

We Will Prevail

From a speech by Solicitor General Theodore Olson to the Federalist Society on Nov. 16, 2001. Mr. Olson's wife, Barbara, was one of the airplane passengers murdered on Sept. 11, 2001.

September 11, 2001 was unprecedented in our nation's history. Our country has been attacked before. Our soldiers and innocent citizens have been the victims of terrorism before. But never before in our history have so many civilian citizens, engaged in the routines of their daily lives, who neither individually nor collectively had done anything to provoke the savage attack that they were to experience that day, been brutally murdered for the simple reason that they were Americans, and because they stood, in their countless individual lives, for all the things that America symbolizes.

As President Bush immediately recognized, Sept. 11 was an act of war. But it was much more than that. It was also a crime, an act of pure hatred and unmitigated evil.

America's Beacon

The victims were of all races, backgrounds, religions, ages and qualities. They had one thing in common. They were nearly all Americans. Their lives were extinguished because they were the embodiment of the aspirations of most of the world's peoples. The people who killed them hate the beacon that America holds out to people who are impoverished, enslaved, persecuted and subjugated everywhere in the world.

The men who planned the savage acts of Sept. 11 cannot prevail as long as American ideals continue to inspire the people they hope to tyrannize and enslave.

It is a cynical lie that the animals that killed our loved ones were motivated by Islam, or because this nation of ours is anti-Islamic. Enshrined in the First Amendment to our Constitution is freedom of expression and the free exercise of religion. This continent was populated by people who crossed a terrifying ocean to reach a rugged and inhospitable frontier to escape religious persecution.

From its birth, this nation and the American people have offered sanctuary and shelter to all faiths. Our Constitution—always with the support of our people—has extended its embrace to the unpopular, the unusual, the unconventional and the unorthodox. We protect not only those who will not salute our flag, but those who would spit upon it or burn it. We pledge our allegiance to a Constitution that shelters those who refuse to pledge their allegiance to it.

It is true, I suppose, that there are many in the Middle East who hate this country for its support of Israel. But how tragic and misguided to despise us for extending comfort and defense to a people who have so long, and so recently, been the victims of indescribable ethnic persecution. Nor has America's support for Israel ever been rooted in or manifested by hostility to the Muslim faith or those who practice it. The terrorists and their apologists have lied about these things, but what is another lie when their goals and tactics are so vastly more evil?

The terrorists can succeed only through corruption and brutality. Thus they must tear down America and its system of laws which shields its people from those malevolent acts. They can enslave the people they wish to subjugate only by keeping them poor and destitute, so they must undermine and discredit the one place in all the world that stands the most for the rule of law and allows its people the opportunity to rise above all those conditions.

Abraham Lincoln was paraphrasing our Declaration of Independence when he characterized our nation as having been "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." That revolutionary document set down our collective belief in inalienable human rights, the proposition that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed, the principle that tyrants who would oppress their people are unfit to be rulers of a free peo-

ple, and the right to the pursuit of happiness.

The terrorists of Sept. 11 cannot prevail in a world occupied by the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and its Bill of Rights, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address, the Statue of Liberty, the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, the Capitol, the Supreme Court and the White House. They cannot co-exist with these ideals, these principles, these institutions and these symbols. So they cannot survive, much less prevail, in the same world as America.

America is not today, or ever, without imperfections and shortcomings. Implementation of our lofty ideals has never been without error, and some of our mistakes have been shameful. But the course of our history has been constant, if occasionally erratic, progress from the articulation of those lofty ideals to the extension of their reality to all our people—those who were

received from a man who wrote, "you can go to live in Turkey, but you can't become a Turk. You can't go to live in Japan and become Japanese, [and so on for Germany, France, etc.]. But . . . anyone from any corner of the world can come to America and be an American."

So it is a particularly sad and a bitter irony that the 19 savages who took the lives of thousands of Americans were able to come here because we welcomed them, and trusted them, and allowed them to learn to fly our airplanes and gave them the freedom to travel. They took these precious gifts and turned them into instruments of hatred and death.

It has, I suppose, always caused some resentment that we believe so passionately and unquestioningly that the freedoms we value should belong to all people. But we know that these are enduring values. We can debate nearly everything else, but we don't need to debate that. We know that these principles lift everyone up.

We have now been reminded, in the most horrible way, that there are those who not only hate our principles, but who would dedicate their lives—and surrender their lives—to banish those ideals and the incentives they provide for tyrannized and impoverished people everywhere to do what Americans did in 1776. We have tragically learned again, in the most unthinkable fashion, that our values and our principles are neither self-executing nor self-sustaining, and that we must sacrifice and fight to maintain what our forebears sacrificed and fought to bequeath to us.

And now the rest of the world is learning again that Americans will not flinch from that fight or tire of it. Americans will fight, they will sacrifice, and they will not give up or leave the job unfinished. This war is for all living Americans. It is for the parents, grandparents and great-grandparents that fought and sacrificed to come here. And it is for our children and generations to come. And it is for those who choose to become Americans in the future.

Preserving a Legacy

America will not lose this war because we cannot even consider that we will lose what centuries of Americans fought to create, improve and maintain.

We cannot, and we will not, betray the people who gave us this glorious heritage. We cannot and will not, dishonor or wash away the memories of those who somehow clawed their way out of poverty, tyranny and persecution to come to this country because it was America, and because they were willing to risk death to become Americans, and to give their children and grandchildren the opportunity and freedom and inspiration that makes this place America. Americans could no longer call themselves Americans if they could walk away from that legacy.

People who write for newspapers and who offer opinions on television, or who send advice to us from other parts of the world, sometimes say that America is too rich, lazy, complacent, frightened, soft and enervated to fight this fight. That we have no stamina, strength, will, patience, or steel. That we will collapse.

They are so wrong. We will prevail for the very reason that we have been attacked. Because we are Americans. Because the values that made us free, make us strong; because the principles that made us prosperous, make us creative, resourceful, innovative, determined and fiercely protective of our freedoms, our liberties and our rights to be individuals and to aspire to whatever we choose to be. Those values and those characteristics will lift us and will defeat the black forces who have assaulted our ideals, our country and our people.

The very qualities that bring immigrants and refugees to this country in the thousands every day, made us vulnerable to the attack of Sept. 11, but those are also the qualities that will make us victorious and unvanquished in the end.



Edward Hashey

born here and those, from hundreds of diverse cultures, who flock here.

There is no segment or class of the world's peoples who have exclusive claim on the term "American," and no segment of the world's population to whom that claim has been denied. We welcome 100,000 refugees per year into this country. Over 650,000 people immigrated legally to America in the most recent year for which we have reliable statistics. Over five million people are in this country today who were so desperate to come here that they did so illegally.

There are more Jews in New York City than in Israel. More Poles in Chicago than any city in the world except Warsaw. America is home to 39 million Irish-Americans, 58 million German-Americans, 39 million Hispanic-Americans and nearly a million Japanese-Americans. And there are seven million Muslims in America, nearly the population of New York City.

How tragic it is that the agents of the Sept. 11 terrorist acts were people whom we welcomed to this country, and to whom we extended all of our freedoms, the protections of all of our laws, and the opportunities this country affords to everyone to travel, work and live. But we welcome immigrants because nearly all of us are immigrants or descendants of immigrants who came here to enjoy freedoms, rights, liberties, and the opportunity, denied elsewhere, to pursue happiness and prosperity.

Ronald Reagan often said that "every once in a while, each of us native-born Americans should make it a point to have a conversation with someone who is an American by choice." Mr. Reagan was fond of quoting from a letter he