

Remarks at Voices of September 11th Luncheon

I am honored indeed to be here with all of you, and I thank you so much, Mary, and I thank each and every one of you who have been part of what Voices of September 11th has meant to families and also to our nation. I had the privilege this morning of spending about an hour and a half down by the memorial and meeting with and talking to and listening to a lot of the families who were seeing it for the first time.

Like many of them, I had resisted going before it was complete, because I didn't want to see something still in process; I wanted to see it finished. And like many of them, I had looked at the pictures of the plans and I couldn't quite envision what it would look like. And I came away this morning so grateful, because the memorial provides a place for people to come to reflect, to remember, to be close to their loved one. And so many this morning said to me that it was an enormous comfort.

I am convinced that many of the actions, the reforms, the changes that we have taken in our country in the last 10 years are due, in large measure, to the Voices of September 11th families. And many of you turned your grief into a commitment on behalf of those you lost and on behalf of the nation that mourned with you.

I know Mary had an idea in her mind that she wanted to be active after losing her 24-year-old son Brad. But as

she just confessed, I don't think she fully grasped what that would mean. People rank what they're most afraid of, and even today at the top of the list public speaking is the number one fear. And there was Mary and Beverly and others who were stepping forward who had never given a thought to being on a public stage speaking to hundreds, even thousands, of their fellow citizens. But in this case, it was absolutely essential, and I thank you for being willing to do that, Mary. And we all grieve Beverly's loss, who started this organization with you.

I remember Mary telling me in those early meetings that she wanted to ensure that nobody else had to walk in her shoes. And family members began asking the questions about what happened and why. And when the Voices of September 11th was founded, you carried through with your questions by being the catalyst behind the creation of the 9/11 Commission. It was family members who began poring over the details of skyscraper security, radio interoperability, government reform. And you didn't take no for an answer, and for that, again, I am grateful.

Some of you had a time when you had to ask yourself why, what, and who, me. Somebody else needs to do this, you perhaps thought. Somebody else needs to take the leadership in trying

to get the answers. And you looked around and realized that, really, it had to be you. Those of us who were in public service at the time stood ready to help, but I am convinced that we would not have succeeded without your perseverance and your persistence.

As a senator, I was proud to bring your cause to Congress, to represent victims and families. And the work is not finished. There are still specific tasks coming out even 10 years later. The continuing need for medical care for those who were on the pile – they still need our support. As the members of the 9/11 Commission just made clear recently, many of their recommendations still need to be enacted.

As we commemorate the opening of the memorial, we know that we still have work to do to bring all those who were part of attacking us to justice. But I can tell you it was a particular satisfaction for me, as a former senator of New York, to be in the team in the Obama Administration that made sure bin Ladin was brought to justice. (Applause.)

As I have said and as President Obama has said, we will not rest until all those who were part of planning and facilitating the attacks are similarly brought to justice. We are capturing and killing terrorists. We are disrupting cells and conspiracies. And as the 9/11 Commission asked us to, we are breaking down the

bureaucratic silos inside the Executive Branch and working across the whole of government.

We do have to recognize that we are engaged in a long-term struggle to face down and defeat the murderous ideology that continues to incite violence around the world. And while we will never give up our right to use military force as needed, we have to use every tool in our arsenal.

I gave a speech Friday at John Jay College outlining the many efforts that we are undertaking. I can tell you that the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development that are under my authority are working to blunt the drivers of extremism. We are putting a decade's worth of lessons to work to launch targeted efforts to undermine terrorist recruitment. We are working along with a coalition of other nations to choke off the illicit financing networks that pay for terrorist training camps, the propaganda and the operations. We are building the capacity of other nations to deal with terrorist threats that they face before they challenge the people of those countries or us. We are training thousands of police and anti-terrorism officials across the globe, and we are creating new forums for nations to deepen our counterterrorism cooperation.

Our diplomats are out in the field and in cyberspace exposing al-Qaida's hypocrisy and brutality, and the enormous toll it has inflicted, above all, on Muslims. Even though the United States, thankfully, has not experienced another attack since 9/11, London has, Madrid has, Mumbai has, Islamabad has, Jakarta, Bali – other places continue to be attacked. And we want to make sure that every person understands that these violent extremists are not representing any religion. They are representing evil and nihilism, and they need to be stopped by all people.

We don't just want to capture and kill terrorist leaders. We want to make them irrelevant. We want to prevent them from attracting new recruits. We want to end the attraction they have for young people.

Now, we're making progress, but this weekend's threats are one more reminder that we still face danger and we have to stay vigilant. We have to keep our eye on what we are fighting against, but we also have to remember what we are fighting for. Because our goal, after all, is not merely to defeat our enemies, but to represent the best of humanity, the values and traditions that are America at our core.

Our struggle against terrorism is rooted in our

strengths as a society, and one of those strengths is resilience. Resilience has been a theme of this organization. How does one nurture it? How does one create it where it is absent? Think about what each of you has gone through. Before September 11, 2001, the people in this room would have been strangers to one another. Now, you are a community – not of your choosing, but because of the circumstance of your loss.

But that community has reached out to now 13,000 families. That community has a website which, as Mary just told me, has millions and millions of hits. Because it is, of course, first and foremost, about our particular loss in New York, in Washington, and in Pennsylvania. But resilience is sought after by people far from New York who are wondering what they too can do to survive a tragedy, to channel their grief, to be part of a new community.

I don't need to tell you what a difficult decade America has had or list for you the challenges we face. But I will say this: America's strength and leadership in the world is more important today than it has ever been. This country is called to greatness. We are charged to be a force for good. And we must summon that spirit, those feelings we all had after 9/11.

As one man who lost his wife said, "The way I see it, we're already connected. People don't see it. A fog that makes you forget we are all connected and knitted together instantly got lifted, and we need to get back to that." I know we can, because that's who we are.

I look at all of you and those whom I've met and talked with this morning, and I cannot say I even can imagine the long nights – sleepless, tear-filled, sorrowful – that each of you has experienced. But I have also seen the strength and, yes, the resilience. And today, as I met the woman who brought her lawn chair with her so she could sit down in front of her son's name and tell me for the first time she felt close to him, or the family of a fire chief whom I had the privilege of knowing with now 15 grandchildren clustered around his name taking rubbings, or the child who came up to me and said, "I want to show you where my mother is," it was for me an important place to be – not because I'm a Secretary of State or I used to be a senator, but because I'm a mom, because I'm an American.

And what you did was so American. I am honored to represent our country all across the world. I don't know of any other place that has the history and the

habits of volunteerism, of coming together, of deciding to go forward, the way we do here in this great country of ours. So let us work together to remind not only our country and the world but ourselves who we are, what we're capable of, what we can accomplish when we're at our best, how we face down terror and violence and choose life, choose the future. And let us not stop working together to make that future worthy of the sacrifice of all those whose names appear on the magnificent memorial we saw today.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

**Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
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