

NEWSLETTER

Making Sense of it All

A Decade after 9/11



On September 10, 2001, I landed in New York's JFK airport on a layover from London. For exact reason I can no longer recall, the layover was several hours delayed and I passed the time making phone calls to various friends and relatives to inform them of my safe arrival on U.S. soil. At that time in my life, traveling to and from the UK was pretty standard stuff, so the only reason this trip remains a vivid part of the landscape of my memory nearly a decade later has more to do with what occurred the next day than the trip itself.

Safely home, I snuggled beneath my bedcovers until my cellphone startled me out of my slumber sometime early in the 9 o'clock hour.

"Turn on the television. Are you watching the news right now?!" Janice's voice came screaming from the receiver.

Life Lessons

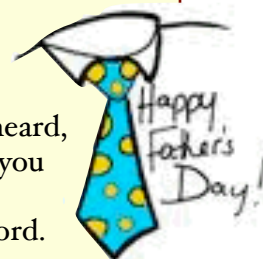
You may have thought I didn't see,
Or that I hadn't heard,
Life lessons that you taught to me,
But I got every word.

Perhaps you thought I missed it all,
And that we'd grow apart,
But Dad, I picked up everything,
It's written on my heart.

Without you, Dad, I wouldn't be
The person I am today;
You built a strong foundation
No one can take away.

I've grown up with your values,
And I'm very glad I did;
So here's to you, dear father,
From your forever grateful kid.

- By Joanna Fuchs



“*Why?*” I asked groggily. “*What’s going on?*” stumbling in my attempts to locate the television remote.

“*An airplane hit The World Trade Center,*” she said.

Finally locating the remote and successfully switching on the television, I asked, “*Hit what? What the hell are you talking about?!*”

Obviously, I didn’t have to find the exact channel as Janice because the scene in question was broadcasting on every channel. As my eyes focused, I quickly understood why her voice relayed abject panic. In confused horror, we both let out involuntary screams as we watched a second plane hit as my consciousness scrambled to make sense of the images on the television screen.

I remember secretly wishing that somehow we were watching the coming attractions of a movie or witnessing a modern-day *War of the Worlds* television broadcast hoax—but even in those brief and fleeting moments I knew deep down that it was real. My heart raced hard, fast and seemingly on the outside of my chest. The only thing that kept running through my mind was—***New York?! I was just there a few short hours ago! What does this mean? That could have been me on that plane!!! Was that the true reason for my unexplained layover?!!*** In that moment, I knew that all of our lives had irreparably changed and that the New York I had come to know and love would never be the same again—ever.

In the mid-1990s, I moved to New York City hoping to simply be able to survive the mean midtown streets. As I fought to demystify the streets, avenues, subways and find my way across the five boroughs, The World Trade Center served as an important directional landscape and became a special part of my life. Fondly, I remember squealing like a child in a confectioner’s store when I discovered that I was standing in the place where my favorite dance scene from *The Wiz* was filmed—a place affectionately known by New Yorkers as “The Twin Towers.” Though the green tint was added courtesy of Hollywood, the fountain so much a part of my childhood imagination was unmistakable.



I knew this place. This is where Dorothy, The Scarecrow, The Tin Man, and The Lion would soon discover—once they gained access to the upper floors—that there was no such thing as a Wiz; just Richard Pryor dispensing fickle fashion advice and wreaking havoc on the lives of citizens of Oz.

Always feeling like an interloper in Dorothy’s motley crew; I would ride those golden elevators numerous times to reach the upper floors of Merrill Lynch’s offices to visit the woman I was dating at the time. Each time the panoramic views of the city—from the Lower Bowery to Midtown—never ceased to take my breath away. With New York City literally at my feet, I felt far from my Chicago roots but closer to home than ever.

Standing masculine and majestic, The Twin Towers served as my steadfast and reliable directional compass as I learned my way around the city. As Manhattan and I eventually became better acquainted, the Tower’s promenade quickly became the place where I would take visitors, meet friends for summer jazz concerts, dinners, brunches, or where I would often roller-blade or ride my bike—in other words, the World Trade Center was a big part of my life. Even when I purchased my first co-op apartment in downtown Brooklyn, The Twin Towers greeted me each morning through my bedroom window from across the Manhattan Bridge.



To watch The Twin Towers crumble in a fiery heap was more than a horrific news story...for me, it was extremely personal! Shuddering, I thought of my friends who lived and worked in the immediate downtown area. What, if anything, could I learn about their fates? Had they gone into work that day, or did they have appointments outside the office, or better yet, had they decided to take a mental health day at home? Breathlessly, I watched along with the rest of the world dumbfounded as to how to interpret what was happening.

Not shortly after 9/11, I led a Basic Course. This course stands clear in my memory due to how I struggled to frame the course distinctions to address the sadness and grief we were all feeling 700 miles away in Missouri, as Americans, as survivors of a shared tragedy...and as citizens of the world. For those who have staffed, you have witnessed firsthand the invention of exercises to meet the participants’ needs—in this course, I “invented” for the first time, the idea of holding the hands of one of the kamikaze pilots who directed AA flight #11 into the North Tower and UA flight #93 into the South Tower that September morning. From the back of the room, I watched as those first participants physically

recoiled at the thought of holding the hands of a human being capable of committing such heinous acts. Who among us could blame them for their reaction? Our collective wound was still pink and fleshy and cauterization could scarcely even be imagined.

For several days, weeks, and even months, there was a definite vibe of benevolence in the air as family members forgave senseless grievances, neighbors moved toward each other without regard of property lines, and politicians had even been documented reaching across dividing party lines. However, a decade later and I pose the question to not only you but also to myself, “*What did we learn...really?*”

Since May 2nd, there have been countless news reports, articles, and commentators all discussing the death of the man responsible for the act that claimed thousands of American lives on September 11th. Many of these stories feature the hordes of people who gathered to celebrate, clap and exclaim as well as those for whom the news of his death moved them to sadness, meditation and silent contemplation.

From an enlightened perspective, I have asked myself each morning since May 2nd, “What does his death mean? What am I supposed to think, do or say? How am I responsible to the most recent events and those from nearly a decade before?”

On 5/11 on my Facebook page, I posed this question:

From an enlightened perspective, how do the recent events surrounding Osama Bin Laden's death leave you feeling? Where do you think we (the world) go from here?

...here are but some of the replies I received:

“somber and stillness... reflected on all that I have been taught and realized my growth because 10 years ago [I] may have been dancing in the streets too .. but we all come on the earth to evolve and return to source.... #that is all ..”

“I have been grieved for years over the ‘war on [terrorism]’. There is no way to fight the condition of a depraved heart with guns. I believe the death of Osama is a reflection of mankind's collective inner pain and longing for justice. Unfortunately, his death doesn't remove the sting of that pain. Our only hope for the planet is to shift our collective consciousness by healing our personal wounds and having compassion for others. We [cannot] continue to fight physically [an] enemy that is within.”

“This is clearly not the end of the broader conflict between the Arab world and the Western world, between radical Islamists and radical Christians, or however you want to paint it. The question is whether this event brings us closer to peace, tolerance, and understanding, or

closer to mutual destruction. It's striking how many people proclaiming themselves Christian can so easily discard the core principles of Christ's teaching in exchange for vengeance and nationalism.”

However, the reply that perhaps moved me the most was:

“From an enlightened perspective WE ARE ALL LIGHT.”

My sincerest prayer is that during this time easily stirred to chaos and confusion that we can remember just that...from an enlightened perspective, WE ARE ALL LIGHT!

Namaste.

James

OP47 LEGACY PROJECT



Through our work in the Ownership Program, OP47 experienced infinite possibilities, healing forgiveness, true joy and absolute conviction. As an all-women OP, we wanted to create a Legacy Project in which we could share these life-changing experiences with other women. After some discussion, we became involved with [The Women's Safe House](#) (TWSH).

TWSH provides refuge for abused women and their children, as well as "*empowers women to make informed choices about their futures.*" Many people, i.e., Angels had such a huge impact on our 90-day experience, we wanted to share that unconditional love with the women of TWSH. Now, when new women enter the shelter they receive a packet of information about the residential facility, which nows include one of our "Angel Cards." Our intention is to cause that these women will learn to see their worth and be open to the beauty they carry within.

U niversal Dad Sayings...

No, we're not there yet.
 Were you raised in a barn? Close the door.
 Coffee will stunt your growth.
 Don't ask me, ask your mother.
 Eat it! It will grow hair on your chest!
 You didn't beat me. I let you win.
 "Hey" is for horses.
 You're gonna like it,
 whether you like it
 or not!
 Turn off those lights. You
 think I am made of money?
 That's the best way I know to put out an
 eye!
 Are you bored? I'll give you something to
 do.
 I'm not sleeping, I was
 watching that channel.
 I don't care what other
 people are doing!
 I'm not everybody else's
 father!
 When I was your age. I had to
 walk to school in 10 feet of
 snow up hill both ways!



*These familiar sayings have somehow
 been handed down from father to sons right through
 the ages. How many of these did you grow up with?*

Course Calendar

Basic Course

July 7-10, 2011
 August 4-7, 2011
 October 6-9, 2011
 November 3-6, 2011

Advanced Course

June 8-12, 2011
 September 14-18, 2011
 December 7-11, 2011

PowerKids

July 25-29, 2011

TeenLab

July 19-23, 2011

Master(s/y)

November 11-13, 2011

DON'T MISS
 THE DEADLINE
 TO REGISTER
 YOUR CHILD or TEEN

for this year's

PowerKids or TeenLab

[Contact Janice](#) today!