
Crisis In America
by Sheri Ann Richerson, Marion, Indiana

September 11, 2001 is a day that will without a doubt go down in history. It is a day that will be remembered with great sadness. It is the day the World Trade Center and the Pentagon fell. Not only did

http://www.issues-mag.com/Sept_Oct/comments.shtml

9/24/2001

these two great buildings collapse, but many lives were needlessly lost.

Entire cities were shut down out of fear. President Bush declared a major disaster exists in the State of New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the areas that were struck by fires and explosions. People stayed glued to their televisions and radios fearing anything that sounded even close to a plane. Jamie Gola said even late this afternoon she could hear planes flying over her Pennsylvania home and was fearful because she didn't know if they were going to cause more chaos.

When the tragedy struck around 9 o'clock this morning, Mrs. Gola was at work. Her company told her to go home and be with her family. "I was sent home from work and I was waiting at the bus stop. The people were waiting to catch buses but the city had been shut down. Everyone was just terrified. Everyone was just scared. Everybody was in shock, just wanting to go home."

Norman Bauman, a medical writer who resides in New York was in his home writing a story when he heard the news. "I couldn't do any work after I heard about this catastrophe. I just walked downtown as close as I could get to the scene, out of journalistic instinct/morbid curiosity. All the vehicular traffic was going uptown -- the downtown avenues were empty. The trains weren't running, and the streets were full of people, walking mostly uptown. They had a very somber mood -- the streets were crowded like New Year's Eve or a snow emergency, but they weren't cheerful like New Year's Eve or a snow emergency. There were no teenagers laughing like you usually see on the streets. Occasionally fire and emergency trucks would be moving cross-town, escorted by police cars."

"Instead of seeing the twin towers looming up downtown, as usual, there was just smoke. Normally, when you walk around mid- or lower Manhattan, you see the Empire State Building uptown and the World Trade Center downtown. Now there was just smoke -- not a burning tower, but just smoke rising up, filling the sky and blowing east. As I first approached, I saw what looked like a normal white cloud in a clear blue sky, but when I got further downtown I could see that the base of the cloud was dark grey."

"The entire Wall Street area was filled with smoke. By Canal Street, I could look down the avenues, and see them ending in smoke. I finally got to the police barricades, about 4 blocks from the WTC, which was as close as you could get. By that time, the entire 2 towers had collapsed. That was a shock. I wasn't expecting the towers to collapse entirely."

"The towers were 110 stories high, and each floor was the size of a city block, and could easily hold 100 people. So my guess was that there must have been 10,000 or 20,000 people in the two towers. Since they had less than 1 hour before the collapse, I don't see how many of them could have gotten out. A woman said she saw people trapped by the flames, jumping out."

"My initial reaction, like most people, was disbelief. A cop at the barricades said he had been filling out paperwork when somebody told him an airplane had hit the World Trade Center. He said, "Oh,

come on." Then he came out and saw a piece of the tower missing. One guy by the barricade said, "We're going to hit them back." Somebody else said, "How do you know who did it?" The cop, a genial black guy in his 30s or 40s, said, "You get them back, they get you back, where does that get anybody?" As I was walking back, I met some women from NYU medical center, which was mobilizing. One woman was on her bicycle, and she was looking for someplace to give blood uptown, because the line at NYU was too long. The initial political reaction in the streets seems to have been mixed pro-peace and pro-war."

Was this exactly what the responsible party had hoped to accomplish or was it something more? When the responsible party or parties are caught will they say that hurting innocent people was not their intention? Well, then, exactly what was their intention? Maybe they were angry at the government? We've certainly heard that excuse before. Whatever their excuse it isn't enough.

By not allowing terrorist groups to have their own way, are we sacrificing our loved ones? We live in a free country but if we must continually look over our shoulders in fear, how free is that?

President Bush said today, "I want to reassure the American people that the full resources of the federal government are working to assist local authorities to save lives and to help the victims of these attacks. Make no mistake: The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts."

Families were needlessly torn apart today. One man said he spoke with his wife after the first plane hit the Trade Center. He was directed to return to a higher floor for safety reasons. His wife did not go with him. When the second plane hit, he escaped but still does not know his wife's whereabouts. Many other families are in the same predicament. "I am sure I am not alone when I say I am totally blown away by today's events. The loss of life is staggering even though numbers haven't even begun to be tallied," one lady who has asked to remain anonymous said. "Security is a concept to now be reworked for each and every individual. My heart goes out to all involved directly with this calamity and to all who feel the ripples of its effects."

The ripple effects are indeed being felt worldwide. Prayers are being said and condolences sent. The internet is a flurry of people reaching out encouraging others to donate blood, pray for the victims and their families as well as those offering encouragement to the discouraged.

Can any good come of this? Our nation has certainly faced other devastating situations. We must continue to have courage even in the face of the tragedy. "Be strong and of good courage...Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:5-7, 9). This is the time for our nation to be strong and to find the faith to help us overcome this tragedy.

This will not be easy for anyone and the continued effects of today's events will be with us for a long time, but we can overcome it, together "one nation, under God, indivisible, with equality, liberty

and justice for all."

Sheri Ann Richerson has over 22 years experience in newspaper, magazine and creative writing styles. She is an on-line freelance writer for Beyond Infinity. She also writes for Correspondent.com, SharingTV and is a contributing editor for Suite101 and WebSeed Publishing.
