



Opinion

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SOMEBODY OUGHT TO SAY SOMETHING

BY LYDIA K. BASS



Same Flag, Different Look

Until moving to Portland some 20 years ago, I've always lived on or near military installations. Growing up, the flag was always a focal point and an integral part of daily life.

As toddlers we held our little sticks in our tiny fists, waving 'Old Glory' on Armed Forces Day as we swayed to the cadence of synchronized marching Infantry Battalions; As young children we'd proudly wave the 'Stars and Stripes' as high as we could during the 4th of July parade so the Blue Angels flying over, would see a sea of flags.

When we started school, we'd pledge our allegiance to the flag every morning. It was a privilege and an honor to be chosen for the flag team: you had to get to school early and stay late, but you got to hoist and lower the flag. You learned how to do it, so it never touched the ground and we learned not only how to fold the flag, but what each fold meant.

As teens we knew the day and place the flag was born: June 14, 1777 in Philadelphia, Pa.

We knew that the 13 red and white alternating stripes represented the 13 colonies; the 50 stars, one for each state were symbolic of the heavens and the divine goals to which men aspired: 'Liberty and Justice For All.'

We knew the red stripes proclaimed the courage and valor of American men and the devotion of American women. We knew the white stripes were symbolic rays of light emanating from the sun, and the color blue represented heaven's faith, signifying vigilance and perseverance.

Now when I look at the flag, I am reaffirmed by the fact that we are indeed one nation.

We grew older, and as young adults we draped the caskets of our fallen fellow citizens with the American Flag during the Viet Nam war.

Growing up, I possessed the historical knowledge of our nation's flag; I knew the rules of etiquette and I understood the indomitable spirit of determination brought to this country by men like the Buffalo Soldiers, Tuskegee Airmen, and the Mount Ford Point Marines. But not until last week did I fully

comprehend love for one's country. The kind of love that when translated into action spells duty. To dedicate your life to the protection of those principles and privileges that the flag embodies: peace and security, civil and political liberties, our freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and sanctity of home.

Now when I look at the flag, I am reaffirmed by the fact that we are indeed one nation.

Whatever our other differences, as Americans we share the core values of a love for liberty, the pursuit of happiness and a commitment to a government of the people, for the people, and by the people.

My father loved his country, through World War II, the Korean Conflict, and Viet Nam.

Even though the American Creed did not always apply to him here at home, he loved America. I now understand what he knew all along: Our flag is a living flag; that every glory that we associate with the flag of the United States is the result of a duty done.

Now when I look at the flag, I too will be reminded of my duty: to value and protect for succeeding generations the freedom that others sacrificed and won for us. This will always be an unfinished task for Americans.

Work for Freedom, Justice Goes On

NAACP Chairman Julian Bond says the NAACP's work for freedom and justice must continue in order to thwart one of terrorism's main goals - "disruption of daily routine."

Kweisi Mfume, NAACP President and CEO, said "The NAACP is strong and resilient in our resolve to help make America a more united nation during this courageous test of time. Our organization was founded to ensure that all Americans have the freedoms and rights guaranteed by the Constitution. We are, unapologetically, bound to the civil liberties that make this democracy great."

In a letter to the NAACP family and supporters, Bond said:

"As we mourn the enormous losses - personal and national - inflicted on our

loved ones and our country by the vicious attacks in Washington, New York and Pennsylvania, we must be careful not to be defeated by one of terrorism's main goals - the interruption of normal life and disruption of daily routine.

"New York's valiant Mayor Rudy Giuliani has asked Broadway shows to perform again. Wall Street opened. The wounded Pentagon is up and running. Baseball is in full swing. America is back in business again.

"It is not business as usual, but, with greater determination than ever.

"We all applaud the heroism demonstrated daily by fire fight-

ers, law enforcement personnel and ordinary citizens and we herald our public servants for their steadfastness. We join our fellow citizens and people worldwide in condemning this horrific, savage deed. We pledge our support for national defense. We dedicate ourselves to ending terrorism.

"The NAACP was born to fight for freedom and justice in a nation dedicated to those goals. Those twin towers - freedom and

justice - still stand. Because we believe in freedom, our work will go on. Because we believe in justice, we know the guilty will be pursued and punished.

"We vigorously condemn those bigots who blame feminists, gays and lesbians and civil libertarians for this horror.

We recoil at how quickly a few yield to mindless prejudice, attacking and killing Muslims and persons suspected of being Muslims or Arabs. We praise President George W. Bush for his visit to Washington's Islamic Center and his forthright stand against hate crimes and racial and ethnic profiling.

"We affirm the right of peaceful dissent, protected by the First Amendment, now, when it is most at risk. We know our Constitution can protect Americans' security and America's freedom.

"Our work goes on. America goes on. We know our work is America's work - as we succeed, America succeeds. America is strongest when her people are strong and free."

We vigorously condemn those bigots who blame feminists, gays and lesbians and civil libertarians for this horror.

Julian Bond, NAACP Chairman

Reporting Personalizes Attack

Michael and Mark, you can't possibly know how much your Sept 19 article (page one "Son Escapes World Trade Center Attacks") article has impacted our community and us.

Many of Moe's friends and schoolmates have called and left messages of joy and celebration for his escape.

I must tell you that the way in which you conveyed my words was so vivid that I realized those hours all over again. People have told me that even though they were somewhat tired of hearing about the catastrophe, the article personalized the event and brought home that we never know how we're going to be affected by

news.

Your article had added to my joy and I'm sure Moe appreciated not only just being alive but also having his story told in such a beautiful way.

Blessings to you and your organization.

Dee Craig-Arnold
Northeast Portland



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