



# Ten years after September 11, 2001

A survey among U.S. citizens about the consequences



Ten years ago we featured this apocalyptic photo of the ruins of World Trade Center by James Nachtwey / VII

## Introduction

In August 2011 we asked 175 people in the United States about their personal opinion on what happened to their country and the world in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. because we were eager to learn first hand their views from inside the nation which was the target of the assault and had to cope both domestically and abroad with its fallout. Only 11 of them took it upon themselves to reply, to us a sign that 9/11 and its political, economic and social aftermaths still are painful subjects far from being overcome and difficult to write about.

The more indebted we are to those who shared their thoughts with us which we relay in the alphabetical order of their last names (some chose to stay anonymous) without any further comments. To us even this relatively small sample provides substantial insights in the diver-

sity of stands and yet unifying hopes and values of Americans which made their country a great one: their willingness to defend democracy and individual freedom, not only at home, and their resilience in pursuing them because they do not take these precious privileges for granted.

*rijo*

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### **Mr. Mike Cate**

This is my response to what the 9/11 terrorist attack upon the United States of America means and / or meant to me:

1. The attack damaged my faith that most people in the world have more or less the same values about what is right and what is wrong, regardless of their religious faith. That is, I always assumed that Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Tribal Americans, and other faiths all shared core values of something akin to the 10 Commandments and the Golden Rule. I now know that these terrorists, who would endorse such a crime, have no concept of these core values. They believe that anyone who disagrees with their faith deserves to be killed, even if they armor their own kids with suicide bombs, etc.
2. The attack removed many freedoms that Americans used to enjoy, including basic things, such as comfortable airfare experiences, without invasive searches at the airports prior to flight. Everyone is a suspect now.
3. Prior to this event, I would never pre-judge anyone by their race, color, religion, origin, political values, or even their mode of dress. Now, when I see someone wearing a turban, or whatever you call that “raghead” look (I apologize for using that term), I wonder if they are not a terrorist among us. I don’t like thinking that way.
4. It bothers me greatly that there are Liberal Americans walking among us, and who elected some of the leaders into important offices governing our land, who seem to ignore the significance that a terrorist attack such as 9/11 could happen on American soil. It almost seems like they can write it off, blaming some of our own people in office then and now ... such as George W. Bush. Sometimes I wonder if these Liberal Americans think that those towers in New York just blew over in a windstorm.

5. I have lost respect in the United States of America for its ability to be world leader, the way I was taught to believe as a student in school, and as an adult thereafter. I don't believe we need to control the world. However, in my lifetime, we have always been at the forefront as world leader promoting freedom and peace. We now live in constant fear that the US of A is just another event away from another 9/11 from happening again and even again.

I apologize for all of the pessimism expressed above about the US of A. I wish I did not feel that way. However, our current national economy is a mess, including raising our national debt limit to even make payments to our elderly living on Social Security ... retired working citizens, who paid into that trust fund for all of their working lives. And, in doing so, we raised our national debt into more trillions of dollars, seemingly impossible to ever repay. I am 61 years old. I am not as worried about me, as much as I am about our kids and grandchildren. Ugh!

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### **Mrs. Terry Danielle**

09/11/01 was a terrorist attack on my city of birth. I was born in the borough of Queens in New York and grew up on Long Island. My father was a volunteer fireman as was many of our neighbors. My father was Irish / English and firefighting is a family tradition. Our last name is Box. Gary Box, firefighter, who died in the attack, was a family member. I never met him because of a family split, but I had always hoped to reunite with that branch of the family.

On 09/11/01 I had called the airport in New York and made a reservation to fly there in less than three weeks. The next day, I had no idea if I still had a reservation, but that wasn't important. My sister Trudy worked in NYC and no one had heard from her nor could they get through. Finally my sister-in-law from Florida got in touch with her. Trudy had stayed home because of a premonition. She was not sick and hardly ever missed work, but she didn't go in that day.

My airline tickets came through and I went to NYC. I collected money from my co-workers to spend near Ground Zero to help the economy. I picked up Yankees collectibles, t-shirts, and anything that seemed appropriate. I was taking pictures, but a lot of the area was blocked off. You couldn't get beyond the tarps nor could you get up in high buildings without an ID showing you worked there.

I could hardly believe I was in America, let alone the city of my birth. The target zone was still smoking. Belongings and office furniture were piled up in the streets. Everything was covered in dust. I would cry intermittently. The people were quieter. There were no horns honking. No loud New York raucous laughter and taxi driver craziness. NYC has its own flavor and I missed the noisy part of it. The people were industrious, going to work if they still had a job, working to clean if they didn't. Everyone lost someone in their family or their high school.

Years later I was visiting a restaurant in Seaford, the town in Nassau County where I was raised. The placemat had a picture of NYC with the Towers still standing. I asked for a clean one when I left to take home to Tacoma (Washington) with me. The waitress ran off crying.

New Yorkers go on, but the pain is still close to the surface. People who lost family had to go through a quagmire of paperwork to be reimbursed, then feel guilty if they did collect. The children who lost moms or dads, or the parents who lost their children will never be the same. Family branches were cut off. Promise and potential were never to be met.

I had always grieved for the people lost in wars, be it anywhere. We human beings should be able to solve our problems without it. I had hope never to have to live through an attack on the United States. I have and will never be the same. No matter how the target area is cleaned up, it will always be a scar.

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### **Mrs. J.F.**

My daughter lives in Brooklyn and on 9/11 she worked in mid-town Manhattan. As a result of 9/11, she, like many others, developed asthma, and almost every winter, she has a bout of pneumonia, all as a result of the polluted air.

On another level, the results of 9/11 on a political and social level have been devastating: two unfunded wars which sapped our financial health, a focus on regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan while at home we have so many needs that can't be satisfied, a breaking apart of the social fabric caused by the upsurge of religious fanatics, rigid social and fiscal conservatives like the Tea Party, and a debt crisis. We will not be able to get out from the shadow of 9/11 in my lifetime or in the lifetime of my children. I no longer feel comfortable saying I am an American.

After the debacle of the past month in Congress over the debt ceiling and cutbacks in programs for the low and middle class and an inability to raise taxes on the very wealthy, who can feel content?

There is no longer a feeling that we are all Americans and that we have a responsibility to care for others. That is what the past decade has brought.

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**Mrs. M.F.**

I believe that the terrorists have already won by creating an unstable and insecure environment globally. They have caused the creation of new and secret organizations devoted to preventing another catastrophe and involving untold expenditures of money. They have caused a tragic and mistaken intervention in Iraq and in Afghanistan, fighting a historically unwinnable battle in that country.

The United States has become impoverished because of the limitless expenditure involved in the “war on terrorism”. The U.S. definition of democracy has been skewed by the new weakening of due process and civil rights, and the creation of new and heretofore unlawful methods of interrogation and imprisonment. We now have the possibility of a permanent military force with no shortage of personnel because the economy cannot provide employment for young people so that the military becomes the employer of last resort. Only the new budgetary constraints will prevent the further growth and deployment of more young lives in the “war on terrorism”.

This is not to belittle the reality of the threat. I deplore the lack of opposition to Islamic extremism in Muslim countries that have been trying to enter the modern world for generations. I abhor the policies of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in buying off terrorist groups in order to achieve a vulnerable and unstable rule in their respective nations. I fear the application of Sharia, the politics of vengeance, the treatment of women in Islamic societies. I worry about the presence of terrorist cells in our countries and I even can understand the opposition to the presence of militant Islam in the U.S. and Europe because of the unwillingness of large numbers of Muslims to adapt to the customs of the countries they now inhabit. I feel ashamed to admit my misgivings, especially as I come from a background that has been the victim of prejudice. But the anti-Semites had nothing to fear from the Jews, and that is a huge difference.

I wish the voices of moderation in Islam would be stronger and I am aware that the interpretations of Quran and other historic sources for Islamic law can be disputed and vary from region to region. But I am afraid that extremists are winning out, both in Islam and in the opposition to Islam from the neo-nationalist forces here and in Europe.

When I mentioned the untold expenditures now being applied to prevent another 9/11, I cannot help but think that had the CIA and the FBI cooperated more, the information about the terrorist plot could have prevented this tragedy. There had been warnings and there had been the 1993 attempt at the same venue [the World Trade Center]. In the last ten years, the dissemination of information and disinformation has grown exponentially on the web and the need for cooperation and coordination is greater than ever.

I should add that three years ago we had a wonderful trip to Morocco where we had only positive experiences. One of our activities involved a presentation by a modern Muslim woman on the evolution of women's rights in that country. We visited several NGOs and were impressed by the progress that was evident in this beautiful place. We were only made aware of the constant presence of police and plainclothesmen who were protecting us at all times after the fact.

In 1978 we were members of the first American Jewish group to visit Egypt, after going to Israel. This was just before the Camp David talks took place. We could not enter Egypt directly from Israel but had to go via Athens. We were given a wonderful welcome and a fantastic tour in 4 days. We were impressed by the Egyptians and their kindness, patience, and charm in the midst of poverty and overcrowding. All of the negative conditions have remained unchanged in the intervening 30-odd years.

I have been reading some analyses that give a more positive point of view on the weakening of al-Qaeda but I suspect this is wishful thinking. I would like to believe otherwise!

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### **Professor Emeritus Arnold Friedmann**

The 9/11 attack in 2001 was the first major attack experienced by the United States on home territory. It was a shocking blow to America's psyche and it left deep scars in the country's collective memory.

However, Americans are resilient people. The pain and grief caused by the attack will not go away. Yet ten years after the attack the country is preoccupied by the economy, by unemployment, and by the political squabbles causing huge financial problems.

The direct result of 9/11 was the Afghanistan war launched by the then president George W. Bush with the declared aim to catch the terrorists who are hiding there. Ten years later the leader of al-Qaeda was brought to justice but the war is far from over. It seems unlikely that the United States and its allies will achieve a “victory” in Afghanistan. It is equally unlikely that our brand of democracy will be the happy future of Iraq.

Unfortunately most Americans forget the causes of our two wars. And unfortunately al-Qaeda succeeded in much greater damage done to the United States than they could have imagined. Even the horrible attack on the World Trade Center succeeded more than Osama bin Laden could have hoped. Had the buildings’ structural systems been designed with proper fire protection, enormous damage would have been inflicted by the two hijacked airplanes but not the total collapse of the towers.

It will take years to get the United States back to the spirit, the prosperity, and the standing in the world that the country had before the 9/11 attacks. Yet obviously there are many other causes that have contributed to the current problems experienced by the country. It is my hope and expectation that the United States will fully recover from not only the 9/11 attacks but from the many internal and external problems. The United States of America has always succeeded in overcoming conflict, wars, depressions, and political problems. Optimism is the essence of the country. It will prevail.

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### **Dr. Harald T. Leder**

#### *9/11 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

September 11, 2001 started out as an ordinary day. I was working for Louisiana State University at the International Cultural Center. We had some construction going on and all of a sudden one of the workers came in my office and asked if he could turn on the TV because apparently something tragic had happened in New York. His wife had called him about it. We turned the TV on and saw one of the World Trade Center Towers damaged. Just a little later another plane hit the second tower. It was clear to me then that this was not an accident. I decided to call my boss, but at that stage we could not do more than watch and follow the news as the tragedy unfolded throughout the morning. It was surreal. I noticed that President Bush was notably absent from all public announcements. We learned later that he had been taken away by the Secret Service and was flying across the United States, even made a short stop at

an Air Force base in Louisiana. Dick Cheney seemed to be in charge on that day. He could not prevent the attack on the Pentagon and it was courageous passengers who prevented another flight from approaching the White House.

The following days remained tense. It became clear quickly that al-Qaeda had orchestrated the largest terror attack on U.S. soil. For foreigners in the United States a lot of questions began. What was touching was the outpouring of international solidarity with the United States. We received e-mails and faxes especially from Europe and Germany telling us how saddened they were. Condemnation and solidarity were unanimous and transcended all political boundaries. One reason for this amazing display of solidarity may have been that the World Trade Center housed so many international businesses. This meant that victims were not just American, but rather from all over the world. This is a point that tends to get lost in discussions today.

One big issue was the question of monetary and economic stability in the United States. After all, the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and initially no one knew what kind of consequences this may have on our economy as well as those in the rest of the world. The United States turned out to be very resilient and after a short while things returned to normal, but not without having a severe negative impact for all those people whose retirement accounts were tied up in the stock market. That, together with the economic crisis ten years later, probably makes retirement for many Americans a rather hopeless undertaking.

Back to 2001: At the university we began to worry about a possible backlash on our Muslim community. But we also had some strange occurrences. One of our Arab students disappeared. Questions arose: Was he a sympathizer of al-Qaeda or could he even have been implicated in the plot? Or was he afraid of the American reaction towards the Muslim community and preferred to go home before a possible backlash? We never found out.

Overall the reaction towards the Muslim community in Baton Rouge was very encouraging. Someone decided to take advantage of the incident and launched rumors to connect a long term restaurant owner of Arab descent with the attacks. Baton Rougeans had their own way of dealing with this kind of insidious behavior. The next day saw long lines in front of the restaurant. Many people decided to buy their lunch at his restaurant and demonstrate their support of the owner in this way. But you also had some negative reactions on campus. Some Muslim women who wore traditional clothing were harassed. And the political discussion in Louisiana at times descended into stereotyping and xenophobia. When President Bush decided to go to war with Iraq, people who publicly opposed the war were quickly branded as



“un-American”. The atmosphere became poisonous and reminded me of the irrational witch hunts of the McCarthy era. A rational discussion of immigration issues became equally impossible.

Some of our international visitors did not display a lot of political sensitivity, either. A visiting engineer from Austria, for example, announced during the week after the incident that he intended to rent a plane and take photos of the refineries where he was spending time as an exchange visitor. Not a smart idea, since Baton Rouge houses some of the largest oil refineries and petrochemical plants in the nation. Police and immigration authorities reacted swiftly: The man was arrested, deported and told not to come back within the next ten years. A year or so later an exchange student who was on his way back home thought that he was making a funny joke when he asked the officer at the New Orleans airport who wanted to see his backpack if he expected to find a bomb in it. The reaction was swift and predictable: It took a while to get the student out of prison and back to his home country without being charged for a crime.

For the rest of the year things remained tense, although the nation decided to return back to normal rather quickly. No-fly-zones remained in effect over stadiums throughout the football season, for example. Our Muslim community became more visible on the media, but I think that overall very few people decided to equate the entire Muslim community with the terrorists.

What did change was that immigration rules and regulations became even more restrictive. For a year or two it became virtually impossible for students from Arab countries to obtain visas. Scrutiny increased for all international visitors and new computerized databases were supposed to make it easier to find the bad apples. I don't know if they made a difference, but they made it more difficult for international visitors to come, study, and stay in this country. Long lines at security checkpoints continue to be the norm at busy airports.

From a longer term perspective, the discussion about illegal immigration to the U.S. became increasingly irrational and in some quarters outright xenophobic. 9/11 stopped immigration reform and brought the Patriot Acts. I guess people will always opt for more security, even if the price is a piece of our individual freedom. The wave of nationalism and Washington's decision to demonstrate to the world that we are still number one brought us two wars and unilateralism. Ironically the culprit, Osama bin Laden was not captured in those two “wars on terrorism”. That was accomplished in a different theater by different means. Ten years later we have not much to show for the effort: an enormous increase in the national debt, the loss of

many lives, and a loss of credibility and the good will from the rest of the world that 9/11 had created.

What I find most troubling ten years after 9/11 is that we in the United States do not seem to understand that we need to find ways to reconnect to the international community and to understand it. It seemed to be a real surprise to our policy makers when they had to realize that people in Iraq were not welcoming the Americans with open arms and were not embracing a political and economic culture that they found alien and often not very attractive. But we blissfully seem to want to continue the path of ignorance: Foreign language programs at universities across the nation all too often are the first programs to go in hard times. It seems that nobody recognizes that they are the only way to communicate with the rest of the world on equal terms. Foreign language teaching at high schools is even worse off. In Louisiana, for example, it is relegated almost exclusively to very basic Spanish and French. Much of that is done by teachers whom the governments of France, Belgium and Spain send to Louisiana every year to help us keep the connections to those languages and cultures alive.

America's situation today is unique in the world: We are still the only superpower left standing. But whereas the political leadership realized after World War II that it needed to constantly communicate with the rest of the world, and understand it, 9/11 seems to have had the opposite effect. Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman created the UN. It found its home in New York as a symbol for this new outlook on the world in the United States. Today the UN is relegated to a secondary role at best. We have become an insular nation that is not overly interested in the rest of the world at a time when we need to understand this world more than ever before and also need the ability to communicate with friends and foes alike. Are we able to change course? This nation has demonstrated its resilience more than once. Let's hope we can do so again.

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### **Mr. Herb Meyers**

September 11<sup>th</sup> is a day that has many meanings to me. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1942, I was inducted into the U.S. Army. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1949, I was married to my wonderful wife, Edith.

And on the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, while shaving, the radio news to which I was listening reported a skyscraper on fire in downtown New York City. Curious, I turned on our

TV just in time to see a plane hit the second World Trade Center tower that erupted into a giant fireball.

It was a sight that has engraved itself in my memory never to be forgotten. And, as the day went on, the events became more and more gruesome as the two buildings collapsed with thousands of people inside.

I, as probably most people, have tried to comprehend what could lead anyone to carry out such a heinous, unprovoked deed. I feel no hatred to those who share the religious background of the perpetrators. But it is incomprehensible for me to accept the philosophy of those whose zeal advocates the killing of human beings who do not adhere to their convictions.

September 11<sup>th</sup> unfortunately unleashed a conflict that has no meaning unless it will eventually lead to an understanding by *everyone* around the globe that life is too precious to use as a tool for satisfying ideological passion.

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### **Mr. Jerry Nothman**

#### *The Influence of 9/11 on America and its People*

First and foremost 9/11 brought home to Americans the naked truth that organized terrorism did indeed exist and that we here in this country were no longer safe and insulated from its effects, as we thought we were.

In spite of isolated individual acts of mass violence in this country we had always believed them to be just that, isolated individual acts that could be easily explained as having been acted out by a more or less deranged individual, whose motives, although easily explained, were seen as anomalies, crazy acts that no sane, normal thinking American could or would subscribe to. Our Timothy McVeighs, Lee Harvey Oswalds, Lynette Alice (Squeaky) Frommes and John Hinckleys, Jr. were all crazy nuts who acted out some idiotic idea that no one really could make heads or tails of. They deserved to be locked up and that was that; have another beer or pretzel.

9/11 was different. Here now was something not homegrown; no single nut acting alone with a murky, hard to explain motive. No, this was different, this was the same kind of terror being spread by organized groups that caused our friends and neighbors to come home from trips to Europe and regale us with tales of no-nonsense, armed police with machine pistols hanging

from their shoulders patrolling train and subway stations, public buildings and busy street corners, stories of bombs in mailboxes and buses, kidnappings of public officials and other horror stories of abductions and murders. We listened and read and for the most part reacted rather smugly, something like: “that couldn’t happen here”. After all, this was a free country where everyone could speak his mind without fear of reprisal or legal consequence. If you wanted change, we knew how to do it peacefully. We held elections and made changes that way. We didn’t need violence, detentions and people being held without cause or put in jail without due process or any of the shenanigans that Russians and other communist regimes subjected their people to, yes, even the Brits when dealing with the IRA or the Germans with the “Baader-Meinhof-Gruppe” and so forth. And here with 9/11, all of a sudden we were into it up to our necks. 3,000 plus dead in one fell swoop; by God we’re going to get the bastards that did this to us, if it’s the last thing we do. Bin Laden, al-Qaeda, Muslims, Hussein. Who were these bastards that bombed our ships, our World Trade Center and did it all in the name of some religion most of us had never even heard of, much less done any harm to?

And, with righteous resolve we invaded Afghanistan and Iraq to “root out” the bases from which these evildoers operated while at home we took ever more draconian measures to safeguard our “Homeland Security”. Some of us thought that sounded a little too much like the “vaterländische Sicherheitsdienst” propagated by our “old friends” Hitler, Himmler and Goebbels but those protests were easily swept aside by the average citizen. After all, wouldn’t you be willing to surrender some of your civil liberties and constitutional rights if it assured you that the plane you were about to board wasn’t going to be blown out of the sky?

Fear is a strange but oh so powerful emotion, in the name of which a people, even American people, can be made to tolerate and even accept measures they never thought they would condone. We so learned of Abu Ghraib, water boarding, renditioning, secret prisons, Guantanamo and heaven only knows what else. It is to their credit that when these matters came to light and it is to the ever lasting credit of Americans and their press that they did come to light, there were loud and vociferous expressions of protest and revulsion and demands that the practices be stopped. But it must also be noted that there were and still are many voices offering the opinion that such acts are justified “for the common good” and “to save innocent lives.”

After all, “if your child had been abducted and is buried alive some place and you had the suspected evildoer in custody, wouldn’t you authorize water boarding and / or other forms of torture to save your child?” These and similar arguments became more and more common as

the debate raged on. It is in matters of humanity that America and Americans have been affected by 9/11. Yes, we are still a bastion of freedom and individual liberty; still a country willing to offer aid and encouragement, both spiritual and economic to people seeking to throw off an oppressive regime. But, we are also a country and a people who because of 9/11 have learned that we are made up of individuals who can be made to respond to propaganda and fear just like the ones in countries we fought in World War II, during the Cold War or the ones engaged in “ethnic cleansing” in more recent times. We too are capable of producing monsters prepared to commit inhuman “atrocities in the name of freedom and democracy,” an oxymoron if ever there was one.

The one thing making it less likely that this country succumbs to inhumane acts, torture and persecution as official policy is the fact that America is a melting pot, made up by peoples and cultures from all corners of the globe, all of whom brought some of the finest qualities of their varied past. Because so many of them came here because of persecution; ethnic, religious, political or economic, I believe it fostered in all of them a greater sense of understanding and tolerance of others and a firm conviction of “*never again*”. I see it in my children and I’m happy to say I see it being passed on by them to the next generation as well.

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**Mr. Robert Potter**

“*United we stand!*” was the common sentiment following the events of September 11, 2001. That sentiment was expressed on bumper stickers and by the almost universal display of American flags across the country and even by many sympathizers around the world. It was expressed in long lines of people at hospitals willing to give their blood for victims of the attacks and in long lines of idealistic young people at military recruiting centers willing to give their blood on the battlefield. Al-Qaeda had given America a rallying cry: “Remember 9/11!” - and the opportunity to reestablish its moral leadership. We represented the light of freedom, religious tolerance, and the rule of law to our Western allies and to oppressed peoples everywhere. Yet, on the tenth anniversary of that tragic day that brought us together, we are more divided than ever.

What happened? I believe that, as a nation, we reacted in very human ways. Our collective loss on September 11<sup>th</sup> made us feel vulnerable - the way we feel when a close friend dies. Some individuals, in their grief, reflect upon the transience of life and resolve to nurture their

relationships and make the most of each day. Other people are gripped with panic and depression. Fear and anger are natural emotions. Some Americans sought communication with Muslims or checked out copies of the Quran from their local libraries in an attempt to understand the root causes of the violence. Others marched outside local mosques carrying hateful placards, shouting: “Ragheads out!” The mountain of our national unity was developing a fissure.

That fissure was filled with the lifeblood of our righteousness when the Taliban refused to turn over Osama bin Laden. Hawks and Doves alike supported the hunt for bin Laden and al-Qaeda for the sake of justice and security. Even our European allies, snubbed by President Bush’s “This is our fight” response to their offers of help, seemed to understand.

The Iraq war, in contrast, was a volcanic eruption, reopening that fissure, splattering molten lava over the American people. It was as if blind fear, hatred, and ignorance toward all Muslims had boiled up in one segment of society, as exemplified by Toby Keith’s “Courtesy Of The Red, White And Blue (The Angry American),” in which he *sang* a brave threat to “... put my American boot up your ass.” A less vocal, but equally passionate segment of the population sang to the tune of Kris Kristofferson’s “Not in my Name.” Each side claimed a monopoly on patriotism and “support for the troops”; those in favor of the war in Iraq co-opted the rallying cry, “Remember 9/11!” Opponents of the war pointed out that Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11 and had no weapons of mass destruction. They insisted that the Iraq war was harming our national security by undermining our goodwill among allies and the Muslim world and diverting resources from the hunt for bin Laden. Thus, what started as a logical argument about strategy degenerated to an emotional chasm between those who agreed with the Bush administration’s policies (“Reds”) and those who disagreed with them (“Blues”).

When emotions displace critical thinking - in an individual, a family, or a nation - problems become conflicts, rather than opportunities. Conflicting ideas become the enemy, and we will fight to the death to destroy them. If these demons are intrapersonal, the individual may suffer a mental breakdown; if they are interpersonal, a man may murder his wife; if they reach the halls of Congress, we may debate our economy into the toilet for political gain. In the ten years since 9-11-2001, we have accomplished ourselves what bin Laden (may he rot in hell) could only have dreamed about: the destruction of our national unity.

The economy will probably get worse before it gets better. As our “standard of living” (as defined by Wall Street and the advertising industry) deteriorates, we have choices. We may turn to demagogues who play on our fears, create scapegoats, and further divide our people. Alternately, we may accept simpler lifestyles, create infrastructures that conserve natural re-

sources, and connect with one another in mutual love and support. If we opt for the latter (as I hope we do), I believe that leadership for the movement will emerge from a broad, intellectual and spiritual awakening, rather than from politicians. Once again, we have the opportunity - if we ignore the bleating of “Red” and “Blue” sheep - to proudly declaim: “*United we stand!*”

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### **Mr. Walter Reed**

As a Holocaust survivor and U.S. soldier in Europe during the fighting and afterward in World War II, my reaction then and today differs from those of most Americans.

First, I had first-hand experience of how criminal perpetrators and groups, plus entire nations like Germany, can commit unspeakable acts against other human beings (my parents and two younger brothers were murdered by their fellow Germans in Poland in 1942 and I was able to escape from the Nazi regime twice with the help of heroic people).

I saw and participated in total destruction of cities and communities in WWII by the Germans first, then by all the Allied nations in Germany, Austria, etc. Thus, while I deeply regret the acts of 9/11, it was also much déjà vu and a realization that the USA is no longer immune from such atrocities. That last fact was very hard to swallow for most Americans - but not for me. What makes us so superior that we cannot be made to suffer what so many others have already experienced in far worse measure? This is where my reaction differed from that of most of my fellow citizens.

Far more important to me as a U.S. citizen are the acts of our leaders (President Bush) and our government in reaction to those terrorist acts: Total disregard for our cherished and valuable human rights traditions, overreaction by restrictions on our own civil liberties and, eventually, aggressive warfare (against Iraq and Afghanistan - and other countries, resulting in many thousands of people killed on both sides - far more than in 9/11!!! And it still continues today!). The panic and hysteria of our leaders and of millions of U.S. citizens will stand as a black mark in the longer-view history 50 years from now. They will not be regarded very differently from how humanity views all acts of violence whether committed by insane terrorists or by democratic governments and people who did not hesitate to lie or deceive in reaction to a tragedy like 9/11. So while I totally condemn and regret suicide bombers and other terrorists as despicable human beings, I feel equally perturbed by political and society leaders who give

up their democratic ideas and ideals in reacting to the tragedies caused by terrorism. Being involved in the Holocaust taught me that a long time ago.

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### Ms. Erika Teutsch

I will never forget the total silence that fell over New York City that day. It seemed like everyone was in a total state of shock and in a normally bustling city no one was talking.

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Poignant recent cover photos from the British weekly *The Economist*

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