

9/11 (and below, some words of wisdom from world leaders at the time)

Yes, I and a few million were there that day. It has been humbling and touching that actually, billions were there from the start.

We each have our distinct memory and each story is significantly part of this rare shared moment in history.

In early August I was running in Central Park with my brother. We were talking about the tension building in the Middle East, and spoke that unless we addressed the tensions in the region soon, something was going to happen, here. I must have seemed so upset and nervous it prompted him to ask me, respectfully, and a bit incredulously, "What do you mean, like a nuclear attack?"

Huffing for air and sense I said, "Yes. Maybe. Something has to give. Something is going to happen. Something big."

The tension was getting too palpable, except curiously, for those who were heading up the nations security. For those reading the international news, I wasn't alone.

It began concerning me so much that that week, I reprinted and mailed out an old flyer for a previous consulting project on conflict management, and community rebuilding, to our and every UN Mission, among others.

Some weeks later rollerblading to work, a crystal clear morning, but a noisy one as NYC can be, I felt a rumbling. I didn't look up. Rumbling is not uncommon here with big vehicles and rush hour traffic. And then a loud pop, much like a truck's tailpipe backfiring. It also gave me no pause. Looked at my watch. On time for work? Yes.

Cloverlene gave me pause. I had heard someone in the department had lost a relative recently. Could it be her? She was walking down the street in tears. When I went to console her, she could barely talk. She pointed to the street corner and cried, "A... a plane, hit the building!" clearly stunned, she repeatedly mumbled it out.

Skeptical, because I imagined that happening would be more than just noticeable, I got to the corner to look up. Expecting maybe some small craft... I could clearly see, but I could not understand at all what had happened. Why is there an unbelievably huge round black hole in the North tower? No semblance of a plane anywhere, no flames yet, and not much smoke, just this large black, very large, and very dark hole. It took up the entire breadth of the building. That just seemed impossible. What kind of plane could have ever caused that? Was it really a plane? Whatever happened it was serious, and there needed to be medical help, now! No sirens were sounding yet. Let's move.

With normal elevator crowds on the ground floor at the beginning of the day, I ran up nine flights to our department, announcing the “accident”! Some were already at windows, fixated, gaping. I urged to mobilize and get downtown to help asap.

As some would die because of it that day, my life was most likely saved by the agonizing deficit of response time of most large bureaucracies. For this once, I’ll give thanks for it. Our hospital was the second closest to the World Trade Center, and as we’d learn soon, the closest functioning hospital. Beekman Downtown, whose heroic response was headed up by a dynamic ER director Dr. Goldschmidt, would soon be overrun and it’s electricity and water severely disrupted. Ambulances would now first be routed to us and Bellevue Hospital.

Making our way over to our main hospital, I ran up to join Dr. Rivera. His depth of knowledge I had come to trust, and I asked him to review with me the first aid care for severe burns, lacerations, and basic crushing trauma, a sidewalking eight minute crash review course. We were sure we’d use every bit of it within moments.

My department was disfunctionally administered at best, but the service of caring for the homeless had called and kept many of us there. Throughout the city, we had 30 clinics for the homeless. Along with all main hospital personnel; Dr.s, RNs, social workers, clinic assistants and service staff were to gather in separate staging areas (pools) where we’d wait for official direction from higher ups. Minutes from the site, many stayed in these areas all day, staring at the TV like all others around the world.

When infusion experience (to collect, set up and administer IV’s for the ER) was requested I quickly volunteered. A small team of us rushed gathering on each floor all the extra IV bags and tubing we could find and fit into a large rolling bin.

Down in the ER one of the first ambulances had just rolled up. Opening the doors, a surprise awaited us. What? Inside were two firemen being carried out, struggling with inhalation. I remember thinking: Where are the people from the building? Why Firefighters? They went to help the people in the building! What’s going on?

In the ER we weren’t watching TV. We were busy clearing, organizing, serving. People would run in with any news. Trying not to shout as people were focussed on care, but we heard it: “Another plane just hit! It hit the other tower!” It took only moments to validate if that absurdity was true. And then it took only moments to compute something else was happening, and it was much worse than we thought. Keep working.

IV’s collected and too many people now in the ER to administer them, I crossed the street to check the clinic where our new PA was. She just started her first week with us and was alone in an area she’d never been before. I found her comforting an elderly gentleman with slight angina, and another for respiratory distress. Patients not deemed critical, having little to do with this disaster were shunted there. Hooking up oxygen for the first time, finding where medications were, anyone would have been over their head, but she never complained and kept doing all she could. It would be sometime later

while helping her that I heard the screams from the street. “The tower, the tower is falling,! It’s falling! It’s gone! It’s gone!” Stay focussed I said to myself, stay focussed. I would go to see the emptying sky later.

I had several relatives who worked down there in the World Trade Center. One was my oldest friend who happened to also be my cousin. Our mothers were best friends and we grew up together from infancy. I saw a phone. Made my only two calls that whole day, lightening quick. Get the info and keep on. One to a friend I knew could call my brother in California who would spread the word in the family that I was OK, and the other a call to the wife of my cousin who worked down there. “Yes, he got just got out. He’s safe.” That’s all I needed to know, and got on with it. Days later I learned that his office had given orders for all to return to their desks after an initial exit. He and most did. But after literally having to face the pure shock of seeing body after body, good soul after good soul, fall down in front of their windows, they decided they had enough, and left on their own. The horror nixed any possibility of thinking of business or company rules. The entire time inching down the crowded stair case and in transit after jumping on a packed subway (one of the last to get through just before the first fall), he kept repeating one overriding thought to himself, “Grab my daughter and get the hell out of the city, now!”

Citizens desperately wanted to help. They asked to do anything, clean toilets, sweep floors, cook food, get water, carry loads, anything..... Looking outside our street level clinic at hundreds who’d been gathering, I’m not sure who it was that came up with the idea, but I got a clip board and many sheets of paper and started to take down names and phone numbers, and note any specific skills. “We’ll call you, as the need arises”, but now we needed them to keep the hospital area clear. We knew it was a massive event and thought “Surely rescuers and personnel will get exhausted and we’ll need help over the next few days. And, who knew what else might happen? Presently I told them “We are inundated, saturated.” We have surgeons who immediately drove from several states away, with equipment in large bags, just sitting in the pooling areas, or pacing the floors, wanting to be involved. Back to the clipboard. “When?” “Maybe later, maybe tomorrow. We’ll call. Thank you. Thank you very much. Next.”

It may have been a crowd control measure, but after taking the first several names and looking at hundreds just lining up orderly, quietly, patiently, I almost began to lose it and cry (externally, because inside, who wasn’t crying). What brought it on was this: Each person was looking me in the eye. Directly. They weren’t fooling around. This wasn’t about them. They didn’t care what job it was... they just wanted to help. I could feel they would give anything, yes, even their lives. They didn’t care about themselves at that moment. I was blown away by one after another. Endless humanity pouring out our best instincts, caring for one another.

Instead of so many who were deeply suffering personal loss on this day, because of a clipboard, I was the one on the receiving end of this tremendous compassionate energy. What a privilege to experience. And this was just one hospital in the city.

This is the large untold story when they speak of heroes. I keep remembering these hundreds of hearts pouring forth on a clipboard. That's the human story little was written about on 9/11. That, and the millions of concerned calls and emails from around the globe to this city, calls from the highest leadership and calls from the smallest village in South America, Asia, or Africa, lines all jammed. When there is talk of heroes and we show only police and firemen in uniforms, my heart sinks a little. Yes for sure them, but I saw hundreds of heroes all around me, unsung heroes volunteering, danger or no danger.

Another of the great missed opportunities adding to the tragedy was not harnessing this inexhaustible depth of community available. It was one of my early discomforts, also not mentioned, on the leadership and our cities response.

Effective leadership could funnel and direct this immediate, ready to serve, vast volunteer force present. Give volunteers good guidance and rules, they'd follow. Surely we would need them. Many other crises got organized in this way, indeed most round the world. All through the London bombings of the war, but anywhere sudden tragedy struck people. The list was handed in, and they were not called, nor considered, not given a chance to serve in that moment of need. Experts had to do it. It was "unsafe". Citizens were told not to go below a certain street (Canal). Surely, any able bodied person could help dig and carry a bucket of debris as well as another, with leadership. Yes, sure there was risk. We'll never know what could have happened. We know our civil servants did a great job down there. Few short term injuries were incurred, and that usually ends this mere suggestion.

ID's would be checked at checkpoints and you weren't allowed south. We did need order and we did need clear pathways for emergency vehicles. We didn't need one more death. In days ensuing, quarrels among the Police and Firemen serving at Ground Zero would occur. Indeed many of them knew someone in the rubble. How to contain that emotion and pull? What about the larger majority of people who had friends and relatives there? They would serve without thought of pay. Most all of those allowed to serve were on government payroll and overtime (save a few). Our taxes reimbursing most every truck and person and service. They were doing what they felt was best for us. They had the best intentions, if not a overriding sense that Ground Zero was somehow their own territory, due to the ultimate sacrifice of their brethren.

Citizens with specific skills were carefully vetted and screened at the volunteer service centers that eventually formed along the river. People offering food, legal services, counseling, massages, you name it. But around the Ground Zero area if you didn't know someone, have a specified needed skill, you had to stay out, stay away. We citizens were mostly relegated to watching, our tax dollars being spent, gladly giving more money, and importantly, getting back to our daily work. We did this, and we supported those serving in every way possible, no questions asked. We followed, and gave our trust to authority.

What would have been the economic benefit using a larger volunteer force from throughout America and this city? We chose to spend many millions of dollars on over-

time for our exhausted civil servants and contracted construction crews. We're still paying for these directives. Would less exposure and more personnel rotation have helped? Volunteers were willing to sign any risk waiver. Years later the fact that many of those who served continuously down there are now on disability, with lung complications, can have us second guessing. Do we wish to learn, more seriously reflecting such future response options? Not in the planning yet.

Large centers were set up spontaneously with citizen input; to serve food, give massages, psychiatrists/psychologists giving free counseling, those caring specifically for pets, relatives filing for services, you name it. My girlfriend and several friends would find volunteer work in these help centers along the river. For weeks they went as often as they could.

To the compliment of all, the city mostly got right back on the saddle, and kept running. But again, "heroes" brings up some mixed thoughts. Never a doubt here that those who went in those buildings for others, and who did not come out, who are on the wall of remembrance, they are heroes to all of us. I still pause at the plaques on the firehouses, and probably always will. I also think of the 2600 civilians who died, many of whom were trying their best to help others in ways we'll never know, who held on to one another with burning lungs and said let's go together, who consoled others in their time of greatest need, who gathered wounded, organized teams, etc. And I think also of those many thousands who wanted to be there to help and were told, no, stay away. Heroes were everywhere that day. Calls loading our phone machines from heroes in other states asking if they could come and help in anyway, "I'll leave now". My machine was full from across the country.

Sandra, a good doctor friend in Ireland saw the second plane hit, rushed to Dublin's airport and got on one of the handful of planes somehow allowed to land in NYC. Can you imagine? There was no institution, and no volunteer group organized that she could find that would take her services. Saturated, but many pulling overtime. Locked out, she would go home a few days later. She did that for others, her own expense, for us, without thought or regret.

There are hundreds, no, thousands of stories like this. To all those many thousands who tried, and were not firefighters, if no one else officially has recognized you, took photos of you, put you on advertisements, or wrote about you, I just want to say thank you. To me, you along with those recognized are also heroes. Thank you. And thank the Lord we have people like you alive.

People from some 60 countries would perish in those buildings. Many of their friends and relatives would do anything to be there to help. Russia's leader Putin within minutes called to help, followed by leaders of the world, too numerous to list. (Several of their statements are placed at the end of this article.)

We tend to patronize and stereotype the homeless, but even many of the thousands of homeless in our shelters turned around our narrow images of them, for any who noticed. I managed the medical clinic in a shelter with a thousand homeless men

at the time. What I remember is: Them requesting from us how they could help, lend a hand, asking, did we need anything? They were ready to serve, to do, to give back. In these days they returned to perhaps former images of themselves, capable citizens caring for others. There was one Home, without the less.

Another missed opportunity? Us not thinking out of the box? Or perhaps the event was more out of the box than we could take? Again, something we might consider for the future? There was no way for individuals to get these ideas up to the powers that be. 9/11 was a chance, with some vetting for mental health, to give many a second chance for integrity, a chance to not need care but to give it, a chance to be equals, a chance to be volunteers, to fill a true need, to be fully human. Indeed, I met a few that later, proudly did get jobs with construction crews etc. Many of the homeless are not useless, and are praying for that chance to be off the rolls, and yes, they even can be heroes too. They were soon as they were before 9/11, "the homeless". They joined the many New Yorkers and people from around the world just left left out of any broader volunteer involvement, not mobilized, utilized, received. Indeed our shelter would receive some who became homeless as a result of 9/11. No insurance, mental breakdown without a family network present, or a lost job off the books could do it.

I know it was dangerous down there, and there was enough confusion. For me the recovery effort was tinged with a tendency toward turf wars and control issues, more than creative carpe diem. Survival mode. Having said that, Monday morning quarterbacking is easy. We all did phenomenally. Review would only strengthen us, but institutions tend to pat themselves on the back, follow money trails, and rarely change.

The great quiet. For several days, all of NYC was quiet. A quiet none of us had heard before here, ever. Cars and trucks moved in the streets, trains ran, people walked, but it was all done somehow, quietly. Highly unusual. NYC's worst offender to noise pollution, horns, weren't honked, none, just an occasional siren. No raucous drinking arguments in the local haunts in the East Village where I live. We all remember hearing our first laugh several days later. We asked ourselves, was it OK to laugh again?

It seemed hours, many long important hours on 9/11, that we were without official word from national leaders. Citizens, regular people, us, became quite self sufficient in the vacuum, and took initiative. We got doing things, rescuing, protecting, comforting, understanding, organizing, helping in any way. We weren't waiting.

Where were our national leaders then? We here on the ground just heard that they were being protected, and were busy getting themselves safe for our sake? The rest of us? Well, we were protecting and caring for ourselves. Leadership was everywhere. Later this administration would repeatedly use 9/11 as an example of their strong leadership. I didn't understand that then, nor now. How did they help us in NYC in those first hours or first days? Common US citizens around the country helped immediately.

War? Upon hearing the President days later here in NYC, I was hit hard in the belly. I felt something was amiss, something wasn't right. Little did my brain know why at the time, but my knees buckled, and I got a shiver down my spine when I heard one word... war. It confounded me more than when I looked up to see that blackened hole in the first tower. What was our leader up to? For the first time in days, I began physically shaking. Was this sacred place being claimed, and used, politicized?! We didn't know then that this administration would be leading us not just to strike the Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, which was not opposed by me or anyone I know of. But we'd learn in the name of this ground, in the name of this day, of those taken from us here, that they immediately were making preparations for wider war. The best policing and investigation, and effective action yes. But, the no rules of War?! And not listening to a soul who had genuine experience in the region? Certainly all who dealt with this era's terrorism knew that armies and conventional war was an obsolete and useless strategy.

Not far off, we'd be driving into Bagdad with orders to protect one building, one building alone. Among all the vital and invaluable Bagdad structures, we would protect the Oil Ministry. We would declare a worldwide war on terrorism and quickly build (and not stop building) the largest fortified base, a whole and isolated city, around this one building the Oil Ministry, replete with Star Bucks and shopping malls, private contractors and private armies "security details" within, called the Green Zone.

I'm not sure which day our new representative Hillary finally showed up at Ground Zero, but it was a bit discouraging to see her just watching with this war talk. I suppose she felt listening, and joining in the empathy was the best thing. Listening is good, but leadership? This is when we want to see that wisdom leaders advertised constantly during the campaigns. Perhaps she thought there were just too many voices joining in the leadership pool now? It's true, it was large and everyone was coming: The CIA, FBI, National Guard, OEM, Firefighters, Police, Mayor, Governor, etc.

The lack of our top leadership and representatives leading at that moment of crisis felt as disappointing as ordinary people were inspiring. The Administration would defensively echo, "Nothing like this ever happened before". To his credit, Rudy came on the scene relatively quickly. He came and tried to make as much sense as he could on the ground. As Woody Allen alluded to about success, the Mayor was there. He was almost killed. Leadership thinks of others and takes that risk. Being there helped a lot. Today he's taken that day and honed it for a presidential bid. Why they decided to blow down vital building number 7 that day continues to be a black hole without investigation.

At 4:45 PM, right on hospital shift schedule, day staff were released. It didn't appear that keeping us in pools was needed any longer. There were too few being found down there, and too few being brought up. This reality did not sink in at all for me. They were two of the largest buildings in the world, with over a hundred stories each, filled with offices on a work day. We didn't know how many, but there had to be many people in there. There had to be many pockets with people trapped in many little hidden places, holding onto life as we watched TV. There had to be. And there couldn't possibly be enough staff down there to replenish rescue through the night.

I took my knapsack, filled it with bottles of normal saline (salt water, good for all kinds of wounds), wrap gauze and tape, ... put on my rollerblades (no trains or buses going there) and headed straight for what would soon be known as Ground Zero. I knew I'd find someone trapped in that vast area. You just had to keep looking. Every family member I think was hoping for and thinking the same. My patron Saint Anthony helps one find things and I had the knack. I'd be one to find people. One person would be worth everything. Hang on, I'm on my way.

I waved my hospital ID at the checkpoints and they just flagged this crazy rollerblader guy by. I was resolute. I could help. Had ID. I was legal. Within a few blocks a layer of white powder slowly became deep, and then deeper. The blades began sliding as through thick snow. I looked around the abandoned quiet streets and saw a beam to stash them under.

Arriving at the now sacred ground was how can I beginas surreal, as disillusioning, as humbling, a truly heart stopping sight ... I suddenly began to realize why so few injured were coming to us. I did not want to get this answer to my question of why, but.... it was now before me. Who could have possibly survived this?

This was the west side of the Towers. The roads on this side were impassable to any vehicles. Few rescue personnel made it here that first day. The gentle wind was blowing this way, so the smoke was thick and on the clearest day, the visibility was very poor, maybe a few hundred feet. Through the fog, appearing on that first corner of the Towers, along Church Street, was the first of the fire trucks. Abandoned, crushed. Tires burnt out. Still. Very still. Silent.

Nearby were three haunting police cars, all had come screeching to a halt from three different directions up onto the sidewalk, facing each other now in a star formation. All the doors were open, and the lights were still flashing on two, but flashing very slowly, reflecting their red and white rotating beams through the silvery dust, all silently, no siren, no engine on. The battery hadn't quite yet given up, but the gas had.

The silence was unheard of in NYC, but especially there. You could hear things that you would never be able to hear before. Almost no one talked, only necessary new information, of which there was little. No one felt like talking and if we did, it was almost in a whisper. There was a constant but very low hiss sound omnipresent, a simmering of steam like particles rising up, escaping from everywhere in the pile. The only other sound that could be heard was a single fire hose set up on a stand, unmanned, aimed into the front of a building section. Flames no longer visible outside, but ... water answering those possible flames underneath? That long arching 40 yard stream of water was the primary sound of the evening and night in that area. Like a calming ever present fountain.

The soon to become famous standing shell of a wall, the crisscrossed beams, was dimly visible to the left, standing precariously, defiantly alone, the only recognizable part left of the World Trade Center we once knew.

But how was it at all possible that that huge huge structure, that structure that you had dinner in a month before and looked down in disbelief that you weren't on an airplane, where you could barely make out those tiny dots as people walking below, that unimaginable structure that you disliked when it removed a community to build it, and learned to love while lying on the riverside park grass on the warm summer evenings, gazing up at them. How was it possible that in a matter of seconds, it became just a handful of stories tall, just a white grey mound, now dwarfed by all the buildings around it. Looking up was unsettling: The smokey, but empty sky, as the Boss would later put to words. The remaining buildings, most less than half the height of the twin towers before, were this night the barely visible new towering skyline. That and everything else around now stuck out, especially the nearby ancient tombstones of St. Pauls now blanketed as if there had been a heavy snowfall. The tree's over the graves, I was happy to see were standing. Every leaf was blown off, but the limbs were there, catching empty plastic bags, now holding them as hanging lanterns in the night.

There was a single pair of firemen boots perfectly aligned together on the street. Either someone just jumped out of them, or was about to jump into them and didn't make it. Where was this soul?

The smell from the site would linger for many weeks for those of us living below 14th street, and wherever the wind was blowing. The smoke, or whatever it was on 9/11 was most peculiar. It was a constant silky vapor, a steady gentle steam. We didn't know what it was. It was not your normal black smoke from a fire.

Normally I have sensitive lungs. My lungs reject smoke from a single cigarette yards away from me. An exhaust plume from a car or bus normally has me hold my breath and cover my mouth. But on this evening and night, this thick smoke doesn't burn, it doesn't make me choke, nor even cough. Many of us donned masks upon arriving, but so many of us took them off. I did. I experimented on, off, back on. Couldn't discern the difference. Seeing and communicating seemed easier with them off, so off they came. I didn't stay in that dust as others did for weeks and months, so luckily I'm not one with any associated problems, yet. Eyes did seem to get slightly irritated later, but hard to tell if it was not just compounded from lack of sleep.

I ran into four people who had gathered medical supplies, masks and helmets from a Con Edison box. (Con Edison, I'll give it back to you if you wish). We formed a back up medical crew, as there were no others in that immediate area. We reviewed what we'd need to stabilize anyone when found. We were like horses in a race waiting for the gate to open. On pins and needles? On the thick crust of the moon, with gravity.

The loneliest reflection that night was captured in the silhouette like stance of a single Fire Chief. I don't know his name. He very well could have been the Chief the President put his arm around up on the pile a few days later. I don't know. But this man, spent hours, most the night, standing away from his troops, alone, white chief helmet on, unmasked. He must have given orders to his men to give him reports and then stand far aside. He stood alone staring into the pile, not moving for interminable

periods. His face was that of someone in the shock of having just lost everything he knew. At the same time, his was the face of determination, maintaining focus on what he could do. I imagined him running scenarios of the faces he knew well, and reviewing repeatedly all the decisions made from the moment he first heard that morning. He knew the beloved Fire Chaplain who died before the collapse, he knew most all those that responded. He hadn't slept, and wasn't going to for a long while. One platoon leader full of respect would come up to him, give him a report, get a brief response or order, and walk aside to his crew. Small platoons of these firemen would one at a time forage through a narrow path between the mounds, quickly disappearing in the haze. They were brave. For the nine hours I was there he would remain standing still, deep in silence, his troops returning empty handed.

Upon forming our small motley medical response team, and stationing ourselves just under the entrance eve of the Century 21 building 30 yards directly behind him, I'd go up and say "We have a medical team behind you, if your men find anyone." With a slight gentle nod, without speaking, he lapsed his other worldly focus just enough to let me know he registered my words, and turned it back again to the pile. Such sadness. The very deepest. Such tangible loss. Such witness. Such visible devotion. It was an honor to feel at his service.

A few bulldozers finally made it to the south western end, clearing sections of the road approaching the pile. After the fall no vehicles could get close to this area. I don't recall the hour, but it seemed close to midnight when the first truck of welders arrived. It was an open air cattle like truck packed full with about 40 welders all standing, holding on to the rails and each other, all with hardhats on, ready to go. Memorably, they all jumped off, then became motionless, as if paralyzed, just staring before them. The job before them was more than staggering, it was endless, and anything we could do seemed completely insignificant. Then someone called out, "This one. Let's start with this one." It set them all in motion. The first torch was lit and the first huge beam lying in the road began to be cut to a manageable size for the upcoming bulldozer or crane to move. Just start. One beam at a time. Don't think about it. One at a time. Like any long journey ahead, that first step is often the hardest to take.

Support fireman crews, many from NJ and surrounding states, would keep arriving late that night, fresh, clean, maxed out in gear. Having left their trucks far behind, walking, they would come in waves, draped in full gear, ropes and all. They would slowly walk around the pile. Often they would just stop and stare for awhile, shaking heads, and move forward to stop to do the same again. One group would find a manageable piece of metal in the middle of the road and decide move it to the side. They did something. Then, just more of looking up and around. Ready to serve, but no visible fire to put out. No one yelling for help. No one to carry. In their eyes too, you saw the look, the question... Anyone to save, anywhere? Not unlike the world being in front of their TV, except for the fact that we were there, we also were mostly looking, looking. On this side of the pile, no TV crews or media vehicles had yet gotten there. One young woman saying she was from the Associated Press arrived late and came over to ask us questions. Name, rank and serial number. There wasn't much of an unique

original scoop any of us could provide. Really what to say? It was all to naked before us. No life was hanging in the balance with our actions. Again, we'd share few words, in a very somber whispered tone. She slowly moved on.

I remember after a few hours, someone actually was found, far at the southern end, one person! They thought he/she was alive. Tremendous motion clicked in immediately for this one life. It was a great moment, to find anyone, and especially anyone with life. The person was transported to a triage center set up in the lobby of the south westernmost building on Liberty St. The lobby had reams of IV's rigged from the ceiling, waiting, waiting for use. Now a couple would be. The roadway was cleared to get an ambulance to this point. Not long after this, rumors would spread that that building was no longer deemed safe structurally. It could fall. The triage area was then abandoned.

With that mouth to mouth announcement, we looked up at each of the buildings above us in a new unsure light, and wondered. How could we tell what the shaking earth had done to any of them? Was there any safe place to stand? Should we leave? Everyone had already answered that themselves. No.

Looking up also had us all wonder at the seeming impossibility of these two huge towers not crashing upon most of these neighbors. 95% of the towers really came straight down. How much more devastating if they fell to a side? Just that much more unimaginable. How fortunate. "It's a miracle," we'd repeat. A miracle. (Engineering deserved that credit we'd say. I would come to be disappointed in and concerned with the gaping unexplained holes in the investigation's results as to the how and why.)

I remember being surprised by one man in particular. There may have been a couple others, but at that time there was one young, strong man, with a hardhat on, and maybe the one they made a movie about (I didn't see the 9/11 movie). He was climbing up alone way out in the middle of that edgy rubble, with a headlamp, calling into spaces. How did he get there? He'd carefully move from one beam to another, bend down as far as he could and yell. One beam, one space at a time. I think he was calling, "Anyone there!? Anyone here?!" He was probing alone, apart from any unit or command it seemed. No one would stop him and all wished him safe, and hoped he would yell "I found someone!" One slip and he could disappear. I felt like joining him but at the edges where I was, I couldn't see a possible way to start, and questioned my strength to shimmy up so many beams. Every half hour or so, I'd go again to an edge and peer through beams, or down into holes. Dark spaces, filled with silence. Foreboding. Bending, leaning, listening intently with every fiber. The answer was so stark that the thought of me calling down didn't seem to make sense. It seemed like yelling out in church or any sacred space... just inappropriate. Venturing any further just didn't feel wise, nor productive. The silt was at least a foot thick around the site. It was a slippery dust. The beams cascaded in every haphazard direction. That fellow climbing in the pile up there seemed my kind of crazy, in my younger years. I do believe he or someone, did eventually find the Miracle of Josephine crew this way. I'd rationalize my pull-

ing back from the edge several times by remembering the medical team commitment to the Chief. But truly, I was afraid. I didn't have it.

I've been on a rescue effort after a serious earthquake, and witnessed a large building falling, pancaking next to me. I've sifted through rubble to find bodies or parts of bodies, but this was very different. This was a pile like none other. This was a dust like no other. Usually, you find the arm of a chair, a smashed picture frame, a shoe, a book or satchel with papers, recognizable shards of glass, torn lamp shades, utensils, pens, ruined clothes, partial walls of rooms, a mug handle, bits of things recognizable in the life of a home or office, something. None of that existed here. It was like being on the surface of the moon and being down in a crater looking up. That first night, everything, except these beams, was powder. Just powder. The air was powder. Nothing was visible or recognizable in the pile that night, but powder. Everything was just completely pulverized. But all night I kept looking to find something, something that would be precious to somebody. Nothing that night, nothing on the north west side.

An American flag was draped from a pole on the side of Church street at that corner. Rarely, the flag would gently, slightly move. The next day a TV crew would reenact the putting up of that flag as if it were current news? Flags the next day began popping up everywhere around the city. I love my country but tend to be wary of fervent displays of nationalism anywhere, in any country.

Man's best friend. One of forever inspiring sights to any down there that night were the search dogs. There were a number of them there. Out of the haze and rubble appeared two German shepherds, walking calmly, directly, purposefully, without a flinch, with their heads, eyes and ears straight forward, with such concentration, confidence, composure. Their presence was a grace for all, and helped our focus. They encouraged us to keep our own heads up, our eyes and ears alert. They didn't hesitate to go where ever they were told, right into the smoke, the dark, the hazard, the danger, without fear. They reflected to us that great gift of loyalty, trust, service. Man's friend had arrived. They would be used throughout the rescue effort, and find many a body and body part. Within a few years of their service they would all die as a result. They never knew how to complain, and you sensed they wouldn't if they did. I remember their eyes to be so soft and loving, yet so determined. I remember, thank, and salute them.

As part of my 50th birthday year I had arranged to climb Mt. Rainier with a brother and brother in law. I felt some guilt leaving city a couple of weeks after 9/11, even if it were just for a few days. But after months of training, I felt getting into nature, and some fresh air would be healthy. It was. Not only cleaned the lungs right out, but my mind, as the task required that I not think about anything else but each and every next foothold. I'd use the same headlamp I used on 9/11, just looking for different dangerous crevices.

It's the little things in life that sometimes makes a big difference. Besides the comfort of good family friends, in a Seattle book shop, as I was ringing up some material, a woman at the register was being a normal courteous friendly human asking where

I was from and how was my day (everyone outside NYC seems more friendly at times, but we're friendly too, no?!). When I mentioned NYC, she spontaneously welled up in tears, "Oh, excuse me." Full of concern, and gasping gently and quietly she asked me, "Are you OK? How are people doing there?" And continued, "It is so horrible. I'm so sorry. We think of you constantly." Real tears flowing. I was disarmed, shocked, feeling very far away from home and "it all", 5 hours plane ride, and she was right there with us, feeling it. The "us" again expanded. Thinking of that outpouring of care, she still can make me weep. Love in, pain/tears out. It wasn't just her personal emotion, it was this clarity that yes, we are all together in this. I felt and still feel so thankful. Thank you people.

In that first month I can also remember getting into a packed elevator in the Empire State Building. There was something about reclaiming our city and going to the now reinstated tallest building. It felt like part of the process to regain our strength. Even though we still felt raw, and the sense of safety not yet back (will it ever be again?), just being in the city still felt risky, death defying, so we kept countering this with our daily lives and work, and more, we were going to pay homage to this grand old building in the center of the city. Tourism was still down at that point.

It's beautiful up there, and feelings soared, but what was truly beautiful was what can happen in a packed elevator ride. They were all from Ohio. All "elderly". They just chartered a couple of buses and were coming to NYC to go to newly re-opened plays and visit all the sights they could, spend as much money as they could. "New Yorkers, we're here to support you, to let you know that we love you and are with you!" They all shouted. And they gave us hugs and cheers. What great spirit! Thank you! Thousands of stories we all in NYC know. This is how we survived, but more this is how we rebuild our lives and thrive. It is not our beating our chests about being the bravest of the brave (we might or might not be), or being the toughest and doing it our way all on our own. It's also very much about all this strength of heart and care from everywhere around us too. It's about the best of the larger family and team.

While for us the lives of those who rushed to the scene to help others and died will be forever etched in our heart with gratitude and remembrance, as most uncommon valor, I've always wanted to acknowledge the unreported millions who tried to do what they could, and would have done anything to help, here and around the world. These are also the 9/11 stories to share, to embolden us for the task we have still before us.

The re-opening of the WTC's great indoor glassed Winter Garden (destroyed with the North Tower fall) was a significant milestone in the city's recovery. To have those palm trees once again over our heads. Instead of the large corridor carrying us to the Tower we have a large glass wall to look down upon the now hallowed ground. Peering from there to give thanks for the souls now gone and those who worked so hard to rebuild, it is a quiet place with tables and benches and wide stairs, between the river and the site.

Ground Zero was now the ground whose name was being used for purposes yet unknown, and full now of controversy. For me Ground Zero remained a place of inspira-

tion. A place to think about why we're here, and how precious life can be. The Winter Garden was a gift of open space protecting from cold, rain or heat, and letting the light shine in. For me it was now also holy ground. It is there that I felt compelled to do most my writing for the 2003-4 documentary. I still return during any inspirational endeavor. We don't and won't forget. It became a meditative routine to rollerblade downstream, when not in silence, listening to Van Morrison, John Doyle strumming behind some of the very best Irish traditional musicians, Sibelius's 5th symphony, or the Boss's Rising Up album. The artist captured the feeling, the time, the emotion. Thank you for that one, Bruce.

There's a Catholic Church on Church Street about a block or so north of the towers. Doors of most all churches are usually shut except for events or services. That night they were wide open. I'd take a short break and wander there. It was dark inside, empty, and like all else, very dusty. Although the whole downtown area seemed to be in active prayer, here it was just natural to fall on my knees, and have a good talk.

Leaving the church, a block further north around 1 AM, a Hispanic TV crew ran up waving to me, the first crew I'd seen venturing that close to this area. The camera went right up to my face. "What is happening down there, can you describe it?" I couldn't articulate, and just recall blurting, "The men down there are doing a great job. They are doing all they can." I can't remember. I don't think I shared my disillusionment that my own expectations had been pulverized, and that there is no one left alive to save. I couldn't and shouldn't say it. I was wrong of course. There were a handful that were to be found, alive. With the daylight, the Miracle of Josephine was to be uncovered.

Do you remember that one? I got to meet Josephine and some of the firefighters a few days later at a musical benefit, to raise money, break the silence of no music in life, and to help us heal. Actors and musicians slowly began ending the dark pall that hung over the city that first week, and brought our life back to life for us. Sound, voice, creativity to get out of our shell shock, our shock. Make it OK again, even if for a moment. This also took risk and courage. Thank you so much artists.

Very briefly, Josephine was an elderly lady working in the Towers. There was a team of 6 firefighters coming down the stairs. Josephine was holding things up, walking down as fast as she could, but very slowly. They wanted to carry her. "Mam, we have to move, let us help you." She had been struggling for quite awhile and turned to them. "Boys you go on ahead." With that she sat down. They were perplexed, again offered help, urgently urged her to keep moving, and debated just picking her up and taking her. With that there was a terrible rumbling, and as they all looked up, sharp movement and total darkness. Quite simply, had they gone a few steps further, just a few steps, not paused that one brief moment, they would all be dead now. That one narrow set of stairs for no reasonable reason, stayed intact as all else around them was crushed. These kind of pockets were what I originally thought would be found throughout the buildings, that is, before I saw them. The Firemen would soon search for, find and visit Josephine in the hospital, be forever bonded, and thank her as best

they knew how. It was their word, not mine, but don't ask any of them if they believe in miracles.

Around 2:30 AM I felt there were plenty of people on hand, and perhaps just too many of us at the site standing around. I also knew in just a few hours I'd have to be at work and beginning to organize my team and homeless shelter for the prospects of another possible event. It was very possible that this wasn't the end, there could be something else happening at any moment, we had to be more prepared. There was much to do. I'd collect my rollerblades, and head to my tiny NYC studio's empty bed, home.

We each do what we can. Within a couple of weeks I would call a Muslim community newspaper in NJ to reprint an old letter of mine requesting interfaith and intercultural dialogue, and try to get an intercultural discussion group together. I would hold a block association meeting on disaster preparedness, set out guidelines and recommendations our neighborhoods preparation, and several months later go to Israel to observe and study their experienced response. Unfortunately, while there, just blocks away, I'd miss another devastating bus explosion by five minutes. I'd get to see the rescue and hospital response up close. How connected, organized and knowledgeable citizens and staff all seemed there. How unconnected we continue to be here in NYC and the US as of the time of this writing. Grab someone on the street today and ask them what their plan is if such and such happens. Most don't know, and assume wrongly again, that others are taking care of things. They don't know what their role will be, they haven't been asked, included or given one.

In that first year, I wrote out, power pointed and shared Israel's best practices and other recommendations to mostly deaf ears. Low levels of the Mayor Office and the Board of Health did respond. The head of NY Downtown hospital's ER was enthusiastic. But our Office of Emergency Management, nor our Hospital Association wouldn't be bothered with meeting a citizen. I wrote out and presented the disaster plan for my department. I got all the heads of the institutions in our shelter area together to formulate plans to help each other in various emergency scenarios. All in all, many people are working hard, but we still lack clarity of roles, function, citizen involvement, institution wide involvement, and basic interagency communication. It's never about fear, it's about knowledge and preparation. It's about drills, all of us, involvement, knowledge, being in it together. "Too expensive, complicated" Not for those facing reality, not for Israel. We have been very fortunate we have not yet been hit again.

When 9/11 news broke, my girlfriend was on her first trip to Italy, actually being called down to from a friend atop another historic tower, in the heart of Siena. I knew she would be filled with anxiety. I knew her heart was all with mine, no distance, and hoped she would feel the same, and that could feel I was OK. No way to reach her now. My mom was in Germany on a trip returning to where she and dad were stationed in the debris of the "Good War". It would be days before any of us could speak. Third party e-mails eventually got thru. Like hundreds of US citizens abroad, they were both to have their return flight delayed for days and both receive support, condolence, food,

lodging, and care by “strangers, foreigners”. Thank you humanity for caring for those of my life.

The first decent meal I had after a couple of days not thinking about food or eating was with my dear friend Mahenni in our neighborhood restaurant. It was more than a meal. It's the breaking of bread I wished for all of us in these critical days. He's Algerian and a Muslim. He and most Muslims I know are firmly rooted in a universal humanity. I wanted to know how he was doing, and his family. “Anyone bothering you? What's your take? What's the reaction in Algeria? Talk to me about “fundamentalists” and Islam.”

It was very healing. Not only his excellent food providing the nourishment for a brain to think again, but the moment to stare at each other, sitting together with questions, for a long time. We helped each other integrate the emotions, and what little we knew of what was happening. We helped each other not confuse the issues with personal attacks. It became easy to feel support from a vast majority of the Muslim world. Received or not, our nation had that supportive sentiment clearly offered towards us in the beginning. Our administrations reactions, as were predicted and cautioned against these first days here, would slowly change this sentiment, not for my friend. Like most, Mahenni can tell the difference between this administration's actions and the American people.

He and his family had plenty of terrible experience with terrorism in their home country years back. After decades things were finally getting better. We asked and wondered out loud that first week, “What would this event bring? What was being stirred up?” So much rested on the wisdom of our actions now. Our response would be crucial. Our leaders were selectively talking to us, but not at all to the people of the world. We'd find out later, there indeed were other hidden agendas stirring the unease in our stomachs, and our subsequent reactions would again lend support to rising ideologues the world over. It was exactly what these damn ideologues all wanted. That first week Mahenni and I knew we didn't want that. We wanted ideologues of every nature weakened, marginalized rather than lionized, and the wind that filled their sails dispersed. The administration did the opposite of what we felt was needed.

If I may share this one difficult thought to explain, it perhaps was the single most overwhelming feeling that stays with me. At Ground Zero, on 9/11, I felt I could feel the souls. I felt their presence, tangibly, through the night, even if no trace of a body was visible, even in and beyond the dark empty spaces.

What I felt was an tremendous energy of compassion from them. They had crossed over but they loved so many here. No one wanted to die. But it happened swiftly, and while some souls still felt confused, there was a beaming out of a new force, beyond where we living were yet. From them there wasn't a trace of hatred, anger or vengeance. It was an energy devoid of fear. It was completely that of love and healing, call it what you may. That of compassion. This energy was very active and everywhere around us down there. I'm not trying to be spiritual or make this spiritual. I remember moments of sensing perhaps the most peaceful energies in my life experience.

And I could feel the world's presence. I don't think I'm alone, but it was so overpowering and helped us all keep moving. I don't think you had to be there to feel it, it was also coming from and going out to you, but that physical spot down there was a focal point on that day. I could feel the support of everyone around the globe. It isn't hyperbole to say, astronomical support and compassion. It was a spirit more compressed than these two largest buildings together, yet somehow, a spirit and force so tranquil and calm. The feeling that something had to give back in August... it gave, something very big broke. It was done. I felt a unity on the earth, like I've never felt in my life. I must admit it's a unity that I always longed for, but always hoped it wouldn't need to be at this kind of expense.

I remember feeling then, and still believe the best way to honor the souls, and what I sensed they were sharing, pleading, was to make this a better world, a safer world, and world that had more of this compassion around me now. No more of this. All the personal and institutional honoring of our dead since may be genuine, heartfelt, vital, and worthy, but, to me we could do better in listening to and answering the voices I felt down there that first night.

That feeling of support from a compassionate humanity would continue with me and allow many of us to work without sleep for days. But that feeling for me would brake and brake suddenly, the moment I heard our national leaders speak. When I heard the word "war" for the first time, and then the word crusade, and the word "evil" repeated, and repeated, as mentioned earlier, my legs almost gave out, a shiver coursed down my spine, "No, no!" I remember calling inside, "No!" It had nothing to do with politics or parties, I felt we were being taken for another unexpected turn. Was I alone in what I heard from those that died? There was a shift, and it felt like an abrupt u-turn. The strike on the towers was more than horrible, but the reaction... would it multiply it ten fold and worse? (Yes, much worse.) The words of war didn't feel like the flow of goodness and compassion, nor effectiveness. Subjectively, it was something quite the opposite of what those who died wished for, something we might call in Star Wars, the dark force was felt returning, cloaked in standard rhetoric of goodness. And the battle now rages.

With specific intelligence, I was all for immediate swift action against who did this, but a broad call to war... and the strong we/they language? As the world's leader (like that role or not) with the world's support, what we would do had everyone's eye, everyone's breath, hope and fear. The best of humanity and civilization, or the worst? It was now in our court. Was our choice to lead the world by example toward the emotions of revenge, an eye for an eye, of might is right, any means necessary? Horribly, the answer would turn out to be, yes.

The 9/11 Commission had to struggle to come into being, and then struggle for each bit of essential information gathered. There are still many critical areas where needed information remains purposefully blocked. I felt alone as most seemed to accept and go along with the administration's answer that that little insignificant report put on their desk titled "Osama Bin Laden planning to fly planes into Buildings" was "old

news and lacked specifics” “Who could have known?” They repeated. We let that and so much more just pass. Old news, let’s move on? But what criminal act says anything different? Stay exactly what course? Inexcusable.

I felt alone as we saw the spontaneous cheers for a President calling from the pile for retribution. This is seen as a turning point and high point in his career? As I wrote and said many a time, I strongly believed the best ways to honor the dead, to build the greatest memorial for them, was to dedicate ourselves to a better world, to help the world to be less violent and hateful, by example and deed.

Yes, get those involved. We disagree on how to approach this. But there was little space for discussion, listening, or disagreement. Dissent, an essential component of an vibrant democracy, was somehow again ... unpatriotic. And Osama t-shirts sell well outside the US.

Did our countries leaders gather the world together to see what we could do together? The world didn’t think so. We did it our way? Well, turns out we did it the way of a handful of people in this administration. And most all our representatives handed them the reins, with too few exceptions. It wasn’t about our good soldiers doing their solemn duty, it was about leadership. The deciders. For me it’s now about accountability, and getting back to a genuine team process, to participation, problem solving and encouragement. It’s about being strong enough to admit a wrong when we do it.

My intuitions that I wasn’t alone was buoyed at vigils and demonstrations in that first year. Most, even large ones of many thousands, were never covered by the press. TV anchormen such as Gibson continue to say there was nothing to cover and people weren’t out there, but like others he didn’t look out his window, or look down the street. Long before the Iraq invasion he would have seen large signs saying “No War for Oil”, “What part of Thou Shalt Not Kill don’t you understand”, etc. and would have met many intelligent people from all strata and professions, people believing in international standards, asking the good, direct, complex questions they were not asking. Non-violently and patriotically, wanting to help, caring. The country was betrayed, failed. Lies won out.

I was consoled a few years later when coming across the statements some of our great human leaders from around the world sent to help us immediately in 9/11’s wake. Tragically, we didn’t include or listen to them. The administration gave no notice, and the press gave them no platform, but these human leaders offered and tried anyway. Their wisdom and unheeded advice is included at the end of this writing. With belated apologies for our failure and recognition of them, how good it makes me feel to learn later we were so thought of and linked around the globe in this vision.

For those who lost their beloved on that day, like all those who have lost a loved one tragically, they don’t want any politics to enter or interfere with that eternal bond. They just want to hear and see that person again, they want that person present in their lives, and since that proves physically impossible, they want to remember him or her with all their heart, never mind politics.

There's a little thing I did unconsciously, but for 5 years I never touched the shoes I wore that night, still crusted with the fine gray white dust/ash. I couldn't bring myself to clean the ash off, or throw them away, or store them. For the first time, more than 5 years later, I laced them up for a hike in the woods, and decided to let the dust fall off naturally onto the earth, in nature.

The day after 9/11, after seeing clients all day, and holding a team conference and making preparations for possible terror events at any time, many of us went to man the volunteer centers at the nearby New School University. Ground Zero being locked out and taken care of, I felt this was the best place to help. With three thousand missing (We did not know the number of dead at all then, and thought it had to be much higher.) the University was one of the designated sites where relatives or coworkers were sent to try to find their missing colleagues and loved one. All day and night they were manned. And all day and night people would walk in, some exhausted and crying, some calm and focussed, all caring with all their heart and all hoping against hope. Some exhausted, had walked already all over town to every hospital and morgue, to each center. The valued possession we had was the latest updated hospital lists. We had names. Names of those identified at the morgue, and those who could be identified at each of the hospitals. There were a number of John and Jane Doe's with some basic description, still not identified. They'd pray, could that be my brother, or wife?

We would sit down with each, one at a time and look through the multiple lists, alphabetical order, first and last name just in case, and any spelling that came close. Everything was about names. Names that meant absolutely everything in the world. They brought in photos, descriptions, contact numbers. They would review where they were working, what the last contact with them was, what they looked like, and ask what we knew of what was happening down there at recovery. Were they finding anyone? Where might the bodies be taken? When was the next update of a list? We watched them tape up the names, numbers and pleas with photos on our boards and walls. We offered counseling. Most only wanted that one person, who was not present.

We listened. We had only a few paltry answers, and wrote down names. We said I'm sorry, a lot. Hope, hope. Even though no death nell was confirmed for them yet, it was the sitting with each other, the echoing of names, that became the beginning of the unofficial shiva, the public wake, the common room of human hope, a room open to listening or being silent together, crying, being angry, confused and frustrated, but mostly compassionate together, whatever it would take.

For all those many hours that evening and after work the next day, not one of the hundreds of names I searched for was found. Not one from my desk. Not once could I say, Here he is! John X! He's at Bellevue! He's alive! I felt as helpless there as I did at the pile, and my efforts to give anyone what they wanted, what they really needed, seemed as futile. "It's going to be OK, or You'll be fine or Don't worry" weren't appropriate, and were not uttered by me.

For those hundreds who came by looking, your concern and tireless efforts will also never be forgotten in the mosaic of 9/11. Your love for your loved one, or your appreciation for your colleague will remain part of what got us all through those days, and continue to inspire. I remember you. And I still go and read the names you looked for, now on the wall.

One of my dearest good friends is an Episcopal priest and chaplain. She would work closely with the Chief Coroner and spend months on call for whenever a body or the smallest body part was found. She and other select chaplains of various faiths were asked to come, say a prayer over, and bless whatever was found. The caring and reverence around this was astounding, a sincere ceremony for even the smallest piece of flesh for it sometimes would be the only link for a family. Thank you.

What has happened to all the caring by all the people mentioned throughout this piece? Can we carry it on, forward? The devastation daily on the TV (actually not shown to us in the US as it is daily in all other parts of the world), has been numbing. But what about those digging thru rubble as we speak, now. Love to them too. For too many thousands around the globe, many unreported and unrecognized 9/11 events have happened, and continue to happen as I write. Many asked back then, why? What did we do to deserve this attack? We could ask still, what did that mother, sister or grandfather on TV crying now do to deserve this life taking blast today? It's for me to rededicate myself, and answer that call, to again, re-member.

Anniversaries are going by quickly. I received a call from a dear Franciscan priest friend stationed in Jerusalem. He had been asked to lead the Catholic prayer in an large Interfaith Service being held in Jerusalem on the first anniversary of September 11th, 2002. He knew my long involvement in interfaith and was lending me a great gift of trust in requesting my thoughts for this. I sent him my answer in the below prayer, that if I were an American Catholic priest there, I would pray on this day:

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Shalom. Baruch Ata Adonai. El O Hey Nu Melech Ha Olam.
Blessed are you our Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe.

Bis Millah. Insha Allah.
In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

We are heartbroken.
We are tired.
We are in darkness.
We are afraid.

On this day, those around the world were awakened yet again by tragedy, a tragedy awakening us to how greatly we are, and have been separated from You.

Your grace in the aftermath united us for a moment to see the greater suffering and vulnerability of our common humanity.

On our streets, within the Towers and planes were your children, our precious children, our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, of all religions, all races, over a hundred nationalities, and people from all socioeconomic status, from delivery staff, cooks, secretaries, to leaders of international institutions. Several hundred public servants who rushed to the scene to help lives unknown to them, had their own lives taken to You.

In all our wonderful diversity, please help us here on this one small, delicate planet, embrace our family of humankind.

Encourage us to gather the fortitude to search, recognize, admit to, and disable the evil carried by our common human enemies: poverty, our sins of hatred, of arrogance, of ignorance, of prejudice, of intolerance, of injustice, of irresponsibility, of indifference, of spiritual materialism, of greed, of blaming the other.

Help us gain the courage to overcome the sources of our fear, our hopelessness and insecurities.

Strengthen us with humbleness, to not only listen, but to hear each other. May we hear in each other, Your wisdom, Your guidance, and Your love. And by "love" we mean as the American Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Not some sentimental and weak response, rather that Force which all of the great religions have seen as the SUPREME UNIFYING PRINCIPLE OF LIFE."

Thank you for endowing us with the ability to give each other ATTENTION: a tool to heal each other and to continually re-build Your community. In this attention we come to witness the center of Your heart: compassion. We pray that whatever we learn from this experience is to improve the lot of mankind.

An American mother, grandmother, and teacher, Ethel Lombardi said: "The real challenge for all of us is to desire to evolve out of our fears. There is no love or healing in fear. Each person living in fear contributes and helps support everyone else's fear, until the struggle to live and love becomes more difficult for all of us."

To fit this occasion, I've taken liberty to paraphrase a portion of an address by US President Abraham Lincoln given at a uniquely devastating battlefield some 140 years ago.

"We have come to dedicate this [moment].

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate --- we can not consecrate --- this ground, [this moment].

The [good] men [and women] ..., living and dead, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.

It is for us the living, rather to be dedicated here to [their] unfinished work and lives ...

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us --- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion ... and that we highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain --- that this [world] under God, shall have a new birth ...

The founder of our Franciscan Order wrote this prayer over 800 years ago;

"Lord make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred,

Let me sow love.

Where there is injury,

Pardon.

Where there is doubt,

Faith.

Where there is despair,

Hope,

Where there is darkness,

light.

Where there is sadness,

Joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled

As to console,

To be understood

As to understand,

To be loved

As to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned..."

A few words given to us by Our Saviour Jesus Christ, a Jew schooled in a synagogue of Nazareth born here in Palestinian Bethlehem, beloved by Mohammed as a Prophet of God.

(Matthew. Part of our Beatitudes)

"... Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness,

The kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who mourn,

they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the merciful,
They shall have mercy shown them.
Blessed are the pure in heart
They shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers:
They shall be recognized as children of God..."

Dear God, our Father. Thank you for our gathering, our coming together today. We don't know what lay ahead of us, but keep us close to You, and strengthen us each day forward.

Amen. Ameen

Ps. Two Extras:

The Bible:

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it...

- Micah 4.1-5

New Testament:

Be ye all of one mind, having compassion of one another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. Pay back with a blessing, that ye should inherit a blessing. Miracles are what God promised to give you when he called you. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that speak no guile. Let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. ... - 1 Peter 3 8-12"

August, 2002

A. Donovan

NYC

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In past years, I came across much wisdom for support to get through our challenge. We tend to think we are alone. We're not. Many Nobel Peace winners with vast experience with war and oppression, who led regions and country's back to a life worth

living, away from authoritarianism, and human cruelty, offered their help and guidance immediately after 9/11. Sadly, and tragically, this vast wealth of leadership and knowledge fell on deaf ears, went unheeded, un-welcomed. Below is guidance I found from just a few of these leaders. The wisdom remains there for whomever will retake the reins and do the work:

Mikhail Gorbachev, October 19th, 2001

Nobel Peace laureate and former leader of the USSR who spearheaded ending the devastating Cold War, and led it's transformation to Russia and independent states, had this statement published:

"In the past month, the world has witnessed something previously unknown: a common stand taken by America, Russia, Europe, India, China, Cuba, most of the Islamic world and numerous other regions and countries. Despite many serious differences between them, they united to save civilization.

It is now the responsibility of the world community to transform the coalition against terror into a coalition for a new, peaceful and just world order. Let us not, as happened during the 1990's, miss the chance to build such an order.

Concepts like solidarity and helping third world countries to fight poverty and backwardness have disappeared from the political vocabulary. But if these concepts are not revived politically, the worst scenarios of a clash of civilizations could become reality.

I believe the United Nations Security Council should take the lead in fighting terrorism and in dealing with other global problems. All the main issues considered by the United Nations affect mankind's security. It is time to stop reviling the United Nations and get on with the work of adapting it to new tasks.

Concrete steps should include accelerated nuclear and chemical disarmament and control over the remaining stocks of dangerous substances, including chemical and biological agents. No amount of money is too much for that. I hope the United States will support the verification protocol of the convention banning biological weapons and ratify the treaty to prohibit all nuclear tests. Both steps would reverse the Bush administration's current positions.

We should also heed those who have pointed out the negative consequences of globalization for hundreds of millions of people. Globalization cannot be stopped, but it can be made more humane and more balanced for those it affects.

If the battle against terrorism is limited to military operations, the world could be the loser. But if it becomes an integral part of common efforts to build a more just world order, everyone would win - including those who now do not support American actions or

the antiterrorism coalition. Those people, and they are many, should not all be branded as enemies.

Russia has shown its solidarity with America. President Vladimir Putin was the first foreign leader to call President Bush on Sept. 11. Russia has been sharing information, coordinating positions with the West and with its neighbors, opening its airspace, and providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and weapons to the Northern Alliance. This has been good policy. But we should bear in mind that, both in the Russian establishment and among the people, reaction to it has been mixed.

Some people are still prone to old ways of understanding the world and Russia's place in it. Others sincerely wonder whether the world's most powerful country should be bombing impoverished Afghanistan. Still others ask: We have supported America in its hour of need, but will it meet us halfway on issues important to us?

I am sure Russia will be a serious partner in fighting international terrorism. But equally, it is important that its voice be heard in building a new international order. If not, Russians could conclude that they have merely been used. Irritants in US-Russian relations - issues like missile defense and the admission of new members to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - will be addressed in due course. But they will be easier to solve once we have moved toward a new world agenda and a deeper partnership.

Finally, it would be wrong to use the battle against terrorism in order to establish control over countries or regions. This would discredit the coalition and close off the prospect of transforming it into a mechanism for building a peaceful world. Turning the coalition against terror into an alliance that works to achieve a peaceful and just world order would be a lasting memorial to the thousands of victims of the Sept. 11 tragedy."

N. R Mandela, F. W. de Klerk, D. M. Tutu, September 19th, 2001.

Three South African Nobel Peace laureates who broke chains of an abhorrent tradition and helped end decades of inhumanity, onto forging a most courageous path of reconciliation, wrote and signed this letter in the week after 9/11:

"The terrorist attacks in the United States of America last week shook all of humanity. It starkly reminded us again of the depth to which we can sink in our inhumanity towards one another.

It was a source of encouragement to note that almost the entire world responded with utter revulsion to such cowardly acts that cruelly and horrendously took the lives of so many innocent people merely going about their ordinary daily lives. Amidst the indescribable tragedy the overwhelming decency of human beings the world over found expression in the unreserved condemnation of those terrible deeds of cruelty.

To that we wish to add our collective voice of condemnation of those acts and to express our deep felt sympathy to the American government, people and particularly those who lost family and friends. We share in their sense of loss and can only trust that they will take some sustenance from the knowledge that so many people all over the world mourn with them.

The events of last week are also a renewed call to rid the world of the scourge of terrorism. Those acts emphasized that we are all vulnerable to terrorism. We hope that the culprits will be identified, apprehended and severely punished.

This is a time that the world should stand together in pursuit of those objectives. Terrorism seeks to put itself above and outside of the law. Our steps against terrorism should studiously be within international law and the charter of our world body.

We need wise leadership and statesmanship in this period of looming crisis. The actions taken should not deepen tensions and further divide the world for it is in those circumstances of strife and division that terrorism finds fertile ground.

The recent history of our own country has taught that negotiation is the surest means of finding lasting solutions to even the most seemingly intractable political problems.

In combating and seeking to eliminate terrorism we must address the root causes of problems around the world and find just solutions to them. In the Middle East, particularly, efforts at arriving at a just and peaceful settlement should be redoubled.

If out of the tragic events of last week the world can find a renewed will to cooperate in finding just solutions to the problems that threaten the safety, security and well-being of us all, the highest tribute would have been paid to those who lost their lives.”

Dr. José Ramos-Horta, October 10th, 2001.

Nobel Peace Laureate and Foreign Minister of the newly established East Timor, who led a valiant independence movement, via an brave alternative path to violence as violence was a constant threat for his people:

“As human beings we must always pause and ask ourselves if the use of force to deter violence or to halt the perpetrators of terrorism and genocide is the only option available.

I have often agonized over this dilemma. As a human being, I agonized over NATO’s use of force in Kosovo. I supported it once I concluded that all diplomatic channels and efforts to stop the ethnic cleansing of Kosovars by the Milosevic regime had failed.

Again I have reflected on the decision by the US and its allies to use force against the Taliban regime and Osama Bin Laden terror network. In confronting this painful and agonizing question, my conscience tells me that the use of force was inevitable and necessary.

In 1999, the East Timorese people were brutalized, murdered, and the country thoroughly destroyed. We appealed to the US, Australia, Portugal and the UN to send in forces to save our people. More than 30 countries responded and an international force finally landed in our country. They saved our people.

How could we East Timorese, today, profess a false "pacifism" in the face of the barbaric act of September 11, that victimized thousands of people at the World Trade Center, and in the face of the barbaric Taliban regime that has enslaved millions of Afghans?

As human beings we must always pause, reflect and resist the temptation to use force and the practice of an eye for an eye. However, there are times, when the use of force is legitimate and necessary. In the face of evil, invocation of false pacifism leads to inaction and betrayal of the victims of oppression. For this reason, as I stand here today, I endorse the use of force against the Taliban regime that oppresses its own people, has taken Afghanistan back to the Dark Ages, and is harboring an international terrorist network.

I can only hope that once the dust settles, the G8 countries, with the UN and the World Bank, and the private sector around the world, forge a Marshall Plan to eradicate poverty.

The US has shown that when there is political will it can mobilize the international community on a common cause. If there is the political will and leadership to forge this impressive coalition that spans the globe in the fight against global terrorism, then surely there must also be the good will, leadership and vision to forge a new international coalition against hunger, abject poverty, malaria and aids. Extreme poverty is an affront to all. It should shame us that governments can readily allocate billions of dollars to fight wars and yet refuse to spend modest sums to fight poverty. As a human being I am ashamed."

Dr. Oscar Arias, October 11th, 2001,

Former President of Costa Rica and 1987 Nobel Peace Laureate, who led the transformation of a whole region in tragic conflict, by example and deed.

"I know that many of the people of the United States believe in working for peace, but have difficult questions in their hearts today. How do we stop terrorism? How can we prevent another attack from happening? How will we know when we are safe again? How do we achieve justice for the horrible thing that was done to us?

I'm afraid that there are no easy answers to these questions. The government, and the people, of the United States are in an extremely delicate position at this time. They are struggling to find a response that will stop the evil of terrorism, but without repeating that same evil: without killing even more innocents. The greatest danger I see is

this: that people will begin to welcome violence into their hearts, and in this way diminish their own souls. While I believe that actions such as those carried out by terrorists on September 11 must be responded to, I believe it is vital that Americans not allow themselves to be overtaken with a thirst for revenge.

Now that war is upon us, I feel it is imperative that the present conflict not be inflamed and extended into a "clash of civilizations," nor that it be painted as a jihad or a crusade--two concepts that have been sorely abused over the course of history. There is truly nothing more disturbing than killing in the name of God and religion. Today I send my plea to those in the Muslim world, in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, in Bangladesh and Iran, and in all places where the name of Allah is worshipped, to reject the false call to holy war against the West that is being put out by extremist leaders. At the same time, I call upon the leaders and the people of the West, in societies based upon the Judeo-Christian tradition, to recall that Christianity provides no basis for an assumption of superiority and dominance, quite the contrary. The holy writings of the Torah, the Bible, and the Koran have been twisted so often that it has become difficult for ordinary, good, and compassionate people of all faiths to discern the principles that are primary in all the holy books: peace and justice, fair treatment of our neighbors, and the primacy of love as the supreme value.

Whether or not we subscribe to any religion, and whichever faith has shaped the culture that we live in, let us all remember the importance of working together as a human race for the survival of our planet, and for its lasting peace."

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Above were some of the paths not taken. Those paths have been made increasingly difficult now, and will need some clearing, but still remain. Let's get together in this spirit.

In ending, that week of 9/11, prayers much like this below were being written, agonized over, given the utmost thought and care, and occurring throughout the city's religious institutions of all faiths. We would learn, we were prayed for around the world. Those who died I know heard the prayer. God I'm sure did. But little evidence by deed from some key "leaders" claiming to hear God's guidance. The prayer lives, and remains worthy. Excerpts from one example of a pastoral prayer, prayed in the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. that prayer written and delivered by a Dean Alison Boden, September 16th, 2001:

"Gracious and everlasting God.

Like people of faith and good will all over the world, we gather our broken hearts in prayer for those who have died in the horrific events of this past week. We thank you that they ever lived at all. We thank you for the joy that they brought to their parents, sweethearts, children, and coworkers, for the testimony of their faith in

their mosques, synagogues, churches and temples, for the comfort and courage they extended to others in their final moments....

We pray for all who search streets and hospital rooms and rubble with fading hopes of finding a dear one alive. We pray for survivors everywhere now tormented by their images and memories of hell....

We gather our broken hearts in prayer for ourselves in the wake of the horrific events of this past week. We have seen the very worst that we are capable of - vengeance, greed, murder, senseless slaughter, ideological villainy, scapegoating. And we have seen the very best that we are capable of - courage, compassion, service, faith, heroism, community, love. We are terrified, and humbled and encouraged to see what we are truly made of. Strengthen us to choose the latter and better way, O God.

We stand at a crossroads. We may answer violence with more violence, we may answer the scapegoating and faceless demonizing with scapegoating and faceless demonizing, or we may respond to any injustice or simple human need with courage, compassion, selflessness, community, and love. O God in your mercy, hear our prayer.”

** It is with tremendous sadness, (but renewed conviction) that study done after writing this recollection, has led me to understand that the towers coming straight-down, and so quickly was not just a “miracle”, why volunteers were not allowed to the site wasn’t just for our safety, and why too few in the know about dealing with international terrorism and international cooperation were called or listened to, and why there are so many hinderances to allowing for a complete investigation of fact. There was a previous agenda hidden from the public. We’re corporatized. We have our work cut out for us. We have democracy and the truth to regain. May the good force be with you, me, us all.

Anthony Donovan

NYC, August, 2007

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