OF HEROISM AND SELF SACRIFICE DISPLAYED *COURAGE THAT IS THE HALLMARK OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER.* - JUST AS IT IS, AND HAS BEEN WITH THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR ARMED FORCES.

THE IMMENSITY OF THE IMPACT OF THE ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 DEFIES DESCRIPTION, AND IN THE END WHAT WE COME BACK TO IS THE TERRIBLE AND SENSELESS LOSS, THAT LEAVES SUCH A VOID IN THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO LOST LOVED ONES, THAT IT CAN NEVER BE MENDED OR FILLED.

IT IS TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHOSE LIVES WERE LOST, AND TO HONOR THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS THAT WE ARE MET HERE TODAY, BENEATH OUR FLAG AT HALF-STAFF. OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH THEM, WITH OUR COUNTRY, AND WITH OUR TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON 9-11

Ms. MarJanie Kinney, President of the SGA, and Ms. Alysia Fernandes, VP of the SGA

[Marjanie Kinney]

We come before you today as witnesses to the catastrophic events of our nation this day seven years ago, to explain its impact and meaning upon our lives as teenagers upon its occurrence, and presently as adults. This day comes to represent the impact it's made on our memory, and how we can never forget our story in relation to our nation's loss.

Seven years ago on this very day Americans across the country were waking up to their alarms and starting their normal everyday routines. Our country was changed drastically that morning in what seems still today as an impossible recollection. September 11th will always be a noted day in the history books of the United States of America.

The nation called upon the unification of its citizens, the government, the armed services, and everyone in-between to help restore our pride and our name. In consequence of the 2,819 deaths recorded upon the attack - 343 Firefighters and Paramedics, 23 NYPD Officers, 37 Port Authority Police Officers, and 22 U.S. troops - fear and paranoia have escalated, and fees have soared in hopes that money can buy our safety; but more importantly we lost the heroes who acted on instinct not glory when saving, we lost those willing to lay their life on the line day after day so that we may preserve our rights to liberties.

Where are we now? We are hoping for change. As an adult growing up in this era I fear most the possibility of that "much needed" change never coming. However, little do we realize what we've gained as result of our losses.

Tragedy can be defined as conflict with some overpowering force resulting in downfall or destruction. This day seven years ago, terrorism was the overpowering force, and fear held our society. However, although the downfall and destruction of the twin towers and the pentagon were a reality, what we didn't lose was our patriotism, nor the values of heroism which existed then, and continue on this moment in our presence.

[Alysa Fernandes]

For me September 11th is a day to look back upon and “memorialize” those innocent people that were lost and those who gave their lives; to remember what lead up to these attacks; and how to prepare for and try to prevent them from occurring again. Most of all these terrible acts allow us to visualize the future through the wreckage that was brought upon the United States, and help us strive to better ourselves and our country. I have begun to see that I am; WE are; the future that will reform our world.

Being in seventh grade when the horrible terrorist actions took place was undoubtedly a very vulnerable age to go through these catastrophic attacks upon freedom. I can remember standing in the central hall of our middle school holding hands and worrying about our country, our families and our futures; arriving home and emotionally being somewhere between my mother’s tears and the repetitive attacks replayed channel after channel. With this I sunk into the reality of fear, the unknown, a lost sense of security and a threat to the privileges I hold as an American citizen.

As leaders of the present with greater potential for the future, we are rebuilding by learning from our past and benefiting our futures. Through education, patriotism and the understanding of what our country stands for we can, and I quote Mahatma Gandhi “Be the Change We Wish to See in the World”. As a body and a nation we need to stand together, to honor and forever remember the individuals who sacrificed and gave all they could without hesitation. We must never forget the same sacrifice in heartache American families and the lost loved ones endured so that we can be speaking to you today.

Let’s not label this occurrence **only** as a tragedy, for it would not justify those who gave to society all they could, including their very lives. Let’s remember this day beyond the special anniversaries, as a moment in history when we came together, as the **United** States of America. This is where we learn to grow, to rebuild and take our past experiences to use them in the present and our future. I truly believe that by living everyday to the fullest, and making a strong positive impact on the people, who share this world with us we can grow, rebuild and take our past experiences to use them constructively today in our futures.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

Mary Anne Martin, Fallen Stars Memorial Project

Today we pause from our every day routines to remember the great Americans lost in the worst terror attacks in this nation's history. For all of us in this country, September 11th, 2001 was a day that will not be soon forgotten. I feel that as New Yorkers, these attacks were especially sobering. I think that, for us, they hit a little too close to home.

It's hard for me to believe that it's been seven years already. I can remember that day as if it were yesterday. I remember everything I felt that day; the shock, the disbelief, the anger, the sadness, and the fear. I especially remember the fear. I had never imagined something like this would happen on the soil of our great nation. I had always felt so safe here and, for the first time, I was truly scared to be in this country. Over the days, weeks, and months that followed, though, what we as Americans did helped to ease my fear and return my feeling of safety. We banded together, we stood up for ourselves, and we refused to let this get the best of us. That pride and determination is part of what makes this the greatest country in the world.

At the time of the attacks seven years ago, I was dating a US Marine. A year after the attacks, I married him. I was so proud to commit my whole life to being with a man who didn't think twice about defending our freedom, even though I knew that – because of the terror attacks of September 11 – he would eventually be going to war. There wasn't another job on this earth that would have made me more proud to call him my husband.

Shawn served our country with pride. He loved being a Marine. He did, eventually, go to war. As an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician, his job was to identify and render safe explosive devices. On June 20, 2007, Shawn was killed in action. He was responding to a call in Saqlawiyah, Iraq when an

improvised explosive device detonated, killing both him and his team leader. On that day, the emotions from September 11, 2001 all came back to me; the shock, the disbelief, the anger, the sadness, and the fear. These terror attacks had now profoundly changed my life two separate times. Now there is a sadness I feel from losing more than 3,000 fellow New Yorkers alongside the hole in my heart caused by the sudden, violent death of my husband.

Please take a moment today to remember the lives of those we lost in the terror attacks in New York and Washington. Please give thanks for the brave souls who diverted that plane in Pennsylvania and helped to save the lives of other innocent Americans. Please also take time to honor the memory of all of the service men and women that we have lost in combat as a result of these terror attacks. My husband, Sgt. Shawn P. Martin, believed in what he was fighting for. I know the thousands of others that we have lost in this war did, too. In a way, we owe our lives to all of these people. I, personally, am thankful for all of them.

There is a special project that I am involved in that works to honor our fallen service members from NY state. It is called the Fallen Stars Memorial Project. I invite you to visit our website – www.fallenstarsmemorial.com – to learn more about our mission. Each of these brave men and women made the ultimate sacrifice in order to preserve the freedom that we cherish. Please don't forget about them.

In closing, I'd like to say thank you from my own heart to all of the troops who are serving or have served in defense of this great country. I'd like to tell the families of the September 11 victims that I still cry with them, and I know that the pain does not go away. I'd like to personally thank this great community for being so supportive of and helpful to me after I returned home following the death of my husband. New York is a great state in a wonderful nation.

Thank you again, and God Bless America.