

## A Time for Self-Reflection

During the upcoming and heated effort to apprehend the World Trade/Pentagon terrorists, it is important for Americans to reflect on who we are as individuals and as a country. The tragedy of September 11th has left many of us with very intense and confused feelings that some of us cannot put into a proper perspective. We are all in this together and we need to address these issues together.

At home, in our schools, in our jobs, and in our communities we are a microcosm of the US. Our corporate culture, as our country, is also very diverse. Most of our families immigrated to this country at some point in time to either escape persecution, terror, or pursue opportunity. Our country has always been about harboring those less fortunate than us while they are given an opportunity to rise above the ashes of their pasts.

The events of September 11th have left many people mortified, devastated and angry. How could this happen to us here in the US? It's always seemed that we were impervious to these types of terrorist acts that abound elsewhere. That makes us feel very vulnerable at this time and our consciousness will never be the same. Every single person in this country was effected by these terrorist attacks. Some of us were born and raised in NYC and watched the twin towers rise and then fall, others had friends and family in the twin towers at the time of the attack, others came over to this country in this lifetime, as immigrants, trying to escape the very types of terrorist acts that they must now re-live as a result of the attacks. Many, who were Holocaust survivors and children of Holocaust survivors are confronted with the continuing hatred against them, which led up to the attack, and those who have come from Middle-Eastern countries to escape the Jihad are being scapegoated for the crimes of a radical fringe that have nothing to do with our common American humanity. There is no one who is unaffected by these crimes.

Now we are seeing images on TV that are very edited and which are inciting passions and influencing opinion. Our government wants to go to war but it is important to note a number of things in regard to this upcoming war: our own CIA created this monster (Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Noriega) in our OWN image. And it always seems to come as a surprise when the monster turns around and bites the hand that has fed it. We have yet to address the shadow side of our own nature that would create such monsters. We self-righteously condemn their actions as if they are totally separate from our own human natures. We have perpetuated the monster and every time we bomb another country and kill civilians we are surprised when the monster comes back and does the same. We need to look at why these acts of crime were committed against us and learn to be very discerning in our judgments of others and their actions.

We can start first by very carefully discerning the information that we are fed from the media. There is no doubt that the Twin Towers were blown to bits and that the Pentagon was attacked. We all know people who were there and saw it happen. But what about some of the other images we are fed by the media? While many of them are used to make us come together as a country during a time of challenge, others are designed to make us angry and to elicit revenge.

During a time like this, these images can act as a catalyst to rally against certain groups of people in our country. One such image, still under speculation, was of Muslims in Palestine rejoicing at the destruction of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Some say it was 1991 Gulf War footage and even if it was not, it makes many at home angry enough to personally want to seek revenge against the Muslim community.

When one looks at our own media and its corporate interests, this is as much a crime as was the attack on the Twin Towers. If one is to be discerning at a time like this, one must realize that many of our corporations, especially media, are run by stockholders in government positions, some of whom have a vested interest in swaying public opinion. And it is well known that images are the best way to influence opinion and incite action. Even when images don't lie, they are strategically used to generate a calculated response. You will not learn what is the truth and what isn't the truth from our mainstream media. You must seek it yourself and additionally face your own shadow to reflect on your own biases and hatreds. This is a good time to really look at who we are and who we want to be. Do we want revenge or do we want a common front against violence and terrorism? We can all start here at home, in our companies, and in our neighborhoods. "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."

During the Holocaust, many Germans put themselves on the line by giving Jews safe harbor. It is time for us to come to grips with our own discomforts and suspicions and talk to each other about our fears and doubts, particularly if you are uncomfortable in your own homes, neighborhoods and work environments. Then for those who are most brave and are willing to slay the dragon that has been implanted into our American psyches by the dragon's sponsors, we must support our Arab and Muslim friends, neighbors, and those American citizens who came to this country for the same reasons that we, our parents, and our parent's parents came. We came for freedom, for a place where we could all respect our differences and rejoice in our commonality. We came so that we can portray a united front to the rest of the world in the face of evil and injustice. Most of all, we came so that we could be given and give a safe harbor to those who face persecution and injustice at the hands of the evildoers, both inside the country and outside our borders.

So, in what seems to be the inevitable face of an upcoming war, organized by the creators of the monster and which will, unfortunately, continue to feed this monster, please, everyone, look into your hearts and remember carefully who you are, why you are here, and how you can help be part of the solution and not the problem. The true heroes will be those who slay the dragon of hatred and bigotry, which resides in each one of our hearts, and then rise to support our neighbors and humanity as Americans -- rather than destroy them under the guise of fanatic patriotism.

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