

How September 11th, 2001 Changed the World

“Where were you when the world stopped turning on that September day?” Alan Jackson, a world renowned country singer, posed this question in song soon after the terrorist attacks occurred on September 11th, 2001 in New York City, Washington DC, and in a field in Pennsylvania. Today, people ask a similar question. How can a single day, occurring ten years before a person was born, affect a person’s entire life? Unfortunately, the truth behind that question is a very real fact.

I was not alive when the attacks on September 11th, 2001 happened, yet the impacts of that tragic day still affect my life and how I view America. People often talk about events that change the world, mentioning events that feel distant or unreal, like political movements or wars fought long ago. September 11th 2001, or 9-11 as it is often referred to, is one such fateful day. What happened, that day the implications of those events, and the stories of the people who responded to the attacks, have definitely influenced my outlook on the United States in many ways. Remembering the attacks on September 11th, 2001 often leaves me thinking deeply about what it means to be an American, what patriotism looks like, and how fragile our sense of safety is. Over two decades have passed since 9-11 and the effects of that fateful day have shaped my entire life and who I want to be.

Before I fully understood what this day’s events meant, I knew America was a safe country where people could live a life aspiring to their dreams. I heard that the United States was the strongest country in the world. America had a level of security that other nations envied, due to its superior military capability. Yet, after studying September 11, 2001 the illusion of safety and security was shattered. The attacks were carried out by Al-Qaeda, a violent extremist organization responsible for a catastrophic amount of damage, harm and death. They saw the vulnerabilities that most Americans never knew existed, and capitalized on the opportunity. Seeing how such a devastating event could occur on American soil, made me realize that no matter how powerful our country is, it is not immune from danger. America cannot take its safety and security for granted.

The realization that America is not immune from danger further changed my view of America as a people. Instead of seeing the country as untouchable or perfect, I began seeing, a place of real people, a people who were hurt, afraid, and came together when things went wrong. That coming together made America feel more human. When I learned of the firefighters that ran into the World Trade Center to save lives, the passengers on Flight 93 who fought against the terrorists, and the ordinary people who helped strangers escape the buildings, I realized that America’s strength is not just in its government or military, but its strength is in the hearts and wills of the American people. The steadfast bravery of Americans After September 11th highlighted American Patriotism.

Patriotism is a deep, profound love for your country- not because it is perfect, but because it is your country. The attacks that occurred on September 11th, 2001 showed me that patriotism moved people from a deep sense of pride to a deep sense of responsibility.

A responsibility not only to our fellow men, in harms way, but also a responsibility to our nation's freedom that was inadvertently placed in harm's way that fateful September day. Growing up an American, I heard the word "freedom" often from home or school-freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom to live the life you want. Freedom was always portrayed as something guaranteed. Yet, September 11th showed me that liberty is not something we should take for granted. After the attacks, our freedom was compromised. Airports became stricter, security increased throughout the nation, and people started worrying about threats that they never thought about before. Freedom, in my eyes, became something we must protect for it is not guaranteed. Freedom can be easily lost, if people are not willing to come together and fight for liberty. September 11th, 2001 has drastically made me more patriotic. Reflecting on the people lost that day, the people who risked their lives to save others, and their courage and sacrifice makes me want to be a part of something bigger than myself. I can see the greatness of America in myself.

The events of September 11th, 2001 also evoke, thoughts on unity. Today, America is divided in so many ways,- socially, politically, culturally. When I watch footage or read accounts from the days following the attacks, I see a country that came together in a way that feels almost impossible now. People did not argue differences; they were focused on helping each other, comforting each other, and rebuilding America. That unity did not erase the tragedy, it showed that common foundation Americans have free of differences that divide.

Despite being born a decade after September 11th, 2001, the catastrophic and horrific events have shaped my view of America for the better. I appreciate the people who protect us. I appreciate the first responders, the service members of the Department of War and those who serve in the Department of Homeland Security. I value the freedoms we have. The freedoms that make America great, and allow anyone to achieve their own American dream. I am thankful for our national unity. The same national unity that often hides behind temporary differences, but shines brightly in times of adversity. Though the events illustrated our vulnerabilities and highlighted how we are not perfect, learning about 9-11 has made me want to be someone who contributes positively to the country, to ensure our way of freedom is not lost. America was forever changed on September 11, 2001. America's courage, strength, and compassion were forged by the broken steel of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in the fields of Pennsylvania. Those tested American

characteristics are what I feel connected to. That is the America I'm proud of. That's the America that shaped who I am and how I see America.