

POST-9/11 PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC AND THE ONGOING REALITY OF  
RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES

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By

Alan Wray

Director: Dr. Beth Huber  
Associate Professor of English  
English Department

Committee Members: Dr. Marsha Lee Baker, English  
Dr. Laura Wright, English

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I dedicate this thesis to everyone who is committed to engaged dialogue as a tool for enacting nonviolence. Let us inspire one another.

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## ABSTRACT

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Alan Wray, MA

Western Carolina University

Director: Dr. Beth Huber

There is little question that the tragedy of September 11, 2001 has significantly impacted 21<sup>st</sup> century life in the United States. On a rhetorical level, 9/11 seems to have triggered a distinct shift in how many Americans understand their political and social environment. In this paper Alan Wray connects a seemingly increased tolerance for discrimination and racially motivated violence with the post-9/11 presidential rhetoric of G.W. Bush—addressing concerns about the *type* of shift the tragedy precipitated. Identifying specific discursive choices and analyzing their implications, Wray argues for an explicit correlation between Bush’s language and the perpetuation of cycles of violence. Through an investigation of Bush’s first public speeches in the wake of September 11, Wray discusses the former president’s commitment to authoritarian tactics and categorical rejection of opposing views. By highlighting the logical and practical consequences of Bush administration ideology and tracing this impact into President Obama’s first term, Wray argues for the ongoing need to identify and push back against rhetorical tactics that impede the manifestation of nonviolence in our society.

## INTRODUCTION

On the morning of September 11, 2001, I was sitting outside a locked classroom door, drinking coffee from a travel mug and frantically reading (for the first time) the material I was supposed to have prepared for my 9:30 class. It was a course in Ethics, a core requirement for my philosophy major that I had resisted taking until my senior year. As I squinted in the low light, attempting to decipher miniscule font on a poorly xeroxed page, another student approached from the stairwell. I was slightly annoyed that my last fifteen minutes before class were going to be interrupted by this young man, who (I could tell) was about to start talking to me. I stared intently at the article I was reading, feigning interest, and tried not to make eye contact. But it was no use.

I heard: *plane crash...New York...Trade Center...this is really bad*. He had gotten my attention. And I asked him to repeat what he had just said. This was my first exposure to the news from that morning and I didn't have any idea how to begin processing it. Several other students joined us, some with bits of information to contribute and others who were hearing about these events for the first time. Once our professor arrived, we engaged him in the conversation—suggesting we spend the class period discussing or investigating the tragedy. But nobody knew enough about what had happened to even begin addressing the ethical implications. After fifteen minutes or so of conjecture and positing hypothetical scenarios, we moved on to the assigned reading for that day and attempted to (temporarily) push current events to the sideline. I can't remember anything about the final hour of that class.

At 10:45 my classmates and I hurried to the University Pub, where we packed in tightly around the television screen and began consuming images of the morning's events—images imprinted forever in my mind. A dear friend, Keara, born and raised in Brooklyn, was screaming and crying hysterically. Nobody knew how to comfort her. Several guys were trying to get in touch with our fraternity brother, Pete, who had just graduated and gotten a job working in the World Trade Center complex. All the phone lines were down. Many students seemed petrified, with their mouths open and eyes glazed as they silently watched the news coverage. Others were more vocal, actively collecting as much information as they could and sharing it with those who had just arrived. I felt heavy and cold. I was concerned—hugging friends and strangers alike, looking deep into their eyes as they spoke. But I was not shocked. I was not surprised that this had happened.

There were rocking chairs on the front porch of the dormitory where I lived and I spent the afternoon rocking, inviting passersby to sit. A conversation I had with a Muslim classmate, Laal, has always stuck out in my mind. He was afraid (rightfully so) of an impending backlash against Arab Americans and peaceful practitioners of Islam worldwide. He knew that even most open-minded, religiously tolerant US citizens (like myself) understood very little about the Islamic faith in either its historical roots or its contemporary practice. Laal quoted from the Koran, told stories from his childhood, and asked me what I thought. We discussed ritual activity, philosophy, and nonviolence. We rocked back and forth—the rhythm of the rockers slow and steady against the sandstone. Occupying the same physical space and the same moment in time, but having arrived there by such strikingly different paths: we rocked.

Later that week I cried about the 9/11 tragedy for the first time. I stopped by Dr. Brown's office one morning before class. She taught courses in Eastern Religion and was a practicing Buddhist. I hoped she might have some idea what we were supposed to do—not necessarily about what had already happened but about what was *going* to happen. I can't remember exactly what either of us said, but I started crying and just couldn't stop. I was embarrassed, but there was nothing I could do. Sitting on the foot of my parents' bed the following week, I did the same thing. I thought maybe I was being too sensitive. Or perhaps the thick-skinned demeanor I had been attempting to cultivate as a young adult was really and truly a façade—the existentialism and the anarchism like an oversized man's cloak, dragging the ground behind a child playing dress-up. It was a humbling experience. I realized how much I had yet to comprehend about myself, other people, the world, and the relationship between us all.

I started having trouble sleeping: staring into the darkness, mind racing, heart pounding, an unseen presence lurking everywhere. I began meditating, walked in the woods, watched the stars, and became increasingly obsessed with reading sacred texts. Nothing really seemed to help. I had feelings and perceptions I was incapable of understanding. I spoke about them sparingly and cautiously—afraid of the impression I might make, afraid others would catch on to my insanity. But I watched and listened, trying to apprehend why the world felt so dark—not just intellectually but viscerally. Something particularly dangerous was afloat (or perhaps had always been afloat) and I wanted to be able to name it. This same impulse, now nearly nine years later, has guided my work on this project.

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In the forthcoming pages, I will address the backlash of violence and discrimination that emerged in post-9/11 America and suggest a connection between this type of response and the rhetoric that dominated public discourse immediately following the tragedy. Rather than naming an individual, institution, or group as the responsible party, however, I will implicate the dominant political/religious ideology at the time, which proved dangerously conducive to the perpetuation of violence and injustice. In discussing the post-9/11 rhetoric of George W. Bush and his administration, I will take an unapologetically critical posture. I do not hold the former president accountable for my personal trauma, nor am I remotely interested in partisan politics. However, I have come to perceive the analysis of Bush's post-9/11 discourse as a tool for examining what deeply troubles me about living in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. In my view, the ideological lens through which Bush and his cronies explained the 9/11 tragedy—a legacy carried on into the present by vocal and frighteningly influential neoconservatives—represents a tangible threat to the flourishing of civil liberties, open dialogue, and nonviolence. The forthcoming pages will explain the connection. Along the way, I will attempt to heed the following observations from Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*:

Any attempt to hold ideologies accountable for the crimes committed by their followers must be approached with a great deal of caution. It is too easy to assert that those with whom we disagree are not just wrong but tyrannical, fascist, genocidal. But it is also true that certain ideologies are a danger to the public and need to be identified as such. These are the closed, fundamentalist doctrines that cannot coexist with other belief systems; their followers deplore diversity and demand an absolute free hand to implement their perfect system. The world as it



is must be erased to make way for their purist invention. Rooted in biblical fantasies of great floods and great fires, it is a logic that leads ineluctably toward violence. The ideologies that long for that impossible clean slate, which can be reached only through some kind of cataclysm are the dangerous ones. (19)

Analyzing the tragedy of September 11, 2001 as just such a “cataclysm,” on which authoritarian ideologues were able to capitalize, I will focus explicitly on the rhetorical tactics Bush employed in garnering support for the so-called *war on terror*. Bush’s presidential discourse, by promoting fear of an abstractly construed enemy, justified sweeping changes in both foreign and domestic policy that threaten the integrity of our democracy. By highlighting the connection between rhetoric and tangible human lives, it is my hope that the following pages will contribute to a reinvigorated dialogue about civil rights and nonviolence in our society.

## CHAPTER ONE: RHETORICAL GROUNDWORK AND AN EMERGING MYTHOLOGY

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, citizens of the United States began searching for an explanation of what had happened and what these events might mean—for individuals as well as the nation. Although US media outlets were broadcasting footage of the crashes and the ensuing rescue efforts, President Bush was the only government official to publicly discuss the *meaning* of the 9/11 tragedy on the day that it occurred. As the official spokesperson for the US government and the American people, Bush was able to define the terms of the emerging post-9/11 public discourse in a way that affected the national conversation—introducing terminology and lines of reasoning that others would build on and respond to in the forthcoming hours and days. By speaking in a way that explicitly or dogmatically established an official story about our “national tragedy” and the type of response it called for, Bush embraced particular possibilities or interpretations as absolute facts or necessities. What Bush chose to speak about became part of the officially sanctioned national discourse, while other perspectives or possibilities faded to the background as Bush (the official speaker) either ignored or dismissed them. Furthermore, Bush employed mythological or religious language to reinforce a worldview built on binary oppositions—good vs. evil, freedom vs. fear, us vs. them—and thus claimed higher authority for the truth or correctness of his story by claiming to stand on the side of *good*, defending the people (*us*) and the ideal (*freedom*) that had been attacked by our enemies.

Bush's rhetorical posture, as a righteous and authoritative storyteller, played a significant role in his ability to influence his audience's understanding of 9/11.

On September 11 Bush spoke publicly three different times: from Booker Elementary School in Florida, from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, and from the Oval Office in Washington D.C. In explaining the tragedy of 9/11 for the American public as well as the international community, he introduced the building blocks of a new national rhetoric, which was ideologically abstract and practically divisive. According to Rutgers University criminal justice professor Michael Welch, "Bush employs empty language to induce others to surrender to his will. Empty language refers to statements that carry little meaning. In fact, they are tremendously broad and vague, making it virtually impossible to oppose" (12). Analyzing Bush's rhetoric as a series of ideologically abstract statements will highlight the way in which his call for patriotism necessarily involved citizens' submission to the official 9/11 story. The Bush administration's emphasis on defining the events in a way that precluded further interpretation set the stage for the emerging *with us or against us* rhetoric. Bush's description of 9/11 became the *official* story (i.e., what the public was expected to recognize as the truth) and this story quickly came to dominate public discourse surrounding the event. Lacing nationalism with religion, Bush attempted to bind (a significant portion of) American citizens together on an emotional level, but he certainly alienated many others. Bush's rhetoric called for a very specific type of unity, which required collectively sacrificing democratic principles—such as diversity, dialogue, individualism, and civil rights—and thus accepting a revised definition of the United States' national character.

### *National Identity*

In Bush's first public remarks<sup>1</sup> on September 11, which he delivered shortly after 9:00 am, he defines the series of events that had just occurred as a "national tragedy" and proclaims, "Terrorism against our nation will not stand." Bush's explanation of who we are *as a nation* became a key component in his 9/11 story, which developed over the course of the day and in the following weeks. As Stoddard and Cornwell note, most contemporary scholars no longer define "the term 'nation' as a population of people bound together by common descent, language, culture, or history," but rather "as largely 'imagined communities' where the elements of identity, the things that bind a group together, are features of stories the group tells itself about itself" (Collins 175). Benedict Anderson, who coined the term *imagined community* in his scholarship on nationalism, explains it this way:

The nation...is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion...In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (6)

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for full transcripts of this address as well as others cited throughout the paper.

In Bush's rhetoric, the 9/11 tragedy was characterized as an event that defined the United States symbolically or even mythically. In his second public address on September 11, Bush proclaims, "A great people has been moved to defend a great nation." He describes *our* people as strong and determined to defend a sacred set of values against threats from an evil "faceless" enemy. Inasmuch as common identity is bound up in shared mythology (*imagining* what it is we all have in common), Bush's call for national unity implies rallying around a value-laden public narrative. Defining the event as a national crisis (in response to which we must act swiftly and decisively) empowered Bush to dictate the terms of the official story about America. He was able to infuse American identity with a particular vision of the world—in which diametrically opposed forces had squared off in a mythological battle. Disseminating phrases, images, emotions, and ideas—all of which solidified a distinction between patriotic, freedom-loving people and an abstractly sketched common enemy—Bush provided a way for US citizens to imagine themselves as a unified group, which as a whole had come under attack.

In his first public address on September 11, after initially defining the events that had just transpired as a "national tragedy," Bush claims he has "ordered that the full resources of the federal government go to help the victims and their families and to conduct a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act." Bush identified the attack as directed against the United States and all of its citizens, above and beyond the people working in the Trade Center specifically. From the very beginning, he rhetorically transferred the experience of victimhood from the individual level to the national level. The chilling phrase, "full resources of the federal government," helps characterize our national strength by implying that the United States

is fully capable of accomplishing any goal that may be required in the wake of the tragedy. Bush framed these seemingly unlimited and all-powerful resources as simultaneously aimed at relieving tangible physical suffering and supporting the more universal cause of hunting down the enemy.<sup>2</sup> In the context of a “national tragedy,” which immediately exposed our vulnerability (as a great nation came under unwarranted attack), Bush began to describe what the strength of United States looks like—an ability to both relieve suffering and kick ass. Being helpful and enacting revenge became part of the same task, so even if individual Americans did not experience physical suffering or personal loss, they could experience victimhood on an emotional level and connect with their tragic brethren through a shared response to the attacks. Furthermore, Bush set up the forthcoming *United We Stand* rhetoric by proclaiming, “terrorism...will not stand.” His language distinguished between death and destruction on a physical level (buildings crashing down) and our national unity on an emotional or spiritual level (strength and resolve emerging in the face of great danger, as a response to great evil)—attempting to establish the core of America as the ideals we represent, which cannot be damaged by physical attacks alone.

Several hours later, around 1:00 pm, Bush spoke from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, as (presumably) he was making his way circuitously back to Washington D.C. In this public address, Bush not only hammers home several key terms that he introduced that morning but also waxes even further into the transcendent realm—proclaiming: “Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and

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<sup>2</sup> At least in retrospect, the term “full resources” invokes images of firefighters and rescue workers blended with images of massive bombing campaigns, domestic surveillance, executive orders, and racial profiling.

freedom will be defended.” Whereas in the previous address Bush emphasized the national over the individual, here he elevates an earnest concern for the abstract principle of freedom above individual as well as national interests. He contextualized the tragedy first and foremost in terms of overarching ideology—defining specific events transpiring in the material world (hijackings, attacks, and the underlying conspiracy) as primarily symbolic. Since the phrases *freedom itself* (the sacred ideal we imagine binds us together as a nation) and *faceless coward* (our common enemy) are extremely abstract, they carry virtually no tangible meaning. Thus, both our sacred ideal and our common enemy could become whatever Bush wanted them to be without (technically) contradicting the empty language at the foundation of his discourse.

Furthermore, labeling the enemy as a “faceless coward” implies that our “full resources” are required to find them bring them to justice. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, at the time Bush was speaking from Barksdale Air Force Base, he may have been aware that early signs pointed to members of al Qaeda as the likely perpetrators of the attacks, but government officials had yet to uncover all the relevant details about who may have been responsible (“National”). Regardless of what Bush did or did not know at the time, his depiction of the enemy as “faceless” makes it seem like specific details about the people who want to destroy our freedom are hazy. What Bush does establish, though, is that they (whoever they are) represent an evil opposition force. As we shall soon discover, in the terms of Bush’s story, this abstract definition of the enemy helped lay the groundwork for extravagant displays of US military might in the Middle East as well as an internally justified witch-hunt mentality here at home. In his second public address on September 11, Bush “reassure[s] the American people that the

full resources of the federal government are working to assist local authorities to save lives and to help the victims of these attacks,” again emphasizing the connection between a humanitarian desire to help (our) people with the impending violent response that will be directed at the “faceless” terrorists. He is extremely explicit: “Make no mistake: The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts.” Bush repeats the phrase “hunt down” in conjunction with the notion that “full resources” will be required to do so, but he also introduces the idea of punishment. Substituting punishment for vengeance, as a central goal of the US response, contributes to the distinct tone of moral superiority in Bush’s language. Only those who have authority over other (less powerful) people—within a family, a legal system, or religious community, for instance—can justifiably describe or sanction punishment as a response to bad behavior. As I will discuss in the following section, the idea of punishing others for their evil (sinful) actions invokes not only the judgmental Old Testament God, but also the God of end times, who once and for all separates the wheat from the chaff.

In an interesting rhetorical shift from past to future tense, Bush claims that “we have taken all appropriate security precautions to protect the American people” and also that “we will do whatever is necessary to protect America and Americans.” It’s important to note that this language created a distinction between “security precautions” and “whatever is necessary.” Even if it is true that by 1:00 pm on September 11 all security precautions had already been taken (which seems highly doubtful), Bush made it clear that security precautions were not enough: in order to *win* the impending war on terror, we must play offense as well as defense. Especially since he spoke from a military base, Bush’s claim that he will do “whatever is necessary” implies that aggressive (violent)



action will constitute part of the solution to the explicitly identified problem of terrorism. Additionally, since Bush's audience was only just beginning to question the implications of the 9/11 attacks on future national security (once all security precautions had already been taken), they may have perceived, based on immediate personal experience, that a defensive posture alone could not assuage their growing fear. Bush invokes innocent victims, diligent rescue workers, as well as God in justifying the need to offensively confront evil: "I ask the American people to join me in saying thanks for all the folks who have been fighting hard to rescue our fellow citizens and to join me in saying a prayer for the victims and their families." The call to prayer became a recurring theme in Bush's post-9/11 rhetoric and, here, his appeal to the supernatural seems inspired by an authentic concern for human life. However, the ongoing juxtaposition of relieving suffering (experienced by God's people, those standing united in defense of freedom) with hunting down the enemy speaks to the inherent impulse toward aggression in Bush's understanding of God's plan for the world.

He ends his address from Barksdale Air Force Base: "The resolve of our great nation is being tested. But make no mistake: We will show the world that we will pass this test. God bless." What's unclear is whether Bush meant to imply that we are being tested by the enemy or being tested by God. The ambiguity is striking not only because it simultaneously conjures images of a schoolyard bully and an Old Testament God, but also because Bush identifies the audience (who will judge our success in confronting evil) as "the world." Thus, Bush described the purpose of the impending US action, at least in part, as bolstering our international reputation in a particular sort of way. If as Chomsky argues, however, "when Western states and intellectuals use the term

‘international community,’ they are referring to themselves,” Bush’s invocation of the world as audience may suggest a degree of reflexiveness in his discourse (75). Along these lines, his description of recent events and their impending consequences implies that we (i.e., the forces of righteousness) alone will judge how successfully we have passed the test. As we shall soon discover, Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric developed in a way labeled anyone who united with our cause and with our vision as a force of righteousness rather than a force of evil in the post-9/11 world. The vision of *us* as single united force contributed to the assumption that authoritative assessments of the US response to 9/11 should necessarily praise the commander in chief, his decisions, and his policies—uniformly praising our leader, just as he praised the victims and heroes of 9/11.

In Bush’s post-9/11 story, our common purpose can only be identified by an appeal to values and principles. The call to defend the nation (and with it, our cherished ideal of freedom) seems like a natural response to an attack on US soil; however, supplanting the need for rational investigation of the facts with sweeping generalizations about the perpetrators (evil enemies of freedom) as well as the victims (innocent lovers of freedom) limited the types of questions and types of answers that Bush allowed into the national conversation. As I will continue to discuss throughout this paper, by “defining community in emotional and epideictic terms after September 11,” Bush dismissed any discussion of *how* we comprehend the ideals that supposedly bind us together; this recognition calls Dana Cloud to identify a different sort of common threat: “being sucked into the imagined unity of American nationalism” (Hauser 76). In Bush’s rhetoric, being patriotic requires a public embrace of empty language and submission to centralized authority. Establishing a discourse of abstractions and defining real world events through

a very particular ideological lens, Bush set the stage for his *good vs. evil* war rhetoric. Taking sides was as easy as saying *yes* (standing with us) or saying *no* (standing against us). There was no room for debate or discussion. According to Stoddard and Cornwell, Bush's "mandate for unity" became a "moral imperative" in post-9/11 discourse (Collins 176). The rhetorical interplay between calls to do the right thing and stand united with one another allowed Bush to manipulate public opinion in a time of crisis, as he encouraged citizens to sacrifice rational investigation and public criticism in the name of serving our country's national interests.

### *Rhetorically Induced Fear*

Bush reinforced his abstractly construed image of national unity by describing the 9/11 tragedy in a way that engendered fear in the American public. He labeled the terrorists as an imminent and ongoing threat to civilization as we know it. If, as Colleen Kelley argues, "during a rhetorically induced state of permanent terror," Bush became "the protector of Americans," his post-9/11 story reinforced his authority to tell it (201). That is, wielding the power to defend the United States against future attacks, Bush depicted himself as the one responsible for speaking (as well as acting) on behalf of the citizenry.

On the evening of September 11, Bush addressed the nation from the Oval Office in Washington, D.C. These remarks expanded on the terms that had been introduced over the course of the day and Bush's vision for the post-9/11 world began to take shape more explicitly. It seems safe to assume that this presidential speech, which was broadcast live

on CNN and in virtually every media outlet during the hours and days that followed, reached an extremely wide audience and probably represents many viewers' first direct exposure to Bush's story (the official story) about what transpired on that day. Bush begins: "Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts." Here, the phrase "way of life" helps define "our very freedom" in a tangible way—stoking citizens' fear of what they actually stand to lose if the terrorists are not defeated. If the American "way of life" is threatened, we may lose the ability to work, go shopping, drive our cars, attend school, get medical assistance, or any number of other things that require a transfer of capital (a "way of life" embodied symbolically in the World Trade Center, which the terrorists destroyed). According to Bush, just as the immediate victims of 9/11 lost their lives, Americans generally could lose their way of life; making this association contributed to the rhetorical impact of Bush's claim that freedom itself is under attack because he roused very tangible fears before attaching them to the universal, abstract fear. It's striking how Bush described the (rhetorical) context in which he spoke as one defined by extremely high stakes: in which all ensuing events could be understood as a matter of *life or death*.<sup>3</sup> This earnestness allowed Bush to frame the impending "war on terror" (a phrase that appeared for the first time in his address to the nation on the evening of 9/11/01) as a life-affirming endeavor, which was crucial to the success of his rhetoric.

Acknowledging the specific victims, Bush links the tangible loss of human life to the more ideological definition of the event as an attack on freedom: "The victims were

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Two for further development of Bush's biological justification for the war on terror: we must fight in order to survive.

in airplanes or in their offices—secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers. Moms and dads. Friends and neighbors.” Everyone in Bush’s audience should be able to connect to these victims, as individuals become symbolic representations of the United States as a whole (a nation under attack) and reminders of what we should fear—losing our (way of) life. Bush proclaims, “Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.” Drawing a distinction between the types of violence that may be considered “evil,” “despicable,” or “cowardly” and the righteous acts of violence that will be undertaken by the defenders of freedom succeeded rhetorically inasmuch as Bush defined good and evil on an emotional level.<sup>4</sup> The identification of *us* as *not them* goes hand in hand with the identification of *good* as *not evil*. In the binary universe of Bush’s post-9/11 discourse, the experience of suffering, vulnerability, and fear (especially in nationalistic terms—*United We Stand*) should lead patriotic American citizens and their allies to name the perpetrators of the attacks as forces of evil. Ignoring applicable historical context<sup>5</sup> and other means of rationally interpreting the events of 9/11 in a non-emotional, non-ideological way—and even labeling such activity as dangerously unpatriotic—limited the terms with which the new reality could be spoken of. These terms, which operated on a strictly emotional level, allowed abstractly construed victimhood and sentimentality to flourish: we know that we have been attacked; we know

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Three for further discussion of how Bush characterizes the problem of evil.

<sup>5</sup> e.g., the historical relationship between the US government/military and Osama bin Laden; the historical relationship between the US and Israel; our unquestioned alliance with Saudi Arabia; our historical role as a destabilizing force in the Middle East; our dependence on Middle Eastern oil; and the economic implications of military action in both the domestic and international spheres.

that we are innocent victims and defenders of freedom; our enemies are evil; and we must stop them before they destroy us.

Bush actively defined his audience's shared emotional response, first in positive terms (what we do feel/experience) and then in negative terms (what we don't feel/experience). "The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness and a quiet, unyielding anger." In Bush's story, he described of our response to the 9/11 attacks as arising from anger rather than arising from fear. This formulation functioned to prescribe an emotional outlet for the collective anxiety his discourse induced. Lacking the ability to rationally comprehend what had happened and feeling victimized (or violated), US citizens could "resolve" their shared emotional trauma by committing their support to the task of aggressively hunting down and punishing the enemy. According to Bush, "these acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong." If the terrorists purportedly "failed," fear, chaos, and retreat should not comprise a central part of the current reality. Our strength supposedly precludes fear and our national unity trumps chaos. Retreat, which seems to mean refusing to embrace an aggressive counter-attack, never even emerged as a viable option. In the terms of Bush's story, the terrorists, who were intimidated by our greatness as a nation, tried to destroy not only our people but also our core ideals—in order to weaken us, to bring us down to their level. Bush was extremely clear in declaring that the enemy's (rhetorical) action had failed to achieve its purpose and, moreover, by rousing our anger, the terrorists made us even greater than we were before. They provided the

necessary impetus for this nation, this people, to recognize its true higher calling: eliminating evil from the world.

“Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.” Bush’s vocabulary here is extremely important. Given the nature of the 9/11 attacks, the invocation of structural integrity combined tangible images of collapsing buildings with a transcendent notion of impenetrability. This language is also heavily infused with blue-collar imagery. The American working class has been attacked and it, more than anyone, understands strength, solidarity, and perseverance. These working class values represent the “foundation of America.” This metaphor not only invoked a tough guy depiction of the American spirit but also cemented Bush’s connection with normal, middle class citizens. Even (or especially) people who didn’t understand much about politics and foreign relations could share in the experience of “American resolve.” Bush continues: “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.” Knowing that the enemy is *trying* to put out our light (i.e., kill us) naturally gave citizens cause to fear and Bush established his authority to help Americans cope with that fear in a very particular way. Merging religious language with working class imagery and authoritarian values, Bush’s rhetoric elevated the trustworthiness of hierarchically disseminated information (the official story) over individual interpretations. America as a whole may possess strength and resolve, but Bush reserved the right to explain what these values look like and how they justifiably manifest in military/political/social behavior.

He claims, “Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature, and we responded with the best of America.” Bush characterizes Americans as “daring,” “caring,” and “help[ful].” As opposed to the cowardly, hateful enemy, the forces of good wield their power in a way that may be understood as productive rather than destructive. Maintaining this dichotomy was essential to Bush’s depiction of distinctively different modes of “re-making the world.”<sup>6</sup> While the terrorists alter reality by tearing things down (buildings, people, sacred values), the United States will alter reality by creating something positive in response. “Our military is powerful, and it’s prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts.” According to Bush, military might defines the post-9/11 national character alongside the helpfulness and diligence of rescue workers, which established an image of the US military as a positive, productive force. Providing tangible assistance to the actual victims of the 9/11 attacks and mobilizing the military become one and the same task in Bush’s rhetoric: “Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks.” Here, the “first priority” seems to involve several distinct components—relieving tangible suffering, tightening domestic security, and engaging in military activity abroad. Bush united these various actions under a single heading, just as he attempted to unite his potential allies behind the common purpose of defending freedom. Furthermore, by implying that our military might should give the terrorists cause to fear and provide US citizens with a sense of security, Bush simultaneously

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<sup>6</sup> More on this point in Chapter Two



described the threat of future violence as an emblem of strength (when the US threatens others) and an emblem of cowardliness (when others threaten the US).

As I will continue to discuss, Bush did not define specific actions (committing violence, instilling fear) as evil in themselves but rather continually shifted the focus onto *who* was involved—identifying the agents themselves as either good or evil. Bush explains, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them,” identifying the status of individuals based on their communities and their associations first and foremost. This statement represents an initial formulation of Bush’s *with us or against us* rhetoric. Over the course of time, Bush established how widespread the terrorist threat might actually be by drawing an ever-widening series of concentric circles around the group of people identified as the enemy. The connection between criminals and those harboring/funding them seems pretty obvious, at least in the widely accepted language of the legal system. However, as Bush expanded the definition of culpability to encompass anyone who failed to stand united with him ideologically, the connection becomes rationally tenuous at best. Perhaps this explains why so many of Bush’s post-9/11 “national security” measures institutionalized the precedent of bypassing the US legal system entirely. Since the war on terror was framed in ideological terms (good vs. evil), the definition of justifiable action in this context developed out of a feeling, an impulse, or a spirit. If enough people stand united behind an ideological story, there’s no need for dialogue or debate. Furthermore, any authoritarian leader seeks to engender the perception among the populace that he represents the values and interests of the majority. By acknowledging Congress, “many world leaders,” and “our friends and allies” more generally, Bush depicts the forces of

righteousness as particularly formidable. He claims, “America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.” Interestingly, by describing the impending military action as representing something far greater than a single nation or a single president, Bush proposed a *mythical* battle as the ultimate solution to our problems—the key to overcoming fear once and for all.

### *The Religious Connection*

To end his Address to the Nation on the evening of September 11, Bush invokes “a power greater than any of us spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: ‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me.’” Calling Americans and our allies to join together in prayer “for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened,” Bush connects a (specifically Christian) notion of supernatural guidance with the (indistinguishable) goals of relieving suffering, promoting peace, and fighting evil. As the desire for “justice and peace” should inform our prayers, so too does this righteous impulse undergird the impending war on terror. By the end of the day on September 11, 2001, Bush had defined the terrorist attacks as a “national tragedy,” a threat to our livelihood, and an event that will necessarily precipitate a form of ideological warfare unlike anything we have ever seen before—as the forces of good prepare to combat the forces of evil, perhaps once and for all. In Bush’s story, our national purpose is clear: “We go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just

in our world.” The connection with religion reinforced Bush’s ability to wield mythological language in a way that could be construed among a portion of his audience as something they could really *believe in*.

As Erin McCarthy notes, “The term ‘justice’ was not and has not been defined, and, as many critically minded citizens around the world have noted, the brand of ‘justice’ the president [Bush], the CIA, the military, and the media seem to be advocating does not necessarily go hand in hand with peace” (Collins 125). If “framing the conflict in terms of ‘good versus evil,’ ‘light versus darkness,’ ‘freedom versus fear,’ ‘justice versus cruelty,’ does not serve to restore peace, but to justify war,” Bush’s notion of doing justice necessarily manifests as doing violence (136). Viewed through a critical lens, Bush’s rhetorical coupling of “justice and peace” seems rationally incoherent, but it functioned effectively in the post-9/11 climate—as a substantial number of people united around Bush’s value-laden abstractions without questioning the deeper implications of answering violence with violence and terror with terror. Perhaps, as Chomsky claims, the abstract phrase *war on terror* is merely propaganda, since following the legal definition of “terrorism” an investigation into US foreign policy would “reveal that the U.S. is a leading terrorist state, as are its clients<sup>7</sup>” (16). However, since Bush framed the appropriate response to the tragedy of 9/11 as a form of religious warfare (violence sanctioned by God), being *on the right side* was all that mattered.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the U.S. Code, “[An] act of terrorism means any activity that [A] involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; and [B] appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping” (cited in Chomsky 16).

On September 14, 2001, Bush spoke at the Episcopal National Cathedral during a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance service. He praised the victims of the 9/11 tragedy, as well as the relief workers and volunteers who came to their aid. As the central component of this epideictic address, Bush set a distinctly religious tone—describing his own and, more generally, the American people’s prayerful mood in the post-9/11 climate: “At St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York, on Tuesday, a woman said, ‘I pray to God to give us a sign that he’s still here.’” Reading the names of the deceased in this context became a type of prayer in itself: “We will linger over them and learn their stories, and many Americans will weep. To the children and parents and spouses and families and friends of the lost, we offer the deepest sympathy of the nation. And I assure you, you are not alone.” Bush’s assurance takes the form of a sign from God—acknowledging our grief in the same way many people crave divine affirmation. Bush rhetorically established the connection between himself and the divine, which contributed to his authority to speak in this context, as he took the position of a national priest or prophet. In Bush’s story his religious faith binds him not only to God but also to the victims, their families, the American people, and all others who stand united with us. Just as the victims, knowing death was imminent, called home to tell their families, “be brave and I love you,” Bush explained to the American people that through prayer we could receive the same message from God in our time of great need. In the face of “deliberate and massive cruelty,” which made the world seem chaotic and our nation vulnerable, God can help quiet our fears and give us strength to pursue our higher calling to “rid the world of evil.”

As cited by Michael Welch, “On the day of his second inaugural as governor of Texas, Richard Land, a leader of the Southern Baptist Conference, recalls Bush saying to his close associates: ‘I believe that God wants me to be president’” (52). In framing his post-9/11 story in terms of ideological religious warfare, Bush may very well have believed that he had God on his side. However, by invoking the supernatural to justify violence—motivated by righteous anger—Bush’s rhetoric looks strikingly similar to the religious fundamentalism<sup>8</sup> he attributed to the terrorists. Evaluating the impact of defining God’s allegiances, as groups of people wage war against one another, Bill Moyers questions the true meaning of *winning* the war on terror:

They win only if we let them, only if we become like them: vengeful, imperious, intolerant, paranoid. Having lost faith in all else, zealots have nothing left but a holy cause to please a warrior God. They win if we become holy warriors too; if we kill the innocent as they do; strike first at those who had not struck us; allow our leaders to use the fear of terrorism to make us afraid of the truth; cease to think and reason together, allowing others to tell what’s in God’s mind. Yes, we are vulnerable to terrorists, but only a shaken faith in ourselves can do us in.

(446)

Inasmuch as Bush succeeded in claiming authority to speak on behalf of the American people and also on behalf of God, he made his audience vulnerable to an onslaught of ideological proclamations, which Americans (and our allies) were encouraged to accept based on a common desire to achieve unity and security at any cost. Dana Cloud argues that Bush’s initial reliance on epideictic discourse in framing the

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter Two for more on how “fundamentalism” represents a biological threat (to our very existence).

post-9/11 reality “can be profoundly undemocratic because it rules inappropriate and unwelcome anyone offering questions, criticism, or a plea for rational thought” (Hauser 75). As I will discuss further in the following section, the ceremonial, religious tone of Bush’s rhetoric relegated any substantive investigation of past events or discussion of future consequences to the fringe of public discourse.

In Bush’s address on September 14, he praised the innocent victims of the 9/11 attacks and explained our emotional response to their deaths in terms of anger. Bush established a rhetorical environment in which the experience of sadness and disbelief merged with the language of vengeance as a natural manifestation of these feelings. He defined the emotional or spiritual context as tragic, since we must necessarily depart from our previously peaceful national character after the forces of evil fundamentally altered the terms of appropriate engagement. He explains: “War has been waged against us by stealth and deceit and murder. This nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger.” According to this story, the American people possess the latent capacity to fight wars and win wars even though we would always prefer to conduct business peacefully. Like many other wartime presidents, Bush explained how war is a necessity rather than a choice by describing our intentions and motivations as inherently *good*. Since good people would never go to war merely to achieve personal, political, or economic gain,<sup>9</sup> Bush encouraged his audience to rest assured that the impending conflict would be designed to actualize some sort of higher purpose. The connection with religion in Bush’s post-9/11 discourse undermined any rational discussion of whether responding to violence with further violence represented a sound choice (ethically or politically) because he framed

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<sup>9</sup> More on this assumption in Chapter Two

the recent attacks as establishing obligations and responsibilities, rather than tough choices to be made through careful deliberation.

Interestingly, even though Bush seems to claim that we have no choice but to go to war for the sake of avenging our fallen citizens and defending the ideal of freedom, he also asserts that we are in complete control: “This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others; it will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing.” Even though peaceful Americans do not desire conflict, the enemy started a war that must now be fought and won by the forces of righteousness. By claiming that he, as commander in chief, had the power to end the war, Bush implied that even if the state of conflict extended far into the future it would be because the United States and its allies chose to continue fighting. Thus, combating terrorism by employing the “full resources of the federal government” came to represent an inevitably renewed choice to approach the world in a particular way. Rather than arguing that the United States is powerful enough to eliminate the forces of evil with the push of a button, though, Bush began to establish a vision of the impending conflict as long and strenuous. However, it is not clear what if any evidence he may have had to justify this assessment. Bush appears to claim he will only choose to end the conflict after every single terrorist has been captured or destroyed and that this moment may not come as quickly as we might hope. Framing the war on terror as a new type of challenge with a new level of (religious) significance, Bush not only provided justification for the application of force but also explained the need for endurance and encouraged the acceptance of sacrifice. If Bush will only choose to end the war once evil has been completely eliminated, then he will inevitably choose war as a perpetual (non)solution to the ongoing threat of terrorism. That is, of course, if the war on

terror does not truly represent the final battle of the Apocalypse and thus the end of history as we know it.

Bush developed an image of himself that corresponds to a traditional understanding of the Old Testament God. Just as God created the world in a way that allowed flawed human beings to freely choose between doing good and doing evil, the United States, as an inherently peaceful, freedom loving nation, previously allowed the citizens of the world to live their own lives according to their own values—freely choosing to succeed or fail in the universal task of doing what is right, despite our ability to control their actions if we so choose. Additionally, just as God sometimes chooses to punish human beings for their sinful ways (when their bad behavior has really gotten out of hand), Bush established that our traditionally peaceful nation had been pushed to a breaking point at which enacting violence was absolutely necessary to restore proper (divinely sanctioned) balance to the world. Since enacting violence necessarily involves limiting certain individuals' freedom (e.g., by killing them, imprisoning them, or starving them of necessary resources), Bush's story evolved to distinguish between freedom as an ideal and tangible individual freedoms. Even God finds it necessary to kill certain people at certain times in order to preserve the type of world that He desires. The implications of Bush's religious ethos are far reaching because he not only played the role of someone who humbly turns to God for guidance in prayer but also someone whose will had become so intertwined with the divine will that the two were difficult to distinguish. If Bush received God's blessing, God's permission, and also God's power, then questioning his actions became synonymous with questioning God. In Bush's words, "Our unity is a



kinship of grief and a steadfast resolve to prevail against our enemies.” These are enemies of America, enemies of freedom, and enemies of God.

It’s interesting to note that when Bush speaks to a crowd of workers at Ground Zero (also on September 14, 2001) he begins with, “America today is on bended knee.” Then he ends his series of statements with, “I can hear you, the rest of the world hears you and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.” Bush quickly established an image of kneeling in prayer and framed his various statements with the reassurance that his audience’s voices could be heard—not only by God, but also by Bush, the rest of the world, and the terrorists. Just as God is the one who hears our prayers, Bush depicted himself as the one who could hear the American people. By implication, Bush could answer our prayers. His pronouncement that the terrorists “will hear all of us soon” functioned on one level as a thinly veiled threat to the enemy and a rallying cry for those who have been stirred to anger by the 9/11 tragedy. This phrase functioned on another level, though, to define the passionate manifestation of vengeance as the answer to our prayers. Additionally, since all of the people who actually (physically) flew the planes into the buildings were already dead, Bush implied that there are many other enemies responsible for these attacks who can only be identified by their perceived connections to the perpetrators themselves.

### *Rewriting or Reconceiving History*

In his address at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance service, Bush explains, “Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the

distance of history, but our responsibility to history is already clear.” He seems to claim that we do not yet have the ability to understand the material circumstances surrounding the tragedy of 9/11. However, perhaps because the American people are guided by their faith in God (i.e., Bush), we should be able to clearly perceive our ideological responsibility. Perhaps the “distance of history” can eventually provide tangible evidence that will help answer our questions about what happened and why it happened, but in the short term we must act on gut instinct and have confidence that we are right. Thus, the idea of our “responsibility to history” is based more on an emotion than a rational investigation of facts. And this way of explaining our sense of duty (to defend freedom and avenge the victims of 9/11) opens the floodgates for Bush’s employment of abstract terms and ideological arguments in defining the enemy. It is the emotion that matters and, according to Bush’s story, the American public should stand united behind the natural and inevitable manifestation of this emotion, regardless of how little we actually know about the event that just occurred and the historical context surrounding it. Given the emphasis on prayer in Bush’s rhetoric, his notion of “responsibility to history” may be read as synonymous with a responsibility to God. At the same time, if history radically shifted all of a sudden, perhaps God changed as well, deciding it’s time to stop playing nice with the sinners. If God can represent timeless ideals and timeless truth while simultaneously responding to new situations in unprecedented ways, then Bush is justified in doing the same as a devout follower of God.

Does “our responsibility to history” likewise mean that Bush planned to re-write history with God’s help? Purportedly, there was no historical precedent for understanding the tragedy that took place. This event was framed as absolutely new, absolutely novel in

the degree of evil involved. In Bush's story, a "nation under attack" must quickly develop a new way of conducting business or else face the gravest of all consequences—the end of history. A rational investigation of history itself, though, might shed light on the United States' checkered past in the Middle East—the arming and empowerment of Osama bin Laden, the unquestioned "friendship" with the oppressive (but powerful) Saudis, the military alliance with Israel, not to mention the humanitarian implications of the post-Gulf War sanctions in Iraq. Bush's claim that "to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil" represents "our responsibility to history," only makes sense if *history* is framed mythically or abstractly—something we pray for rather than something we investigate.

Bush explains: "Our purpose as a nation is firm, yet our wounds as a people are recent and unhealed and lead us to pray. In many of our prayers this week, there's a searching and an honesty." According to Bush, we're searching for answers, searching for comfort, and searching for a divinely sanctioned call to action. In his post-9/11 story, if we honestly love our country and honestly want to do the right thing, God will reward us by answering our prayers—providing the guidance and direction we so desperately need during our time of national crisis. Bush continues: "God's signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own, yet the prayers of private suffering, whether in our homes or in this great cathedral are known and heard and understood." Even though, as human beings (our ability to understand the divine will being necessarily limited), we may not comprehend exactly why suffering is necessary for the ultimate manifestation of peace and prosperity, we should rest assured that seemingly chaotic events make sense from the perspective of ultimate truth (i.e.,

God's perspective). Interestingly, Bush speaks with confidence that he understands what God is calling him (and everyone who stands united with him) to do in response to the 9/11 attacks: "rid the world of evil." Inasmuch as Bush's proclamations took the shape of commandments from God, he claimed privileged access to the inner workings of the divine plan. Since common people did not have (were not allowed) access to all of the information Bush purportedly had access to, his language suggested we acknowledge his authority to lead our country in the right direction—defending a mythical notion of "history."

Bush's claim that we should "yield our will to a will greater than our own" established a distinct ambiguity in any attempt to differentiate between Bush's will and God's will. Furthermore, when he says, "this world He created is of moral design," Bush labels the call to war (defending freedom) as an extension of God's will and therefore "moral." By claiming "adversity introduces us to ourselves," Bush explains that the impending conflict will help us understand our true national identity for the first time. In Bush's story, history is changing and a new world is emerging. He envisioned the United States (under his leadership) ushering in a new era—responding to unprecedented terror with unprecedented national unity, "a unity of every faith and every background." Although Bush claims that the defenders of freedom put political and religious differences aside in order to unite behind a common purpose, he defines this unity in terms of commonly defying the forces that oppose us: "It is evident in services of prayer and candlelight vigils and American flags, which are displayed in pride and waved in defiance." This spirit of defiance separates *us* and *them* on one level, since those who stand united with Bush resist the terrorists' vision of the world and understand

(inter)national identity via opposition to a common enemy. However, on another level this language seems to unite Bush with the very people who he claims to defy, since the terrorists have also acted in defiance of an opposing worldview—using violence to combat a perceived practical/ideological threat. It is only through Bush’s appeal to God, who purportedly represents all legitimate faith traditions, that he can distinguish between righteous defiance and sinful defiance.

Playing on the dichotomy between the physical world (of sin and suffering) and the spiritual world (of divine truth and goodness), Bush claims: “In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom.” Just as Bush invokes God as the source of his post-9/11 vision, he identifies “the world” as responsible for the opposition embodied by our enemies. This rhetorical formulation advanced the notion that the material world is inherently flawed when viewed from a transcendent perspective. Additionally, by aligning himself with God and the terrorists with the world, Bush implied that his own actions as well as the motivations behind them could only be properly understood in transcendent ideological terms. Bush’s formulation of the war on terror as a divinely sanctioned *necessity* only makes sense outside the realm of physical evidence and rational investigation. Furthermore, by praising God for “the promise of a life to come,” Bush draws a qualitative distinction between tangible human lives (past and future dead) and the everlasting life enjoyed by God and His followers in the transcendent realm. Embedded in this dualistic vision is an ideological justification for sacrificing human lives on earth to achieve a higher purpose. Bush attempted to maintain a position of moral and ideological authority by looking past the details of material

circumstances—perhaps identifying these as (evil) impediments to an appropriate understanding of Ultimate Truth.

When Bush concludes his 9/14 address with a threefold appeal to God, he connects our shared sense of grief, our feeling of vulnerability, and our desire to discern the appropriate (re)action following the 9/11 tragedy: “May He bless the souls of the departed. May He comfort our own. And may He always guide our country.” Two days later, in an unscripted moment on the White House lawn, Bush describes his religious vision for the war on terror in a particularly troubling way: “This is a new kind of—a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This Crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient.” This rhetorical framing of the impending conflict as a “Crusade” may not have been a politically expedient maneuver, but Bush nevertheless revealed his own personal vision of what it means to manifest God’s truth in the world—conducting religious warfare. Invoking the historical Crusades in which Christians battled Muslims for nearly two centuries, vying for control of the Middle East, Bush’s language links the previously articulated “responsibility to history” with rekindling a Crusade era mentality. Ostensibly, God heard the American people’s prayers and alerted Bush that the time to continue the Crusades is upon us. Since “this will be a long campaign, a determined campaign—a campaign that will use the resources of the United States to win,” we should naturally assume that the extent of evil is so great that God requires unwavering dedication and perseverance on our part. Just as in the previous Crusades, political and economic concerns intermingle with religious ideology, but the outward expression of the

nature of the conflict embraces a transcendent narrative exclusively—a mythical expression of history.

In his September 16 remarks, Bush elaborates on the unprecedented challenge of conducting this Crusade: “We’re facing a new kind of enemy...and, therefore, we have to be on alert in America. We’re a nation of law, a nation of civil rights. We’re also a nation under attack.” Although the rule of law and the ideal of civil rights have traditionally guided our nation, the new reality—being under attack, being vulnerable—has necessarily altered our national character and national purpose. The message is clear: since this event marks a turning point in our history, the way in which we respond will necessarily shift accordingly.

## CHAPTER TWO: WHO'S IT GONNA BE—US OR THEM?

In post-9/11 America, Bush created a new rhetorical context—in which certain people stand united behind a common explanation of reality and others (who employ different terms) represent an opposing force. According to Bush, since the task of defending freedom defines Americans at the core, we have no choice but to fulfill our stated purpose as a nation—protecting our way of life and satisfying God. Joining Bush's cause defined certain individuals as a loyal *Americans*, while opposing Bush's cause made others distinctively *un-American*. There was no grey area. Furthermore, the dominant public discourse depicted an abstractly defined emotional response to the tragedy rather than providing or encouraging a rational investigation of the events and their context. Bush's story provided only a simplistic version of the *facts*: the terrorists issued an initial threat to our way of life, which marked the beginning of a new type of war, and the defenders of freedom must respond to this threat by eliminating evil from the world.

In Bush's address to the nation and a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, which I will evaluate throughout this chapter as a crucial moment in the public expression of the official 9/11 story, Bush's rhetoric evolved to incorporate a level of biological justification for the war on terror. Assuming reality can be accurately defined with a metaphysical dualism, Bush described our world as black/white—a world wherein ideas, events, people, and nations either conform to what is good or what is evil. This speech builds toward a climactic *with us or against us* moment: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."



From the beginning Bush had framed the US response to 9/11 as a matter of *life or death*. On September 20 he implied that only one of the two groups would survive the impending conflict and, furthermore, that siding “with us” was the only way to avoid certain destruction. Bush claims, “Our nation has been put on notice: We are not immune from attack.” And, therefore, “defensive measures” are required to “protect Americans” and ensure our “national security.” Bush introduces the newly established Office of Homeland Security, which will “oversee and coordinate a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard our country against terrorism, and respond to any attacks that may come.” According to Bush, “These measures are essential. But the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows.” In Bush’s story, terrorism spreads like weeds—especially in places where the garden of freedom and righteousness is not well tended (in the Middle East or even in our own backyard). Our task, like that of any good gardener, involves facilitating the success of certain species by thwarting their competitors. Describing the impending war on terror (eliminating the weeds) as *essential* for our survival, Bush framed aggressive militarism and “enhanced” law enforcement as biological necessities.

Since the practical application of measured violence for the sake of self-defense is justified within a variety of ethically relevant rhetorical contexts—including the US legal system, the United Nations, and the dominant social ethos in a wide array of different communities (both foreign and domestic)—Bush’s depiction of forthcoming violence as a defensive measure helped support his claim that he acted on behalf of justice. Furthermore, since Bush explains homeland security efforts would be aimed not only toward “safeguard[ing] our country” but also toward “respond[ing] to any attacks that

may come [in the future],” Bush plays on his audience’s fear. Many people became convinced that the ongoing reality of attacks on US soil would extend into the unforeseeable future. Others became afraid of Bush himself, given his black/white ideology and clear intentions to perpetuate the cycle of violence. Regardless of the extent to which different individuals and different nations stood with Bush or against Bush, his language gave them cause to be afraid:

This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat.

To juxtapose the forthcoming war on terror, which would be different than conflicts that came before, Bush cited two examples in which the US military purportedly emerged victorious against significantly weaker enemies without considerable damage being inflicted on our own nation. Acknowledging that “our response [to the current threat] involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes,” Bush prepares his audience for something far more troubling: “Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen.” Calling the military to action and asking Americans to prepare for a new type of war contributed to a growing level of uncertainty about the future of our country. Bush goes on to explain, “From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” This proclamation defined the new rules of engagement in warfare: no neutrality and no peace. Like many other wartime leaders, Bush described the US and its allies as “peaceful,” but nonetheless called to conflict out

of *necessity*. If the defenders of freedom embrace the inevitability and necessity of violence, then those who choose to protest the violent retaliation (against a faceless enemy) effectively identify themselves as standing opposed to our (righteous) cause. In Bush's system of discourse, the enemy's opposition to freedom can manifest in myriad, often unexpected ways—as the tragedy of 9/11 demonstrated. In post-9/11 America, anyone who failed to fall in line with the terms (and ideology) of the dominant story was framed as guilty (by association) of supporting the terrorists' unjust violence rather than Bush's righteous violence. Bush's story left no room for supporting nonviolence as a possibility.

Addressing his audience as people who are confused and overwhelmed, who seek authoritative answers to questions they do not feel equipped to address based on their own (lack of) knowledge, Bush established his own ethos as the authority figure capable of providing explanations of previously opaque events. Bush acknowledges, “Americans have many questions tonight,” before setting out to answer them. In response to the question, “Who attacked our country?” Bush explains:

The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda. They are the same murderers indicted for bombing American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and responsible for bombing the USS Cole.

Although Bush appeared to produce historical “evidence” to define al Qaeda (our enemy), his anecdotal account of history left out many significant details. Bush systematically ignored or distorted all relevant data about the historical relationship between the United States' government and Osama bin Laden. If the *new* history began

on the evening of September 11, everything that came before may be construed symbolically to prop up ideology, while being practically dismissed as irrelevant. Bush claims, “Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime,” playing on symbolism rather than an investigation of facts. Americans automatically associate the mafia with undermining the legitimate pursuits of upstanding citizens, compromising the efforts of those charged with maintaining law and order, and carrying out domestic acts of terrorism. Bush, however, explains a crucial difference between the mafia and the group of “Islamic extremists” we now face: “its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world—and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.” In effect, al Qaeda wants to sew the seeds of terrorism throughout the world—spreading its radical agenda like weeds. By implication, the United States and those who stand united with us should recognize the danger inherent in a worldview that does not hinge on the logic of rational self-interest and that rejects a capitalistic description of human motivation. If the mafia represents a group of criminals who adhere to a basic form of logic that Americans can understand, these new terrorists are that much more frightening because they are willing to commit murder in service of an ideal that cannot be comprehended in strictly economic terms.

According to Bush, American citizens, through “continued participation and confidence in the American economy,” can keep our nation strong and thus help fight terrorism. He labels the World Trade Center as a “symbol of American prosperity,” implying that our enemies communicate with us on the level of symbolism—planning their attacks to “touch [the] source” of our prosperity. If Americans continue spending money, which may easily be construed as our own form of symbolic action, we prove

that the terrorists have failed. According to Bush, we can assuage our fears about an uncertain future through enthusiastic capitalism and also through prayer. Bush asks Americans to “please continue praying for the victims of terror and their families, for those in uniform, and for our great country. Prayer has comforted us in sorrow, and will help strengthen us for the journey ahead.” In Bush’s story, God represents the primal source of all that the defenders of freedom cherish—namely the mythological assurance of prosperity.

Naomi Klein argues that the Bush administration’s response to 9/11 functioned on a psychological level—as a form of “shock therapy”—capitalizing on the collective experience of national trauma to facilitate a large-scale shift in the American economy: with “big business and big government combining their formidable powers to regulate and control the citizenry” (307). She points to the controversial appointment of Donald Rumsfeld, who transformed the mission of the Department of Defense “into something more psychological than physical, more spectacle than struggle, and far more profitable than it ever had been before” (284). Klein’s research suggests that Bush’s endorsement of military activity abroad as well as sweeping changes to domestic national security policy may be interpreted through the lens of capitalistic opportunism. For the purposes of the current project, I would like to point out that Bush’s war on terror involved a large transfer of public funds into the private sector and that these funds were largely absorbed by a handful of corporate entities with documented ties to high-ranking government officials (Klein 283-307). In this way, Bush took his own advice to heart by spending money in response to the tragedy of 9/11. Additionally, it is important to note that inasmuch as Bush explained our own way of life in terms of economic prosperity, he

defined the threat of terrorism as a threat to American capitalism. According to Bush, “civilization” itself depends on our ability to spend money (for the sake of achieving a higher purpose) and the terrorists want to take this ability away from us.

While stoking a particular brand of American nationalism, Bush claims: “This is not, however, just America’s fight. And what is at stake is not just America’s freedom. This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.” In Bush’s story, the terrorists constitute the antithesis of civilization and thus a threat to all people who are *like us*. Bush established that everyone had a stake in the conflict and that everyone must take a side. As Marina Llorente notes, “unity in the war on terror was explicitly linked with unity in sharing the discourse of free trade and growth,” and Bush’s reinforcement of the dichotomy between civilization and barbarism helped define those who stand united with us as those who facilitate the functioning of our economic system (Collins 42). Invoking a traditional understanding of barbarians as those who refuse to “play by the rules, in a military sense,” Bush implied that our own brand of violence could be understood as legal, natural, and refined rather than illegal, unnatural, and crude (44). Furthermore, he depicted the rules governing interpersonal relations and structures of power within American capitalism—the rules that make us civilized and purportedly allow for universal prosperity—as the system that our enemy will perpetually attempt to undermine. In Bush’s version of post-9/11 reality:

The civilized world is rallying to America’s side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next. Terror,

unanswered, can not only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments. And you know what—we're not going to allow it.

Bush defined the impending war on terror as the natural manifestation of values that are universally embraced by the “civilized world.” In a fascinating rhetorical move, Bush expresses deference to previous standards of conduct: “Perhaps the NATO Charter reflects best the attitude of the world: An attack on one is an attack on all.” Then, over the course of the coming months, he systematically dismissed all relevant insight provided by world leaders and intelligence agencies<sup>10</sup> that failed to support the very specific political/military vision that Bush (and those standing behind him) developed as a response to the ideologically-framed threat of terrorism. In Bush’s story, the core values underlying the impending war on terror preceded the emergence of the new reality, even though the manner in which this war will be fought must necessarily defy all historical precedent. Bush further defines the civilized world (i.e., those who stand united with us) as individuals and nations who “understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next.” Anyone who does not feel threatened by the forces of evil must be sympathetic with the enemy’s radical agenda. And anyone who is not prepared for a long, hard battle does not deserve to stand united with the forces of righteousness—those actively striving to defend everything that is good in the world. For Bush, preserving “legitimate” political and economic institutions involves punishing those who threaten our way of life. Since they are determined to attack the system that promotes universal prosperity among civilized people, they must be destroyed.

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<sup>10</sup> Specifically, see Welch (126-143) on the Bush administration’s attempts to cover up the ineffectiveness of post-9/11 counterterrorism measures and marginalize all critical voices.

Invoking a stereotypical misinterpretation of Nietzsche as a proponent of evil (based on the contextually inappropriate assumption of a binary universe), Bush describes the dangerous ideology guiding the terrorists: “By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions—by abandoning every value except the will to power—they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism.” Assuming that will to power is evil and assuming that “we” are good, Bush makes an implicit argument that the freedom-loving US government and its diverse array of civilized supporters are absolutely not concerned with self-empowerment. According to Bush’s story, spreading democracy, spending money, and hunting down terrorists have nothing to do with the *willful* exertion of power, but rather some sort of natural or divinely inspired manifestation of what is right and what is necessary. The desire for power and the desire for goodness (godliness) are mutually exclusive in this reality. Thus, any wayward claims about the US exerting its power *because we want to* were discredited by definition. Since Bush’s vision of American strength involved a morally justified application of force (based on the internal logic of the argument), his story must account for how the proposed response to 9/11 can be distinguished from the ideologically/religiously motivated acts of violence committed by the enemy. The defenders of freedom must somehow be capable of exerting power without embracing will to power as an ideal—meaning they must *begrudgingly* accept the authority to remake the world, rather than intentionally seeking this end. Bush depicted himself and his supporters as vehicles for God’s power, which is naturally stronger (not to mention more ethical) than the terrorists’ power. By implication, Bush does not desire personal power, but rather feels called by God to fill an authoritarian role in order to serve the greater good. The terrorists “stand against us, because we stand in



their way,” preventing the spread of evil and protecting the sacred ideal of freedom. With God standing united with us, there is no way we can fail and no way we can be reprimanded by any higher authority. Furthermore, acting as vehicles of God defers agency (and thus responsibility): what might look like signs of will to power manifesting in Bush’s words and actions can be re-labeled as evidence of his subservience to God.

The terrorists are “heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” and thus represent a new emergence of a historically ingrained force, a dangerous impulse toward evil and radicalism embodied (in every generation, with different levels of severity) by those who seek power. As evidence that the terrorists hate the ideal of freedom, Bush explains:

They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.

Having already drawn a distinction between “our many Muslim friends...our many Arab friends” and the enemy, Bush asserts that the terrorists “blasphemed the name of Allah” by committing violence in His name and that Muslims around the world should feel welcome to stand united with the forces of good, the defenders of freedom. Then, by describing the terrorists’ intentions to disrupt the Muslim way of life (in addition to the Christian and Jewish way of life), he suggests that any rational, ethical Middle Easterners would naturally support the righteous cause of fighting a war on terror. Those who fail to support Bush’s cause must be dangerous, since standing against us implies shared sympathies with the terrorists—those who embrace *will to power* as an ideology and

praxis. From a different perspective, it would seem natural for Middle Eastern leaders and citizens to oppose a US-led war on their home soil. However, in Bush's discourse, vocalizing such opposition became tantamount to supporting terrorism.

He describes what our world could look like if the terrorists are not defeated:

In Afghanistan, we see al Qaeda's vision for the world... Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough.

Bush painted a picture of a principled but irrational opposing force—creating a rhetorical world wherein religious extremism and patriarchy became linked with prescriptions about facial hair and television. It seemed implausible (at least via the power of association) that any American action would compromise women's rights or freedom of religion, since everyone knows that in America we don't have any laws against television or shaving. In order to define his actions as non-radical, Bush had to construe his own application of executive power as qualitatively different than the terrorists' attempts to exert power. He framed attacking the enemies of our social/religious paradigm as ethically justified by construing the dominant ideology as *good*—conforming, perhaps, with the democratic principle of supporting individuals' rights to pursue their own rational self-interest. Furthermore, Bush depicted the war on terror as *necessary* by claiming the perpetuation of our way of life and our very survival depended on it. In the dominant post-9/11 story, siding with Bush represented a tangible prescription for affirming life as we know it and maintaining (some semblance of) personal freedom—to worship God, spend money, and watch television.

According to Bush's story, the enemy hates our "democratically elected government," supposedly due to their fundamental rejection of freedom as an ideal. "They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other." Bush describes the enemy as a group of extremists, whose radical beliefs lead them to commit violence for the sake of *re-making the world*: "These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life." Bush's own purported agenda—defending freedom via whatever means may be required—was characterized in a distinctly different way; namely, it was the opposite of extremism. As political reality unfolded in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy, Bush himself (rhetorically as well as militarily) took steps to end the way of life represented by the Taliban and then by Saddam Hussein—re-making the world in his own sort of way. In the domestic sphere, while pushing for a radical re-definition of Americans' freedom under the law (threatening civil liberties, limiting public access to information, and undermining privacy rights), Bush maintained that his policies were necessary for the protection of freedom and its longevity as a sacred ideal.<sup>11</sup> Monopolizing the realm of public discourse with his official story and issuing threats to potential dissenters, the commander in chief successfully strong-armed the American public into an ideological rhetorical climate. Therein, radical action was justified as a response to radical action.

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<sup>11</sup> And anyone questioning the constitutionality of Bush administration policies (including the underlying assumption that limiting individual liberties can promote the longevity of freedom as an ideal) was labeled in official discourse as dangerously contributing to the terrorists' cause. For instance, in 2003 John Ashcroft argued before Congress: "To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: your tactics only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve" (quoted in Welch 138). See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

Following Trethewey and Goodall, it seems that a significant portion of Bush's audience was willing to "rely less on a burden of truth supported by real evidence than on simplistic repetitions of symbolic soundbites clothed in puffed-up patriotic sentiment" (Corman 52). One way of explaining this post-9/11 allegiance to Bush—and his mythological tale of the conflict between good and evil—may be the acknowledgement that many Americans were truly afraid that our existence as individuals and as a nation could not necessarily be assumed as a given. Playing on fears that reside on an instinctual or biological level (the fear that our kind of people will fail to survive in the long run) was critical to the success of Bush's rhetoric. Trethewey and Goodall ask:

Why do we accept less from our leaders than we know they should be capable of?

The easy answer—and maybe the right one—is that we will give up almost all reason in exchange for a sense of, or the hope for, ontological security. Another reason is that [with] an absence of brightside leaders who embody the higher qualities we associate with earned elite positions in government, industry, and education, we are left with darksiders who traffic in our fear, weakness, and the absence of worthy competitors. Left unchecked, the logical extension of this dark side of leadership is the very embodiment of fundamentalism. We elect and are led by leaders who know their own truth, do not tolerate disloyalty, do not bother with argument or evidence, and who make decisions guided only by their self-interest and faith. (Corman 53)

The phrase "dark side of leadership" references the Bush administration's dedication to secrecy regarding its tactics in fighting the war on terror and the (lack of) evidence used to identify those who must be punished for their participation in or association with the

9/11 attacks. Bush informs his audience that the impending war on terror “may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success,” implying that we should justifiably expect only limited transparency from the commander in chief as the new reality unfolds. “We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism.” As this process began, Bush encouraged those who stand united with his cause to place unlimited trust in the capability of the military, as well as other arms of the executive branch, to defend freedom in a manner that will necessarily remain at least partially covert. Since Bush had previously described the enemy as capable of hiding in the shadows and striking unexpectedly, the suggestion that he plans to employ similar tactics reaffirms the claim that the terrorists have changed the rules of engagement. The forces of righteousness will not make the mistake of attempting to play by the old rules, which are no longer functionally expedient. Rather, we will respond in kind to the gauntlet laid down by the forces of evil—not because this is the way we would prefer to do business, but because the new reality (which we are not responsible for creating) requires it. Thus, if Bush and his allies seek power *over* the terrorists, as opposed to power for its own sake, this action is justified because it is necessary. Military might, economic strength, and secret operations are tools that must be used to undermine the fundamentalists and their radical agenda. As Bush’s new version of history began to take shape in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy, it became increasingly clear that the context for fighting terror “where it grows” could be defined as pretty much anywhere at pretty much anytime. Thus, destroying the ideological threat developed into a project that targeted a wide array of nations,

organizations, communities, and individuals. The success of this project, according to the Bush administration, necessarily depended on the American people's willingness to nurture a kind of abstract faith in the *goodness* of their government—accepting a lack of public information, transparent investigation, and engaged dialogue as essential to our eventual triumph over the forces that threaten us.

As Michael Welch notes:

Almost paradoxically, the issue of secrecy in the war on terror has been open to public discussion. Vice President Cheney spoke straightforwardly about the role of secrecy in the war on terror in an interview with “Meet the Press” five days after 9/11, saying that the government would have to “work through, sort of, the dark side.” Cheney continued: “A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion.” (169)

By clinging to secrecy as the official *modus operandi* in the war on terror, the Bush administration attempted to shield the public from exposure to tangible facts about the full extent of US-sanctioned counterterrorism policies (enacted both domestically and abroad) because such evidence could call emotional and instinctual support for our government into question. According to Welch, “the myth of war is sustained by the popular view characterizing some forms of violence—including serious human rights violations—as noble, serving to defend the eternal good” (165). And this mythology came to dominate public discourse to the extent that citizens remained unaware of material circumstances and historical context. Following John Dean’s argument in *Worse than Watergate*, the Bush administration’s “reliance on secrecy is truly evidence of their weakness as leaders,” since a transparent investigation of post-9/11 policy would reveal

uncanny similarities between the terrorists' approach to "re-making the world" and Bush's own tactics in the war on terror (179). Dean cites an instance where Bush claimed: "If this were a dictatorship, it'd be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as I'm the dictator" (197). In the context of post-9/11 America, Bush succeeded to a large extent in expanding the reach of his own executive power (much like a dictator). Tightening the flow of information and replacing citizens' ability to conduct rational investigations of the facts with a national mythology of terror, Bush garnered seemingly unquestioned faith in his policies (among a wide swath of the US population) by framing them in purely ideological terms.

Dean compares Bush and Cheney to the Nixon administration:

Never before have we had a pair of rulers—it is difficult to call them leaders—like Bush and Cheney, men whose obsession with control of information, and spin, is so strong that they are willing to subvert the democratic process for their own short-term personal political gain. Not since Nixon left the White House have we had such greed over presidential power, and never before have we had such political paranoia. (21)

Dean quotes Dick Cheney advising White House associates: "Principle is okay up to a certain point, but principle doesn't do any good if you lose" (45). This implies that bolstering the *appearance* of acting on principle is far more important than actually doing it. Furthermore, as Dean argues, "international law is only a problem if you respect it and are not the sole superpower so strong that you can act with impunity" (137). Labeling himself as a benevolent leader Bush seemed determined to justify unilateral military action abroad and unconstitutional infringements on civil liberties in the US by appealing

to his own authority. Since testing this label with rational scrutiny was condemned as unpatriotic or even evil, asking the US government to act based on legal or ethical principle rather than the abstract terms of Bush's mythology became defined as an attempt to undermine the stability, prosperity, and indeed the very existence of the United States. In the dominant public narrative, the context of the war on terror—with its *life or death* stakes—required secrecy on the part of the government and allegiance from the citizens. Even though in Bush's September 20 address he acknowledges that "Americans have many questions," he answers them only to the extent that so-called national security precautions will allow—sacrificing transparency and dialogue for the greater goal of winning the war on terror. According to Dean, Bush "adopted a pure Nixonian end-justifies-the-means mentality. But Nixon was trying to end a war, not start one" (136).

Bush's story, which truly took shape (publicly) on September 20, distinctly divides *us* and *them* by labeling the terrorists in a particular way and using these descriptions to negatively define America and its allies. Bush, who speaks on behalf of the nation, characterizes his own goals in opposition to those of the terrorists: "remaking the world—and imposing...radical beliefs on people everywhere." Attempting to follow the logic of Bush's rhetoric, the enemy shifted reality and their intention to "remake the world" defines them as evil. There is an ethical ambiguity here, though, because Bush attempted to justify his decision to play by the rules the terrorists established—defining his motivation in different terms than that of the enemy. The terrorists' goal is destroying freedom. This is "radical." Bush's goal is defending freedom, which by implication is not radical. Spreading democracy came to symbolize a proactive, ethically defensible



response to terrorism (a form of counterinsurgency perhaps) and thus an ideologically justifiable action.

Bush ends his September 20 address by expressing solidarity with his audience: “I thank my fellow Americans for what you have already done and for what you will do.” As “we face new and sudden national challenges,” Americans must “come together” to stop terror, “strengthen America’s economy,” and “rebuild New York City.” He connects the eerily vague plans to “give law enforcement the additional tools it needs to track down terror here at home” and to “strengthen our intelligence capabilities to know the plans of terrorists before they act” with the extremely tangible goals of bolstering the economy and rebuilding a broken city. Since pretty much everyone can comprehend the pressing need to achieve these tangible goals, it was rhetorically expedient for Bush to connect them with the ideological underpinnings of the forthcoming Patriot Act (which many Americans might, in a different climate, have perceived as a radical departure from the political/ethical standards at the heart of our democracy). The same logic that justified helping those in need and seeking national prosperity came to justify a radical infringement on civil liberties, including individual privacy and equitable treatment under the law—as Bush framed the war on terror, in all its various components, as what Americans *must* do.

Waxing transcendent, Bush explains the role we have to play in determining the future of America and the future of the world:

After all that has just passed—all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them—it is natural to wonder if America’s future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead, and

dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world.

Acting like a messenger, who picks up the word on the street and shares it on national television, Bush claims, “Some speak of an age of terror.” In actuality, Bush himself, as the rhetorical agent, brought this concept into public discourse and then acted as if it preceded his recognition of it. According to his story, America immediately became fearful in the wake of 9/11; Bush noticed this fear; and here he tries to comfort us with an ideological pep talk. However, it seems that Bush may be guilty of creating a climate of fear in the US while simultaneously blaming the fear mongering on the enemy, just as he attributes the “age of terror” construct to a faceless “some.” By encouraging Americans to stand strong in the face of great danger, Bush not only instilled a sense of fear but also described exactly how to be strong in response to the vulnerability we had come to recognize as a central component of reality. In this way, Bush “define[d] our times.” He spoke, however, as if the American people themselves had the power to shape the world in which we live. Thus, even though the terms had been set (*with us or against us*), Bush’s story hinged on the claim that American citizens (and those who stand united with us) must take responsibility for creating the future. This responsibility revolved around a single choice: do we stand with Bush or with the terrorists?

In addressing the question, “What is expected of us?” Bush defines the actions that patriotic Americans should undertake in response to 9/11: “I ask you to live your lives, and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat.” Beginning with a request for

emotional solidarity, which represents our strength as a nation, Bush asks people to attend to business as usual—acting as if everything is normal, but quietly preparing for the worst. Next, Bush asks citizens to “uphold the values of America, and remember why so many have come here,” implying (ironically) that we should not compromise others’ freedom in order to protect our own. He says, “We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith.”

However, since Bush’s strategy in the war on terror came to involve identifying large groups of people as potential threats, the call to “live by our principles” seems logically absurd. On an emotional or psychological level, though, Bush tried to establish what is *true* based on the authority of his words rather than an evaluation of his actions. In order to take any of his advice seriously, Bush’s audience must assume that he is a good, rational, sane person who is capable of leading our nation in a time of crisis. On a tangible level, standing united with Bush meant granting him the power to speak authoritatively not only on matters of politics but on virtually every aspect of post-9/11 American life. Furthermore, once he established this authority, attempting to undermine the assumption that Bush and his cohorts were acting rationally, ethically, and sanely came to constitute something akin to rhetorical terrorism based on the newly established rules of discourse.

Bush’s stance is clear: “I will not forget this wound to our country or those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people.” The rhetorical manipulation of the common phrase, *waging war*, is blatant here—as Bush defined the new war (unlike any

other in history) as the ultimate “struggle for freedom and security.” According to Bush, “The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.” In Bush’s story, God presides over a binary universe—supporting freedom and justice, condemning fear and cruelty. Since the defenders of freedom stand united with God, their actions do not incite fear or enact cruelty. For Bush, ethics became a function of definition rather than interpretation. Framing himself and his supporters as *good*, he defined US-sanctioned violence as necessary for ensuring our survival and the perpetuation of our (superior) way of life. Depicting the enemy as evil, Bush defined their violence as cruel. He highlights this distinction in his word choice: “Fellow citizens, we’ll meet violence with patient justice—assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America.” With God on our side, violence becomes “patient justice.”

Since the rhetorical climate of post-9/11 America was characterized by a widespread sense of fear and vulnerability, Bush was able to make an explicit connection between citizens’ common desire for security and his official prescription for achieving this end: fully committing to the war on terror. Bush capitalized on Americans’ need to express solidarity with one another (as well as with the specific victims of the 9/11 attacks, their friends, and their families) during a time of national crisis. Labeling a common enemy and prescribing vengeance (a manifestation of the anger we justifiably harbor) as the only natural solution to a newly acknowledged threat, Bush sold his war on terror as a symbol of American strength. To many citizens, Bush’s adherence to a

religious vision made this war seem righteous; his accentuation of the *life or death* stakes in a world characterized by terror made this war seem necessary. Americans must have either truly wanted to trust Bush as the commander in chief or been afraid to voice their mistrust, since expressing a lack of solidarity may have been viewed as contributing to further instability and thus the continuation of national trauma and collective suffering.

### CHAPTER THREE: TARGETING ARABS AND MUSLIMS IN THE WAR ON TERROR

In the preceding chapters, I have discussed the way in which Bush created a post-9/11 story in the days immediately following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Bush established rhetorical, moral, and biological justification for defining the events of September 11 in a particular way and prescribing a certain type of response. I have discussed the discourse of common opposition to an enemy *other* and how Bush's language may be characterized primarily as divisive. I have addressed concerns over Bush's adherence to fundamentalist religious ideology and the pervasiveness of dogmatic religious rhetoric in his official explanations of the 9/11 tragedy as well as its implications for the world in which we live. Additionally, I have called attention to Bush's claims about history and its role (or lack thereof) in guiding an appropriate understanding of what 9/11 means; Bush created an extremely limited and overtly fundamentalist version of history and simultaneously granted himself power to control the evolution of history as it progressed from the turning point of 9/11. Bush, acting as the official intermediary between God and the American people, justified his re-interpretation or re-creation of history in specifically religious terms (as faith-based truth), which allowed him to discredit rational objections by definition. Furthermore, by framing the enemy as an inherently evil force and stoking fear of future attacks, Bush rallied support for impending violence in a way that replaced the need for evidence with the need for security.

The social, political, and rhetorical impact of Bush's 9/11 story—both domestically and internationally—has been far reaching, especially in terms of Bush's definition of the *other* in a way that justified violence against innocent people and violence against democratic principles themselves (the very principles Bush claimed to defend, albeit in extremely abstract language). Not only did racial, ethnic, and religious profiling dominate the Bush administration's post-9/11 national security strategy, but documented evidence of hate crimes committed by civilians against Muslims, Middle Easterners, and South Asians immediately following September 11 demonstrates a dramatic shift in racial consciousness more broadly. It seems that public discourse and official government policy contributed to a significant increase in racially motivated violence both in the US and abroad. I must ask: How did Bush's authoritarian, fundamentalist, and overtly divisive rhetoric help establish a climate conducive to racialization? And how does Bush's political discourse of national crisis correspond with tangible human suffering?

In John Dean's *Conservatives Without Conscience*, he characterizes contemporary conservatism in terms of an ideological adherence to authoritarian values. Looking at Bush and Cheney, who self-identify as conservatives, Dean argues "that how they think, their policies, and their style of governing are based to an alarming extent on their own authoritarian personalities" (xxxix). According to Dean, these personalities "tolerate no dissent, use dissembling as their standard modus operandi, and have pushed their governing authority beyond the law and the Constitution" (xxxix). His investigation of the resurgence of authoritarianism and its psychological underpinnings is based primarily on the work of Bob Altemeyer:

To study authoritarians Altemeyer and other researchers have used carefully crafted and tested questionnaires, usually called “scales,” in which respondents are asked to agree or disagree with a statement such as “Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us,” or, “A ‘woman’s place’ should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in the past.” As a professor of psychology Altemeyer has tested (usually anonymously) tens of thousands of first-year students and their parents, along with others, including some fifteen hundred American state legislators, over the course of some three decades. There is no database on authoritarians that even comes close in its scope, and, more importantly, these studies offer empirical data rather than partisan speculation.

(48)

Dean’s discussion of “the growing presence of conservative authoritarianism” in American politics helps shed light on the popular appeal of Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric (xiv). Especially in the context of a national crisis, Bush and many of his supporters exemplified the “right-wing authoritarian aggression” that Dean identifies as a central danger in the current mentality of many conservatives (54). Inasmuch as authoritarianism and democracy represent opposing forces both politically and rhetorically, the Bush administration’s imposition of unprecedented executive power—which trumped the potential for other voices to balance it out—may be viewed as a triumph for authoritarianism as a dominant ideology. The connection between aggressive behavior and the assumption that truth and morality are transmitted in a hierarchal fashion through



existing systems of power is essential to this discussion. In opposition to the *old school* conservatism of Barry Goldwater—who claimed, “the conservative’s first concern will always be: *Are we maximizing freedom?*”—the Bush administration’s approach demanded submission and acquiescence before all else, which effectively served to minimize freedom (quoted in Dean 18). According to Dean, the contemporary conservative movement is driven by right-wing authoritarians, who generally embody the following characteristics:

- They travel in tight circles of like-minded people.
- Their thinking is more likely based on what authorities have told them rather than on their own critical judgment, which results in their belief being filled with inconsistencies.
- They harbor numerous double standards and hypocrisies.
- They are hostile toward so many minorities they seem to be equal-opportunity bigots, yet they are generally unaware of their prejudices.
- They see the world as a dangerous place, with society teetering on the brink of self-destruction from evil and violence, and when their fear conflates with their self-righteousness, they appoint themselves guardians of public morality, or God’s Designated Hitters.
- They think of themselves as far more moral and upstanding than others—a self-deception aided by their religiosity (many are “born again”) and their ability to “evaporate guilt” (such as by going to confession). (55)

Bush’s *with us or against us* approach to rhetorically framing the post-9/11 world not only fueled an insider/outsider mentality among American citizens but also defined

patriotism as the submission to centralized authority. By embodying the primary characteristics of an authoritarian conservative and creating a rhetorical climate in which this temperament was depicted as natural (or at least necessary), Bush attempted to bolster popular support for his post-9/11 story. Discussing the way this type of discourse holds together ideologically is one way of beginning to address its various consequences when embraced wholeheartedly by the president of the United States in a time of national crisis.

According to Dean, “most conservatives...oppose equality, and there is ultimately no clearer underlying distinction between conservatives and liberals than their view on this issue” (13-14). Identifying people in positions of power as responsible for transferring knowledge to everyone else leads to an understanding of truth that is inherently tied to the hierarchal structure of human society. From an authoritarian point of view, attaining greater power implies either heightened access to truth (inasmuch as truth resides with God as a transcendent phenomenon) or increased ability to re-name the truth in a politically expedient way. Thus, the authoritarian becomes like God, or perhaps replaces God, when he harnesses the power to create discourse that his authoritarian followers will necessarily embrace as *the* story, rather than *a* story. A political environment characterized by expanding executive power (whether we call the leader a king, a fascist, or a president) is necessarily built on the premise of inequality. However, when the president of the United States not only establishes his ability to wield increasing degrees of centralized power but also claims to defend freedom and democracy by doing so, he must somehow reinterpret Jefferson’s words in the Declaration of Independence: “All men are created equal.” Perhaps, as Dean suggests, authoritarians maintain (in

ideology, if not practice) that individuals have “equality under the law” (13). The law itself, though, is subject to change based on the interests or personal beliefs of the people in the most powerful positions in society. From this point of view, it seems that for authoritarians the word *freedom* must mean either freedom to follow the rules created by the person in power or freedom to punish those who do not follow those rules. In this way, the notion of equality is turned completely on its head. In post-9/11 America, the official story labeled those standing united with us as *equally* good and those standing against us as *equally* evil, but this seems like a disturbingly Orwellian departure from what Jefferson and the other founders of our nation had in mind.

Since Bush’s national security strategy involved “defending freedom” ideologically by reducing individual freedom on a practical level, the internal contradictions that dominated official discourse and policy in post-9/11 America seem obvious. Dean notes that contemporary conservatives (even or especially conservative intellectuals) seem more than willing to rationalize their “illogical, contradictory, and hypocritical thinking” if and when they become aware of it (27). As evidence, Dean cites an article by Jonah Goldberg in the *National Review*: “The beauty of the conservative movement is that we all understand and accept the permanence of contradiction” (quoted in Dean 28). Just as the Christian fundamentalist claims to follow the teachings of Jesus while simultaneously embracing violence as a solution to perceived problems, Bush’s authoritarian mentality justifies the assumption of inherent inequality by appealing to the need to defend freedom at all costs. In post-9/11 America, Bush’s public discourse supplants the need for rational appeal to ethical principles with dogmatic proclamations and judgments. This rhetorical environment, in which truth becomes a function of power

rather than rational inquiry, lends itself to “rash and radical” decision-making—a quality that Bush attributes to the enemy in describing their evil opposition to democratic principles (Dean 36). His discourse focused on defining *radicals* rather than defining radical action more objectively; thus, Bush attempted to free himself and his supporters from the same types of criticism he leveled against the terrorists.

Michael Welch notes the significance of political rhetoric that employs arguments based on a distinction between good and evil rather than a distinction between right and wrong (4). He argues that “grounding the war on terror within a mystical framework” of good versus evil set the stage for significant “collateral damage,” as the rhetoric of the war on terror justified widespread violence (especially against Arabs and Muslims) as well as institutional abuse of power (4). On a rhetorical level, the accusation of evil functions to label an individual or a group with inherent characteristics—as if evil is a super-human force capable of overtaking the very humanity of those who succumb to its power. By contrast, speaking about right and wrong implies some sort of ethical framework for evaluating particular *actions*. Since a sound argument about what someone *has done* takes a necessarily different form than an argument about what someone *is* (inherently or by definition), it’s interesting to note Bush’s equation of the 9/11 attacks—a series of events which transpired in the material world—with metaphysical claims about forces of evil and “an age of terror.” Rather than proposing an investigation into the complexities of political and military history, which might shed light on the context, if not the causes of terrorism, Bush’s rhetoric aimed at characterizing the terrorists themselves. The ethical implications of this discursive choice are far reaching. The claim, *we are good and they are evil*, looks significantly different than the claim, *their action*

*was wrong, but our action is right.* Focusing on who people are by definition makes any consideration of what they have done or why they might have done it only secondarily important, if at all. Furthermore, since Bush defines those who “stand with the terrorists” in extremely broad terms, anyone who appeared un-American by failing to conform to the image or ideology of his authoritarian version of national identity may be labeled *evil* based on a malleable set of criteria.

As Laura Rediehs argues, rhetorically framing the problem of evil in terms of agents (the *individual* theory) rather than actions (the *structural* theory) dangerously justifies future violence as a necessary response to violence done in the past (Collins 65-6). If we choose to speak about good and evil as qualities embodied (perhaps naturally or inherently) by individuals or groups of people, our discourse will necessarily favor a call to eliminate evildoers. When Bush claims that the war on terror “will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated,” he implies that the eradication of certain people and the disruption of their communities can ultimately solve the problem of evil (9/20/01). Bush explains how “these terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life,” as a way of reinforcing his definition of the enemy as radical (9/20/01). However, since Bush proposed that the defenders of freedom employ the exact same tactics in responding to the tragedy of 9/11—killing to end terrorists’ lives and to disrupt terrorists’ way of life—he did not argue that certain actions (which could be evaluated based on objective criteria, regardless of the agent) are evil due to ethical or legal principles. Rather, by asserting that the enemy’s tactical use of violence called for a qualitatively similar but quantitatively superior response, he rhetorically located the problem of evil within particular people. Based on this logic, if

the forces of evil pick a fight with us, the righteous annihilation of those who pose a practical or ideological threat to our citizens, institutions, and values (which are perceived to be inherently superior to others) can be labeled as *good*. It should be clear, though, that choosing to identify the problem of evil from a different perspective, as a “structural” phenomenon, might imply that it is possible to transform the impulse toward violence and thus promote peace by *acting* in a peaceful way. According to Bush’s post-9/11 story, however, violence is wrong when evil people commit it, but violence is right when good people commit it. Likewise, when Bush labeled the United States an inherently peaceful nation, he didn’t mean that we attempt to solve our problems in a peaceful way but rather that our violent actions are legitimized by our religious faith as well as our vastly superior military capabilities.

Dean’s discussion of right wing authoritarians, who “harbor numerous double standards and hypocrisies” as well as systems of “belief [that are] filled with inconsistencies,” sheds light on Bush’s definition of evil as a phenomenon arising from the inherent constitution of particular agents (55). Since Rediehs notes that a more structural account of evil would require us “to go through the painful work of examining our own consciences and dealing with guilt, sorrow, or remorse,” as well as “engage in the difficult process of trying to understand and communicate with people we hate or fear,” the psychological appeal of a divisive *us vs. them* rhetoric should become clear (Collins 67). Following Rediehs’s analysis, “it is far easier for all of us to resist change and simply try to destroy those we don’t like. In fact, this attitude is the very origin of violence: violence is the impulse to close out, push out, or destroy those whom we regard as a threat” (67). Thus, Bush’s characterization of our nation as strong and determined,

compared to the weak and cowardly terrorists, seems extremely hypocritical inasmuch as he invoked ethical principles over and above military might in doing so. Patriotic Americans and those standing united with them in the war on terror engage in righteous violence, since the ultimate purpose was framed as the eradication of evil. The terrorists' purpose, however, was identified as the eradication of all that is good or all that is sacred (e.g., "freedom itself is under attack"). If, as Rediehs claims, "what differentiates the good people...from the evil ones is a difference of feelings and attitudes," killing, torturing, imprisoning, interrogating, or spying on innocent people can be "justified if the people responsible for those actions have the right *feelings*" while they are committing them (72). On a psychological level, Bush's post-9/11 discourse created a dangerous superiority complex or sense of natural entitlement among those who see themselves siding with the forces of *good*.

Based on Bush's account, committing acts of violence against innocent people does not necessarily constitute evil, nor does wielding anger and vengeance as an impetus for action. Rather, it can be evil to oppose violence when its stated purpose is framed as protecting *good* people from *evil* people. Bush assures the public that the war on terror will succeed based on the unquestioned integrity of its purpose: "This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom" (9/20/01). Ironically, Bush claims that by engaging in righteous violence, "our nation—this generation—will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail" (9/20/01). Whereas the terrorists had purportedly failed to achieve their evil goals, Bush affirmed that he and his supporters would inevitably succeed in achieving

their righteous ones—not because the tactics used in the war on terror are qualitatively different from the terrorists’ tactics, but because one group of people (us) is inherently superior to another group of people (them). According to Bush, “freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them” (9/20/01). Thus, he argues that committing our “full resources” to the war on terror is justified by definition, since we are God’s chosen people. With God’s blessing, patriotic Americans can be “assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come” (9/20/01). Bush’s invocation of the divine implies that God sanctions the use of violence *by certain people in certain situations* and that God guarantees victory when righteous warriors direct violence toward infidels. Just as Muslims who are interested in committing violence can find justification based on particular interpretations of the Koran, Bush’s spin on Christianity seems to do the same kind of thing: “The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness” (Proverbs 11:5).

Welch argues, “The criminology of the other thrives in the war on terror because it builds on stereotyping Arab and Muslim men as possible terrorists, reminiscent of derogatory ethnic and religious images dating back to the Crusades” (43). When Bush, whether intentionally or not, used the Crusade metaphor to describe the necessary severity of our response to the 9/11 attacks, he contributed to the perpetuation of religious and cultural warfare—which has been propped up by a historically ingrained set of Western stereotypes used to commonly identify Middle Easterners and Muslims as an enemy *other*. Palestinian-American author, Edward Said, argues in his 1978 work *Orientalism* that the popular and institutional *othering* of “the Oriental” in Western



discourse has its roots in centuries of politically charged interactions between Europeans and Arabs. Connecting the rhetorical impact of anti-Semitism with what he describes as Orientalism, Said claims: “The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, and dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny” (27). He describes his own observations and experiences of anti-Arab discrimination by analyzing “a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire” (202-3). If we look at the formation of cultural reality as a function of language, Nietzsche’s account of truth may be instructive:

A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins. (1174)

Following this line of thinking, Said argues “that so far as it existed in the West’s awareness, the Orient was a word which later accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations...[which] did not necessarily refer to the real Orient but to the field surrounding the word” (203). Historical tensions between Europeans and Arabs may very well have contributed to the intentional identification of Middle Easterners as barbaric, backwards, weak, and intellectually inferior by European Crusaders and

colonizers. However, after generations of perpetuating these stereotypes (with varying degrees of meta-cognition about their rhetorical impact), most Westerners have lost sight of the political or ideological context in which they were originally formed. Thus, according to Said, “this information seemed to be morally neutral and objectively valid; it seemed to have an epistemological status equal to that of historical chronology or geographical location” (205). This analysis helps frame the widespread acceptance, among a significant proportion of the American public, of discriminatory post-9-11 policies. Deeply ingrained cultural stereotypes—*illusions which we have forgotten are illusions*—allowed potentially well-meaning people to explain the unequal and often violent treatment of Middle Easterners and Muslims as not only practically necessary but also ethically legitimate.

Nadine Naber discusses racialization as the rule rather than the exception in US politics. According to the evidence she cites, “the assumption that particular immigrant cultures are inherently backwards and inferior to ‘American’ culture, in justifying immigrant exclusion and racialization,” has played a role in crisis politics throughout American history (*Rules* 240-1). Naber notes that post-9/11 discourse, by naturalizing nationalistic, ethnic, and pseudo-moral binaries, simultaneously “legitimated war ‘over there’ and racism against persons perceived to be Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim in the Diaspora, ‘over here’” (*Rules* 244). This type of racialized profiling in the domestic sphere looks similar to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and also to the Cold War politics of McCarthy. A climate of national crisis seems to correlate with citizens’ acceptance of fear mongering rhetoric, which identifies a common enemy as the source of their problems.

Several researchers, including Naber and Salaita, have discussed the historical relationship between Middle Eastern immigrants and the “mainstream” American public—arguing that post-9/11 scapegoating of Arabs and Muslims hinges on well-seasoned stereotypes. In his article, “Beyond Orientalism and Islamophobia,” Salaita discusses how “Arab Americans generally have been homogenized in various American discourses as an unstable Southern/Third World (i.e., foreign) presence” (245). Similarly, Naber highlights the way in which Arab Americans have been “represented as a monolith in popular North American media images,” despite the diversity and complexity of the individuals and communities identified with all-encompassing terminology (*Ambiguous* 37). As Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric encouraged a form of hyper-nationalism, which emerged from a divisive, dualistic vision of the world, labeling the enemy in “homogenized” or “monolithic” ways contributed to the justification for racial/ethnic profiling. However, Salaita claims, “It would be foolish to conceptualize anti-Arab racism as a byproduct of 9/11,” arguing that “a more responsible conceptualization will locate anti-Arab racism within a heterogeneous and multitemporal complex of historical factors” (251). Stockton’s analysis of historical American media portrayals of Arabs supports this claim, since in 1994 he noted that “an exceptional proportion of all hostile or derogatory images targeted at Arabs are derived from or are parallel to classical images of Blacks and Jews, modified to fit contemporary circumstances” (McCarus 121). In a publication from the same year, Abraham claims, “that anti-Arab racism in contemporary society is not only a fringe phenomenon, but extends to mainstream society as well” (McCarus 160). Thus, traditional or familiar forms of racial profiling undergird the post-9/11 attitude toward Arabs and Muslims in the United States. The anger Bush

successfully evoked in the American public following the tragic events of September 11 helped transform Middle Eastern immigrants into “discursive tropes,” with an unfortunately simplistic and familiar meaning attached—making them targets for authoritarian aggression. (Salaita 251)

Just as Bush’s story cast true American citizens as a homogenous group (e.g., “United We Stand”), a similarly simplistic depiction of the enemy emerged as well. In the words of Mino Moallem, “Islamic fundamentalism has become a generic signifier used relentlessly to single out the Muslim other in its irrational, morally inferior and barbaric masculinity and its passive, victimized, and submissive femininity” (8). Since “Islam represents a homogenous doctrine that is essentialized as a force that limits the mental capacities of its adherents,” the nationalistic discourse of US superiority can be internally justified by a set of implicit and explicit claims about the enemy’s *natural* inferiority (Moallem 41). Inasmuch as the Middle Eastern Muslim enemy is depicted as intellectually weak in addition to morally backwards, the terrorists who threaten the United States may not be capable of comprehending exactly how evil their actions and beliefs actually are. Thus, according to Bush’s story, the enemy can never be trusted as an authoritative evaluator of his own reality; the forces of righteousness (with their natural intellectual/moral superiority) are the only ones capable of accurately judging the severity of the current situation.<sup>12</sup> If those standing united with Bush in the post-9/11 world accepted the claim that certain types of people are predisposed toward evil, then so-called

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<sup>12</sup> During the Cold War, the intellectual capacity of those who fell under the political influence (spell) of communism was similarly called into question. Since the enemy was framed as incapable of comprehending his own susceptibility to evil influences, he could not be trusted to accurately answer the fundamental question: “Are you or are you not a communist?”

national security measures that specifically targeted those perceived to have an affinity for terrorism based on racial, ethnic, or religious criteria might have appeared to be legitimate. Cainkar's research has demonstrated that "of thirty-seven known U.S. government security initiatives implemented since the September 11 attacks, twenty-five either explicitly or implicitly targeted Arabs and Muslims in the United States" (255). These measures included widespread roundups and interrogations of US citizens and foreign nationals, prolonged and often covert incarcerations, as well as violations of privacy and property rights. The implications of replacing a discourse based on legality (right vs. wrong action) with a discourse based on irrational moral dogmatism (good vs. evil agents) should be obvious. The rules of engagement in this type of rhetorical climate empowered the authoritarian leaders and their loyal followers to not only "legally" commit violence against the perceived enemy but also strong-arm potential dissenters with the threat of being identified as one of "them."

According to Salaita, "the mythos of national pride generated by American politicians and marketed as a peculiarly violent patriotism would lose its rhetorical power without the manufacturing of a fear of the irrationally hostile Arab;" this implies that Bush's way of describing national unity provided "legitimization" or "moral validation" for post-9/11 racial profiling (253). Bush's *with us or against us* rhetoric "imbues American-ness with assumed criteria of whiteness and Christianity" while characterizing the Arab other as inherently dangerous because of "congenital barbarity [which] compels him to irrational violence" (259). Defining American culture as inherently civilized and peaceful, Bush describes the war on terror as "a struggle against barbarians" and claims the United States "needs to win a war against barbaric behavior" (quoted by Llorente in

Collins 40). This type of language begs the question of whether US sanctioned violence against Arabs and Muslims—both domestically and internationally—represents an ethically sound interpretation of democratic principles (not to mention Christian principles). If Bush’s rhetoric truly “rendered both imperialism and Messianism synonymous with American identity,” then participating in anti-Arab racism may have been framed as *the right thing to do* in a post-9/11 world (Salaita 265). Along the same lines, Abood argues that “the political commodification of September 11 perhaps best represents the privileging of white-Western suffering over and above everyone else’s political concerns” (576). The attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were defined in public discourse as barbaric and thus unjustified based on a political/ethical system characterized as inherently civilized, but the ensuing US sponsored attacks on Arabs and Muslims—the vast majority of whom were innocent civilians—were justified (at least in part) by depicting the enemy as non-white and non-Christian. It is for this reason that Abood associates post-9/11 politics with “an explicitly white supremacist agenda” and, in her resistance to Bush’s version of patriotism, “refuse[s] to be co-opted into this act of white solidarity at the expense of all other political concerns and events” (576-7). Even though many Arabs living in the West, like Abood, may have shared this sentiment, fear of reprisal for calling attention to themselves more explicitly as *other* kept many who were suffering the consequences of racial/religious oppression from speaking out against the manifestation of Bush’s form of patriotism. Furthermore, those whose ethnicity, religious beliefs, or political leanings allowed them (even by default) to be characterized as one of *us* may have been afraid to voice ethical concerns and thus

compromise their solidarity with the group—as the public discourse melded personal security and national unity into two sides of the same coin.

Citing several sociological studies conducted in post-9/11 America, Welch acknowledges “that Americans have become concerned, anxious, and fearful of another terrorist strike” and argues that a widespread transformation in Americans’ shared emotional state allowed them to be manipulated by fear mongering rhetoric in public discourse (20). If, as Colleen Kelley claims, presidential rhetoric “creates expectations in the electorate,” it seems clear that the Bush administration’s focus on the inevitability of future violence contributed to the formation of commonly held assumptions among US citizens (56). The terrorists have started an ideological religious war; they seek to incite fear and turn our world into a chaotic place; they will continue to commit unjustified violent acts until we stop them by whatever means necessary; and all of this can be explained by the fact that they are evil and we are good. These kinds of assumptions seem to rest at the heart of post-9/11 anxiety. “Contributing to that anxiety,” Welch claims, “is the realization—consciously or subconsciously—that public safety is subject to roulette dynamics” (27). That is, even an extremely strong country with an extremely powerful president is perpetually vulnerable to evil attacks. The color coded terror alert system, implemented in post-9/11 America to warn citizens of the likelihood of being targeted by terrorists on any given day, is an overt manifestation of Bush administration fear mongering. Especially since our political leaders explained the shifting levels of potential threat (yellow, orange, etc.) in vague, ominous language, often citing evidence

that was either nonexistent or blatantly misconstrued,<sup>13</sup> the purpose of instituting such a warning system seems questionable at best. Furthermore, collective anxiety about future attacks is bolstered rather than quelled by aggressive, militaristic discourse. As Welch notes, “tough-talk and ‘kicking ass’...are symptoms of social anxiety, leading to an array of scapegoating activities manifested in blatant human rights violations, such as abuse and torture scandals” (28). These activities were undertaken by the US government as well as US citizens in ways that were both highly organized (conscious) and psychologically intuitive (subconscious). The racialization of Middle Eastern Muslims functioned simultaneously on the level of political strategy (an overt manifestation) and on the level of historically engrained stereotypes (a more subtle manifestation), which allowed the Bush administration’s response to 9/11 to be framed as more than merely tactical: it was *natural* as well.

The perceived connection, both racially and religiously, between Al Qaeda and Middle Eastern Muslims generally not only contributed to the justification for war abroad but also to widespread discrimination in the United States. The policy that probably had the most direct impact on Arabs and Muslims living in the US was the so-called special registration program, which began in December 2002:

The directive, intended to produce vital information about terrorist activity, was aimed at all non-immigrant male visitors who are over the age of 16 and entered the United States before September 30, 2002. Specifically, special registration applied to those males from countries that, according to the U.S. government, have links to terrorism, including 12 North African and Middle Eastern countries

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<sup>13</sup> See Dan Smith’s article, “Code Orange, Cry Wolf,” published by the Friends Committee on National Legislation.



plus North Korea, affecting more than 82,000 students, tourists, businessmen, and relatives. Those who attended special registration were required to complete a personal information form, then be fingerprinted, photographed, and interviewed by the FBI. Justice Department spokesman Jorge Martinez believes that this information is necessary intelligence for the war against terrorism. “These people are considered high risk,” he said. (Welch 83)

The logic behind this type of “security” measure is preposterous if applied objectively to all situations and all groups of people. It would imply that following the 1995 terrorist attack in Oklahoma City, which was at first assumed to be the work of a “foreigner,” all Caucasian males should have been rounded up and interrogated about their knowledge of Timothy McVeigh and people like him. Assigning “high risk” status based on ethnicity and religious background is not only incompatible with democratic principles but ultimately proves counterproductive in any legitimate criminal investigation.

Whereas the registration of more than 82,000 foreign nationals failed to uncover any major links to terrorism, the Justice Department moved forward with plans to deport as many as 13,000 Arab and Muslim men whose legal immigration status had expired. Many of the men had hoped for leniency since they had cooperated fully with the program. Detentions coupled with deportations have sent shock waves through immigrant communities across the nation, producing heightened fear. Many Middle Eastern men and their families—many of whom are U.S. citizens—fled the country, particularly to Canada where they intend to apply for political asylum. (Welch 85)

Even if the Bush administration could attempt to justify the special registration program as part of the solution to our immigration problem, the highly selective targeting of Middle Easterners and North Africans (who make up less than one percent of immigrants in the United States) points to an institutionalized fear of Arabs and Muslims generally. If the goal is to deport illegal immigrants, we could probably make significantly greater headway by focusing on Western Europeans and Canadians. If the goal is to fight terrorism, the special registration program was by all factual accounts a complete failure. So, even the argument that racial profiling is necessary as a means to an end holds no water in the absence of measured progress toward achieving the stated purpose. Furthermore, targeting specific ethnic or religious groups for interrogation, detention, and deportation undermines the integrity of our democracy and discourages cooperation among our potential allies. To the extent that violence and other forms of abuse came to characterize the application of Bush's discriminatory post-9/11 policies, citizens and governments around the world had even more reason to call our national character into question.

One of the most controversial incidents occurred in Los Angeles where more than 400 foreign nationals who appeared for registration were handcuffed and detained. Sohelia Jonoubi, a Los Angeles-based attorney representing several of the men, said that the detainees spent the next several days (and in some cases weeks) in custody. Many of them were stripped searched, verbally accosted, deprived of food and water, bedding and adequate clothing, and denied information as to why they were being detained. (Welch 84)

While tens of thousands of individuals were targeted based solely on their national origin, many others were arrested and detained based on purported evidence linking them to terrorism. Unlike lawful criminal investigations, however, in these cases the so-called “terror suspects” were denied information about the charges filed against them, denied access to legal consultation, and denied contact with friends and family. Identifying potential suspects as “threats to national security” and using that designation as grounds for denying them basic human rights led to widespread mistreatment of Arab and Muslim citizens as well as foreign nationals. By invoking the language of “national security,” government officials refused to acknowledge what evidence, if any, justified the incarceration and interrogation of a wide array of “material witnesses” and also attempted to prevent any significant transparency regarding how those called in for questioning were being treated. As time passes, however, more and more of their stories are beginning to emerge.

In one particular case, Osama Awadallah, a lawful permanent resident of the United States and a citizen of Jordan, was held as a material witness for 83 days during which he experienced a series of humiliating and physically abusive incidents. While at the San Bernardino County jail (California) corrections officers forced Awadallah to strip naked before a female officer. At one point, an officer twisted his arm, forcing him to bow, and pushed his face to the floor. After being transferred to a federal facility in Oklahoma City, a corrections officer hurled shoes at his head and face, cursed at him, and issued insulting remarks about his religion. Later, Awadallah was shackled in leg irons and flown to New York City and while in transit U.S. marshals threatened to get his brother and

cursed the Arabs. At the Metropolitan Correctional Center he was confined to a room so cold that his body turned blue. Physical abuse continued as one corrections officer caused his hand to bleed by pushing him into a door and a wall while he was handcuffed. The same guard also kicked his leg shackles and pulled him by the hair to force him to face an American flag. In another incident, marshals kicked him and threatened to kill him. After being detained for nearly three months, Awadallah was released on bond. (Welch 91)

In another case:

Abdallah Higazy, a 30-year old Egyptian graduate student with a valid visa...was detained as a material witness on December 17, 2001. A pilot's radio had allegedly been found in the New York hotel room where he had stayed on September 11. Higazy was placed in solitary confinement at the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in Manhattan. Eager to establish his innocence, Higazy volunteered to take a polygraph examination. He then was subjected to a grueling five-hour interrogation during which he was not given a break, food, or drink. Due to some unusual restrictions concocted by the Justice Department, Higazy's attorney was forced to remain outside the interrogation room, unable to advise his client. Higazy reported that from the beginning of the interrogation, the agents threatened him and his family. Yielding to intense emotional and physical fatigue as a result of the abusive interrogation, Higazy eventually said that the radio belonged to him. The Justice Department charged Higazy with lying to the FBI, but three days later an American pilot went to the hotel to claim the radio. Charges against Higazy were dropped and after one month in solitary

confinement, he was dumped from the MCC into the streets of New York City wearing a prison uniform and given three dollars for subway fare. Months later, Ronald Ferry, the former hotel security guard who found the pilot's radio, admitted that he had fabricated the story accusing Higazy. Ferry was sentenced to six months of weekends in prison for lying to the FBI. He admitted that he knew that the device was not in a safe belonging to Higazy. Ferry, a former police officer, said that he lied during a "time of patriotism, and I'm very, very sorry." (Welch 94-5)

The documentation of abuse at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and other prison facilities operating completely outside the jurisdiction of the US Constitution and international law paints an even grimmer picture—as ever increasing evidence of torture highlights the systematic violation of human rights in the wake of 9/11. The Geneva Conventions, the United Nations Convention Against Torture, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice all strictly forbid abusive treatment of prisoners, regardless of how these prisoners are labeled (e.g., "enemy combatants"); however, the Bush administration claimed it was justified in trumping national and international law with executive proclamations due to the heightened risk posed by potential terrorists (Welch 120). According to the executive director of Human Rights Watch, "torture is always prohibited under any circumstances. U.S. officials who take part in torture, authorize it, or even close their eyes to it, can be prosecuted by courts anywhere in the world" (Roth). Here in the United States, though, allegations of institutionally sanctioned torture have been consistently reframed as the result of "a few bad apples," operating near the bottom of the military chain of command (Welch 113). Thus, although prominent members of

the Bush administration unapologetically endorsed harsh interrogation tactics, those holding positions of power in either the government or the military were systematically shielded from any legal repercussions.

The prevailing assumption guiding post-9/11 national security policies in the United States was that those regarded as potential terrorists (i.e., a potential source of evil, in Bush's rhetoric) automatically sacrifice their human rights upon any suspicion of involvement in criminal activity. These policies legalized racial profiling by labeling a wide swath of the Arab and Muslim population as potentially suspicious based on their ethnic and religious background alone. The security, dignity, and livelihood of tens of thousands of innocent Middle Easterners were institutionally sacrificed in violation of democratic and ethical principles. Such widespread government-sanctioned discrimination has significantly strained the relationship between Arab/Muslim communities and "mainstream" (i.e., white) America. To make matters worse, US military involvement in the Middle East has led to an extraordinary number of civilian casualties—all framed as necessary collateral damage in the war on terror. As of June 7, 2010, conservative estimates suggest that in the wake of 9/11 at least 19,180 citizens of Afghanistan and at least 890,501 citizens of Iraq have been killed as a result of the US-led wars in their countries.<sup>14</sup> Thus, avenging the deaths of approximately 3,000 Americans has led to killing three hundred times as many Arabs and Muslims, and the numbers continue to grow. Furthermore, the US sanctions imposed on Iraq after the Gulf War (a war which Bush describes as "a decisive liberation of territory [with] a swift

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<sup>14</sup> See the article, "Casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq," published by Unknown News: <http://www.unknownnews.net/casualties.html#fn15>

conclusion”) led to nearly one million Iraqi civilian deaths between 1991 and 1998.<sup>15</sup> Far from representing an exhaustive statistical survey, these numbers are merely intended to point toward the hypocrisy inherent in Bush’s labeling the enemy as evil—a definition purportedly based on their inherent willingness to sacrifice human life for the sake of achieving *radical* goals. If killing innocent Arabs and Muslims was considered terrorism as well, the United States government, without competition, would represent the most destructive terrorist organization in the world. According to Chomsky, “everyone with close knowledge of the region [recognizes] that a massive assault on a Muslim population would be the answer to the prayers of bin Laden and his associates, and would lead the U.S. and its allies into a ‘diabolical trap,’ as the French foreign minister put it” (17). Killing a vast number of Muslim civilians, rather than decreasing the future risk of terrorism directed against the US, probably serves to accomplish precisely the opposite—as the majority of independent scholars not directly tied to the Bush administration have acknowledged.

Noting the hypocrisy and self-righteousness in Bush’s post-9/11 story, which systematically ignored massive human suffering in the areas of the world where our “enemies” live and hyperbolized a significantly smaller degree of suffering inflicted upon people in the US as an indication that the final showdown between the forces of good and the forces of evil had begun, Abood muses:

Do we imagine that ordinary Iraqis were deeply shocked by the collapse of two buildings in downtown New York, when in fact most of their buildings and landscapes have been collaterally damaged by masses of carpet bombs and

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<sup>15</sup> See Anup Shah’s article, “The Effect of Iraq Sanctions,” published by Global Issues: <http://www.globalissues.org/article/105/effects-of-sanctions>

depleted uranium dropped by none other than the United States and friends? Not to mention the willful starvation of the Iraqi civilian population through a genocidal economic blockade imposed by the so-called civilized West for the past eleven years? Do we imagine that Palestinian women remain deeply affected by this incident when they and their families have been subjected to state terrorism via bombs, U.S. F-16s, Apache helicopters, and an assortment of missiles, rockets, and bullets for decades? Could we imagine that this urban devastation deeply troubled Chechen women when their own city of Grozny has been razed and bombed into a smoking postmodern ruin without an ounce of sympathy from anybody? And what about the Somalis? The Bosnians of Sarajevo? The Sudanese? The South Lebanese? I could go on. (576)

Only through an extremely ethnocentric lens does the tragedy of 9/11 appear to be a historically unprecedented, radical act of evil. To expect not only sympathy from the Arab/Muslim world following the casualties we sustained on 9/11 but also passive acceptance of ongoing US-sanctioned violence directed at their own people, demonstrates an unfaltering spirit of self-righteous entitlement in official national discourse. The US government's response to 9/11 rhetorically established the value of certain lives as far greater than the value of others—both in terms of suspending the basic human rights of Arabs and Muslims living in the United States and in terms of labeling the extensive civilian casualties in the Middle East as mere “collateral damage,” necessary to the success of the war on terror.



Official statements and policies in post-9/11 America that targeted an ethnically and religiously defined *other* correlate strongly with an intensive escalation in hate crimes directed toward Arabs and Muslims. According to Poynting and Perry:

Hate-motivated vilification and violence can only flourish in an enabling environment. In Western nations...such an environment has historically been conditioned by the activity—and inactivity—of the state. State practices, policy, and rhetoric have often provided the formal framework within which hate crime—as an informal mechanism of control—emerges. Practices within the state, at an individual and institutional level, which stigmatize, demonize, or marginalize traditionally oppressed groups, legitimate the mistreatment of these same groups on the streets. (161)

Along these same lines, Chainkar discusses the far-reaching effects of discriminatory post-9/11 public policy: “Arabs and Muslims in the US have experienced, and continue to experience, forms of collective punishment as their looks and names mark them as targets” (254). Welch reports that “the FBI recorded a seventeen-fold increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes nationwide during 2001” (66-7). Those numbers are comparable to similar escalations in Canada as well as Australia (Poynting 156). According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, between September 11, 2001 and February 2002 there were at least 1,717 reports of “backlash discrimination” aimed at Muslims living in the United States (Welch 68). Naber notes, “In the eight months following 9/11, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) received 488 charges of backlash discrimination stemming from 9/11” (246). Additionally, in the week following September 11, over one hundred mosques were targeted in attacks (Welch 69). Without

even beginning to touch on the profiling of Arabs and Muslims in US airports, it should be clear that the lives of everyday citizens were adversely affected on a variety of levels due to their assumed connection to terrorism based on ethnicity or religion.

On October 4, 2001, Mark Stroman shot and killed Vasudev Patel, a 49-year old Indian and father of two, who was working at his convenience store in Mesquite, Texas. Stroman said that anger over the September 11 attacks caused him to attack any storeowner who appeared to be Muslim. “We’re at war. I did what I had to do. I did it to retaliate.”...For Stroman; however, it was not his only act of ethnoviolence in the wake of 9/11. Stroman shot Rais Uddin, blinding the gas station attendant. He also was responsible for the death of Waquar Hassan, a 46-year-old Pakistani father of four, who was killed on September 15, 2001, while cooking hamburgers at his Dallas grocery store (Welch 63).

On September 13, 2001, John Ashcroft released the following statement: “Any threats of violence or discrimination against Arab or Muslim Americans or Americans of South Asian descent are not just wrong and un-American, but also are unlawful and will be treated as such” (quoted in Howell 447). Despite this official claim, however, the Bush administration (both in policy and discourse) invoked an archetype of the vigilant, patriotic American, whose highly racialized vision allowed him to comprehend who was *with us* and who was *against us*—thus helping keep our nation more *secure*. In many instances and on a variety of levels, the combination of fear mongering and collective vilification led to a drastic increase in racially motivated violence in post-9/11 America—as official language and policy were reflected in the actions and attitudes of the public. According to statistics cited by Cainkar:

After the 9/11 attacks, public opinion polls showed broad support for the special treatment of Arabs and Muslims as *groups* in the United States. A poll conducted in mid-September 2001 found respondents evenly divided over whether all Arabs in the United States, including American citizens, should be required to carry special identity cards. Two late-September Gallup polls found that a majority of Americans favored profiling of Arabs, including American citizens, and subjecting them to special security checks before boarding planes. A December 2001 University of Illinois poll found that some 70 percent of Illinois residents were willing to sacrifice their civil rights to fight terrorism, and more than one-quarter of respondents said Arab Americans should surrender more rights than others. A March 2002 CNN/Gallup/*USA Today* poll found that nearly 60 percent of Americans favored reducing the number of immigrants from Muslim countries. Five months later, a majority of the American public polled said that there were “too many” immigrants from Arab countries. In December 2004, a Cornell University study found that nearly 50 percent of respondents in a national poll believed the U.S. government should curtail civil liberties for Muslim Americans (260).

Citing Foucault’s notion of the Panopticon, “or the disciplinary mechanism of generalized surveillance,” Naber discusses the “covert and unspoken [psychological] medium that linked sociopolitical institutions and the individual psyche together” (*Rules* 254). An authoritarian government, intent on monitoring not only the actions but also the emotions and very ideas espoused by the citizenry, can establish a climate of forced acquiescence to centralized power based on a rhetorically instilled fear of reprisal for

failing to play by the rules handed down by authority figures. According to Welch, “As government (and corporations) expands and intensifies its external observation, citizens over time internalize that gaze: not only becoming increasingly willing to accept such intrusion but also adjusting their conduct accordingly” (163). While such psychologically induced submission affects “mainstream” America on one level, by *othering* potential dissenters who arise among their ranks, it impacts immigrant communities on an entirely different level. According to Naber:

Community leaders and mental health practitioners who participated in my research repeated over and over that for Arab and Muslim communities post-9/11 the intensified sense that one is always under the scrutiny of others—strangers, hidden cameras, wire-taps, and other surveillance of the security state—and the assumed existence of a hypothetical audience that polices the legality and normality of behavior and renders individuals vulnerable to the “truths” contrived by the state have become increasingly normative patterns of functioning (*Rules* 254).

Naber describes “fear as a sentiment that has constrained the nation at large and Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians as those the nation is required to be afraid of...fear constrains the nation on one hand and justifies racism and xenophobia...on the other” (257). By stoking anxiety about future violent attacks, labeling the *evil* enemy in highly ethnocentric, racialized language, expanding executive power to curtail civil liberties in the interest of so-called *national security*, and labeling all dissenters—including minority advocates and peace protestors—as unpatriotic and thus dangerous, the Bush administration’s post-9/11 discourse simultaneously divided the public along racial,

religious, and ideological lines and attempted to justify violence as essential in winning the ongoing battle between *us* and *them*.

When Bush describes our nation as “peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger” he rhetorically legitimates aggression, creating a context in which the violent manifestation of hatred is considered a natural response to the evil we have become aware of in our world (9/14/01). The emotional and psychological climate that Bush established with a chilling degree of success in post-9/11 America seems to invoke Orwell, who in his classic dystopian novel *1984* describes the communal participation in ritualized hatred as a central component of national unity:

The horrible thing about the Two Minutes of Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretense was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one’s will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp. (16)

## CHAPTER FOUR: AN ABSTRACT RAGE AND A NEW ENEMY

In the weeks and months following the tragedy of 9/11, the American public rallied around its commander in chief. According to a Gallup poll, Bush achieved a 90% approval rating on September 22, 2001—the highest recorded number in the history of the United States (“Presidential”). The context of national crisis, which invoked a widespread sense of fear and vulnerability, led the vast majority of US citizens to place an unprecedented amount of faith in their leader to effectively navigate domestic and foreign affairs. According to a survey from late 2001, 68 percent of respondents acknowledged that politics had recently become “more relevant to their lives” (Crotty 41). Hillary Clinton proclaimed, “Only the government can respond to what we’ve confronted,” and according to Dick Cheney, “One of the things that’s changed so much since September 11 is the extent to which people do trust the government—big shift—and value it, and have high expectations for what we can do” (Crotty 41). Bush successfully passed the USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) on October 26, 2001, with Russell Feingold of Wisconsin issuing the only dissenting vote in the Senate. Although his voice was hardly acknowledged in any significant way at the time, by the end of Bush’s presidency, Feingold’s position no longer represented a minority view among voting Americans. Admonishing Bush as well as the other members of Congress for sacrificing democratic principles based on national security concerns, Feingold passionately pleaded:

There is no doubt that if we lived in a police state, it would be easier to catch terrorists. If we lived in a country that allowed the police to search your home at any time for any reason; if we lived in a country that allowed the government to open your mail, eavesdrop on your phone conversations; if we lived in a country that allowed the government to jail [people] indefinitely based on what they write or think, or based on mere suspicion that they are up to no good, then the government would no doubt discover and arrest more terrorists.<sup>16</sup> But that probably would not be a country in which we would want to live. And that would not be a country for which we could, in good conscience, ask our young people to fight and die. In short, that would not be America. Preserving our freedom is one of the main reasons that we are now engaged in this war on terror. We will lose that war without firing a shot if we sacrifice the liberties of the American people. (quoted in Welch 146)

Once the ideological fervor of post-9/11 America had settled, many US citizens began voicing similar concerns. Especially since “enhanced law enforcement” tactics that “legally” employed racial profiling, as well as inhumane interrogations and detentions, had failed to produce a palpable improvement in national security, citizens became increasingly uncomfortable with the social, ethical, and political implications of Bush’s PATRIOT Act. Furthermore, as evidence gradually surfaced to confirm suspicions that the Bush administration had repeatedly distorted and falsified information in rhetorically framing the call to war in Iraq, citizens increasingly viewed Bush’s foreign policy as

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<sup>16</sup> Given the complete ineffectiveness of the special registration program, Feingold may have conceded too much on this point.

grounded in deception and opportunism.<sup>17</sup> Even prominent political and military insiders, such as Richard Clark, publicly criticized Bush's foreign policy as not only ineffective but also counterproductive in terms of national security. According to Clark:

Far from addressing the popular appeal of the enemy that attacked us, Bush handed that enemy precisely what it wanted and needed, proof that America was at war with Islam, that we were the new Crusaders come to occupy Muslim land. Nothing America could have done would have provided al Qaeda and its new generation of cloned groups a better recruitment device than our unprovoked invasion of an oil-rich Arab country...It was as if Osama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting "invade Iraq, you must invade Iraq." (246)

Rather than using September 11 as "an opportunity to unite people around the world around a set of shared values: religious tolerance, diversity, freedom, and security," Bush capitalized on the tragedy as justification for exerting unilateral military might in the Middle East, which played right into the image of America promulgated by fundamentalist Islam—that of the violent oppressor (Clark 285). In 2002 Illinois State Senator Barack Obama cautioned that "an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than the best, impulses of the world and strengthen the recruitment arm of al Qaeda" (quoted in Marable 7).

As history unfolded in post-9/11 America, the citizenry grew increasingly disillusioned with the Bush administration's invasive policies and divisive rhetoric. In

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<sup>17</sup> See Sidney Blumenthal's 2007 article, "Bush Knew Saddam Had No Weapons of Mass Destruction," published on Salon.com.



fact, by the time Bush left office, CBS reported that his approval rating had dropped to 22%—setting another benchmark, a record low—while Dick Cheney’s had dropped even lower to 13% (“Bush’s”). Asked to reflect on Bush’s eight years in office, half of all respondents claimed he had been a “poor” president, with only 5% reporting he was a “very good” president (“Bush’s”). Thus, in 2008 the political climate in the United States allowed Barack Obama, a progressive African American and first term US Senator running on a platform of “change,” the chance to accomplish what was previously unthinkable. His successful campaign for the presidency of the United States, an event that many people around the world viewed as “a stunning reversal of history,” may owe its success, at least in part, to Bush’s unprecedented unpopularity and Obama’s ability to construct a public persona distinctly different than that of his predecessor (Marable 2). However, Bush’s *with us or against us* rhetoric continued to flourish among fundamentalists and hard line conservatives—many of whom described Obama as one of “them” rather than one of “us.” Depicting Obama as un-American, as Muslim, and even as a terrorist became a common tactic among his political/ideological opponents.

Nevertheless, in 2008 a majority of US voters chose the candidate who seemed capable of confronting controversy with rational deliberation, as Obama demonstrated a “tendency to downplay ideological differences” and to “refer to whatever truly displeases him [as] ‘divisive’” (Wellington 29). Many Americans had lost faith in Bush’s authoritarian posture and dismissed his vision of national unity (which Bush framed as common adherence to ideological claims and presidential proclamations). The Bush administration had clearly failed to meet the public’s “high expectations” and the voices shouting, *Yes We Can*, drowned out the tiresome and vacuous refrain, *with us or against*

*us*. To a large extent, Obama succeeded in re-defining American patriotism by shifting the public focus toward an affirmation of human life and celebration of diversity—as he embraced the need to defend civil liberties at home and reconstruct our reputation as a tactful, trustworthy nation among the international community. In Obama’s presidential campaign, he showed a rhetorical commitment to addressing national challenges by outlining proactive solutions rather than simply labeling the agents responsible for the problem.

The Bush administration had attempted to focus the attention of the citizenry on the pressing need to discover and defeat our common enemy. Rhetorically, Bush appealed first and foremost to *agents*—juxtaposing the supposedly inherent nature of different groups (patriotic Americans and all lovers of freedom vs. evil terrorists and all who oppose a US-led war on terror). Obama, by contrast, tends to craft his rhetoric around the soundness or feasibility of particular *actions*. Thus, his criticism of the Bush administration called attention to what had been done and why it may not be the best (most American) way of conducting government business without resorting to personal attacks. To many, this style of political discourse represented a refreshing change from what American citizens had become accustomed to.

Based on his criticism of Bush’s war on terror and his passionate call for a more diplomatic approach in the Middle East, Obama’s “entry into national politics was associated with the Islamic world” from the very beginning (Marable 7). Since inciting fear of Islamic fundamentalism had become a cornerstone of mainstream conservative rhetoric, Obama’s ideological opponents accused him not only of supporting dangerous policies, which were “soft” on terror and compromised national security, but also of

embodying characteristics that called his very status as an American into question. That is, stalwart supporters of Bush ideology attempted to label Obama as a threat to the nation and its *traditional* values. As Nicholas Kristof noted in a New York Times editorial from September 2008, the ideological right unashamedly initiated and perpetuated a “campaign to ‘otherize’ Mr. Obama...a persistent effort to exaggerate [his] differences, to de-Americanize him” (Kristof). As Marable demonstrates, “Even before the announcement of his candidacy for president, media conservatives resorted to Islamophobia to denigrate Obama” (7). He cites Jeanne Moos on CNN’s “Situation Room” (12/11/06), who pointed out that “only one little consonant differentiates” Obama from Osama and also highlighted the name, Hussein, which Obama inauspiciously shares with “a former dictator” in the Arab world; Marable also notes Rush Limbaugh’s incessant mockery of the presidential candidate as “Osama Obama” (7-8). Furthermore, false rumors about Obama’s familial and historical ties to Islam were widely circulated—at first on the Internet and later in major media outlets. For instance, Mark Steyn, in an article in the Chicago Sun-Times, asserted that Obama “graduated from the Sword of the Infidel grade school in Jakarta,” and Juan Williams, a correspondent on Fox News, voiced the following argument: “[Obama] comes from a father who was a Muslim and all that...Given that we’re at war with Muslim extremists, that presents a problem” (Marable 8). As Bush’s post-9/11 national security initiatives and *war on terror* rhetoric attempted to establish, being associated with Islam or the Arab world constitutes legitimate grounds for suspicion. Proponents of Bush’s form of patriotism supported policies that violently targeted Arabs and Muslims—as a way of avenging the victims of 9/11 and helping ensure national security. Thus, as Obama emerged as a viable candidate, who posed a

tangible political threat for those embracing Bush's divisive ideology, Obama's opponents attempted to vilify him by associating him with Islam—which had come to signify the world of the *other*.

Obama, who by all reputable accounts is a practicing Christian, navigated a barrage of attacks throughout his campaign, which called the legitimacy and authenticity of his religious faith into question. This blatantly bigoted and anti-democratic rhetoric, which has continued even into Obama's first term as president, represents a dangerous remnant of Bush-era discourse—mythologizing mainstream (i.e., white, Christian) America as vulnerable to attacks from those whose central aim is to subvert or destabilize the racial/religious/ideological hegemony of the dominant group. Citing a Pew Research Center survey from September 2008, Kristof notes that 13% of registered voters were certain Obama is a Muslim, while 16 % reported they were unsure about Obama's religious affiliations because they had heard “different things” on the issue (Kristof). He also cites a growing number of conservative Christians who entertain theories that Obama could very well be the Antichrist—acknowledging that the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has shown, “about 10 percent of Americans believe we may be in a Book of Revelation's ‘end times’ and are on the lookout for the Antichrist” (Kristof). Bush's mode of discourse, which framed the commander in chief as an agent of God's will, set the stage for the demonization of Obama among the Christian right—whose stalwart support for Bush and his policies led them to identify Obama (representing a potential alternative) as standing in direct opposition to God. Far from being dismissed as ludicrous by conservative politicians and conservative media, these claims about Obama's (ir)religious sympathies have taken root among fundamentalist Christians and

seem to have spread from there. Citing a March 2010 survey by Harris International, a recent article published by LiveScience acknowledges 14% of Americans responded affirmatively to the claim that Obama “may be the Antichrist,” including 24% of Republicans and 6% of Democrats (“Quarter”). Other notable results from the same survey include: 32% of respondents affirmed that Obama is a Muslim; 29% “think he wants to turn over the sovereignty of the United States to a one world government;” 27% claim he “resents America’s heritage;” 25% believe he is ineligible to be president based on his place of birth; 23% claim he’s a racist; 23% claim he’s un-American; and 20% agree that “he is doing many of the things that Hitler did” (“Quarter”). Throughout Obama’s presidential campaign and, remarkably, with seemingly greater force since his election, the fundamentalist and hard-line conservative voices in American politics have resorted to the most shameful imaginable tactics in order to “other” Obama among a significant portion of the voting population.

In Kristof’s view, “religious prejudice is becoming a proxy for racial prejudice. In public at least, it’s not acceptable to express reservations about a candidate’s skin color, so discomfort about race is sublimated into concerns about whether Mr. Obama is sufficiently Christian” (Kristof). Thus, “dedicated proponents of both racialization and religious intolerance, as central tools in the continuing perpetuation of a racist America,” have attempted (often quite successfully) to counter Obama’s endeavors to overcome racial, cultural, and ideological differences in unifying the country (Marable 10). Since Obama’s supporters (among the voting population) in the 2008 presidential election included significant majorities of African Americans (95%), Jews (78%), Latinos (67%), voters under the age of thirty (62%), and women (58%), not to mention a surprising

number of white voters as well (including moderate Republicans and independents), he represents, on one hand, a threat to racialized politics (Marable 10). However, on the other hand, since Obama's political opponents have repeatedly chosen to question the authenticity of his *identity* as an American, as a Christian, and as a trustworthy human being rather than focusing on (a legitimate representation of) political *issues*, the election of Obama has called attention to the perpetuation of racism among powerful and vocal right wing groups in the United States.

The strikingly inflammatory depiction of Obama's longtime pastor, Jeremiah Wright, during Obama's presidential campaign points to the way in which Bush's legacy of fear mongering based on a highly-racialized vision of America's enemy has continued to impact public discourse in a troubling way since 9/11. Herman and Peterson claim, "the United States witnessed the most brazen demonization in its history of a person based on his race, his creed, and his ties to a presidential candidate," when Obama's opponents dragged (a caricature of) Wright into the political limelight (1). Tracing the "ugly spectacle" of the right wing vilification of Wright leads Herman and Peterson to argue, "Despite much optimism about narrowing racial divides and an emerging 'post-racial' consciousness, something much closer to the opposite had gripped America" (1). Following in the footsteps of the Bush administration, right wing commentators (and to a disturbing degree, politicians as well) abandoned intellectual rigor and refused to acknowledge the historical events and commonly shared experiences of hardship out of which the black prophetic tradition has emerged—choosing instead to isolate a handful of seemingly anti-American or anti-Christian statements in Wright's sermons, which only appear contentious when completely divorced from their context. By "reduc[ing] the

complex identity of the unashamedly black and unapologetically Christian [Rev. Wright] to spliced controversial sound bites...[which] fostered the false impression that he is an unpatriotic, radical black separatist and racist bigot who deserves vilification and crucifixion,” Obama’s political opponents attempted to depict the future president as silently embracing subversive religious views and harboring secret allegiances to declared enemies of the state (Bell 333). Just as Bush’s post-9/11 story used the threat of terrorism as justification for preemptive strikes (against foreign targets as well as those supposedly lurking in our midst), the right wing base of the Republican Party, who view Obama as a political or ideological threat, attempted to prevent his election by embracing Bush’s same tactics: fear mongering, demonization, and distortion of evidence.

As Herman and Peterson note, “whenever the media’s attention turned to Wright, the use of dismissive, highly insulting language came automatically to commentators, while an examination of the truth or falsity of what Wright actually said was regarded as unnecessary” (6). As evidence they cite examples of the language conservative media outlets used to describe Wright and his sermons: “anti-American, racist rantings” (National Review); “venomous and paranoid” (Ron Kessler); “grievance-mongering preacher animated by the voracity of hate” (Michelle Malkin); “hate-filled, anti-American black nationalism” (Shelby Steele); and the list goes on and on (7). Most Americans probably remember hearing statements like these when coverage of Jeremiah Wright engulfed the media. What is truly fascinating about Herman and Peterson’s research, though, is the following recognition:

There were no comparable levels of anger and denunciation by the establishment media, or even by the liberals and left, over Parsley, Hagee, or Robertson, despite

their prolific records of atrocious statements, their years of right-wing activism on behalf of the Republican Party, and the fact that McCain actively sought Hagee's endorsement and referred to Parsley while campaigning with him in Ohio as "one of the truly great leaders in America, a moral compass, a spiritual guide. (7)

In one of Hagee's notable public addresses during the 2008 presidential campaign, he warned the US government that proposing a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would inevitably incur the wrath of God, who would punish America by bringing more terrorist attacks upon us ("Hagee"). This line of thinking implies that liberals (who are defined as pro-Palestinian and pro-Arab) oppose God and effectively *cause* terrorism through their political stances and proposed policies. Hagee's pronouncement represents but a single example of inflammatory religious rhetoric issued by a conservative white minister who endorses the GOP, but Herman and Peterson observe that media representations of these religious figures as "divisive" or "crazy" occurred with exponentially less frequency than similar denunciations of Jeremiah Wright (4-9).

In Wright's now-infamous sermon from April 13, 2003, entitled "Confusing God and Government," he condemns a system of government that has institutionalized the dehumanization of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States, building on historically entrenched inequality:

The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing 'God Bless America.' No, no, no, God damn America. That's in the Bible for killing innocent people. God damn America for treating our citizens as less than human. God damn America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is supreme. (quoted in Bell 335)



Combined with other sound bites of Wright warning his congregation “of the wrath and damnation of God to come to America for its...historical sins,” the refrain, “God damn America,” resounded through conservative media outlets in the spring of 2008 (Bell 332). The content and tone of media reporting on Jeremiah Wright depicted him as a dangerously radical religious leader, who does not represent authentically Christian or authentically American values. Popular caricatures made him out to be crazy, at best, and an outright supporter of anti-US terrorism, at worst. By attempting to associate Barack Obama as closely as possible with his purportedly radical, subversive, and dangerous preacher, Obama’s opponents found the rhetorical foothold they needed to begin shifting the activity of “othering” Obama from the fringe toward the mainstream. When Glenn Beck, on July 28, 2009, claimed President Obama clearly demonstrated his “deep-seated hatred for white people” in his response to the arrest of Henry Louis Gates, Beck’s assumption that “this guy is, I believe, a racist” seems implicitly justified by the inflammatory depiction of Jeremiah Wright over a year earlier (quoted in Sanneh 21). In a 2009 article in the *New Yorker*, Kelefa Sanneh claims, “many of the people who worry about Obama’s view of race see him not as personally bigoted but as complicit with anti-white interests and policies” (22). By this account, it seems that even some who acknowledge Obama’s rhetorical success in navigating the issue of race have nevertheless been impacted by the barrage of imagery and skullduggery identifying President Obama as an implicit or explicit threat to the ongoing prosperity of white America.

Just as Bush’s post-9/11 story overlooked or reinterpreted the historical relationship between the US government and the Arab world—including, notably, the

longtime economic and military partnership with Osama bin Laden and the steadfast allegiance to Saudi Arabia (which is home to the bin Laden family, not to mention the majority of the 9/11 hijackers)—the critics of Jeremiah Wright systematically ignored the religious tradition and historical context out of which his sermons arise. In this way, the public vilification of Wright not only invoked similar language (*radical, un-American*) but also similar rhetorical tactics (undermining rational investigation with ideological proclamation, inciting fear, and demanding submission to an official story) as Bush's post-9/11 discourse. Inasmuch as Obama and his longtime preacher openly acknowledge the impact of historical events on contemporary social and political life, they employ a significantly different rhetorical approach than Bush. Additionally, the black prophetic tradition, which has significantly impacted both Wright and Obama, earnestly acknowledges the need to commune with the *other*—the oppressor, who perhaps unwittingly or against his higher nature compromises the integrity and prosperity of minority groups. This tradition labels those who perpetuate violence and inequality as children of God, capable of transformation and redemption. Martin Luther King, a seminal figure in the black prophetic tradition, “dismissed race as an accidental rather than an essential feature of human beings...[and] recogniz[ing] the reality of white racism, adamantly condemned the viciousness of its structural violence and insisted throughout his life on nonviolence, dialogue and persuasion” as the appropriate way for children of God to interact with other children of God (Frank 168). Thus, framing Wright as a radical ideologue, full of hatred for white America, represents blatant (and quite possibly intentional) ignorance of the rhetorical context in which his messages are delivered and received.

In the black prophetic tradition, also called the Jeremiadic tradition (after the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah), God's wrath is understood as the natural and inevitable response when human beings willfully break their covenant with the divine. Thus, the recognition of US-sponsored terrorism abroad as well as institutionalized inequality at home calls attention to our national sins, which leads King, Wright, and others embracing this religious tradition to issue warnings about God's displeasure and the impending consequences if human beings fail to reform their ways: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong, that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work" (Jeremiah 22:13). However, when Rev. Wright condemns the US government for "killing innocent people" and "treating our citizens as less than human," he does not imply that human agents are sanctioned by God to punish their oppressors. Rather, "the nation is destined for divine—not man's, not the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah's—wrath and damnation," which exemplifies one of the key differences between Wright's version of Christianity and that voiced by Bush and his supporters (Bell 336). In due time God may very well avenge cruelty and violence, whether committed by individuals or by nations, but according to the black prophetic tradition, faithful Christians should stick to the practice of nonviolent peacemaking—ensuring that they do not incur God's wrath right alongside their oppressors. Although the open acknowledgment of injustice and willingness to voice anger from the pulpit represent a significant departure in form and style from the type of Christianity that many white Americans practice, the context of slavery—out of which Wright's tradition emerged—can account for this approach. Even if we attempt to call both by the same name (Christianity), the religious practice of oppressed people will necessarily look

different than the religious practice of their oppressors, especially inasmuch as those in positions of power cast themselves as vehicles of God's will.

According to David Frank:

Emphasizing Christianity's African heritage, the Hebrew scriptures, particularly the book of Exodus, and the redemptive messages of Jesus, Trinity [Wright's church] seeks to offer a theological balm for African Americans and others who continue to suffer in the wake of slavery, legal segregation, and the continuing forces of racism. The theology practiced at Trinity affirms the African heritage of many of its congregants. Moses is depicted as an "African Prince," hailing from Egypt, who is married to a "raven-black beauty." Jesus is described as having "nappy hair" and a bronze complexion. This geographical rendering recasts the central geographical myth of American white Christianity. (172)

During the Civil Rights Movement, King repeatedly invoked the story of Moses, who would lead his people out of oppression and into the Promised Land, to describe the inevitable fate of black Americans. In King's words, "the arch of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice," which implies that patience, principled action, and steadfast faith are essential—as we prepare for the inevitable manifestation of justice (quoted in Frank 172). In King's rhetoric, what separates God's chosen people from their oppressors is the unwavering commitment to nonviolence, which not only facilitates the oppressed people's ultimate liberation from bondage but also the transformation and redemption of the oppressors themselves. Obama's rhetorical commitment to transcending *us vs. them* logic with compassionate, intelligent dialogue points to his loyalty to King's legacy of nonviolence. By contrast, when Bush claims, "whether we

bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done,” he embraces a notion of divine retribution that manifests specifically through human agents’ willingness to commit violence—responding to terrorism with tactics that are qualitatively similar but quantitatively superior to those of our enemies. Whereas Jeremiah Wright claims that God will punish the nation for its sins, Bush claims that he and his supporters will be the ones who dole out the punishment. Thus, when Wright accuses Bush of confusing God with government, he is reacting explicitly to Bush’s claim that he commits violence in the name of God.

As Bell observes:

[Wright is certainly] engaged in hyperbolic rhetoric and passionate denunciations of America for its national sin of racialized slavery, for its violation of the founding principles of the nation with institutional antiblack racism, and for its selective demonizing and violent destruction of nondemocratic, non-Christian peoples as suspected threats and terrorists to the United States. (335)

However, unlike Bush, who depicted violence as the natural and inevitable response to anger, Wright bears witness to a religious tradition founded on the principle of nonviolence as the only manifestation of anger that can be considered *righteous* based on the teachings of Jesus. Although Bush’s post-9/11 story effectively *radicalized* nonviolence as an untenable political and rhetorical position, it was not Wright’s commitment to the tradition of Martin Luther King that became the focus of his public demonization. Rather, quite ironically, his critics framed him not only as committed to undermining the interests of mainstream America but also as an implicit, if not explicit, proponent of revolutionary violence as a means of overcoming the (white) enemy. Just as

Bush labeled the terrorists as religious fundamentalists—full of hatred for whites, Christians, Jews, and anyone else who enjoys freedom and prosperity—Wright’s critics framed his expression of the black prophetic tradition in much the same way and thus attempted to tarnish the reputation of Barack Obama by associating him with (a fabricated caricature of) a radical opposition force.

The public demonization of Jeremiah Wright (and, by association, Obama), which was based on a sensationalized media portrayal of de-contextualized sound bites, succeeded to a large extent by employing Bush’s same rhetorical tactics. Wright’s critics reduced him to a monolithic, ahistorical figure—ignoring his long list of honors and accomplishments, his commitment to nonviolent civic engagement, and his very humanity, while simultaneously rejecting the perpetual manifestation of the Civil Rights Movement as a legitimate African American concern and an essential feature of our shared cultural reality. When Bush explains, “We’re a nation of law, a nation of civil rights. We’re also a nation under attack,” he implies that the threat of terrorism necessarily alters our national identity—relegating the importance of civil rights to a secondary position, as a value or concern that may need to be (temporarily) sacrificed in the interest of national security. In fact, according to Bush’s story about post-9/11 America, voicing concerns about civil rights and democratic principles can contribute either practically or ideologically to the terrorists’ cause. In a 2003 statement before Congress, Bush’s attorney general, John Ashcroft, asserted the following:

To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: your tactics only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve. They give ammunition to America’s enemies, and pause

to America's friends. They encourage people of goodwill to remain silent in the face of evil. (quoted in Welch 138)

Defining "peace-loving people" as those who support foreign wars in the Middle East and "enhanced law enforcement" tactics at home and labeling those who raise questions about official policy (especially regarding civil rights) as dangerously subversive, Ashcroft attempted to forcefully silence dissenting voices. Interestingly, in so doing he demonstrated his true allegiance to Bush's mode of discourse—accusing his political opponents of "encourag[ing] people of goodwill to remain silent," the very action Ashcroft himself is guilty of.

When Obama responded to the whirlwind of accusations that emerged in the wake of the public vilification of Jeremiah Wright, his opponents (in much the same spirit as Bush and Ashcroft) accused Obama of harboring a secret allegiance to anti-American values and possibly even supporting terrorism. In his "A More Perfect Union" address from Philadelphia on March 18, 2008, Obama simultaneously acknowledged his deep and meaningful relationship with Wright and attempted to distance himself from some of Wright's more controversial statements. Notably, Obama directly and substantially addresses the problem of racial inequality for the first time in his presidential campaign: "What ails the African American community does not just exist in the minds of black people...the legacy of discrimination—and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past—are real and must be addressed." This willingness to openly confront serious concerns about compromised civil liberties in the US made him a hero in the eyes of many Americans but also provided fodder for his political opponents' attacks. Since, from perspective of fundamentalists and hard line conservatives, speaking about

the need for racial equality (especially when the speaker happens to be a person of color) constitutes proof of one's allegiance to racist (i.e., anti-white) views, Obama was subjected to the same type of attacks as his former pastor was.

Although a full analysis of Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech is beyond the scope of the current project, it seems appropriate to point out a few characteristics of Obama's rhetoric that highlight his connection to the black prophetic tradition of King and Wright as well as his ability to bring the discussion of inequality and civil rights to a racially and politically diverse audience. While distancing himself from Wright's most controversial statements, Obama devotes a considerable amount of effort to contextualizing the language and tone of his preacher's sermons:

For the men and women of Reverend Wright's generation, the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away; nor has the anger and the bitterness of those years. That anger may not get expressed in public, in front of white co-workers or white friends. But it does find voice in the barbershop or around the kitchen table. At times, the anger is exploited by politicians, to gin up votes along racial lines, or to make up for a politician's own failings.

Obama also notes:

That anger is not always productive; indeed, all too often it distracts attention from solving real problems; it keeps us from squarely facing our own complicity in our condition and prevents the African American community from forging the alliances it needs to bring about real change.

Obama attempted to re-invest Wright with humanity after he had been systematically demonized by the media, which represents Obama's commitment to



reconciliation and categorical refusal of Bush's *with us or against us* discourse. Additionally, by calling attention to the de-contextualization of Wright's statements as a political attempt to divide the country along racial lines, Obama demonstrated that he too is angry about institutionalized racism in the United States. By simultaneously calling the effectiveness of Wright's rhetorical tactics into question, however, Obama implied that every American (regardless of class, color, or creed) is complicit in our nation's collective trauma and thus equally responsible for helping enact positive change. Given the similarity between the conservative media's attempt to *other* Jeremiah Wright and Bush's attempt to *other* potential terrorists—as radical fundamentalists, publicly depicted (in strictly ahistorical terms) as inherently dangerous—Obama's commitment to transcending ideological differences and problematizing a dualistic vision of the world helped cement his reputation as a different *type* of leader, who responds to controversy through rational appeal without dismissing emotional realities.

Obama connects the anger expressed by Rev. Wright with a similar anger...within segments of the white community. Most working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race. Their experience is the immigrant experience—as far as they're concerned, no one's handed them anything; they've built it from scratch...So when they are told to bus their children to a school across town, when they hear that an African American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed, when they're told that their fears about crime in urban neighborhoods are somehow prejudiced, resentment builds over time...Talk show

hosts and conservative commentators built entire careers unmasking bogus claims of racism while dismissing legitimate discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or reverse racism.

By demonstrating empathy with white working-class anger, Obama framed the discussion of race in a way that connects a wide swath of the US population to the spirit of Rev. Wright's sermons. In Obama's rhetoric black interests and white interests are not antithetical to one another; instead, Obama attempts to bridge the gap between groups—blurring the line that others are attempting to reinforce. Truly following in the tradition of King, Obama rhetorically unites the struggles of all Americans by highlighting working class concerns:

Just as black anger often proved counterproductive, so have these white resentments distracted attention from the real culprits of the middle class squeeze—a corporate culture rife with inside dealing, questionable accounting practices, and short-term greed; a Washington dominated by lobbyists and special interests; economic policies that favor the few over the many.

Not only does Obama point directly at Washington but also at the working class citizens themselves in assigning responsibility for the hardship many Americans face. In this way he simultaneously implies that electing better leaders would help address our nation's problems and also that the American people need to do their part as well—by putting an end to divisive discourse and behavior, which only interferes with common striving toward common goals. Notably, in a drastic departure from Bush's political rhetoric, Obama acknowledges the earnest need to shift public discourse from a focus on

ideology to a focus on action. Our nation should confront the historical reality of injustice in our country:

Not just with words, but with deeds—by investing in our schools and our communities, by enforcing our civil rights laws and ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system, by providing this generation with ladders of opportunity that were unavailable for previous generations. It requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams, that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper.

Thus, Obama's vision of national unity takes a distinctly different form than that promoted by the Bush administration. His rejection of ideological divisiveness and his focus on positive and proactive civic engagement (as a way of bridging the gap between groups who may *perceive* one another as different) may very well have contributed to his opponents' motivation to depict Obama as subversive and radical. Some commentators attempted to merge public fear of Obama's association with a "subversive" black religious tradition with a condemnation of his background as a community organizer—claiming his concern with civil rights and working-class struggles connects Obama with a *socialist* political platform. For instance, Joshua Muravchik claims that Obama's publicly articulated vision of a "post-partisan, post-ideological era" represents a falsification of the president's true (secret) allegiances (18). He goes on to assert that the term "community organizer" is a mere "euphemism for professional radical" (19). Addressing Obama's purported connection with Bill Ayers—the controversial University of Illinois professor, who co-founded a communist revolutionary group in 1969 to protest the Vietnam War

and who was allegedly involved in at least one bombing of government property—Muravchik warns that Obama is attempting to cover up his affiliation with communism, terrorism, and Satanism (20). Obama supposedly constitutes a threat not only because he elevates “the struggle of the oppressed against their American capitalist overlords” over “American security,” but also because he believes “we must accept multiculturalism at home and share our wealth abroad” (22-3). According to this story, Obama wants to commune with the enemies of America and represent their interests in Washington—thus allowing dangerous people and dangerous ideas a role in shaping our country from within. In this account (and many others that are similar), Obama is depicted as relying on smooth talking and well-calculated deception to undermine the US government and the ideals on which it was founded—just as Bush framed the enemies of freedom in his post-9/11 discourse.

Sarah Netter, in a January 2010 article published by ABC World News, cites a host of public figures who have continued to denounce President Obama along ethnic or racial lines. Notably, she calls attention to Minnesota State Senator Mike Perry, who described Obama as a “power hungry arrogant black man;” Arlington, Tennessee Mayor Russ Wiseman, who attacked Obama for being a “Muslim president” after a December 2009 Christmas special (“Charlie Brown’s Christmas”) was interrupted in order to air a public address by the president on troop levels in Afghanistan; and U.S. Representative Lynn Jenkins (R-Kansas), who claimed, “Republicans are struggling right now to find the great white hope;” additionally, commenting on a gorilla that had escaped from a Columbia, South Carolina zoo, GOP activist Rusty DePass mused, “I’m sure it’s just one of Michelle’s ancestors—probably harmless;” another South Carolina GOP activist, Mike

Green, reported, “I just heard Obama was going to impose a 40% tax on aspirin because it’s white and it works;” Rush Limbaugh claimed Obama is “behaving like an African colonial despot” and later referred to the president as an “angry black guy;” Texas GOP leader Diann Jones spoke at a Republican rally, calling a proposed firearm tax “another terrific idea from the black house and its minions;” Virginia GOP leader Bobby May argued that Obama wanted to send more aid to Africa so that “the Obama family there can skim enough to allow them to free their goats and live the American Dream;” US Representative Geoff Davis (R-Kentucky) proclaimed, “That boy’s finger does not need to be on the button,” in reference to the US nuclear arsenal; and Florida GOP leader David Stork made the following observation during the 2008 election: “I see carloads of black Obama supporters coming from the inner city... This is their chance to get a black president and they seem to care little that he is at minimum, socialist, and probably Marxist in his core beliefs. After all, he is black—no experience or accomplishments—but he is black” (Netter). Unfortunately, this list only begins to scratch the surface of the resurgence of racialization in right wing political discourse—carrying on Bush’s legacy of attempting to unite (a portion of) America by collectively demonizing an enemy.

Additionally, just as the post-9/11 racialization of the Arab/Muslim *other* hinged on the historically ingrained assumption of intrinsic inferiority—not only in terms of culture and morality but also intellectual capacity—some right wing Obama critics claim that he’s simply not intelligent enough to effectively run the country. For instance, Alan Bock explains, “I’m starting to approach the tentative conclusion that Barack Obama is just not that smart... what he seems to have displayed throughout his career is cunning rather than anything resembling real learning” (Bock). Bock goes on to dismiss Obama’s

impressive academic and professional career and seems to claim that dedicated involvement in high-tier academic institutions (Harvard, University of Chicago) has made Obama even stupider than he must naturally be. In the view of this critic, Obama may have succeeded in becoming “aware of how to present himself as a multicultural black man,” for the sake of wooing progressives, who (like Obama) are clearly out of touch with reality; however, Obama cannot successfully lead our country in the ongoing war on terror because he lacks any true substance as a problem solver (Bock). Like other flamboyant criticism, this account seems heavily laced with racial undertones. I have to ask: Would a white man in Obama’s position face the same type of shameless defamation of his character by his political opponents?

The so-called “Birthers” have attempted to call Obama’s status as an American citizen into question—demanding ad nauseam to see proof of Obama’s birth certificate and then claiming that his documents must be inauthentic or intentionally fabricated. Sadly, many GOP representatives have been hesitant to condemn the Birthers’ outrageous claims for fear of losing the support of neoconservatives, Christian fundamentalists, and racists, who seemingly resent the fact that an African American could be legitimately elected president of the United States. In one instance, a Delaware town hall meeting was completely derailed by citizens drowning out Representative Mike Castle’s attempts to discuss policy issues—demanding he investigate the *truth* about Obama’s place of birth. A particularly outspoken woman seemed to gain virtually unanimous support from the audience in shouting, “I want my country back!” This seems to imply, of course, that the US has been taken over by an outsider. CNN correspondent Roland Martin, responding to this episode, interpreted the Birthers’ concern as: “How is this black guy all of a sudden

running the country?” (“CNN’s”). The fact that Obama was born in Hawaii, rather than one of the more *normal* (i.e., white) states, seems to contribute to the Birthers’ fervor. Additionally, the recognition that Obama spent a portion of his childhood abroad has provided fodder for the neoconservative fire; however, the same conspiracy theorists have conveniently overlooked the fact that John McCain was *actually* born outside the country (in the Panama Canal Zone on a military base), which does not affect his eligibility to serve as president or in other public office. The seemingly unprecedented level of skepticism regarding Obama’s legitimacy as a leader based on his personal background (including ethnic/religious heritage) over and above his political views and voting record points to the disturbingly entrenched legacy of Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric: the tendency to approach minorities in the United States as potential threats—guilty until proven innocent—while allowing white Americans (and white leaders) the benefit of the doubt.

Citing a Pew Research Center poll from the final year of the Bush presidency in which 76% of Americans reported they were dissatisfied with “the way things are going” in Washington, a Wall Street Journal-NBC News poll that found “by a margin of 51% to 35%...voters preferred the Democrats to win the White House in November rather than the Republicans,” as well as a Gallup poll that showed “37% of voters identified themselves as Democrats, compared to 28% Republicans,” Herman and Peterson argue that in terms of policy issues McCain stood more at odds with the majority of US voters than did Obama (15). According to their research, “McCain’s relatively strong showing [in his presidential campaign]...stood in sharp contrast with his party’s decline in popularity and its looming loss of congressional seats” (15). To help explain this

phenomenon, Herman and Peterson point out that a majority of voters claimed to identify with McCain's "background" and "values" even though they may have disagreed with his stance on political issues; they also acknowledge that voters characterized Obama's negative traits as predominantly "personal" and McCain's negative traits as predominantly "political" (15). Indeed, McCain's campaign rhetoric played on this distinction by framing the potential election of Obama to the White House as just "too big a risk for voters to take" (15). This leads Herman and Peterson to argue that an "implicit defense of the color line... lurked beneath all of this" (16).

As the persistent barrage of anti-Obama attacks issued during his presidential campaign and since his election have demonstrated, Obama's race, his willingness to talk about race, his religious affiliations, his commitment to civil rights, and also his rhetorical focus on action constitute sufficient evidence for fundamentalists and hard line conservatives to label Obama as a serious threat to America. However, as David Frank argues, "In both political and ideological matters, Obama articulates a universalism of consilience; namely, that different political and theological perspectives can 'jump together' toward shared principles, while retaining their particular and specific values" (176). Obama has attempted to embrace a nonviolent approach to political debate and has demonstrated a commitment to dismissing his most flamboyant critics with cool reason rather than personal attacks. Thus, his rhetorical posture represents a significant departure from that of his predecessor. By "matching... symbolic narrative with action in the world," Obama is attempting to re-frame America's story (Frank 177).

In post-9/11 America, Bush claimed to support peace while endorsing violence; he claimed to defend freedom while consistently compromising individual rights and



democratic principles; fully embracing Christian fundamentalism, he called for a Crusade in response to a supposed Jihad; confident in the legitimacy of racial profiling (and arguably many features of white supremacy), he targeted minorities with “enhanced law enforcement,” which implicitly justified hate crimes directed at Arabs and Muslims. All the while, Bush accused the *enemy* of the same type of behavior and ideology he was personally committed to. Projecting focus onto the particular *agents* engaged in terrorism rather than a strict definition of terrorism as a criminal *activity*, Bush demonized entire countries and entire groups of people—endorsing a racial/religious/cultural hierarchy wherein conservative white Christian capitalists stand at the top and Middle Eastern Muslim radicals represent the lowest form of human life. This type of rhetoric can only succeed to the extent that the rational investigation of historical context is marginalized in public discourse. Such an investigation would problematize the assumption that particular groups of people embody inherent characteristics (e.g., good/evil, civil/barbarous, peaceful/violent) and allow emerging dialogue to call ideological proclamations into question.

The ongoing neoconservative depiction of Obama as an inherently dangerous president based on his abstractly defined *identity* demonstrates the continuing impact of Bush’s legacy of divisive rhetoric on race relations in the United States. At Tea Party rallies specifically, participants routinely carry signs and shout slogans meant to “other” President Obama—denouncing his character with ideological proclamations divorced from any rational investigation of facts. Some posters of Obama depict him with a Hitler-style mustache and Tea Party ralliers compare Obama’s rhetorical skills to those of Hitler—claiming Obama’s commitment to “smooth talking” identifies him as a “fascist;”

others describe Obama's support for women's reproductive rights as a specifically racialized position—claiming (falsely) that “black American women” have more abortions than any other group and that Obama supports this “holocaust;” some assert that Obama is a “tyrant,” a “socialist,” a “racist,” or the “antichrist”—threatening violence against the president in order to defend “God's country;” many proclaim that Obama is a “liar” and imply he has a secret agenda which is at odds with authentic American values (“Revealed”). All of these examples point to the way in which the tactics Bush employed in “othering” the terrorists have found new life in right wing anti-Obama politics. Framing the purported enemy in abstract ideological terms and attempting to divorce the depiction of this enemy from any rational investigation of historical context or interpretation of solid evidence fuels a type of fear and hatred that can easily shift from one scapegoat (or group of scapegoats) to another. Recognizing that this “othering” process occurs predominantly along ethnic/racial/religious lines calls attention to a host of challenges we now face in the United States. Any attempt to promote diversity, multiculturalism, rational dialogue, and nonviolence must necessarily take the legacy of Bush administration rhetoric into account—as representative of the severity of the practical and rhetorical challenges before us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## CONCLUSION

Many citizens of the United States as well as other countries around the world view the election of Barack Obama as a symbolic (if not practical) step toward dissolving institutionalized racism in our country. However, by examining the rhetoric of Obama's most vocal critics, it has become apparent to me that the tradition of the Civil Rights Movement must carry on into the present—and perhaps with increased fervor. As I have investigated the discourse of G.W. Bush and observed how this type of language not only dangerously justifies racially motivated violence but also characterizes *real* Americans based on their allegiance to the authoritarian ideology of white Christian conservatives, I have grown increasingly concerned with the need to counteract it in some way. But how? Perhaps we can begin by paying attention, speaking up about what we observe, and finding situations in which we can nurture open dialogue and mutual respect.

According to Marable, “the most underreported story connected with Barack Obama's presidential victory has been the disturbing spike in racial hate crimes across the U.S.” (13). He cites evidence of hundreds of such crimes committed in the wake of the 2008 presidential election in which the perpetrators seemed to take out their anger over Obama's election on African American citizens in our country; he quotes NAACP Director Hillary Shelton, who stated: “At a time when we as a nation are celebrating our demonstrated diversity...there are unfortunately those who are still living in the past filled [with] hatred, fear, and division” (13). Awareness of the ongoing reality of racialization, which cannot be justifiably ignored or discredited by mislabeling this phenomenon as an activity taking place on the *fringe* of American society, should lead

those of us who are truly committed to democratic principles to push back against divisive discourse whenever and wherever it rears its ugly head. This is a task for citizens to undertake and a task that often requires great courage. The proponents of racialization, as I have called attention to in this paper, will attempt to tout themselves as devoted to Americans' security and prosperity. They will attempt to label those concerned with equality and civil liberties as ignorant or incapable of protecting mainstream American interests (i.e., the status quo). Thus, in rejecting the language of racialized politics and resisting the enactment of racialized social policies, we must prepare ourselves to be attacked by our opponents as *un-American*, to be "othered" alongside those whose rights we are fighting to protect. Responding to these attacks forcefully but nonviolently is absolutely essential.

In late April 2010, Arizona passed an extremely controversial immigration bill, which allows police to stop and question anyone who they suspect of being in the country illegally. It effectively authorizes law enforcement officers to demand that (those who appear to be) immigrants produce paperwork demonstrating proof of their legal residency status. This has led critics of bill to refer to it as the "show me your papers" law. In an article from May 3 (about two weeks after Arizona's governor signed the immigration bill into law), Marcello Ballve points out that at least ten other states—Utah, Oklahoma, Colorado, Ohio, Missouri, Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Texas, and Maryland—had already introduced legislation "call[ing] for laws that would mirror Arizona's Senate Bill 1070" (Ballve). Rather than representing an isolated incident of a conservative border state taking the immigration issue into its own hands, Arizona's new law seems to have opened up the floodgates for legislators around the country to justify

institutionalized racial profiling as a necessary means to an end. The connection between this labeling of the immigrant other and Bush's labeling of the terrorist other is striking, since proponents depict "enhanced" law enforcement as a defensive measure—designed to protect *us* from *them*. John McCain, who was once extremely moderate on the issue of immigration, adamantly defended Arizona's new law before the Senate. As cited by Chris Good in *The Atlantic*, McCain dismissed concerns about racial profiling by claiming: "Many viewed this as a civil rights issue. There is no intention whatsoever to violate anyone's civil rights, but this is a national security issue" (Good). Just as Bush's rhetoric highlighted a distinction between those who intentionally harm civilians (terrorists) and those who might accidentally harm civilians (US policy makers and the US military), McCain justifies Arizona's law by claiming any (inevitable) violations of civil rights will not be intentional. Furthermore, by invoking national security concerns as justification for racial profiling, the language of McCain (and many others) invokes the same type of *means to an end* logic employed by the Bush administration: given the high stakes context (whatever that may be), sacrificing civil liberties can be framed as essential to promoting the safety of (mainstream) American citizens. This type of discourse, especially when it goes unchecked, represents a serious threat to the integrity of our democracy.

All citizens have a role to play in the dialogue surrounding this issue. Do we want to live in a country where racial profiling is normalized or legalized? Do we believe that some ethnic/cultural/religious groups are inherently more *American* than others? Do we feel unsafe when interacting with people who appear different from us? Those of us who intuitively answer *no* to these questions definitely have our work cut out for us—because

it seems like mainstream America is becoming more and more willing to tolerate (or, at least, turn the other way when confronted with) racialized politics. North Carolina has recently adopted the controversial 287(g) program, which gives local police the authority to enforce national immigration laws. This program is similar to many that have been instituted nationwide to give law enforcement officers “the additional tools they need” to help fight illegal immigration. The number of minority citizens who have been arrested and detained (unconstitutionally, but apparently not illegally) has skyrocketed. Though advocacy groups are working tirelessly to fight discriminatory programs, the mainstream public has yet to respond in a vocal or forceful way. Until we start talking about these policies and raising difficult questions, it’s hard to imagine how the disturbing trend of racialization is going to turn around.

The media certainly has a role to play here as well. For instance, by calling attention to South Carolina state Senator Jake Knotts’s racist condemnation of Indian-American gubernatorial candidate Nikki Haley, vigilant reporters may have effectively ended the career of a vocal bigot and paved the way for a woman of color to play a major role in state politics (Seitz-Wald). Knotts claimed, “We already got one raghead in the White House. We don’t need a raghead in the governor’s mansion;” he then defended his statement by asserting, “We’re at war over there” (Seitz-Wald). Knotts’s unapologetic use of a racial slur to associate seemingly all leaders of color with the agenda of America’s enemies has only bolstered Haley’s public appeal in recent surveys and thus seems represent a political tactic that completely backfired—effectively empowering rather than marginalizing a minority candidate. However, without swift and aggressive reporting, many similar comments go unnoticed except by those who are sympathetic

with racist views or who are directly affected by them. We must encourage our media outlets to acknowledge and confront racism every time it becomes apparent—especially when employed as a political tool by those with established positions of power.

Additionally, those of us working in the realm of academia have a similar responsibility to highlight the way in which language can be used in public discourse to “other” individuals who look, act, or speak in a way that seems different (from the perspective of the mainstream). By calling attention to and problematizing the (sometimes overt, sometimes subtle) manifestation of violence as a result of divisive rhetoric, we can include a younger generation of Americans in the ongoing task of resisting oppression—using education and conversation as implements of social change. As the legacy of Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric continues to impact race relations in the United States, it will take a dedicated and concerted effort to reverse this anti-democratic trend and help reinvest our national psyche with a common affirmation of diversity and celebration of engaged dialogue.

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APPENDIX A: 9/11/01, PRESIDENT BUSH SPEAKING FROM BOOKER  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN FLORIDA SHORTLY AFTER 9:00 AM

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a difficult moment for America. I unfortunately will be going back to Washington after my remarks. Secretary Rod Paige and the lieutenant governor will take the podium and discuss education. I do want to thank the folks here at the Booker Elementary School for their hospitality.

Today we've had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country. I have spoken to the vice president, to the governor of New York, to the director of the FBI, and I've ordered that the full resources of the federal government go to help the victims and their families and to conduct a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act.

Terrorism against our nation will not stand. And now if you join me in a moment of silence.

May God bless the victims, their families and America. Thank you very much.

APPENDIX B: 9/11/01, PRESIDENT BUSH SPEAKING FROM BARKSDALE AIR  
FORCE BASE IN LOUISIANA AT APPROXIMATELY 1:00 PM

Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended.

I want to reassure the American people that the full resources of the federal government are working to assist local authorities to save lives and to help the victims of these attacks.

Make no mistake: The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts. I've been in regular contact with the vice president, secretary of defense, the national security team and my Cabinet. We have taken all appropriate security precautions to protect the American people. Our military at home and around the world is on high-alert status and we have taken the necessary security precautions to continue the functions of your government. We have been in touch with the leaders of Congress and with world leaders to assure them that we will do whatever is necessary to protect America and Americans.

I ask the American people to join me in saying a thanks for all the folks who have been fighting hard to rescue our fellow citizens and to join me in saying a prayer for the victims and their families.

The resolve of our great nation is being tested. But make no mistake: We will show the world that we will pass this test. God bless.

APPENDIX C: 9/11/01, PRESIDENT BUSH ADDRESSING THE NATION FROM  
THE OVAL OFFICE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. AT 8:30 P.M.

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts.

The victims were in airplanes or in their offices -- secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers. Moms and dads. Friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation.

Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.

America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature, and we responded with the best of America, with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could. Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency



response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C., to help with local rescue efforts.

Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks. The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business as well.

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources for our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance. America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.

Tonight I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me."

This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.

Thank you. Good night and God bless America.

APPENDIX D: 9/14/01, PRESIDENT BUSH SPEAKING DURING THE NATIONAL  
DAY OF PRAYER AND REMEMBRANCE SERVICE AT THE EPISCOPAL  
NATIONAL CATHEDRAL IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

We are here in the middle hour of our grief. So many have suffered so great a loss, and today we express our nation's sorrow. We come before God to pray for the missing and the dead, and for those who loved them.

On Tuesday, our country was attacked with deliberate and massive cruelty. We have seen the images of fire and ashes and bent steel. Now come the names, the list of casualties we are only beginning. They are the names of men and women who began their day at a desk or in an airport, busy with life. They are the names of people who faced death and in their last moments called home to say, "Be brave and I love you."

They are the names of passengers who defied their murderers and prevented the murder of others on the ground. They are the names of men and women who wore the uniform of the United States and died at their posts. They are the names of rescuers -- the ones whom death found running up the stairs and into the fires to help others.

We will read all these names. We will linger over them and learn their stories, and many Americans will weep. To the children and parents and spouses and families and friends of the lost, we offer the deepest sympathy of the nation. And I assure you, you are not alone.

Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history, but our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil. War has been waged against us by stealth and deceit and

murder. This nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger. This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others; it will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing.

Our purpose as a nation is firm, yet our wounds as a people are recent and unhealed and lead us to pray. In many of our prayers this week, there's a searching and an honesty. At St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, on Tuesday, a woman said, "I pray to God to give us a sign that he's still here." Others have prayed for the same, searching hospital to hospital, carrying pictures of those still missing.

God's signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own, yet the prayers of private suffering, whether in our homes or in this great cathedral are known and heard and understood. There are prayers that help us last through the day or endure the night. There are prayers of friends and strangers that give us strength for the journey, and there are prayers that yield our will to a will greater than our own. This world He created is of moral design.

Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance and love have no end, and the Lord of life holds all who die and all who mourn. It is said that adversity introduces us to ourselves. This is true of a nation as well.

In this trial, we have been reminded and the world has seen that our fellow Americans are generous and kind, resourceful and brave. We see our national character in rescuers working past exhaustion, in long lines of blood donors, in thousands of citizens who have asked to work and serve in any way possible. And we have seen our national character in eloquent acts of sacrifice.

Inside the World Trade Center, one man who could have saved himself stayed until the end and at the side of his quadriplegic friend. A beloved priest died giving the

last rites to a firefighter. Two office workers, finding a disabled stranger, carried her down 68 floors to safety. A group of men drove through the night from Dallas to Washington to bring skin grafts for burned victims.

In these acts and many others, Americans showed a deep commitment to one another and in an abiding love for our country. Today, we feel what Franklin Roosevelt called, "the warm courage of national unity." This is a unity of every faith and every background. This has joined together political parties and both houses of Congress. It is evident in services of prayer and candlelight vigils and American flags, which are displayed in pride and waved in defiance.

Our unity is a kinship of grief and a steadfast resolve to prevail against our enemies. And this unity against terror is now extending across the world. America is a nation full of good fortune, with so much to be grateful for, but we are not spared from suffering. In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender, and the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time.

On this national day of prayer and remembrance, we ask almighty God to watch over our nation and grant us patience and resolve in all that is to come. We pray that He will comfort and console those who now walk in sorrow. We thank Him for each life we now must mourn, and the promise of a life to come. As we've been assured, neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth can separate us from God's love. May He bless the souls of the departed. May He comfort our own. And may He always guide our country. God bless America.

APPENDIX E: 9/16/01, PRESIDENT BUSH RESPONDING TO REPORTERS'  
QUESTIONS ON THE WHITE HOUSE LAWN BEGINNING AT 3:23 P.M.

THE PRESIDENT: Today, millions of Americans mourned and prayed, and tomorrow we go back to work. Today, people from all walks of life gave thanks for the heroes; they mourn the dead; they ask for God's good graces on the families who mourn, and tomorrow the good people of America go back to their shops, their fields, American factories, and go back to work.

Our nation was horrified, but it's not going to be terrorized. We're a great nation. We're a nation of resolve. We're a nation that can't be cowed by evil-doers. I've got great faith in the American people. If the American people had seen what I had seen in New York City, you'd have great faith, too. You'd have faith in the hard work of the rescuers; you'd have great faith because of the desire for people to do what's right for America; you'd have great faith because of the compassion and love that our fellow Americans are showing each other in times of need.

I also have faith in our military. And we have got a job to do—just like the farmers and ranchers and business owners and factory workers have a job to do. My administration has a job to do, and we're going to do it. We will rid the world of the evil-doers. We will call together freedom loving people to fight terrorism.

And on this day of—on the Lord's Day, I say to my fellow Americans, thank you for your prayers, thank you for your compassion, thank you for your love for one another. And tomorrow when you get back to work, work hard like you always have. But we've been warned. We've been warned there are evil people in this world. We've been warned

so vividly—and we'll be alert. Your government is alert. The governors and mayors are alert that evil folks still lurk out there.

As I said yesterday, people have declared war on America, and they have made a terrible mistake, because this is a fabulous country. Our economy will come back. We'll still be the best farmers and ranchers in the world. We're still the most innovative entrepreneurs in the world. On this day of faith, I've never had more faith in America than I have right now.

Q: Mr. President, are you worried this crisis might send us into a recession?

THE PRESIDENT: David, I understand that there are some businesses that hurt as a result of this crisis. Obviously, New York City hurts. Congress acted quickly. We worked together, the White House and the Congress, to pass a significant supplemental. A lot of that money was dedicated to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, as it should be. People will be amazed at how quickly we rebuild New York; how quickly people come together to really wipe away the rubble and show the world that we're still the strongest nation in the world.

But I have great faith in the resiliency of the economy. And no question about it, this incident affected our economy, but the markets open tomorrow, people go back to work and we'll show the world.

Q: Mr. President, do you believe Osama bin Laden's denial that he had anything to do with this?

THE PRESIDENT: No question he is the prime suspect. No question about that.

Q: Mr. President, can you describe your conversation with the President of Pakistan and the specific comments he made to you? And, in addition to that, do you see other—you've asked Saudi Arabia to help out, other countries?

THE PRESIDENT: John, I will—obviously, I made a call to the leader of Pakistan. We had a very good, open conversation. And there is no question that he wants to cooperate with the United States. I'm not at liberty to detail specifically what we have asked him to do. In the course of this conduct of this war against terrorism, I'll be asked a lot, and members of my administration will be asked a lot of questions about our strategies and tactics. And in order to protect the lives of people that will be involved in different operations, I'm not at liberty to talk about it and I won't talk about it.

But I can tell you that the response from Pakistan; Prime Minister Vajpayee today, of India, Saudi Arabia, has been very positive and very straightforward. They know what my intentions are. They know my intentions are to find those who did this, find those who encouraged them, find them who house them, find those who comfort them, and bring them to justice.

I made that very clear. There is no doubt in anybody's mind with whom I've had a conversation about the intent of the United States. I gave them ample opportunity to say they were uncomfortable with our goal. And the leaders you've asked about have said they were comfortable. They said, we understand, Mr. President, and we're with you.

Q: Mr. President, the Attorney General is going to ask for enhanced law enforcement authority to surveil and—things to disrupt terrorism that might be planned here in the United States. What will that mean for the rights of Americans? What will that mean...



THE PRESIDENT: Terry, I ask you to talk to the Attorney General about that subject. He'll be prepared to talk about it publicly at some point in time. But what he is doing is, he's reflecting what I said earlier in my statement, that we're facing a new kind of enemy, somebody so barbaric that they would fly airplanes into buildings full of innocent people. And, therefore, we have to be on alert in America. We're a nation of law, a nation of civil rights. We're also a nation under attack. And the Attorney General will address that in a way that I think the American people will understand.

We need to go back to work tomorrow and we will. But we need to be alert to the fact that these evil-doers still exist. We haven't seen this kind of barbarism in a long period of time. No one could have conceivably imagined suicide bombers burrowing into our society and then emerging all in the same day to fly their aircraft—fly U.S. aircraft into buildings full of innocent people—and show no remorse. This is a new kind of—a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This Crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient.

But I can assure the American people I am determined, I'm not going to be distracted, I will keep my focus to make sure that not only are these brought to justice, but anybody who's been associated will be brought to justice. Those who harbor terrorists will be brought to justice. It is time for us to win the first war of the 21st century decisively, so that our children and our grandchildren can live peacefully into the 21st century.

Q: Mr. President, you've declared we're at war and asked those who wear the uniform to get ready. Should the American public also be ready for the possibility of casualties in this war?

THE PRESIDENT: Patsy, the American people should know that my administration is determined to find, to get them running and to hunt them down, those who did this to America. Now, I want to remind the American people that the prime suspect's organization is in a lot of countries—it's a widespread organization based upon one thing: terrorizing. They can't stand freedom; they hate what America stands for. So this will be a long campaign, a determined campaign—a campaign that will use the resources of the United States to win.

They have roused a mighty giant. And make no mistake about it: we're determined. Oh, there will be times when people don't have this incident on their minds, I understand that. There will be times down the road where citizens will be concerned about other matters, and I completely understand that. But this administration, along with those friends of ours who are willing to stand with us all the way through will do what it takes to rout terrorism out of the world.

Q: Mr. President, in your conversation with Pakistan's leader, was there any request or demand you made of him that he failed to satisfy?

THE PRESIDENT: The leader of Pakistan has been very cooperative. He has agreed with our requests to aid our nation to hunt down, to find, to smoke out of their holes the terrorist organization that is the prime suspect. And I am pleased with his response. We will continue to work with Pakistan and India. We will work with Russia. We will work with the nations that one would have thought a couple of years ago would

have been impossible to work with—to bring people to justice. But more than that, to win the war against terrorist activity.

The American people are used to a conflict where there was a beachhead or a desert to cross or known military targets. That may occur. But right now we're facing people who hit and run. They hide in caves. We'll get them out.

The other day I said, not only will we find those who have affected America, or who might affect America in the future, we'll also deal with those who harbor them.

Q: Mr. President, would you confirm what the Vice President said this morning, that at one point during this crisis you gave an order to shoot down any civilian airliner that approached the Capitol? Was that a difficult decision to make?

THE PRESIDENT: I gave our military the orders necessary to protect Americans, do whatever it would take to protect Americans. And of course that's difficult. Never did anybody's thought process about how to protect America did we ever think that the evil-doers would fly not one, but four commercial aircraft into precious U.S. targets—never. And so, obviously, when I was told what was taking place, when I was informed that an unidentified aircraft was headed to the heart of the capital, I was concerned. I wasn't concerned about my decision; I was more concerned about the lives of innocent Americans. I had realized there on the ground in Florida we were under attack. But never did I dream we would have been under attack this way.

That's why I say to the American people we've never seen this kind of evil before. But the evil-doers have never seen the American people in action before, either—and they're about to find out.

Thank you all very much.

APPENDIX F: 9/20/01, PRESIDENT BUSH ADDRESSING A JOINT SESSION OF  
CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FROM THE HOUSE FLOOR

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore, members of Congress, and fellow Americans, in the normal course of events, presidents come to this chamber to report on the state of the union. Tonight, no such report is needed; it has already been delivered by the American people. We have seen it in the courage of passengers who rushed terrorists to save others on the ground. Passengers like an exceptional man named Todd Beamer. And would you please help me welcome his wife Lisa Beamer here tonight?

(APPLAUSE)

We have seen the state of our union in the endurance of rescuers working past exhaustion. We've seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers in English, Hebrew and Arabic. We have seen the decency of a loving and giving people who have made the grief of strangers their own. My fellow citizens, for the last nine days, the entire world has seen for itself the state of union, and it is strong.

(APPLAUSE)

Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

(APPLAUSE)

I thank the Congress for its leadership at such an important time. All of America was touched on the evening of the tragedy to see Republicans and Democrats joined

together on the steps of this Capitol singing "God Bless America." And you did more than sing. You acted, by delivering \$40 billion to rebuild our communities and meet the needs of our military. Speaker Hastert, Minority Leader Gephardt, Majority Leader Daschle and Senator Lott, I thank you for your friendship, for your leadership and for your service to our country.

(APPLAUSE)

And on behalf of the American people, I thank the world for its outpouring of support. America will never forget the sounds of our national anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate.

We will not forget South Korean children gathering to pray outside our embassy in Seoul, or the prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque in Cairo. We will not forget moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia and Africa and Latin America. Nor will we forget the citizens of 80 other nations who died with our own. Dozens of Pakistanis, more than 130 Israelis, more than 250 citizens of India, men and women from El Salvador, Iran, Mexico and Japan, and hundreds of British citizens. America has no truer friend than Great Britain.

(APPLAUSE)

Once again, we are joined together in a great cause. I'm so honored the British prime minister has crossed an ocean to show his unity with America. Thank you for coming, friend.

(APPLAUSE)

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years they have been wars on

foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war, but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.

Americans have many questions tonight. Americans are asking, "Who attacked our country?" The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda. They are some of the murderers indicted for bombing American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya and responsible for bombing the USS Cole.

Al Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money, its goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere. The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics; a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam.

The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children. This group and its leader, a person named Osama bin Laden, are linked to many other organizations in different countries, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan where they are trained in the tactics of terror. They are sent back to their

homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction. The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan we see al Qaeda's vision for the world. Afghanistan's people have been brutalized, many are starving and many have fled.

Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough. The United States respects the people of Afghanistan -- after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid -- but we condemn the Taliban regime.

(APPLAUSE)

It is not only repressing its own people, it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder. And tonight the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban:

-- Deliver to United States authorities all of the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide in your land.

-- Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens you have unjustly imprisoned.

-- Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country.

-- Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. And hand over every terrorist and every person and their support structure to appropriate authorities.

-- Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating.

These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion.

(APPLAUSE)

The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate. I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah.

(APPLAUSE)

The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends. It is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them.

(APPLAUSE)

Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.

(APPLAUSE)

Americans are asking, "Why do they hate us?" They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.



They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.

These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us because we stand in their way.

We're not deceived by their pretenses to piety. We have seen their kind before. They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies.

Americans are asking, "How will we fight and win this war?" We will direct every resource at our command—every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war—to the destruction and to the defeat of the global terror network.

Now, this war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat. Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes visible on TV and covert operations secret even in success.

We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.

From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. Our nation has been put on notice, we're not immune from attack. We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans. Today, dozens of federal departments and agencies, as well as state and local governments, have responsibilities affecting homeland security.

These efforts must be coordinated at the highest level. So tonight, I announce the creation of a Cabinet-level position reporting directly to me, the Office of Homeland Security. And tonight, I also announce a distinguished American to lead this effort, to strengthen American security: a military veteran, an effective governor, a true patriot, a trusted friend, Pennsylvania's Tom Ridge. He will lead, oversee and coordinate a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard our country against terrorism and respond to any attacks that may come. These measures are essential. The only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it and destroy it where it grows.

Many will be involved in this effort, from FBI agents, to intelligence operatives, to the reservists we have called to active duty. All deserve our thanks, and all have our prayers. And tonight a few miles from the damaged Pentagon, I have a message for our military: Be ready. I have called the armed forces to alert, and there is a reason. The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud.

This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom. We ask every nation to join us. We will ask and we will need the help of police forces, intelligence service and banking systems around the world. The United States is grateful that many nations and many international organizations have already responded with sympathy and with support—nations from Latin America to Asia to Africa to Europe to the Islamic world.

Perhaps the NATO charter reflects best the attitude of the world: “An attack on one is an attack on all.” The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next. Terror unanswered can not only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments.

And you know what? We're not going to allow it.

(APPLAUSE)

Americans are asking, “What is expected of us?” I ask you to live your lives and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat. I ask you to uphold the values of America and remember why so many have come here. We're in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith.

I ask you to continue to support the victims of this tragedy with your contributions. Those who want to give can go to a central source of information, [Libertyunites.org](http://Libertyunites.org), to find the names of groups providing direct help in New York,

Pennsylvania and Virginia. The thousands of FBI agents who are now at work in this investigation may need your cooperation, and I ask you to give it. I ask for your patience with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security and for your patience in what will be a long struggle.

I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. Terrorists attacked a symbol of American prosperity; they did not touch its source. America is successful because of the hard work and creativity and enterprise of our people. These were the true strengths of our economy before September 11, and they are our strengths today.

And finally, please continue praying for the victims of terror and their families, for those in uniform and for our great country. Prayer has comforted us in sorrow and will help strengthen us for the journey ahead. Tonight I thank my fellow Americans for what you have already done and for what you will do. And ladies and gentlemen of the Congress, I thank you, their representatives, for what you have already done and for what we will do together.

Tonight we face new and sudden national challenges. We will come together to improve air safety, to dramatically expand the number of air marshals on domestic flights and take new measures to prevent hijacking. We will come together to promote stability and keep our airlines flying with direct assistance during this emergency.

(APPLAUSE)

We will come together to give law enforcement the additional tools it needs to track down terror here at home. We will come together to strengthen our intelligence

capabilities to know the plans of terrorists before they act and to find them before they strike.

(APPLAUSE)

We will come together to take active steps that strengthen America's economy and put our people back to work. Tonight, we welcome two leaders who embody the extraordinary spirit of all New Yorkers, Governor George Pataki and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. As a symbol of America's resolve, my administration will work with Congress and these two leaders to show the world that we will rebuild New York City.

After all that has just passed, all the lives taken and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them, it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead and dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror. This will be an age of liberty here and across the world.

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us.

Our nation, this generation, will lift the dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter and we will not fail.

(APPLAUSE)

It is my hope that in the months and years ahead life will return almost to normal. We'll go back to our lives and routines and that is good. Even grief recedes with time and grace.

But our resolve must not pass. Each of us will remember what happened that day and to whom it happened. We will remember the moment the news came, where we were and what we were doing. Some will remember an image of a fire or story or rescue. Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever. And I will carry this. It is the police shield of a man named George Howard who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others. It was given to me by his mom, Arlene, as a proud memorial to her son. It is my reminder of lives that ended and a task that does not end.

I will not forget the wound to our country and those who inflicted it. I will not yield, I will not rest, I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people. The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.

(APPLAUSE)

Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice, assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come.

In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom and may he watch over the United States of America. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)