



America's Community Resilience

Remarks by Mayor Michael O'Connor

September 11, 2018

Delivered during event at Winchester Hall

Sponsored by Frederick County, The City of Frederick and Fort Detrick

On this day, when we come together to honor and remember the people, the bravery, the loss and the story of a day we will not forget, we also take stock of who we are, as a people, and as a community.

All of us who watched and experienced that day unfold are more than survivors of a terrorist attack on our country. We, who experienced that awful day, and those who we tell our stories to, must guard the bedrock values of a country and strive to rise above nationalism and tribalism.

Like the iconic image of the weary firefighter at the World Trade Center handing off the American flag to a military serviceman to carry, we take on the responsibility, with strength of heart, to carry forward our best values and the best hope for our future.

The sad truth of that day need not define us, nor define our history into "pre" or "post" 9/11. On that day, hijackers did use four airplanes in an attack that killed nearly 3,000 people. And while the horror of that experience took away some of our innocence, it did not change what it means to be an American, but rather it breathed a new energy into our American spirit.

We must continue to commit ourselves more than ever to examine what American exceptionalism means, and, for those of us who love this country the dearest, to look realistically at it, to demand adherence to what is right and good, and to expect us all to strive to do better where better is called for.

The grief that naturally gripped us after 9/11 does not stop us from living the fullest, best lives we can; in fact it reminds us to do just that and makes it possible for all our residents to have that opportunity.

No, we will never forget: Not the innocent lives lost that day, not the everyday heroes who evacuated 500,000 people by boat from Manhattan, not the heroes at the Pentagon, not the heroes of Flight 93, not the physical and emotional wounds that scarred first responders and families of those who died, not the heroism of first responders and military service members who continue to meet the challenge in the 17 years since 9/11.

And so it is that September 11th has become a National Day of Service. Together we have turned the tragic anniversary into a tribute and an opportunity.

The memory and inspiration taken from 9/11 are found in everyday acts of kindness, in the commitment by those who govern to equitably establish laws, and by those who administer justice to do so fairly. We honor the memory of the day when we establish care for first responders injured in the line of duty, and in our vigilance to be ready for any kind of community crisis.

I'm reminded of a quality described by John F. Kennedy; knowing so well about global fears and anxious times, he said, "I'm an idealist without illusions."

Out of the destruction of 9/11 comes a commitment to living our best lives as individuals and as community.

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