

9/11 Freedom Meadow Memorial 2017

City Councilwoman, Shona Huffman's speech:

9/11 is a day of remembrance in our country. A day where we come together to remember what happened on that fateful beautiful, clear blue sky Tuesday morning. It was a normal September day across America. Much like today. Many had gone off to work just like any other fall morning. Most of us, can remember exactly where we were, who we were with, and what we were doing when we heard that first bit of news that a plane had crashed into one of the World Trade Center towers. We can remember that exact moment when we learned that a second plane had hit—and we just KNEW we were under attack. We can remember when we watched in horror as the towers fell, as the Pentagon was hit, and as flight 93 crashed into a field.

We can remember when we realized our world had forever changed.

And yet, there is a whole generation here with us today that does NOT remember that morning. And THAT should give us pause in how we remember the events of 9/11 today. It is with this in mind I would like to share with you a few reasons WHY we should make an effort to purposefully and intentionally remember the events of 9/11.

We remember first, because—it is imperative that we pass our memories on to our children and to their children. My daughters have no understanding other than what I share with them and what they learn in history books. Many of our children here today have no memory of that day. They will rely on us to provide the personal stories behind the details you read in a book. Those who were there, those who lived through the fear of those events can share the history of those days with the gravity that is fitting.

Details that matter like the 246 citizens traveling on airplanes who lost their lives. The 125 citizens working in the Pentagon who lost their lives. And the 2606 citizens in the World trade Center who lost their lives. In all, 2977 Americans lost their lives in one morning. These were not soldiers of war. These were everyday citizens going about their everyday lives working in and for the American dream.

Even more so, we should tell our children about the 412 brave men and women of the first responders who ran toward the danger as so many

were running away from the danger. Doing as they choose to do every day to protect us.

It is so important that the details of that day continue in order to maintain the truth of that day. History must not be rewritten. Our children must understand the overwhelming loss from 9/11. Our children must understand the sacrifice so many of our first responders willingly gave that morning. And it is our responsibility to share with our children the importance of that day so they indeed never forget as well. It's easy in a world with a 24 hour news cycle and things happening every day to forget. So we must work to intentionally always remember.

We remember because of how 9/11 brought us together as one nation. When we tell our children about 9/11 let us tell them how we watched moment after moment as good fought to overcome evil. We watched as rescuers pulled victims from the rubble. We watched as many pulled together to provide food and support for the rescuers.

Let us remind our children how our elected officials joined across their political differences—on the steps of our nation's capital to sing in unity, God Bless America.

Let us remind our children that our churches were filled that evening as people came together to pray.

Let us remind our children that American flags were posted everywhere—on our homes, on our businesses, and along Main Streets across the country. We wanted to show we were Americans first. And that we were unified.

Let us remind our children that we were unified regardless of our positions—regardless of our politics—and regardless of our personal preferences. Let us remember the brave men and women who ran toward danger did not care whether you were a sinner or a saint—your political party, your ethnicity, or your background. They just did what they were called to do.

So today, when we choose to never forget—we remember because our children should know of those who lost their lives, AND the unity that carried us through those difficult hours, days, and weeks that followed.

And finally, we remember simply because we said we would never forget. We made a promise in the days after 9/11 to always remember. We owe

it to those who lost their lives just by participating in our American way of life. Those who were going to work, providing service to others, or carrying out their duty to be the first responders in times of trouble.

Those who were waiters at the Top of the World, housekeepers in the back rooms, stock brokers and company presidents in corner offices, and company administrative assistants who answered phones. Those who were pilots and flight attendants doing their everyday jobs.

Those who were police officers, firefighters, and captains, who rushed toward the danger. All who lost their lives that morning. All of them contributing to our way of life in their own way. All of them contributing to what makes us who we are as American citizens.

On the 5th anniversary governor George Pataki stated:

As you recall September 11, always remember that we were attacked not for what we do wrong but for what we do right. Remember the spirit of that day -- the day America showed what makes us a great people and a great nation; the day the true character of our nation triumphed over unspeakable evil; the day that freedom and democracy prevailed yet again over oppression and tyranny.

As we pause to remember today, the 2977 Americans that lost their lives on that day 16 years ago. Let us remember the good that prevailed that day. Let us remember the unity of being American that allowed us to rise from the tragedy of so much loss from an evil that still exists today. Let us remember so that our children and their children and generations to come understand the depth of our loss, and the height of our enduring freedom that we continue to fight for today. Let us remember those who ran toward the danger and their ultimate sacrifice in doing so.

Let us remember because we promised we would NEVER FORGET.