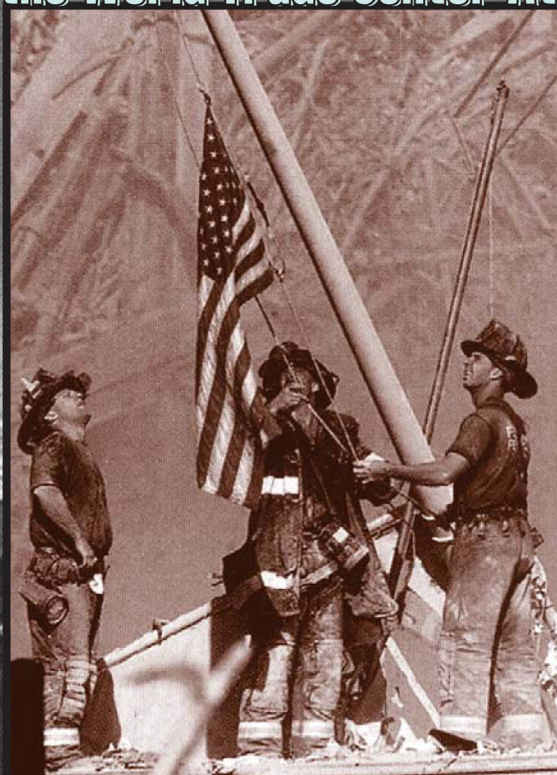


Language, Symbols, and the Media

Communication in the Aftermath
of the World Trade Center Attack



Robert E. Denton, Jr., editor

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This book is dedicated to those who lost their lives on 9/11, to those who gave their lives in America's war against terrorism here at home, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and elsewhere around the world as well as to those who continue to serve to make the world a safer place for us all.



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Preface

"The World is not at all structured like a fairy tale... Evil must be confronted in its womb and, if there is no other way to do it, then it has to be dealt with by the use of force."—Vaclav Havel, September 19, 2002 to the Graduate Center of the City University of New York

At this writing, well over 100,000 American troops are in Iraq. It appears that Osama Bin Laden is still alive but on the run. Saddam Hussein is captured and awaits the trial and judgment of the Iraqi people. While building schools and hospitals, suicide bombers target hotels and embassies within Iraq. While working to provide electricity to all of Iraq, American convoys are hit with mortar fire. While repairing the oil pipelines and restoring refineries for Iraqi economic development, American Blackhawk helicopters transporting troops are fired upon from those hidden in buildings below. We continue to lose troops, now more than during the actual intense assault and drive to Baghdad; hundreds more than in first Iraq war.

We are now at war and in the post-Cold War period; "9/11" inaugurated a new Era in terms of foreign policy and our "war on terror." The rules that governed American foreign policy since World War II no longer apply. Our "friends" are no longer defined by their anti-communism and our "enemies" are no longer defined by their affiliation with the Soviet Union. "In the new era," according to Anne Applebaum (2002, 19), "we are no longer selling democracy for its own sake, but exploring security, both for our sake and for the sake of other potential victims."

On 9/11, terrorism left the domain of criminality and entered that of warfare. Just what are the implications? It means not only targeting foot soldiers, but also the organizations and governments behind the terrorists. It means relying on the armed forces, not policemen. It means defense overseas rather than on American soil and in our courtrooms. It means reasonable proof as sufficient evidence to deploy U.S. forces. It means using force and even pre-emptive strikes to deter future attacks.

We are indeed experiencing a “new world order,” a new political landscape, a new era of warfare. A few thugs can terrorize an entire nation. Small nations can dominate international debate and diplomacy. A few ounces of anthrax can be more devastating to life than multi-ton explosives.

Of course, the connection between terrorism and religion is not new. However, until the 1990s we witnessed more ethnic, nationalist-separatist, or ideological motivated terrorism. By the middle of the decade, however, the rise of religious terrorism was evident. Ironically, although the total volume of terrorist incidents worldwide declined during the 1990s, the proportion of persons killed in such incidents increased. Thus, while terrorists were less active, they were certainly more lethal. Prior to the September 11 attack, over the preceding thirty-three years, fewer than 1,000 Americans had been killed by terrorists either overseas or within the U.S. In just ninety minutes, more than 3,000 Americans lost their lives at the hands of terrorists. (Hoffman 2002, 2-3, 7). Another 1,000 (and counting) are lost on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq.

According to Bruce Hoffman (2002, 4), religious terrorism tends to be more lethal than secular terrorism because of the radically different value systems, mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and worldviews that directly affect the “holy terrorists” motivation: “For the religious terrorist, violence first and foremost is a sacramental act or divine duty, executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative and justified by scripture. Religion, therefore functions as a legitimizing force, specifically sanctioning wide scale violence against an almost open-ended category of opponents.”

On that fateful day, little did we know what lay before us in terms of war and peace, friends and foes, or personal fear and national security. We did not know the current or future price in terms of human life or financial costs. With each passing day, month, and year, we gain insight into the impact and influence of 9/11 upon our cultural, social, and political life. Some influences are major and obvious, while others are subtle.

This collection of essays examines the language, symbols, and media of 9/11. Each chapter focuses on one or more elements of communication while investigating a wide range of topics from the media’s portrayal and dilemmas of coverage to advertising and public relations strategies; from the use of humor and the role of sports

in our healing process to the impact of the Patriot Act upon public discourse; from the use of religious sacred symbols to the meaning of patriotism as part of the political socialization of young adults. Although loosely arranged by the broad topic areas, each chapter addresses one or more aspects of language, symbols, and media of 9/11.

Ronald Lee and Matthew Barton analyze the challenge to religious pluralism in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11. They explain the grounds for the immediate backlash against Islam and the relationship between civil religion and rituals of pluralism. Finally, they explore the ceremonies, speeches, and media coverage that enacted a ritualistic recommitment to American religious pluralism with several conclusions about the usefulness of ritual as a way of understanding American political culture.

For Wat Hopkins, free speech is not simply a convenience or even a right of citizens in our society. It is a mandate, essential to the proper working of our democratic republic. Hopkins reviews several crucial historical and contemporary Supreme Court rulings relevant to the limitations of free speech in times of war and national crises. In essence, citizen critics of governmental policies and actions should be encouraged, especially in times of national stress.

Now after more than two years since the passage of the Patriot Act, it remains suspect, controversial, and many provisions challenged in federal courts. Craig R. Smith puts the measures of the Patriot Act into historical context by comparing the legislation and its interpretation of it to other legislation passed in response to past American crises. His analysis provides insight into the roles played by our branches of government, the impact upon the First Amendment as well as other rights such as consulting with an attorney and to confront one's accusers.

After the attacks of 9/11, Roger Rosenblatt in *Time* magazine suggested that perhaps we witnessed an end to "the age of irony" and called for shift in the formation of American values. He called for a return to "traditional values" and a rejection of the "banality of popular culture." Daniel J. O'Rourke III and Pravin Rodrigues explores Rosenblatt's call for the rejection of irony and the ironic response of the weekly newspaper the *Onion* as counterpoints in a debate about the impact of irony as a rhetorical device in American culture.

Robert Brown looks at the role of sport in the post-9/11 healing process in America. After examining the role of sport during na-

tional crises, he focuses on the influence of the World Series and Super Bowl following the attacks in 2001. Brown finds that in times of crisis, sport can provide solemn opportunities to mourn the dead, patriotic messages to inspire, salutes to honor the life-saving efforts of those involved, and to reinforce a sense of unity. The two sporting events examined provided messages of healing and inspiration for many Americans.

Edward Horowitz and Johan Wanstrom examine the reactions and responses of young adults to the events of 9/11 on its one-year anniversary. Through their empirical study, they found emotions of fearfulness, sadness, suspicion, and anger among young adults. In addition, those who were more likely to display a flag were more religious, paid more attention to news coverage, engaged in more discussion with parents and friends about the attacks and the war on terror and, finally, expressed more dimensions of patriotism.

John Llewellyn investigates how both New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and California Congressman Gary Condit both benefited from the shift in public attitudes and attention resulting from the attacks of 9/11. Utilizing the theoretical concepts of agenda-setting and media framing, Llewellyn demonstrates how Giuliani and Condit received a public "makeover" or reframing of careers and reputations.

Katherine Kinnick finds substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics of post-9/11 advertising functioning as a rhetorical genre. Using an overwhelming appeal to patriotism, national ads included expressions of grief, sympathy, and goodwill; images and language evoking American cultural values and icons; and preference for large display ads.

Virtually every business and industry was impacted by the attacks of 9/11. Perhaps none were hurt more than the tourism industry. Utilizing situational theory of publics and the relationship management perspective, Lisa Hall examines how messages were redesigned and primary publics refocused as well as communication tactics utilized by convention and visitors bureau managers. In general, she found less reliance upon traditional advertising and more on Internet and Public Relations media tactics. More specifically, communication tactics should encourage relationship-building opportunities among target audiences.

At the philosophical heart of the freedoms of the press is the notion of the "Marketplace of Ideas," in which it is assumed that a robust and unrestrained dialogue on significant issues is essential to

public policy formation. Of course, the media has an important role in this process. At no time is this role more important than during war or social upheaval. Bruce Drushel examines several instances of media self-censorship following the attacks of 9/11. He also discusses the impact of self-censorship as it relates to the First Amendment and the implications for the policymaking process during times of crisis. Drushel concludes with an argument for greater regulation of the marketplace of ideas to ensure the representation of unpopular points of view.

Editing a volume can be a challenge, for many reasons. However, I find the collaboration with colleagues focusing on a single topic or an area of common interest rewarding and informative. This collection of essays began as a panel program at the National Communication Association in November 2002. Other colleagues investigating the impact and lessons of the attacks of 9/11 were invited to join the project. I enjoyed the process of discussing chapter ideas with such wonderful colleagues and learn from their insights and analyses. Thankfully, the contributors made this a rewarding and enjoyable endeavor. I genuinely appreciate their participation in this volume and their insightful contributions. But more importantly, I value their friendship.

I wish to thank my colleagues in the Department of Communication at Virginia Tech. A faculty committed to scholarship productivity provides encouragement, even for an “older” colleague with administrative responsibilities. I also want to thank Jerry Niles, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences; Richard Sorensen, Dean of the Pamplin College of Business; and Major General (retired) Jerrold Allen, Commandant of the Corps of Cadets for their continued support of administrative, professional, and scholarly activities. For more than fifteen years, they have understood the importance of the right “mix” that makes my job a privilege and pleasure. They have supported me professionally, financially, and personally. I am very fortunate to work for such outstanding administrators who continue to serve as role models in every way.

Finally, I wish to thank members of my family who tolerate the long hours in the endeavors of teaching, research, and outreach. They sustain me, encourage me, and provide a sense of belonging and security that frees me to read, write, and pursue projects of interest. Rachel, Bobby, and Chris provide the joys of my life well beyond academe.

This book is dedicated to those who lost their lives on 9/11, to those who gave their lives in America's war against terrorism and to those who continue serve to make the world a safer place for us all.

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1

The Language, Symbols, and Media of 9/11: An Introduction

Robert E. Denton, Jr.

On that bright, clear, and fateful day of September 11, 2001, nineteen Saudis and al-Qaida operatives, wielding knives and box-cutters, hijacked four American aircraft. At 8:45 A.M. American Airlines Flight 11 departed Boston, Massachusetts in route to Los Angeles, California crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center with eighty-one passengers and eleven crewmembers on board. Just eighteen minutes later, United Airlines Flight 175, also in route from Boston to Los Angeles, with fifty-six passengers and nine crewmembers hit the South Tower. At nearly 9:30 A.M., another flight headed toward Los Angeles, American Airlines Flight 77, departed Dulles International Airport with fifty-eight passengers and six crew members and crashed into the Northwest side of the Pentagon. Thirty minutes later, United Airlines Flight 93 departed Newark, New Jersey, this time in route to San Francisco, California with thirty-eight passengers and seven crewmembers. The flight crashed in a field in Pennsylvania resulting from a struggle between the hijackers and brave passengers. Many speculate the target of this flight was the U.S. Capital or even perhaps the White House.

The attacks upon America on September 11, 2001 are being characterized as this generation's Pearl Harbor. The comparison is powerful. Especially since the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day, there is a plethora of books and films commemorating the heroics of those who fought with courage, commitment, and sacrifice during World War II. In the words of Tom Brokaw (1998), they stayed true to the values "of personal responsibility, duty, honor, and faith" (XX). Quite

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simply, as he proclaims in his best selling book, they are the “greatest generation any society has produced” (XXX). The surprise attack upon our forces on the morning of December 7, 1941, characterized by President Roosevelt as “a day that will live in infamy,” changed the course of history and the lives of a generation of Americans. It took three hours before news reached the mainland of the bombs dropping on Pearl Harbor and more than a week before the *New York Times* carried the first pictures (Nacos, 39). The surprise, horror and magnitude of the attack forced America into a four-year war far away from the shores of the homeland.

For most Americans and many others around the globe, life was suspended on September 11, 2001. The perpetrators gained our attention and that of the world. They took control of our public agenda and even our private lives. Fighter jets flew over major cities; Air Force One flew evasive patterns throughout the day and the Secret Service kept Vice President Cheney in virtual hiding.

On the evening of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush (2001) acknowledged that “Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature” (738). Nine days later before a joint session of Congress, President Bush (2001) proclaimed

on September the eleventh, 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. (760)

We were “at war.” President Bush announced that “our war on terror begins with al-Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated” (761).

Not since the assassination of President John Kennedy did so many Americans and others around the world stayed glued to their television sets. For the first five days after the terrorist attack, television and radio networks covered the aftermath around the clock. All four of the major networks (i.e., ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC) suspended regular programming and provided ninety hours of “wall-to-wall” coverage, exceeding the amount devoted to President Kennedy’s assassination in 1962 and the first Iraq war in 1991 (Glass 2002, 4). We followed the horror and minute-by-minute destruction of the

World Trade Center buildings, people jumping to their deaths and running for their lives, the flames engulfing the Pentagon, and the Pittsburgh crash site of United Flight 93. The wall-to-wall coverage of events by the networks closely followed President Bush's war rhetoric. The various networks competed for known celebrity talking heads. Within hours they were calling the attack "America's New War," "War on Terror," and "War Against Terror," to name just a few.

All the subsequent "war talk" by President Bush and members of his administration set the serious tone of the actions and form of our response. Forget the fact that only Congress has the constitutional power to declare war and that war is traditionally waged between states. The word—taken either literally or metaphorically—provided President Bush several advantages. In times of war, the public places more trust in elected officials. The idea of a nation under attack buys a level of goodwill for presidents that they otherwise would not enjoy. Presidents also become more protected from political infighting and personal attacks. Criticism by members of the opposing political party is usually silenced; we easily and mistakenly jump to the conclusion that it is unpatriotic to challenge the wisdom of political or military operations against a foreign foe. And citizens are asked to make personal sacrifices, which, after September 11, meant the inconvenience of tighter security and new restrictions on some civil liberties.

To be "at war" demands some form of action. At home, President Bush's early pronouncements acknowledged our shock, anger, and promise of justice. Abroad, his war rhetoric generated cause for concern. French President Jacques Chirac, while visiting the White House just a week after the attacks to show solidarity with America, stated, "I don't know whether we should use the word 'war,' but I would say that now we are faced with a conflict of a completely new nature" (Herbert 2001, E-1).

Bush's early use of the word "crusade" to describe the fight against terrorism caused alarm among those in the Islamic world. For them, the term evoked images of Christian soldiers battling against Islam during medieval times. The White House even apologized for the word insisting that Bush intended the word to mean only "a broad cause." The name the military chose for its anti-terrorism campaign was changed from "Infinite Justice" to "Enduring Freedom" because the former offended Muslim allies. To Muslims, only God can provide infinite justice (Herbert 2001, E-1).

The news media was also dealing with language issues. Should the attackers be described as “terrorists” or “freedom fighters?” There was even a debate within newsrooms across the nation whether or not anchors and reporters should wear flag pins or ribbons. Reuters news service instructed reporters to preface any descriptions of attackers with “so-called” (Irvine and Kincaid 2001). The major networks, except Fox News, decided that anchors should not wear flags or ribbons. After all, the news media are supposed to be “neutral,” “objective,” “non-biased” in perspective. The dilemma was real for the press. Did their patriotic duties override their more professional duties? Especially in a time of crisis?

The human and financial costs were real as well. The consequences and impact are with us today and will be so for years to come. The immediate loss was over 3,000 lives, many more thousand families impacted by lost mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles. From an economic perspective, billions were lost in the stock market, in company revenues, in retail sales, in insurance liability, and in tax intakes by state and federal authorities. Billions more required in clean-up costs, security and defense measures, supporting select industries and to stimulate the economy.

This volume examines the language, symbols and media of 9/11. Each chapter focuses on one or more elements of communication while investigating a wide range of topics from ranging from the use of humor and the role of sports in our healing process to the impact of the Patriot Act upon public discourse; from the use of religious sacred symbols to the meaning of patriotism as part of the political socialization of young adults; from the media’s portrayal and dilemmas of coverage to advertising and public relations strategies post-9/11. Although loosely arranged by the broad topic areas, each chapter addresses one or more aspects of language, symbols, and media of 9/11.

Human communication is the vehicle for political and social thought, debate, and action. Language serves as the agent of social integration; as the means of cultural socialization; as the vehicle for social interaction; as the channel for the transmission of values; and as the glue that bond people, ideas, and society together. Language, therefore, is a very active and creative process that does not reflect an objective reality but creates a reality by organizing meaningful perceptions abstracted from a complex world. Language becomes a mediating force that actively shapes one’s interpretation of the environment.

Terrorism as Communication

Interestingly, more than two decades ago, Alex Schmid and Janny deGraaf (1982) argued simply that terrorists' acts of violence are really acts of communication. In effect, terrorists' acts should be viewed as "violent language" (1). "Without communication there can be no terrorism" (9). For them, the genuine power of terrorism is that it functions as propaganda. The result is behavior modification of the target audience by both coercive and persuasive means. In effect, terrorism uses violence against one to obtain an effect upon others. The immediate victim(s) is/are merely an instrument or tool of communication. For terrorists, message matters, not the victim(s) (14). Thus, in essence, "terrorism can best be understood as a violent communication strategy. There is a sender, the terrorist, a message generator, the victim, and a receiver, the enemy and/or the public" (15). In the words of an ancient Chinese proverb, "Kill one, frighten ten thousand." In addition to communicating messages of fear to the mass audience, terrorists also may polarize public opinion, make converts, mislead the enemy by spreading false information, win publicity, advertise causes and movement, and discredit victim(s), to name just a few.

The Language and Symbols of 9/11

I have already noted the power of language to influence our perceptions and subsequent behavior. The president, of course, has the special power of definition, defining and labeling an act, providing context for interpretation. Key phrases or symbols evoked by a president have two primary effects. Key audiences begin to use the term or characterization as well as evoke ancillary symbols and images. Key phrases or symbols also create expectations of action, solutions, and visions of the future.

The war metaphor that came to frame the attacks was most powerful. The war metaphor defines the objective and encourages enlistment in the effort, it identifies the enemy, and it dictates the choice of weapons and tactics with which the struggle will be fought (Zarefsky 1986, 29). There are additional assumptions and implications with the act of rhetorically evoking the war metaphor. For us, most wars are unconditional in terms of mounting all means necessary, as much time as required to be victorious, as much funds as necessary to complete the task. The metaphor and label requires a

lower standard of burden of proof for action or to establish guilt. Finally, the metaphor suppresses opposition to subsequent actions or response. Ironically, to declare war is to unify the nation in a sense of purpose, commitment and sacrifice.

Is terrorism a form of war? Most scholars say no. War, especially a "just war," "is conducted between armies who recognize the legitimacy of targeting their uniformed enemies, but endeavor to limit violence against civilians and, more generally, to keep their use for force proportionate to the ends in question" (Carruthers 2000, 163). In contrast, terrorism utilizes "extra-normal" violence, most often in peacetime with no regard to civilians or conventional targets. Reprehensible forms of violence designed as much to gain publicity as to rectifying ideological or political grievances.

Throughout the ordeal, key words and phrases were formulated and took on special meaning. For example, saying 9/11 (and not 911) is sufficient to refer to the attacks. Law enforcement officers and firefighters became heroes. Not since the Cold War have we confronted an "evil empire." We soon learned of the dangers pending from the "axis of evil" comprised of Iran, Iraq and North Korea. We discovered the range of devices comprising "weapons of mass destruction." Three years later, the letters "WMD" suffices.

Of course, the very label "terrorist" implies negative judgment. The term has been attached to "enemies" since the French Revolution (Carruthers 2000, 163). The label has become more common since World War II. The semantic battle over the term has ideological and political implications. As the cliché goes, "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Historically, the American government has been rather quick to label "leftist guerrillas" as terrorists while labeling "right-wing" U.S. supported mercenaries as "rebels (Carruthers 2000, 165).

It was the Reagan administration that initiated the first "war against terrorism" in the wake of the TWA hijacking and within the shadows of Carter's "Iran hostage situation." They framed terrorism as a threat to international security thus replacing Carter's "human rights" concerns at the heart of American foreign policy. At the time, some American media commentators suggested that "terrorists" replaced "communists" as our number one enemy. Susan Carruthers (2000) argues that by elevating terrorism as a concern, the Reagan Administration was well served by the U.S. media. The mainstream media duplicated our own partial view of labeling specific acts and coun-

tries as terrorists; in doing so, provided some cover for our own actions in such countries as Nicaragua and Angola, to name just a few; and through its reporting, actually built consensus for counter-terrorism measures (193). As a result, the Reagan administration enjoyed widespread support for the 1986 bombing of Tripoli and other actions directed at Libya's Colonel Gaddafi.

The attacks of 9/11 targeted some of the primary symbols of America's strength, power, and world status. The World Trade Center stood as the symbol of our financial wealth and enterprise. The Pentagon is the center of America's military power and the suspected target of the White House stands as the symbol of the world's political power. The attacks brought down the symbol of *our* financial wealth, seriously damaged the home of *our* military fortress, and caused the evacuation of the center of *our* political power.

The American flag became the primary symbol of unity, commitment, determination, and our values of democracy and freedom. Immediately following 9/11, consumer demand for flag-themed merchandise sky-rocketed. Now three years later, demand is still very strong. Traditionally, flag displays and themed items are in use primarily between Memorial Day through Labor Day. However, upon the events of 9/11, demand became year round. Almost any item now sports the flag in one way or another: pens, pencils, calculators, Christmas tree ornaments, towels, birdhouses, dinnerware, home furnishings, you just name it. Virtually any kind of clothing for every season sports the flag. Jeffrey Bergus, corporate product development director for Arizona Jean Company, observes, "Patriotism has turned into a lifestyle since 9/11. A trend is a trend, but a lifestyle stays around for a long time" (*Roanoke Times* 2003, A11).

We make sense of events by the use of narratives. Narrative metaphors and images help us understand the social and political worlds in which we live. They also can sanction some kinds of actions and not others. Narratives are explanations for events in the form of short, commonsense accounts or stories. They contain images and judgments about the motives and actions of our own groups and those of others. Groups with very different beliefs and values construct very different narratives of an event. They are grounded in selectively remembered and interpreted experiences. Within a community, a narrative may emerge and gain easy consensus. Finally, narratives provide a sense of community and connectedness.

As already mentioned, to portray the attacks as analogous to the “sneak attack” at Pearl Harbor justified a military response, punishment for those responsible and actions to prevent future attacks. Compare this view to one that America now knows what it is like to live in physical terror, as with the Palestinians, Iraqis, and others in the Middle East who have done so for years. From this perspective, America has ignored the Arab world, abandoned the region after Gulf War I and provided virtually unconditional support for Israel. The contrasting views between Americans and Muslims in general is best expressed by the statements issued on the day the Afghanistan war started, October 7, 2001. President George Bush referred to the “sudden terror” that had descended on the United States just twenty-seven days earlier. Osama bin Laden asserted that the Muslim world had experienced more than eighty years of “humiliation and disgrace” at the hands of Americans. In the two and a half weeks following the attacks, the major television networks and NPR broadcast thirty-three stories that addressed the question, “why do they hate us?” (Nacos 2002, 45). The first narrative encourages a strong, military response and images of justice. The second views the attacks as a wake-up call for America and our role in the Arab world. This rationale would argue America should not seek revenge, but greater understanding and attention to the plight of Arabs.

Another narrative emerged viewing America as the “great Satan.” We represent “the West,” the epitome of global exploitation and injustice. We need to recognize our historical capitalist exploitation of the World, being destructive to cultures and environments. Our capitalistic system contributes to the growing gap between the rich and poor. Our ever-increasing demand for the world’s natural resources endangers the environment for all nations. In effect, the terrorists may be bad, but we are worse. America is the original sinner who keeps thugs in power, consumes far more than its share of the world’s resources, and spreads a culture of drugs, sex, and egoism.

One of the more controversial narratives that emerged viewed the attacks on America as punishment for our own greed, pride, arrogance, and continual decay of morals and values. This view was best expressed by Jerry Falwell: “I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say ‘you helped this

happen.” He concluded that we had created an environment “which possibly has caused God to lift the veil of protection which has allowed no one to attack America on our soil since 1812” (CNN, 2001).

Finally, another major narrative that emerged was the view that as individuals or members of the world community, you were either “with us or against us.” In Bush’s speech on September 20, 2001, to the Joint Session of Congress with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in the audience, he proclaimed “Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with terrorists” (761). Within our borders, it was difficult to challenge a military response without appearing as unpatriotic.

The various narratives that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11 provide collective understanding of what happened, why it happened, who we are and where we are going. They provide a context for the attacks and justification for response. The attacks became part of a larger allegory, a tale of good versus evil, order versus chaos.

The Media of 9/11

Because the United States is the most media-saturated nation, Schmid and deGraaf (1982) predicted that we are “the country most open to terrorist use of the media” (33). In a more recent study, Brigitte Nacos (2002) explores the notion of “mass-mediated terrorism” where the media become instruments of terror. Mass violence becomes a political statement and the media images of violence evoke terror among the general public. “Groups and individuals who commit or simply threaten political violence understand their deeds as a means to win media attention and news coverage for their actions, their grievances, and their political ends” (10). From this perspective, “when terrorists hurl a rocket into Great Britain’s foreign spy headquarters, bomb the hull of the *USS Cole*, hold hostages in a remote part of the Philippines, or hijack an Indian airliner, they do not simply commit violence—they execute premeditated terrorism that virtually assures a great deal of news coverage” (10). The visuals of media coverage spread fear and anxiety in their targeted societies.

On 9/11 and days following, the televised pictures and news photography served the purpose to bear witness to the horror, magnitude, and destruction of the attacks. Millions of Americans saw the first plane hit the World Trade Center, millions more the second plane. Who will ever forget the image of the plane almost gracefully turn-

ing toward the towers, crashing into the building and exploding in a fireball. We witnessed the metamorphosis of a commercial plane into a weapon of mass destruction. Then the frantic looks on the faces and voices of those running for safety while firefighters and police ran toward the towers. Who will soon forget the moment the buildings fell, the thick dust covering everything for miles and miles. At the same time, we witnessed the dark smoke rising from the Pentagon while workers were helping those injured on the ground. In the aftermath, our hearts were with the firefighters raising a flag at “ground zero,” searching the rubble, and standing still with head bowed and hat removed as each fallen comrade was removed.

On that fateful day, Richard Drew, on assignment for AP shooting a maternity fashion show was drawn to the twin towers soon after they were engulfed in flames. Soon upon arrival, he heard people on the ground gasping because people in the Towers were jumping. Drew started shooting pictures; his camera found a falling body and followed it for a twelve-shot sequence. The unidentified body was traveling 150 miles per hour. The next morning one shot appeared on page seven of the *New York Times*, then hundreds of newspapers all around the world.

In the photograph, the man

appears relaxed, hurling through the air. He appears comfortable in the grip of unimaginable motion. . . His arms are by his side, only slightly outriggered. His left leg is bent at the knee, almost casually. His white shirt, or jacket, or frock, is billowing free of his black pants. His black high-tops are still on his feet. . . The man is perfectly vertical, and so in accord with the lines of the buildings behind him. He splits them, bisects them: Everything to the left of him in the picture is the North Tower; everything to the right, the South. . . There is something almost rebellious in the man's posture, as though once faced with the inevitability of death, he decided to get on with it; as though he were a missile, a spear, bent on attaining his own end. (Junod 2003, 177)

The photo became known as “the Falling Man.” In most American papers, the photograph ran just once and never again. Public reaction was quick to criticize the exploitation of a man's death, invasion of his privacy, turning a tragedy into “pornographic voyeurism.”

It appears that of all the images of 9/11, those of people jumping were the ones that became “taboo.” At CNN, for example, such footage was shown live, then after intense discussions within the newsroom, it was shown only if the people were blurred and unidentifiable. Within hours, no such footage was aired. The same was true