

## 20 Years After 9/11

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**I bet you remember exactly where you were and how you felt on September 11, 2001.** I was teaching fourth grade in Atlanta and had to tell my students what had happened. While they were in PE, I had been in the library, huddled with other teachers, watching the first tower collapse. There wasn't much to tell my students other than our country was under attack, people had already died, and that this was a time to try to stay calm, not to give in to fear, and be confident that our cowboy president from Texas would defend us. I told them that they were safe, even as they school went on lockdown and parents increasingly came to pick up their kids early.

I had a friend who was in one of the Towers. She took off her heeled shoes and ran down the stairs alone while her coworkers took the elevator. She made it out, they didn't. Many of us know someone who was there, but regardless of that- the whole nation took this attack very personally, especially as more news rolled in, and we heard about Flight 93 and the attack on the Pentagon. I felt upset, angry, sad, and yes, fearful but I also felt patriotic on a new level. I felt a kinship with every other citizen. I didn't care about if people were Republican, Democrat or Libertarian- we were all threatened together and all needed to cooperate to fight back somehow.

**American flags popped up all over the country overnight.** No one said, it wasn't their flag- everyone flew them and the stores couldn't keep them in stock. At school, we were given flag pins to wear, and we did. For one brief moment, we were united as a country.

20 years later, it's so different. We are divided and angry. Many live in fear, we've all experienced loss on many levels, and our country feels like its under attack. We've just experienced a confusing withdrawal and loss in Afghanistan, which was a war we entered because of 9/11.

**But I am still resolutely patriotic.** Under the swamp, under the obvious lies, and under the corruption, our country is still America, the home of the free because of

the brave. We have a foundation of hope that is still there, and worth believing in. Politicians come and go, they impact us but they don't define our nation. Our people are still a great people, and our country still is a beacon to others, even if that light seems dim now.

How can we honor those who died on 9/11? How do we honor those who so valiantly went into the buildings to save those who were trying desperately to get out? We should do more than preserve their memory, we should live in a way that makes this country worth their sacrifice.

**America is beautiful, it is free, and it is a place which give hope and opportunity to her people, but we need to stand up and protect her.** We couldn't control the planes on 9/11 and we can't control many things happening now, but we can control our reactions and our attitude. Making America great again doesn't start with a president, it starts with each of us. ***Let's roll.***