

REFLECTIONS FROM A SOCIAL WORK FACULTY ON 9/11

Editor's note: These last four reflections about the impact of 9/11 were written by the director and three faculty members of a Social Work department on the West coast. Faculty were invited to write about the impact of 9/11 on their social work classes after the social work faculty and students met together for two days to share their grief and pain over the tragedies in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania.

The Loneliness of an Administrator in a Crisis Situation

By John Oliver, Ph.D., Director,
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Early in the morning on September 11th, the telephone rang. My first thoughts were that this was probably one of my daughters or a grandchild needing transportation to or from one of their varied activities. On this day, however, while my assumption was correct (it was indeed my daughter); her reason for calling was unfathomable. "Daddy, daddy," she screamed, "turn on the TV, someone has crashed an airplane into the World Trade Center." Without replying, I quietly turned on a TV. My daughter and I continued talking about what we were seeing with both of us expressing dismay and profound sadness as news reporters provided preliminary numbers on human carnage. Before hanging up, I asked her to call her sister to see if she was aware of the event. I reminded her to call me, if my wife or I might be of assistance in helping them to process this tragic event.

My wife and I sat in our den transfixed. As we permitted ourselves to be bombarded by one horrifying image after another for more than one hour, it suddenly occurred to me that this was the morning for our field education laboratory. The field lab is designed to provide students with a review of policies, procedures and practicum expectations. It is also constructed as a forum for students to down-

load anxiety, and to get answers for pressing questions prior to their first day of field. My role in the lab is twofold. One, I'm supposed to review the profession's values and ethical standards, and two, I am entrusted with the task of motivating and inspiring them about the prospect of rendering professional social work services.

Checking my clock I noticed that it was 7:45 am and the lab was slated to begin at 8:30 am. I quickly showered and hurriedly dressed. I was becoming increasingly concerned that over 200 of my students were assembled in an auditorium awash with horrifying images, which for most of them were devoid of a context that could provide meaning. A growing sense of the necessity to be with my students became a singular objective.

When I arrived on campus, I quickly walked the halls where faculty offices are located to determine if colleagues needed assistance. I was unsure as to what I would do to help, but I was hoping that my presence would in some way be reassuring. The faculty offices and hallways would have normally been bustling with activity at this time of the morning. This was not the case. There was an eerie quietness. The atypical stillness was punctuated by flickers of morning sunlight and distance muffled sounds superimposing a surreal quality on a departmental atmosphere characterized by warmth and friendliness.

I remember thinking, "What should I do? Should I call a special faculty meeting so that we might share and discuss our fears, con-

cerns and apprehensions?" "No, no," my inner voice replied. "We should adhere to our vision of students as equal partners, even in time of challenge. We should cancel all classes and call a faculty/student assembly." As I sorted through what felt like endless ideas on how I should respond, a solution never emerged. Competing cognitions about war, societal irreverence toward life, in particular certain lives, and other unresolved socio-historical feelings of social betrayal, unabridged brutality and acceptance of personal insecurity as normal, demanded equal consideration.

Confused and anxious I headed toward the student union, the location of the field education program. The one hundred yard walk from our building to the union seemed to take an eternity. On my walk to the union, I deeply sensed being alone. I remember reflecting on my father and his seemingly uncanny sense of always knowing what to do in troubling situations, and his ability to always summon the courage to do what had to be done. I remember praying and asking daddy to be with me.

When I arrived at the auditorium, the venue was dimly lit and students and faculty were somber and very quiet. I was approached by our Director of Field Education who asked me, "What should we do?" I don't remember what I said, but I'm certain that it was extremely tentative. I was slowly succumbing to the weight of the moment. Unable to reflect on my thoughts, a quick introduction propelled me into the limelight, "Here now is the Director of the Department of Social Work, John Oliver."

I slowly walked to the front of the assembled students and stood there teary eyed and speechless. When my tears receded, my voice returned. In a deliberate and quiet tone, I began by summarizing the factual data related to the tragedy. I then discussed our profession's reverence for life, our commitment to social justice, and our collaborative responsibility toward one another. I told them

that I needed their support, guidance and love, because I was unsure as to what I should do at this moment. I shared my concerns for families who lost loved ones, and my personal guilt, shame and confusion around the mass of conflicting ideas and emotions that had "welled up" inside me. I invited them to turn to colleagues for support, and to openly share their concerns and apprehensions.

Many of the students willingly spoke of not knowing if relatives had been killed. Students cried openly and were comforted by classmates and faculty. The assembly was told that they would be joined by other faculty that would help them to process their feelings regarding the tragedy. The assemblage was eventually divided into self-selected groups, joined by faculty, and together they collectively talked, cried and supported one another.

The insights directly related to the morning of 9/11 are numerous. Although I am an experienced administrator, this made me more aware of the range of tasks associated with leadership. It also made me more aware of the necessity of a common vision to provide meaning and stability in the face of unexpected challenges. The morning of 9/11 also deepened my beliefs in the validity of our collaborative learning environment. We treat all students, faculty and staff as stakeholders. General principles of information sharing, inclusion, maximum autonomy and participatory governance are hallmarks of daily activities. In retrospect, these departmental building blocks facilitate the ease with which student and faculty bonded to transverse this emotional and tragic moment in our history.

On a personal note, a basic lesson learned from my parents was reaffirmed. As mother and daddy would say, "Always be yourself. If you are genuine and sincere, and your motivation is to be of help, those in need will always receive your help and will help you in return." What their teaching suggests is that when you are unsure, use of your genuine,

authentic self is a useful interim response.

Crisis situations test administrators in new and novel ways. This is particularly true of a crisis generated as a consequence of atypical circumstances. 9/11 was such an event. In retrospect, I have asked myself repeatedly if my actions were sufficient. Did I react quickly enough? Were my interventions personable and did I help my students, faculty and staff to feel that their concerns and anxieties were cared about? While I'm not sure that I utilized my leadership skills in ways that significantly impacted their challenge, I am certain that they know I care about their well being.

Faculty Narratives of Post 9/11 Responses

The faculty responded to 9/11 by immediately identifying various ways in which we might infuse our collaborative learning environment with opportunities to mediate the side effects of the tragedy. The article by Professor Lee reflects one nuance of the department's collaborative response to 9/11. This event left most of us wondering how we might be helpful in mediating the myriad consequences of these acts of terrorism. As a department, we decided to sponsor two community wide dialogs, and organize a school-based NASW unit that focused on developing a closer relationship between the university, student and community. It was anticipated that such a unit could lend an uncompromised local voice for equity and social justice. Professor Lee's narrative provided a detailed account of this post 9/11 outcome.

Professor Philip Tan's reflection of his post 9/11 classroom experience is also an outgrowth of our commitment to collaborative approaches to developing a learning community. At the end of the semester, his students were invited to reflect on how 9/11 might have impacted their lives. His summary of their thoughts reflects their needs and willingness to share concerns about the tragedy; the scope and depth of the exposed feelings

could have only surfaced in an inclusive and supportive environment. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of his paper is the explanation of his personal experience of the event. In light of select efforts to cast the expression of certain points of view as un-American or unpatriotic, I applaud his willingness to explain how his culture and formative experiences generated feelings and explanations of 9/11 that are quite different from those of many persons born and reared in the United States. This information most likely proved to be quite valuable for our students by stimulating opportunities for discussion, reflection and critical thinking.

The paper by Paul Abels depicts the range of student concerns and emotions about the event. His paper also aptly demonstrates how narratives might be used to place painful experiences in context by freezing their momentum long enough to analyze and gain insights from them. Narratives are also a means of maximizing individual autonomy and personalization of events, free of external ties that might hinder the emergence of buried feelings and emotions.

Creating an NASW Unit After 9/11

By Cheryl D. Lee, Ph.D.

The shock, pain, and sorrow felt by those in New York, Washington or other locales who witnessed the destruction or lost close family or friends because of September 11 seem incomprehensible to me. Even though I was far from the site of the tragedy, there was a palpable change in me and in my interactions with students and colleagues. This narrative describes my own experience as a faculty member at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and the creation of a new unit of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) on our campus.

I had actually considered forming an

NASW unit long before Sept 11 because Los Angeles County is so large that it would take an hour or more for people in Long Beach to get to the closest NASW meeting. Prior to September 11, I had been to an interesting meeting in a neighboring county. Ironically, it had been about disaster training. I left puzzled by why we did not have an NASW unit in our local community, which is a fairly large city in Southern California and noted for its diverse population. Long Beach is its own community and social workers should have a place to get together and do good things. Over the years, I had attended several NASW meetings in Arizona but felt they were cliquish, run by a few entrenched people, and it was hard to fit in. I knew that if I ever started a unit, I wanted it to be open, welcoming, fun, and with important roles available for everyone to take on.

Community service is a requirement of tenure track faculty. As a new faculty member at CSULB, I was having some trouble getting on a college or university committee. I realized that starting a unit could be a great way to do meaningful community service. Most of my colleagues were discouraging. They said, "Wait until you have tenure," "It's going to be too much work," and "We had one here and no one came." The department's director, John Oliver, encouraged me by saying, "Go for it, it's not that hard to get a unit started. It will be a contribution to our department and our community, and I'll support it." Being a group worker and long time community organizer, I knew I could not do this alone and was not quite sure when to take on this project. I wrote to a community organization professor and asked if a group of students wanted to help me start a unit in Long Beach as their required community project.¹

On September 10, I taught my second group work class and left to drive to the airport to catch a midnight plane to Florida to see my 87-year-old father and then to go on to a technology conference in South Caro-

lina. At 8:45 on the morning of September 11, I landed at the Fort Lauderdale Airport. On the way to my dad's, while listening to the radio, I learned of the attacks on the World Trade Center and that airports were closing. I could not leave Florida because the planes were grounded. I spent extra days glued to the television and talked with my wise father, a proud World War II Veteran who had participated in the Normandy Invasion. He said the 9/11 attack was serious and he was worried about the future of the world. This conversation upset me because he never seemed fazed by most world events. He seemed to think this event was going to affect all of us.

At the end of the week, I flew back to California, never having made it to the technology conference. My students, colleagues, and sons were happy that I made it back safely, and I was happy to be home. Later, I found out that the undergraduate social work students who knew about my trip were worried about me. One student, Cathy², confided, "After the university closed that day, I went home to my tiny apartment and crawled in bed full of anxiety and fear." Mary shouted, "I felt as if I was living through the Northridge Earthquake again and was overwhelmed with feelings of stress."

My group work class, consisting of 12 graduate students in our Older Adults and Family concentration, still reeled from the events of September 11 several weeks later. One student, a wife and mother of several children, was nervous about leaving her family and driving several hours to our campus. Everyone was a bit more edgy than usual, including me. I realized that I was numb about students' meetings of deadlines. It did not seem worth getting upset about small things like wanting an extension on a paper, and the students seemed more tense, especially if other crises were in their lives. In our group work class, we gave support and comfort to each other. I had a vision of the class as a safe environment in which to deal with diffi-

cult times and to receive comfort from each other. There was no need to lecture on mutual aid.

In early October, students started facilitating groups in the class. The first group experience was hilarious. The two student facilitators wanted us older adults to reminisce about the meaning of bread in our lives. I took on the role of my father, Sam, and explained all about challah, the traditional bread eaten on the Jewish Sabbath and other holidays and what it meant in my family. Another student played an older Mexican client who talked about the virtues of tortillas. The two old men fought with each other about the superiority of their bread and everyone was laughing. The facilitators were dismayed because the group was out of control with laughter. They thought something was wrong with their facilitation; rather, it seemed to me that it was just great to be laughing in class after the tense feelings in the aftermath of September 11.

After September 11, I viewed the NASW unit as even more important. We needed a unit in place to deal not only with 9/11 but also with the obvious changes, threats, and anxieties that the future might bring. I could not wait for someone else to do it. The changing landscape of our lives required a new commitment to our profession.

I worked with the four students from the community projects class to initiate the NASW unit. Our first meeting had been scheduled for the week that I returned after September 11. The students came to my office and I introduced myself and asked how they were doing since September 11. One of them burst into tears. After she regained her composure, she explained that she had been very depressed since then. It provoked memories of when her family was living in the South Pacific where several crises had occurred. Her father had been called up from military retirement to help train soldiers for the Persian Gulf War. He left for South Carolina, and she worried that he wouldn't return.

He did return, but died from other causes several months later. It also brought back memories of how frightened she was because of the hurricanes on the island when her family had to evacuate their home due to mud slides. Since September 11, she felt as if the world were ending. Why even bother with school? Her grandmother was sick in Mexico, and her mother left to be with her. She feared that she would not see her mother again due to current world events. Being an only child, she felt that she had no family here in this time of turbulence. Another student was the oldest of many siblings and she was worried about their safety and future. They expressed gratitude at my merely asking how they were doing since September 11, and I was stunned that just asking this question meant so much to them.

We then discussed some reasons for the formation of an NASW unit and what steps needed to be taken. They had decided to do this community project (a class assignment of all CSULB MSW students) because they thought it had potential to change our community far into the future. They wanted to be part of starting and shaping this unit. Yvette explained, "My vision is that it would be a place to go to gain support and to intermingle with more experienced social workers and professors in a different way than the classroom could provide." I was happy to have their help. I thought these students would be able to inspire the faculty who were skeptical, and to bring in members from their own circles of friends among students, faculty, and community members. They made a presentation during our faculty meeting, and everyone became more enthusiastic about this unit when they saw the energy of these four students.

Mark, one of the students in the group work class, thought that we should get together as a department to discuss the meaning of the events of September 11. I encouraged him to talk to our director as I knew

that plans were underway for some sort of activity. A group of faculty, students, and community members planned a half-day conference to dialogue about September 11 in early December. The conference was entitled "Searching for Meaning in Difficult Times." It was agreed that the new NASW unit would be initiated at the end of this conference.

The dialogue was very serious at this conference and was facilitated by two experts on our faculty in conflict resolution, Susan Rice and Rene Castro, community activists. There were participants who stated they wanted peace at all costs, and there were mothers and brothers of people in the U.S. military who supported the war effort. There were participants who themselves had been discriminated against since September 11, and there were those who pointed out that they are discriminated against daily due to their skin color and September 11 was no big deal. Several faculty and students were tearful—still in a quandary about what was wrong in the world. There were some heated discussions about the Arab-Israeli conflict in the small breakout groups. A follow-up session was planned for the spring because it was clear that more discussion needed to take place.

At the end of the conference we ate lunch and had a meeting to kick off the new NASW unit with about 50 prospective members in attendance. Although people seemed drained by the morning dialogue, the unit meeting seemed to offer them hope. I introduced the new unit as a place to figure out things together during these difficult times. The four students who helped initiate the unit facilitated brainstorming about what future members hoped to accomplish with this unit. One faculty member said she hoped the unit would be a grass roots group for political change that would help guide the higher-level state and national organization of NASW. She indicated that she hoped social workers would become more involved and active in promot-

ing social justice during these difficult times. Another faculty member said the most important reason for the local unit is to offer support to each other as social workers. Students wanted to have a chance to network and meet professional social workers. Others wanted to receive education regarding current legislation affecting communities that social workers serve. I wanted to dialogue about international and local issues to help gain perspective and to do meaningful projects related to the aftermath of September 11. Some of my colleagues wanted training on clinical interventions. And so the Long Beach unit of NASW was born. The NASW region in Los Angeles sponsored a holiday party in our area to celebrate the rebirth of this new unit.

I became the chair of our local NASW unit and am still learning what that means. I asked Chauncey Alexander to speak at our first official meeting about "Why Be a Member of NASW and the Historical Context of NASW." Chauncey was a former National Executive Director of NASW, had been a leader in the International Association of Social Workers, and was an esteemed former university professor at CSULB. My worries about attendance were unfounded, and Chauncey spoke to a full house of students, faculty and community members. I was worried how the audience would like the vignettes about his lifetime experiences with NASW. The audience was easily able to recognize his treasures, as was I. He told us to persevere in the face of all the odds against social justice. He said that was more important now than ever in the aftermath of September 11. People of different ethnicities were being profiled as terrorists and would need support. He told us to get involved in social work organizations such as NASW and that we would never regret our involvement. We could accomplish a lot more as a group or an organization. He told us to always be prepared when trying to accomplish important things. Like

my father, this wise social worker made it clear that we were living in very troubled times.

Since this meeting there have been four additional Long Beach NASW unit meetings. Each meeting related in some way to September 11 and forwarded the goals of the unit to support social workers, to gain a better understanding of our community, and to make the world a better place. Speakers led discussions of social work issues in Lithuania, Turkey, Iran, India, South Africa, India, Rumania, Singapore, Cambodia, Israel, Egypt, and Hungary. The focus of one meeting was on our own community of Long Beach and its problems related to housing, health, gangs, education, and poverty. We had a wine and cheese party to celebrate social work month. We got to know each other through small group discussions and made plans for future meetings and projects. Our attendance has far exceeded expectations. We average 45 people at each meeting and our membership list is growing. Members of the unit's board, which is open to anyone who wants to join, have been angels: setting up the room, making flyers, bringing refreshments, planning agendas, arranging for speakers, and cleaning up.

I know that we are living in difficult and different times. As an American Jew, I find reading about the Arab-Israeli war and suicide bombings very painful, and my edginess has not really subsided. My current students seem a bit more focused on their studies than the ones I taught right after 9/11, but I know that this focus can easily be disrupted. Being gentle and supportive of each other rather than being petty and judgmental seems for me the most important lessons of 9/11. Our baby

NASW unit is growing into a full-fledged toddler, and it will be exciting to nurture its growth so that it can be a support to social workers and oppressed populations in our community and in the world. The community projects students and I learned that we cannot delay our professional goals and that we can make a difference with help from our fellow social workers.

End of the Semester Class Reflections on September 11, 2001

By P. Philip Tan

Introduction

It is hard for me to respond to the events of September 11. When I do, I feel that I am out of sync with other people. Thousands of innocent people have died and many more suffered. Lives have been disrupted here in the United States and around the world. It is perhaps that I am an immigrant to the United States and was born and raised in South-East Asia that I look at September 11 differently. When I was growing up, neighboring Indochinese countries were embroiled in political and ideological wars and their people were suffering. Foreign and dominant world powers, including the United States, were involved. Though I did not experience war, I was constantly reminded by the media of the bloodshed, violence, and injustice associated with it. Thus, the attacks of September 11 did not shock me drastically nor have they changed my view of the world much.

In the fall of 2001, I was assigned to teach a course on Wednesday evenings. The attacks of September 11 occurred on the morning of the third Tuesday of that semester. On the evening of the 12th, my class of 27 students met as usual. The difference was that there was an uneasiness among them; much more than I had expected. For the first part of that class I encouraged them to express

¹ Loretta Gonzalez, Maria Sevilla, Esther Vega, and Roxanne Weiner were the four MSW students who helped create the Long Beach NASW Unit.

² Pseudonyms were used in the quotes from students.

their feelings. The students indicated that they were sad, some were distressed, but they all seemed perplexed. They were relieved to be unharmed, however, too many innocent lives had been destroyed. Most of all, the attacks were unprecedented in their lifetime and were unimaginable to most.

As the weeks slowly passed the circumstance and extent of the attacks were better understood. By the end of that semester, the United States was engaging in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, dealing with the lethal anthrax spores found in the mail, and trying to stabilize the declining economy. A greater sense of patriotism had arisen but the public seemed to be gripped in fear and was supportive of whatever the government was planning.

As a closure to that unsettling semester, I invited my students to each write a reflection on how their lives had been impacted by September 11. The following is a summary and some quotes of what they wrote.

*Students' Reflections:
Fear and Confusion*

The immediate responses to the attacks of September 11 were feelings of shock, fear, and confusion. A student who was asleep when the attacks occurred wrote:

I very distinctly recall waking up in a startled manner as my phone was ringing. My mother-in-law said, 'we're being attacked!' When I turned on my TV, I was in shock. I stayed home from work and kept my son from school. I remembered being scared and confused.

Another student remembered:

I began to feel unsettled, fearful, and vulnerable. It was as if we didn't quite know what to expect. I realized just how much we lacked control. At times I still feel somewhat helpless.

Empathy

Students felt very sad for those who had lost their lives. Some reflected on the final moments of the victims:

Those cell phone calls that all of the passengers made to say their last 'goodbyes'. I pondered for many weeks about whom I would have called to say my 'goodbyes' to. It made me very sad to have heard those conversations repeated over and over on the news.

I remember seeing a couple join hands and leap off the building together and they looked somewhat peaceful going down. What desperation one must have had to leap off a building of great heights? It made me question the fight/flight mode that we all have within us. I might have jumped off the building too, to save myself from being burned to death. Chaos, desperation, and helplessness, those were the thoughts that went through my mind for weeks after the attack. I kept thinking about all of the victims.

Students also expressed concern about the survivors of victims and especially for their children. They wondered if these children could ever understand why their parent had died. Some were concerned for those who were made scapegoats because of their ethnicity:

I was also fearful of what would happen to individuals of Arabic Middle Eastern descent and of retaliation against innocent people. I was saddened to see that some people did die or got hurt but I realized that more people could have been targeted. I just hope no one else is injured by ignorant people.

Some students thought that there was a need for forgiveness and were against the

United States using military force. These students envisioned a world where religious and ethnic tolerance existed:

In my view, violence is not the solution because it only teaches children violence and this will create violence. I am upset with the United States, because they have the power to create change in the world, but instead they only added more fuel to a fire.

Myths

Perhaps what I sensed that was most painful to students was that they were forced to change the myths that had been built around them; the illusion that the United States was immune to attacks. Many students were forced to acknowledge that their world, like the rest of humanity's, was not as predictable as they believed it to be. A student reflected:

Growing up and living in the U.S. has given me a false sense of security and about safety. My family lives in Mexico and I could hear about corruption and lack of security in certain parts of that country. It's true that corruption exists in the U.S., but I would always feel safe. The events on 9/11 have made me realize that no matter where you are you are never 100 percent safe.

Students were also forced to see that freedom and civil liberties could be limited even in the United States.

If one is a bit critical about the U.S. going into one of the world's third or fourth poorest country, then you're considered un-American or unpatriotic. That's freedom of speech!...The hours that we have to wait at the airports, the racial profiling that has been going on, this over abundant message to prove to foreigners that we are all united now.

Existentialism

Most expressed a yearning to be in touch with their inner selves and their spirituality. Perceiving life to be fragile, students looked at what was most important to them:

I am more aware of my day-to-day activities and relationships. I treasure moments shared with my loved ones more dearly because I want to make sure they know I love them.

There was also a greater sense of urgency to fulfill life's purpose:

I have steered my course to become a humane, compassionate, and just individual. To live my life by example and to work toward ending hate, bigotry, selfishness, and cruelty. I believe I have a more political activist angle and a need to act on behalf of issues that are salient to me.

Conclusion

As I mentioned, the attacks of September 11 did not shock me drastically. Having lived in different parts of the world and belonging to them, I would say that September 11 strengthened my belief, as a human being and as an educator, that the world is indeed small and that people everywhere are more alike than we are different. We have been socialized to be patriotic; to identify with an ethnic, racial, religious, and political group. The stories we are told and teach of humanity's search for truth, meaning, and significance have taken forms via cultural, religious, national, and religious symbols. Whether we like it or not these myths still support our society, its moral order, and cohesion. However, these myths also make us regard ourselves as favored over others and feel that we have the right to dominate others. In a world of change and with distances shortening, we need to be humble and be willing to understand, teach, and appreciate others' stories as much as our

own. In so doing we need not be intimidated and suspicious of one another, and at the very least, need to safeguard the existence of our planet! Perhaps there will come a time when we can all teach and learn the same universal myths. After all, all of us are seeking the meaning, the experience, and the feeling of being alive!

How Social Work Students Felt on 9/11: Reflections from Student Logs

By Paul Abels, Ph.D.

Instructor's Note

I require each of my classes to keep a log. In that assignment the students are generally asked to note and reflect on items related to the specific course, connections with field practice, and general social work-related material in their current experiences. Relevant items from the media are often mentioned. The items below are a few of their entries on and shortly after 9/11. They were not asked to direct their comments to 9/11, which occurred after their second session. These are all first-semester graduate students.

The content has not been edited except to make sure names, ages, and any other content that might identify them or an agency were removed. Students gave permission for extended quotations to be published. Most also said their names could be used, but all names noted in the excerpts are fictitious. Five students' contributions are presented below. The choices were made to illustrate the variety of reactions. The dates preceding the entry are the dates they were written into the logs. The comments of the other students could have just as easily been included. Some of the students wrote two and three pages on 9/11 in their logs. While they make cogent reading, they are not included in their entirety due to the nature of this presentation. This is a small sample of their reflections.

September 11, 2001

Oh my God.

What can I say. I'm scared. I hurt. I'm stunned. I'm bewildered and confused. All I want to do is cry. And I can't, for I work in a place where I have to be there for others. In between supporting families in their crisis, I tried to fill my own need for information by staying glued to the radio. I am so overrun with feelings and emotions I can't concentrate on anything. The horrid events I saw on TV this morning haunted my day and creep in at a moment of mind's rest. There is no place to quiet the mind. This is terrible and I can't do anything to fix it. I fear what is to come next. (Alice)

September 11, 2001

Very frightening stuff on the news. 400 phone calls back East, so far so good thank God. Work was calm. Almost quiet. Staff looking shell shocked; patients no showing; kids in our adolescent program who are usually very "cool" visibly upset....I just keep breathing and praying for peace and that George W. does not so anything too rash and am glad his father and Mr. Cheney tend to be knowledgeable folks that might guide him along. (Jean)

September 11-20, 2001

(Various students)

This was a tragic day for America with the destruction in New York and Washington D.C. Just within my own family I witnessed the affects of violence on children and adults.

A day of amazing destruction and terror! Thousands needing to be calmed and cared for - Social Workers to the rescue! I am certain that New Yorkers will not be

alone in their despair...

I am hearing people talk about being suspect of people with Mid-Eastern accents and I worry that we will repeat the mistakes of World War II.

Does my country understand that this is World War III?

Driving around with flags on their cars. Do they truly understand why they are waving the flag or are they caught up in the hype and propaganda?

September 13, 2001

I have had a few ideas in the past weeks and I've said, "Aha, I'll put those in the log," and I meant to, and should have and could have, but I didn't. Meanwhile 9/11/01 has passed and the world is a different place. I am preoccupied with what has happened to us and I would like to share some thoughts.

I am wary, though, that I might run on and my thoughts might be too emotional in tenor or the intent can be a personal catharsis rather than a discussion of ideas but nevertheless I can not focus on other issues now.

I picked up the New York Times yesterday but I didn't read it during the day, and in the evening, I found myself watching TV non-stop while simultaneously being on call for (name of agency). I thought how interesting to juxtapose my time between calls concerning...with the vivid and repetitive images/commentary.....

At work, we talk we talk in groups about our distaste for war rhetoric and retribution. The answers are not an "easy fix", solace can not be found in more pain. Don't we know better? Aren't we all brothers and sisters? It is a time of sadness and grieving, not anger. Yet...if I had a loved one needlessly die, after the shock there would be less objectivity and

more anger. I am not completely devoid of anger or potential anger, yet where are we going? (Sandra)

September 13, 2001

More of the same; some friends being deployed by the Red Cross to do crisis work with some victims families. Other friends being deployed with the military to parts unknown, class should be interesting. (Jean)

September 15, 2001

Got a few minutes to write before class begins. The axis has shifted - been hard to focus knowing that the grand old flag is about to kill again. 40 billion dollars out of whose budget? Somehow I don't think that it's going into social programs. If social welfare programs weren't in trouble before, they certainly are now. America's just thrown away all kinds of civil rights, rights to privacy & given this.....even more power. Unbelievable. I'm horrified and the more I write the crazier I feel. (Carol)

September 24, 2001

I finally had to stop listening to the radio and watching TV because it was making me very depressed due to the September 11th disaster.

Patriotism is interesting to me. It seems that people pull together to say "we are loyal to our group that is distinct and separate from your group, or anyone else's group." So in a sense, patriotism promotes separation of different groups. It promotes the "us and them" syndrome. (Doris)

September 27, 2001

Been a while since I've written. Felt paralyzed - mostly by my own negativism. Hard to write when my words are so all of

despondent spew—still have to write. So social policy in the 21st century appears to be a non-issue if one were to pay attention to the news media. (Carol)

September 21, 2001

I guess I'm ready to discuss the disaster some now. ..I didn't expect that I would be as upset about the whole thing as I turned out to be. I didn't know any of those people who died, and New York is quite a distance from where I live, it hit me very hard. I cried before I went to work, and when I got to work, I was surprised to see that it was mostly business as usual. No one seemed very upset and they were going about their day as if nothing had happened. I was still quite upset so I went in and spoke with a counselor co-worker, who I work closely with, for a while. It helped to have someone to share the experience with and to provide mutual support. I was surprised that...agency...did not offer their employees a debriefing. (Doris)

September 30-October 2, 2001

On 9/13 the phone rang and it was my friend B from New York and we talked for awhile. She said that upping her dose of Prozac has helped. I also didn't continue writing because I wasn't quite ready to discuss "the event" in terms of intellectual or future considerations. I also did not continue writing because I felt somewhat guilty or felt that it was askew to write about projected concerns, when there was/is immediate enormity of suffering to be acknowledged. The news of September 11 hit me hard and fast. (Sandra)

An association from 9/11; we received no acknowledgement from administration about the events. Not even a minimum, "thanks for coming in and working while all this was going on." I heard that "X"

went to a meeting that day and didn't mention anything about the events at the meeting and just said, "Let's get down to business." I found that very sad from an agency that is supposed to be a little savvy on human relationships. On the other hand we have autonomy. We have created a Friday morning group after 9/11 and we discuss thoughts/feelings concerning 9/11 and sometimes we also discuss stressful components to being a social worker. (Sandra)

Instructor's Note

I did not discuss these specific entries with the students, as the logs were handed in a few months after the events of 9/11. We did discuss 9/11 in the class following the attack. I see now that the discussion did not have the power of the log entries. It is interesting how much comes out when persons start to write about the experience and their feelings. The class discussion did, however, add some dimensions that the logs didn't offer the students. It was the ability of the students to make connections with each other and, in some cases, with the instructor. It was the ability to share their feelings with other students but also a sense of being able to count on each other. Unlike other classroom discussions, no one interrupted others comments. Nor did I. I was no more an expert on feelings and solutions than they were. And if there was ever a time when persons could say they were in the same boat, this was surely such an occasion.

As the physical landscape changed on September 11th, the landscape of our own lives has changed as well. I know I had many of the same feelings as the students on and after September 11th. I wish I had kept a log.

I wish to thank all the students for their openness and willingness to share and risk by writing their reactions.

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