

The Real Tragedy of 9-11

Even though I was alive when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, I was too young to realize the impact of that event. So I, like most Americans living today, see the events of September 11, 2001, as the most tragic to ever strike our country.

There are no words to express our sadness at the loss of so many lives and the suffering of their loved ones. Our grief and anger at the attack on our country is probably the most ever felt by Americans as a whole. We also are saddened by the loss of the buildings in New York City, the destruction at the Pentagon, and the financial losses suffered by so many. It's all had a profound affect on us.

So I'd like to offer my observations about the effects of 9-11 a year later. This is not meant in any way to detract from the very real losses we suffered in the attacks. It is to offer my insight into what has happened since, which I see as perhaps the biggest tragedy of all.

After the attacks, Americans rallied together like most of us have never seen or experienced before. We cried in sadness and we cried tears of comfort and gratitude when we saw how so many other countries grieved with us and sent us their prayers and blessings.

We supported each other, our country, and its leaders. We sent out the message that no one can do this to us and get away with it. We're tough, we're strong, don't tread on us!

Soon after we were told by the experts that the Muslim terrorists attacked us because they hate us – they resent our power, our wealth, and our freedom. Many suspect there are other reasons for their hatred and blame our own foreign policy, but I won't go into that here. Let's just say the talking heads are right – and the terrorists are jealous of our freedoms.

Then why, in the name of all that's holy, are Americans so willing to give up their freedoms because they're afraid of terrorism? How can we tell the world we won't give in to despicable terrorist acts, then say we'll give up "some of" our freedoms to our very own government if only it will protect us?

Don't Americans realize that by agreeing to do that, we've let the terrorists win? That they accomplished what they set out to do on 9-11?

Anyone who understands the freedom our founding fathers were willing to die for to give us knows they would be horrified to hear us talk this way. Let me give you just one, well two, examples.

I've recently seen two television interviews with Steven Spielberg and Tom Cruise about their new movie, "Minority Report." From the interviews and previews it appears to make "Brave New World" look like a walk in the park. Biometric technology apparently allows the government to know when people are only *thinking* about committing a crime and so police arrest them on the spot.

In the interviews, both Spielberg and Cruise say wide-eyed, "We're getting close to this now in real life!" But instead of saying this is a horrendous attack on liberty, freedom, privacy, and human dignity and we must do whatever we can to keep it from happening, both men said, "Hey, it's happening. We might as well accept it and realize we have to give up some of our freedoms." Why? Because of 9-11. If they had taken that attitude during the McCarthy era, both of them would be out of jobs now. I will not see their movie.

Maybe 9-11 did create a New World, but what's "brave" about it? I say let's act like people who live in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Let's tell our government that we won't give up our freedoms and cower like wimps whenever anyone wants to go through our personal belongings or when police want to search us, our homes, or our cars without a warrant; a warrant that was issued because there's probable cause we've already committed a crime.

Our founding fathers knew that we can have freedom or "protection" but not always both. Benjamin Franklin said it best: "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Annette Estes is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Values Analyst, Coach, and Consultant. She coaches individuals and teams on professional and personal development, communication skills, conflict resolution, and hiring winners. She also is a professional speaker. Contact her at coachannette@charter.net or call The Estes Group at 864-244-1156.