

Commemorating 9/11: The Power of Discourse

An analysis of the use of language within the collective memory of 9/11

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“No day shall erase you from the memory of time”

– Virgil in *Aeneid*.¹

Introduction

Although it has been almost seventeen years since the attacks on 9/11, their effects are still very much present today. There is a certain sense of national victimization and trauma that appeared in the United States as part of the collective memory after the events of 9/11. The War on Terror has been legitimized through this post-9/11 trauma and there has been a lingering feeling of the damaged security within the United States. Homeland security has grown immensely, and the violence in the Middle East has been unprecedented to root out the ‘axis of evil’. 9/11 is seen as the day that changed the United States *forever*, and is considered a tragic rupture and a void in American history. It is seen as an exceptional event of massive importance to the nation, and it is something that can never be forgotten. Furthermore, it is seen as something so unique to the United States, that gave the country a distinctive place – a leading role – in the War on Terror. All this led to a form of ‘9/11 exceptionalism’, which in turn is part of the larger American exceptionalism.

This thesis will focus on the collective memory of 9/11 and the dominant discourse that has been formed around this. To establish the dominant discourse, this thesis will study the language that is used around the attacks and how these are commemorated. In order to create a broad understanding of the discourse, it will study its construction in three different areas. First, this thesis will identify the dominant discourse within the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York City. Then it will continue to analyze the discourse in political rhetoric, starting with two speeches by president G.W. Bush, until the most recent commemoration speech by president Trump. Finally, it will study three different documentaries in order to see what kind of discourse can be found in the way that they portray 9/11. It will add to the existing literature on this topic by combining different commemorative areas as well as the use of recent case studies such as the rhetoric by president Trump.

These areas cover different grounds where the discourse on 9/11 is formulated. They are common aspects of American people’s lives and are therefore contributing to the discourse of many people; they might visit the memorial and museum, and they see the presidential speeches and documentaries on television. The three areas also include different types of commemoration. The memorial and museum represent the formal image of 9/11

¹ This quote can be found within the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

commemoration: they are places where people are confronted with this discourse is a way that represents for most people not a subjective or political story, but an objective one. The presidential speeches cover the political sphere. By using both Democratic and Republican presidents, this material will show how the dominant discourse on 9/11 is present throughout post-9/11 American politics. The documentaries represent cultural commemoration. In this thesis, three documentaries will be analyzed, which all have different goals. One is perceived as objective, one as political, and one as artistic.

Memory is a concept that changes over time, and this thesis will consider how the collective memory of 9/11 has developed over time by studying the way it's been commemorated within the three areas. The specific research question of this thesis will be: How is the dominant discourse of the collective memory of 9/11 established in different expressions of commemoration in the post-9/11 era? Special attention will be given to the similarities and differences between the discourse used in the three different settings.

To answer this question, this thesis will look at three different sub-questions. The first chapter will include a literature review of the concept of collective memory and will specifically look at the collective memory of 9/11 and what key themes are linked to this memory. It will look at the direct trauma that was caused by the event, and it will look at how it is now being commemorated. This chapter will provide an analysis of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York City, the largest place of commemoration of the events of 9/11. The sub-question will be: What are the key themes in the collective memory of 9/11 and how are these incorporated in the National September 11 Memorial and Museum?

The second chapter will look at presidential speeches right after the attacks and the reaction of president Bush, and will follow by analyzing several speeches by president Obama and Trump around the commemoration of 9/11. These speeches will be analyzed through a discourse analysis, focusing on the use of the key themes that were established in the first chapter: trauma and exceptionalism. The sub-question of this chapter will be: How is the collective memory of 9/11 constructed in the rhetoric of U.S. presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump?

The third chapter will study three documentaries and what discourse the documentary makers are using to explain the events of 9/11. It will analyze the documentaries *11'09''01 – September 11*, *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *102 Minutes That Changed America: 15th anniversary edition*. Through a discourse analysis, this chapter studies the ways of construction, the focus points of the documentary and how they deal with the notions of trauma and exceptionalism.

The sub-question of this chapter will be: In what ways is the collective memory of 9/11 constructed in 9/11 documentaries?

Theory and Methodology

In order to study the collective memory of 9/11, this thesis will use relevant works in the field of memory studies relating to the theoretical concept of collective memory in general, and it will analyze works on collective memory in regards to 9/11. Within the field of International Relations, this thesis fits within the theory of constructivism. Constructivism claims that the structure of human association is driven by shared ideas, and that people's identities are *constructed* by these shared ideas rather than set in stone.² It looks at the power of human agency and how people can “make and re-make the social world”, in this case by creating a dominant discourse revolving around 9/11.³ In chapter 3, there will be a specific focus on construction within documentaries, using the theory of film theorist Bill Nichols to identify the different modes of documentaries.

The different case studies of this thesis will be analyzed by means of a discourse analysis. Discourse refers to “groups of statements that structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking”.⁴ It is a “particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it”.⁵ French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote about discursive formations, and how “meanings are connected together in a particular discourse”.⁶ In the following chapters, the dominant discourse of 9/11 will be analyzed through several formations (national memorial and museum, political rhetoric and documentaries) in order to see how this discourse is created. To do a discourse analysis, the strategies of social philosopher Gillian Rose will be used. This includes identifying key themes and concepts, examining the effects of truth, looking at the complexity and possible contradictions, and also look at the things that are not discussed; the invisible.⁷

² Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

³ John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: an Introduction to International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6th edition, 2014), 5.

⁴ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: an Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. (London: Sage Publications, 4th edition, 2016), 187.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 188.

⁷ Ibid., 206 – 214.

Chapter 1: Remembering 9/11

First of all, it is necessary to look at existing literature on the concepts of memory and collective memory, both in theory and in the specific case of 9/11, and create a framework to work with. This chapter will analyze the language used when talking about the events of 9/11 in order to identify the key themes in the dominant discourse. It will then analyze how 9/11 is commemorated at the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum in New York City.

Collective Memory

Memory is a concept that, in its most simple definition, refers to something that has happened in the past. It is different from ‘history’, because memory reflects events on a more personal and emotional level, while history deals more with facts and figures. History is also something that looks at the past and is concerned with its meaning *for* the present, while memory “involves the impact of the events of the past and their meaning *in* the present”.⁸ Furthermore, memory is very much about the “presentation and representation of past events, not the events themselves”.⁹

There are many different types of memory. For instance, there is individual memory, cultural memory, transnational memory, and collective memory. These can in some ways be connected, but they might also divert from each other. Your personal memories of an event and conflict might be very different from the collective memory that is seen as common in your country or community. Memory can also take on different functions: it can be a personal quest for narrative, the ability to tell a story, a way to ease a burden, a form of myth or ritual, the desire for nostalgia, or lastly, the desire to create an identity.¹⁰

This thesis will focus on the collective memory of the American society surrounding the events of 9/11. Collective memory is a term that, in its current meaning, was first used in the 1920s by philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, when he made the distinction between collective and personal memory. Halbwachs explained that people in society *construct* their memories through a collective framework in which they “recall, recognize and localize their memories”.¹¹ It is not something that we simply ‘have’. These frameworks can be seen as “instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord...with the predominant thoughts of the society”.¹² One of these frameworks is *language*,

⁸ Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 2.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹² Ibid.

because by using language you are speaking through a certain discourse; words have different preconceived ideas attached to them and are not neutral. Discourse, as studied by Michel Foucault, “is about the production of knowledge through language”, and it “defines and produces the objects of our knowledge”.¹³ Discourse “governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about”, and therefore shapes the collective memory itself.¹⁴

The working definition of collective memory that will be used throughout this thesis is one that German sociologist Bernhard Giesen provided in 2001:

“Collective memory provides both individual and society with a temporal map, unifying a nation or community through time as well as space. Collective memory specifies the temporal parameters of past and future, where we came from and where we are going, and also why we are here now. Within the narrative provided by this collective memory individual identities are shaped as experiential frameworks formed out of, as they are embedded within, narratives of past, present and future”.¹⁵

As Giesen’s definition notes, collective memory is also a way of shaping people’s individual identities. Jan Assmann argued in his 1995 article on collective memory and cultural identity that memory “preserves the story of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity”, and that through “identificatory determination in a positive (‘We are this’) or negative (‘That’s our opposite’) sense”, collective identities can be formed.¹⁶

Memory and identity are entangled because “the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering”.¹⁷ In the specific case of 9/11, Americans create an identity based on similar memories on the events that happened on September 11, 2001; they are brought together by this feeling of unity. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka argued that “*experience* [determines] the basis for the construction of memory”, in which “a narrative of victimization can serve to bolster group identity or support political claims”.¹⁸ Marita Sturken pointed out that a traumatic experience is present in the “renegotiation

¹³ Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon, *Representation* (London: SAGE and the Open University, 2013), 29.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6.

¹⁶ Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”, *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 130.

¹⁷ John Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁸ Stier, *Committed to Memory*, 11.

of narratives of nationhood and identity”.¹⁹ Memory is therefore something that can contribute to the establishment of ‘imagined communities’ of a nation, a concept which Benedict Anderson developed in his work with the same title. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone wrote in their work *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts* that “the appeal to memory articulates the narrative of the nationalist past, and enjoins its subject to recognize and own it”.²⁰

The nationalist past is also regulated and re-enforced by different institutions, such as museums. Pierre Nora made the point that monuments and memorials are also sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) in which “memory crystallizes and secretes itself”; in other words, where the memory is condensed and expressed.²¹ These sites “emerge at points of rupture in order to counteract forgetfulness”.²² The construction of such discourses can be linked to the idea of ‘invented traditions’, a concept developed by Eric Hobsbawm which is used in relation to the creation of a national identity. This phenomenon can be extended to the creation of a collective memory, because the creation of memorials often comes with a form of invented tradition tied to that location, where you return every year to commemorate the event that took place there. The topics of memorials and museums will be illustrated further in the final part of this chapter. Now this chapter will move on to the specifics of the collective memory of 9/11 and which key themes are present in the dominant discourse.

The Collective Memory of 9/11

The factual historic narrative of the events of 9/11 is that there were four terrorist attacks by the militant Islamist organization Al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001, in which they crashed hijacked planes into the World Trade Center in New York City as well as, while maybe less present in the basic narrative, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania, resulting in nearly 3,000 people getting killed. The American collective memory of 9/11 however is more focused on the traumatic experience that resulted from these events. Lucy Bond, a scholar specialized in American memory and trauma, analysed in her article ‘Compromised Critique: A Meta-critical Analysis of American Studies after 9/11’ how the events altered the entire nation, and how they cannot be explained in words because it “goes beyond the capacity of the imagination to

¹⁹ Stier, *Committed to Memory*, 10.

²⁰ Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006), 169.

²¹ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de mémoire*.” *Representations* 26 (1989), 7.; Eugenia Allier Montaño, “Places of memory. Is the concept applicable to the analysis of memorial struggles? The case of Uruguay and its recent past,” *Cuadernos del CLAEH* vol. 4 (2008).

²² Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History”, 7. ; Stier, *Committed to Memory*, 9.

conceive or anticipate it”.²³ Over time, this notion of an interpretive void has not changed, and the events of 9/11 are still seen as a rupture in American life in which “the sky changed forever”.²⁴

As the *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* states, “the process of naming has the property of transferring a certain event from the perspective of matter to that of particles”, and that “the naming process has the capacity to change the event”. Therefore, by naming the attacks of 9/11 something that has changed the United States forever, a lot of weight gets attached to the events. “By remembering what has been forgotten and negotiating what must remain, it is possible to transform the necessity of memory”, and “...the trauma can be incorporated into identities”.²⁵ This means that by describing 9/11 as an indescribable national trauma, the event is being transformed into a “rupture in historical understanding”.²⁶ It is seen as a “seismic schism between an orderly and innocent prelapsarian America, and a horrifying and chaotic new reality”.²⁷ Psychoanalyst Dori Laub went as far as to say that “[n]ormality abruptly ceased. Life as we have known it stopped”.²⁸ Bond saw this creation of a rupture as an “overextension of the attribution of trauma to national, even universal levels, and the overpersonalization of the American public sphere”.²⁹

Next to the description of the event, imagery also plays a big role in how 9/11 is seen and the way it is talked about. Something that is often brought up when talking about 9/11 now is the question: where were you when you *saw* it happen, and a lot of people still know exactly where they were when they witnessed the events, most likely on television. The footage of 9/11 is often described as something you could only see in Hollywood movies. A New York City resident who witnessed the plane crashes in real life stated that her first thought was that “[s]omeone is making a movie”.³⁰ There was a blurring of reality and film, partly because the footage was something that was playing endlessly on programs such as CNN Headline News. Film functioned as a “metanarrative for experiencing 9/11”.³¹ Susan Sontag also mentioned this in her work *Regarding the Pain of Others*, writing that “a catastrophe that is experienced will

²³ Lucy Bond, “Compromised Critique: A Meta-critical Analysis of American Studies after 9/11,” *Journal of American Studies* 45.4 (2011): 733-34.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 734.

²⁵ Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen, *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, (London and New York: Routledge), 4.

²⁶ Bond, “Compromised Critique”, 735.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Dori Laub, “September 11, 2001 – An Event without a Voice”, in *Trauma at Home: After 9/11* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003): 205.

²⁹ Bond, “Compromised Critique”, 738.

³⁰ Cynthia Weber, *Imagining America at War: Morality, Politics and Film* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*

often seem eerily like its representation”, explaining that after four decades of “big-budget Hollywood disaster films, ‘It felt like a movie’ seems to have displaced the way survivors of a catastrophe used to express the short-term unassimilability of what they had gone through”.³² As these shocking images were played over and over again on television, like some sort of traumatic flashback, they also contribute to the narrative of national trauma.

September 11 is very much focused on being a national trauma in which all Americans are victimized. In terms of trauma theory, the discourse around 9/11 relates to this theory with “ideas of unrepresentability, [...] a conflation of historical and structural patterns [...] combined with notions of healing and redemption”.³³ However, according to Cathy Caruth, trauma does not arise “from a particular tragedy or disaster, but as an inherent structural consequence of the impossibility of accurately representing or remembering any given event”.³⁴ Calling the events of 9/11 traumatic for the entire nation creates a “misleading symbolic equivalency between the allegedly traumatic component of all human communication and the concrete suffering of victims of physical and mental trauma”.³⁵

From the 1990s on, there has also been a rising phenomenon of ‘traumaculture’ or ‘victim politics’, in which everyone gets attributed the victim status.³⁶ Laura Berlant declared that this privileging of trauma has led to a culture of *collective victimhood*, saying that “the public rhetoric of citizen trauma has become so pervasive and competitive in the United States that it obscures basic differences among modes of identity, hierarchy, and violence”.³⁷ She noted that the public sphere has become personalized with the testimonies of innumerable ‘traumatized’ individuals, and that their personal matters suddenly became a concern of the state.³⁸ This has especially become the case after 9/11, where everyone is telling their own personal story of that day.³⁹ Their individual memories are forming one collective memory of experiencing the event of 9/11. This growing phenomenon led to the creation of a ‘traumatized core national identity’ where these individual testimonies get placed into a wider discourse which is firmly rooted in a nationalist sphere where values such as freedom and liberty are highly talked about.⁴⁰

The attacks on 9/11 have also caused a loss of safety amongst citizens, whose image of the United States as an invulnerable nation has been damaged. The actions that the US government

³² Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books), 19.

³³ Bond, “Compromised Critique”, 739.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 740.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 741.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 745, 741.

has taken afterwards, such as the start of the War on Terror, are seen as a process of healing and redemption to counterbalance the nation's collective 'wound'.⁴¹ Actions followed 9/11 to make the country less vulnerable, such as immensely increased border security with the creation of the US Department of Homeland Security in 2002, with a focus on social threats originating from outside the state.⁴²

As touched upon in the previous section, Jan Assmann stated that memory can form a collective identity through positive and negative ideas. This is very relevant for the events of 9/11, because next to a traumatized national identity, there has also been a creation of a collective 'us vs. them' identity in American discourse. The American people see themselves as the 'us', and consider themselves a positive, progressive and successful group, while 'them', in this case the terrorists, but sometimes also even all Middle Eastern people, are seen as the negative, even barbaric group. The American society is associated with positive values such as democracy, peace and freedom, while the 'Other' is thought of not having these values. This creates a form of moral superiority of American citizens over other people in the world. This way of thinking can be considered '9/11 exceptionalism', a contemporary form of American exceptionalism.

The events of 9/11 have also contributed to the public debate on the position of the United States in the world, which "revolved around a foundational question of US-ness: what does it mean to be a moral America(n)?"⁴³ This debate revolves around the questions of "who 'Americans' are, what 'America' represents to the rest of the world, and about what Americans and America might be in this new, new world order".⁴⁴ These questions contribute to the creation of the dichotomy in which 'Americans' are separated from the rest of the world, and especially the people who they consider different from themselves. This way of thinking is also one of the incentives that pushed the War on Terror; the belief that the United States has the sole duty to fight this form of terrorism.

This section has looked at how 9/11 has been framed within a discourse of national trauma and created a form of 9/11 exceptionalism in which American citizens see themselves as victims, but also as the superior nation with the duty to fight this in the form of the War on Terror. The following section will look at how the attacks and the following trauma are being

⁴¹ Bond, "Compromised Critique", 745 – 747.

⁴² Niklaus Steiner, Robert Mason and Anna Hayes (eds.), *Migration and Insecurity: Citizenship and social inclusion in a transnational era* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 7.

⁴³ Weber, *Imagining America at War*, 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

commemorated at the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum in New York City and how this also contributes to the dominant discourse.

Commemoration at Ground Zero

The National 9/11 Memorial & Museum is located at the World Trade Center site in New York City, also known as Ground Zero. Construction on the memorial and the museum started in 2006, five years after the attacks took place. The memorial was completed in September 2011 and the museum in May 2014. These places of commemoration represent a lot of the feelings and emotions that 9/11 has evoked, and they have in turn institutionalized all different connotations connected to September 11.

The 9/11 Memorial was opened for the victim's families on September 11, 2011, on the tenth anniversary of the attacks. In 2003, there was a worldwide World Trade Center Memorial Competition held by The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation for the design of the memorial. There were 13,683 registrants and 5,201 Memorial submissions from 63 nations.⁴⁵ Architect Michael Arad and landscape architect Peter Walker won with their design called *Reflecting Absence*. The jury wrote in their jury report that "in its powerful, yet simple articulation of the footprints of the Twin Towers, *Reflecting Absence* has made the voids left by the destruction the primary symbols of our loss. It is a memorial that expresses both the incalculable loss of life and its consoling renewal, a place where all of us come together to remember from generation to generation."⁴⁶ The design is supposed to convey "a spirit of hope and renewal, and [should create] a contemplative space separate from the usual sights and sounds of a bustling metropolis".⁴⁷ All the emotions and feelings that are attached to this monument, such as 'incalculable loss', 'hope' and 'renewal' all represent the size and impact of the attacks, and contribute to discourse of national trauma and exceptionalism.

⁴⁵ "About the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition," World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/about.html>.

⁴⁶ "Future Memorial for World Trade Center Site: Reflecting Absence," World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/>.

⁴⁷ "Design Overview," 9/11 Memorial & Museum, accessed 10 April 2018, <https://www.911memorial.org/design-overview>.



Bird's-eye view from the 9/11 memorial and museum. Source: <https://www.nycgo.com/museums-galleries/9-11-memorial-museum>

As can be seen in the photograph above, the memorial consists out of two reflecting pools that are “each nearly an acre in size and feature the largest manmade waterfalls in North America”.⁴⁸ The rims of the pools state “the names of every person who died in the 2001 and 1993 attacks [...], a powerful reminder of the largest loss of life resulting from a foreign attack on American soil and the greatest single loss of rescue personnel in American history.”⁴⁹ This makes the commemoration very personal, while on the other hand representing this collective loss within the nation.



The WTC cross. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The site also includes several artifacts such as the ‘Survivor Tree’. This tree was found, damaged but not completely destroyed, on Ground Zero, removed, recovered and placed back onto the site in 2010. According to the official website, the tree “stands as a living reminder of resilience, survival and rebirth”.⁵⁰ Something else that was found in the rubble was a formation of steel beams shaped like a Christian cross. This has also been placed at Ground Zero, and is known as the Ground Zero or World Trade Center Cross. It functions as a spiritual symbol for strength, as religion is

⁴⁸ “About the Memorial,” 9/11 Memorial & Museum.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “The Survivor Tree,” 9/11 Memorial & Museum, accessed 2 June 2018, <https://www.911memorial.org/survivor-tree>.

often looked at for a place to find strength.⁵¹ Ground Zero is a place that is repeatedly called ‘sacred’, and this is another indicator that it is indeed treated this way. By repurposing these items that have ‘survived’ the attacks and making them a part of this memorial, the narrative focuses on how strong the United States is and that the nation as a whole can overcome this tragedy.

In the midst of the memorial is the 9/11 Memorial Museum. This museum, located mostly underground, opened in May 2014. The museum serves the different purposes of “[being] the country’s principal institution for examining the implications of the events of 9/11, documenting the impact of those events and exploring the continuing significance of September 11, 2001”.⁵² Before the plans for this museum were finalized, there were other ideas for cultural centers, including the development of an ‘International Freedom Center’, which would have been a museum with a much broader aim, narrating the context of the worldwide struggle for freedom through the ages. However, critics said that Ground Zero, together with the 9/11 memorial, would be too sacred to build a museum with “a lesson in geopolitics or social history”.⁵³ The leader of the opposition, Debra Burlingame, stated that a museum solely about 9/11 would still convey all the core values that the International Freedom Center would have portrayed, because 9/11 was a story “not only of loss but an uplifting story of decency triumphing over depravity.”⁵⁴

To try and display this story, the museum works with different mediums of exhibiting, such as multimedia displays, archives, narratives as well as a collection of monumental and authentic artifacts.⁵⁵ The artifacts specifically “provide a link to the events of 9/11, while presenting intimate stories of loss, compassion, reckoning and recovery that are central to telling the story of the attacks and the aftermath.”⁵⁶ The permanent collection of the museum holds more than 11,000 artifacts, as well as more than 40,000 print and digital photographs.⁵⁷ For example, there are many objects that were retrieved from the rubble and displayed in the museum, such as the

⁵¹ Anugrah Kumar, “American Atheists Lose Lawsuit Over 9/11 Cross”, *The Christian Post*, 30 March 2013, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/american-atheists-lose-lawsuit-over-9-11-cross-92950/>.

⁵² “About the Museum,” 9/11 Memorial & Museum, accessed 10 April 2018, <https://www.911memorial.org/about-museum>.

⁵³ David W. Dunlap, “Governor Bars Freedom Center at Ground Zero”, *The New York Times*, September 29 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/29/nyregion/governor-bars-freedom-center-at-ground-zero.html>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “About the Museum,” 9/11 Memorial & Museum.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Collection,” 9/11 Memorial & Museum, accessed 11 April 2018, <https://www.911memorial.org/collection>.

‘Survivors’ Stairs’, which provided a way out to thousands of survivors.⁵⁸ By using such artifacts and giving them these names to create a narrative, there is again a focus on survival, just like in the memorial.

The museum also illustrates the impact 9/11 had and continues to have with its architecture. The entrance of the museum can be found in between the two pools of the memorial, which were installed at the location of the Twin Towers.



The Survivors’ Stairs. Source: <https://www.911memorial.org/survivors-stairs>.

Because of this, the architects have made use of the remnants of the original towers that were still there, for instance incorporating a ‘slurry wall’, which is a surviving retaining wall of the original World Trade Center. By using the scale of the original buildings, people get the full picture of how massive the towers were, and by being reminded of this scale, they also represent the scale and impact of the attacks.⁵⁹

In the Foundation Hall, there are two objects that each serve a different purpose. First of all, there is the ‘Last Column’, a “thirty-six-foot-high steel colossus [which] is covered with messages to the dead, photographs, and memorial inscriptions put there by firefighters, police, rescue workers, and other laborers who worked at the recovery mission at Ground Zero for nine months”.⁶⁰ This item serves the purpose of creating one narrative out of many individual memories, as well as showing



The Last Column (left) and the Slurry Wall (right). Source: <https://www.dwell.com/article/at-ground-zero-bedrock-the-911-museum-prepares-for-visitors-1dc51921>

⁵⁸ Marita Sturken, “The 9/11 Memorial Museum and the Remaking of Ground Zero”, *American Quarterly* (67:2, 2015), 477.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 471.

resilience, hope and the previously mentioned survival narrative, because this column has survived the attack and has become a place where one is free to share emotions.

A slightly more unexpected artifact that serves an entirely different purpose, is a brick that was taken from the compound in Pakistan where Osama bin Laden was assassinated in 2011,



The Navy SEAL jacket (left), the coins (middle) and the brick (right).

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/911-memorial>.

which is being displayed “with the jacket of one of the Navy SEAL’s (donated by the man who wore it) and a small CIA ‘challenge coin’ apparently awarded in the agency for a mission accomplished and donated by the CIA operative (‘Maya’) who led the intelligence mission to find bin Laden.”⁶¹

This brick represents feelings of revenge and symbolizes some sort of closure to show that the United States did defeat the enemy. In this way, every artifact in this museum serves a different purpose that works towards the collective discourse of 9/11, but it also, by keeping it and displaying it as a reminder, shows that there is still resentment and hatred towards the enemy.

All in all, this chapter looked at collective memory as a whole, and specifically the collective memory of the attacks of 9/11. The collective memory of 9/11 is very much focused on a national trauma, and there is a collective identity of victimhood. These feelings and memories are used in the way 9/11 is commemorated. The memorial and museum are both very much focused on the enormous loss that the entire nation suffered, and they are places in which the events can be remembered from generation to generation. These are places where people can find hope and resilience, but, especially in the museum, they can also find some form of resentfulness and revenge towards the enemy. Keywords that keep showing up on the websites and in descriptions are loss, void, hope, resilience, survival, rebirth, renewal and remembrance. These words evoke strong emotions, illustrating the impact the attacks have had on American society as well as the effectiveness of its discourse.

⁶¹ Sturken, “The 9/11 Memorial Museum”, 472.

A second key theme is this idea of ‘9/11 exceptionalism’. The memorial and museum contribute to this narrative, because it portrays how strong they believe the nation to be, having the resilience to bear this loss, and to survive these attacks. By connecting the site with the ‘worldwide struggle for freedom’ and a brick from bin Laden’s compound, the survival of the United States is portrayed as the catalyst of America’s leading role in the War on Terror. The brick represents the personal quest of the United States taking on the burden of fighting back and defeating the terrorists. This feeling of exceptionalism “demands that we continue to try to tell its story as one of consequences – to frame it and make sense of it within the larger history of the United States.”⁶² Now this thesis will move on by looking at how trauma and exceptionalism come back in the political rhetoric used by US presidents Bush, Obama and Trump.

⁶² Sturken, “The 9/11 Memorial Museum”, 489.

Chapter 2: Political Speeches

By analyzing several 9/11 presidential speeches through a discourse analysis, this chapter will show how the collective memory of 9/11 is established in the political rhetoric of U.S. presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. There will be a specific focus on the use of trauma as well as exceptionalism, which were established in the previous chapter as two key factors regarding the collective memory of 9/11. This chapter will ultimately answer the question: How is the collective memory of 9/11 constructed in the rhetoric of U.S. presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump?

President Bush (2001 – 2009)

President George W. Bush had been president of the United States for just half a year when he was faced with the tragedy of 9/11, which became a real turning point in his presidency. On the evening after the attacks, he delivered his televised address to the nation (see appendix 1). The setting of this address was intimate; the audience saw president Bush sitting at his Oval Office desk, one could see family pictures in the background, and he spoke directly to the camera.



Source: www.history.com

His short address focused on two themes: the unity of the United States, and the promise to the nation that the enemy will be brought to justice. He created an image of what the attacks have caused in the United States, explaining how the American “way of life, our very freedom” was attacked by these terrorist acts.⁶³ Just after four minutes, Bush wrapped up his address by

⁶³ “Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation,” Office of the Press Secretary, September 11, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>

calling the nation to prayer “for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security have been threatened.”⁶⁴ This way of describing the attacks contributes to what Lucy Bond identifies as a rupture in time, as well as this discourse of a national trauma that has effected everyone, even the children. Moreover, Bush made it clear that, while these acts were “intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat”, the terrorists have failed, because “our country is strong”.⁶⁵ By creating this narrative, Bush showed the people of the United States that they can overcome this trauma because the enemies have failed.

By mentioning dividing pronouns such as ‘we/our’ and ‘they/their’, in the study of rhetoric also known as ‘inclusive we’⁶⁶, Bush was on the one hand unifying the people of the United States, and on the other hand creating one clear enemy, the terrorists, who he only referred to as ‘they’. The final paragraph of his speech reinforces this idea by using a lot of positive values such as freedom, goodness and justness, which are explicitly connected to the nation state and its people, and are therefore values that the enemies do not possess.

Bush also created a strong discourse of exceptionalism, for example by stating that they, a “great people” in a “great nation”, are “the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world”.⁶⁷ The first priority that Bush stated is that *they*, the government of the United States, have to protect the citizens at home and around the world from further attacks. He also made the first claim of starting a “war against terrorism” in which America “and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world”.⁶⁸ Bush made it clear that they will not be soft in their fight against terrorism, as they “will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them”.⁶⁹ By forming this narrative in such a black and white way, where there is a good side (us) and a bad side (them), the American people have been given a strong justification why the United States will have to start this war, which will later be labelled the War on Terror.

His more famously known speech is when he addressed Congress nine days later, on the 20th of September (see appendix 2). This speech is highly focused on serving justice and defeating the enemy by all means necessary. It is constructed by posing and answering questions that the American people might have: who attacked the country, why do they hate us, how will we fight

⁶⁴ Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President.”

⁶⁵ Ibid.

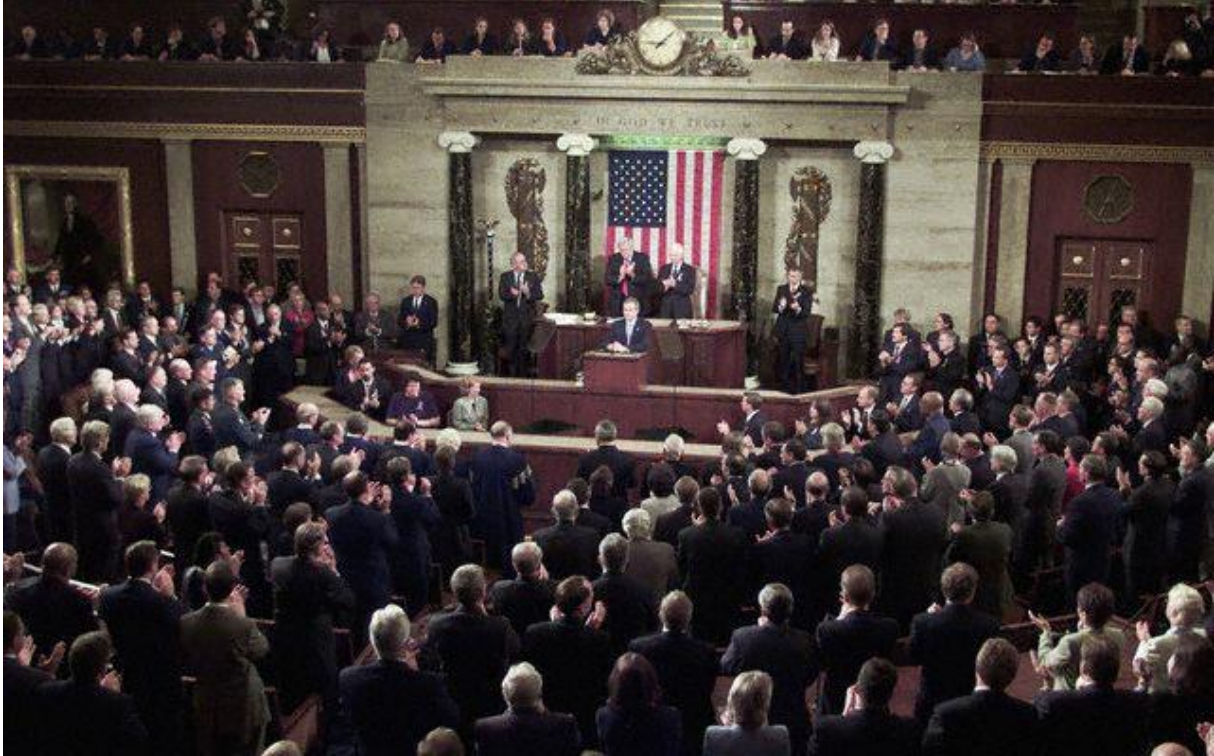
⁶⁶ Antoine Braet, *Retorische kritiek: hoe beoordeel je overtuigingskracht?* (Amsterdam: Boom Uitgevers, 2011), 126.

⁶⁷ Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President.”

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

and win this war, and what is expected of us? The setting is very different from his intimate address to the nation. He was not alone in his office anymore, but he was standing in front of all the people's representatives in Congress, a highly symbolic location that symbolizes *democracy*, a central theme and important concept within his speech.



Source: https://www.historyonthenet.com/authentichistory/2001-2008/1-911/2-timeline2/20010920_Bush_Address_Before_Joint_Session_of_Congress.html

In this address, president Bush placed a lot of emphasis on the uniqueness of 9/11, which changes the narrative of 9/11 to an exceptional event. Something that can be found in both speeches is the discourse of rupture and national trauma; he contributes to this discourse of rupture by stating that “night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack”.⁷⁰ He added to the discourse of trauma by stating that people “have made grief of strangers their own”, which relates to the idea of a national trauma culture and what Lucy Bond labeled the “overpersonalization of the American public sphere”.⁷¹

Another rhetorical element that comes back in both speeches is his use of an ‘us vs. them’ rhetoric, making a strong divide between Americans and terrorists. Again, he made exuberant use of the ‘inclusive we’. He also linked values to the different groups; Americans are directly

⁷⁰ Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” Office of the Press Secretary, September 20, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

⁷¹ Ibid.; Bond, “Compromised Critique”, 738.

in line with ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’, while the terrorists are “enemies of freedom”.⁷² The most explicit example of this rhetoric is where he answers the question: why do they hate us?

“They hate what we see right here in this chamber -- a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms -- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. (...) These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us, because we stand in their way.”⁷³

Here, democracy, freedom and their entire way of life are being juxtaposed with the terrorists, people who Bush claimed are “heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century” who will “follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies.”⁷⁴

This speech is generally considered powerful because Bush spoke with vigor; he used powerful language regarding the faith of their enemies, and he made demands in his speech without showing any weakness: “These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.”⁷⁵ He also demanded the rest of the world to make a choice: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”⁷⁶

In this speech he also explicitly stated the upcoming War on Terror. This is justified not only through the ‘us vs. them’ discourse, but also through a discourse of exceptionalism, which is perfectly illustrated in this section:

“Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now *depends on us*. Our nation, this generation will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.”⁷⁷

⁷² Office of the Press Secretary, “Address to a Joint Session.”

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

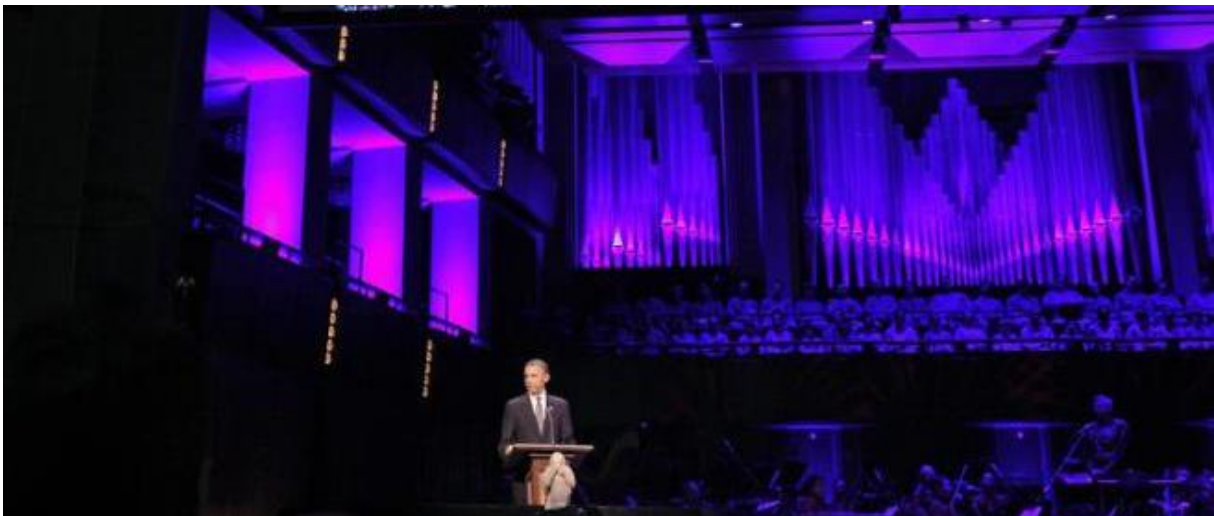
⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

These speeches illustrate how Bush's rhetoric contributes to the discourse and collective memory of 9/11. He included this idea of a rupture in time and the immense national trauma that the events have caused: the United States have felt harm, grief, fear, and anger, but the president asserts the enemy that these feelings will only result in more courage and hope. He also used this idea of 9/11 exceptionalism to explain why they have the right to start the War on Terror. By using an 'us vs. them' rhetoric and contributing positive and negative values to the opposite groups, a clear enemy was created and the upcoming war was justified.

President Obama (2009 – 2017)

President Obama has had two big commemoration anniversaries of 9/11 within his presidency, the 10th and 15th anniversary. In 2011, two years into his presidency, Obama delivered a speech at 'A Concert for Hope' that was held in the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. (see appendix 3). At this concert there were about 2,000 attendees, and next to Obama's speech there was entertainment from various musicians.⁷⁸ People had the ability to commemorate 9/11 in a more informal setting with more energy, and in his speech he focused on positive feelings of hope, resilience and survival.



Source: <https://theobamadiary.com/author/chipsticks/page/692/>

In his 2011 speech, Obama created the same image of what 9/11 had done to the United States as Bush: he claimed it to be one of the darkest nights that they have known, and they “awoke to a world in which evil was closer at hand, and uncertainty clouded [their] future”.⁷⁹ However, he countered these feelings of immense loss and trauma by mentioning what has not

⁷⁸ Dana Hedgpeth, “Obama wraps up 9/11 at Kennedy Center concert”, *The Washington Post*, September 11, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obama-wraps-up-911-at-kennedy-center-concert/2011/09/11/gIQAYHDhLK_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.15ea0a9ad8d6

⁷⁹ “Remarks by the President at ‘A Concert for Hope’,” Office of the Press Secretary, September 11, 2011. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/11/remarks-president-concert-hope>

changed in the ten years that have passed, which becomes the overarching theme of his speech. He started several paragraphs with the words “these past 10 years”, and he stressed their character as a nation, their faith in God and each other, their belief in America and the freedom that the citizens have to determine their own destiny.⁸⁰

In Obama’s speech there is also a sense of overpersonalization of the nation, but unlike Bush, he did this even more explicitly by discussing the personal experience of a citizen named Suzanne Swaine, whose story he has received through a letter. Swaine’s story does not focus on the trauma that came upon her, but on the resilience of her and her family, something that Obama called the “spirit [that] typifies our American family”.⁸¹ This story functions as an *effect of truth*⁸²: by telling a true story, it showed the audience what 9/11 has done to families, but it also served as a persuasion that there is indeed hope in the power of strength, resilience and family.

Obama’s speech includes noticeably more biblical references than Bush’s. There were numerous references to Christian scripture in his evening speech at the Kennedy Center. For instance, he started and finished his speech with a verse: “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”.⁸³ This bible quote is something that captures the message of the speech well, as it focuses on feelings such as hope, resilience and moving forward. According to the reaction of an attendee of the concert, this succeeded, stating that the message he left with was “hope, love, unity, faith. And there’s a tomorrow.”⁸⁴

Obama also delivered hope by repeating the ideals of the American Dream, that “all people are created equal, and deserve the same freedom to determine their own destiny”, and that “our open markets still provide innovators the chance to create and succeed”.⁸⁵ He also mentioned it directly: “...all of them pledging allegiance to the flag, all of them reaching for the same American dream.”⁸⁶ President Obama connected the idea that the United States represents an enduring beacon of freedom with the victory over its national traumatic event. In this way, the president expressed American exceptionalism, by connecting the national ethos of the United States with its ability to recover.

Possibly the biggest change from Bush’s speeches to this one is that there is no real mention of the enemy. The focus is rather on Americans and the successes that they have had. There is

⁸⁰ Office of the Press Secretary, “A Concert for Hope.”

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 209.

⁸³ Office of the Press Secretary, “A Concert for Hope.”

⁸⁴ Hedgpeth, “Obama wraps up 9/11 at Kennedy Center concert”.

⁸⁵ Office of the Press Secretary, “A Concert for Hope.”

⁸⁶ Ibid.

also no strong ‘us vs. them’ rhetoric in this speech where Americans are placed opposite the terrorists; ‘they’ does not refer to an enemy, but to Americans in the future:

“Decades from now, Americans will visit the memorials to those who were lost on 9/11. They’ll run their fingers over the places where the names of those we loved are carved into marble and stone, and they may wonder at the lives that they led. (...) [T]hey will pay respects to those lost in Iraq and Afghanistan. They’ll see the names of the fallen on bridges and statues, at gardens and schools. And they will know that nothing can break the will of a truly United States of America.”⁸⁷

This is especially interesting because earlier that year, in May 2011, the U.S. army finally achieved the mission of killing al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. By not explicitly mentioning this victory, Obama did not acknowledge this achievement of vengeance, but solely focused on positivity amongst Americans themselves. In a way, this is also exactly what gave him the opportunity to do this: as the enemy is defeated, they can finally start to move forward.



Source: <https://www.mercurynews.com/2016/09/11/full-text-obamas-911-speech-at-the-pentagon-memorial/>

Obama’s final 9/11 commemoration speech was in 2016, on the 15-year anniversary of the attacks at the 9/11 Memorial Observance Ceremony at the Pentagon (see appendix 4). This speech had a lot of similarities to his 2011 speech as he reuses a lot of the rhetoric and themes. He again incorporated biblical references, beginning and ending his speech with a verse that resonates well with the overall positivity that Obama liked to spread: “Let not steadfast love

⁸⁷ Office of the Press Secretary, “A Concert for Hope.”

and faithfulness forsake you... write them on the tablet of your heart".⁸⁸ He combined this religious symbolism with other traditional American values, like the importance of family: "May He watch over these faithful families and all who protect us".⁸⁹

He took this familial imagery even further by portraying the *nation* as one big family, sharing love and faith: "we renew the love and faith that binds us together as one American family".⁹⁰ By providing this idea of connectiveness between American citizens, individual experiences become more touching and powerful. Just like his earlier speeches, he read anecdotes from personal experiences by citizens to evoke feelings of courage, resilience and love in the listener – keywords that keep returning in Obama's general political rhetoric, as can for instance be seen in Obama's 2008 presidential campaign material with his famous 'Hope' poster.

Something that is different from his earlier speech is that in this one, he did mention the enemy and the murder of Osama bin Laden. Words which allude to vengeance entered his speech when he mentioned that the United States has "delivered justice to Osama bin Laden".⁹¹ Furthermore, Obama took the opportunity to focus on a new enemy, The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and how they, just like al Qaeda, "will never be able to defeat a nation as great and as strong as America".⁹² This clearly shows the narrative built around 9/11 and the War on Terror: even though many terrorist attacks, mostly on European and Middle Eastern soil, have been carried out by ISIL, by tracing it all back to that one day in September 2001, the War on Terror becomes an unquestionable American affaire.

This theme of exceptionalism is further manifested in a later part of the speech which is filled with 'us vs. them' rhetoric, something that was earlier established as another technique to justify the War on Terror. At the end of his speech there is also a statement that most strikingly illustrates Obama's narrative of American exceptionalism, namely that the citizens of the United States "do not give in to fear", and that they will "preserve our freedoms and the way of life that *makes us a beacon to the world*".⁹³ This rhetoric distinguishes itself from the form of exceptionalism discussed in the previous paragraph by its ideological character. In this way, it seems that where Obama earlier used 9/11 exceptionalism to justify the War on Terror, in this section he utilized the broader form of American exceptionalism:

⁸⁸ "Remarks by the President Obama at the 9/11 Memorial Observance Ceremony," Office of the Press Secretary, September 11, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/11/remarks-president-obama-911-memorial-observance-ceremony>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

“Perhaps most of all, we stay true to the spirit of this day by defending not only our country, but also our ideals. Fifteen years into this fight, the threat has evolved. (...) Hateful ideologies urge people in their own country to commit unspeakable violence. (...) that's why it is so important today that we reaffirm our character as a nation -- a people drawn from every corner of the world, every color, every religion, every background -- bound by a creed as old as our founding, e pluribus unum. Out of many, we are one. For we know that our diversity -- our patchwork heritage -- is not a weakness; it is still, and always will be, one of our greatest strengths. This is the America that was attacked that September morning. This is the America that we must remain true to.”⁹⁴

All in all, it can be concluded that president Obama's 9/11 speeches have focused more on positive keywords such as love, faith, and hope, which matches the rhetoric used during this presidential campaigns. The primary difference in between his two speeches is that in 2011 he made no mention of the enemy and focused solely on the American people, while in 2016 he did talk about their enemies and the situation in the Middle East. By discussing bin Laden in this last speech, Obama reassured the necessity of Americans involved in battling a new enemy: ISIL. For this, he made use of two important ideas engrained in American collective memory: firstly the recent trauma of 9/11, and secondly the centuries old ethos of the American Dream, laden with an ideology of freedom. Both contribute in their own way to the forming and simultaneously utilization of a twofold American exceptionalism.

⁹⁴ Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by the President Obama.”

President Trump (2017 -)

Source: screenshot from CNN's YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkEb888Uit8>

President Trump has only delivered one commemoration speech during his presidency so far as he has just taken office (see appendix 5). On September 11, 2017 he gave his commemoration speech at the Pentagon in Arlington just as president Obama had done the year before. In contrast to the speeches by president Obama, his speech focused mostly on the military and serving the country. Many of the keywords that are being used by president Trump are similar to the ones president Bush used: Trump talked especially about the power and strength of the nation, and did not focus on words like love, faith and family as president Obama did.

Trump started his speech by sending the nation's prayers to the victims of Hurricane Irma and Harvey, and therefore moving away from the story of 9/11. He continued this section by stating that when "Americans are in need, Americans pull together – and we are one country", making it therefore broader than just the attacks of 9/11, but continuing the themes of unity and trauma.⁹⁵ After that, the 9/11 discourse of national trauma and rupture is very much present in Trump's speech. He reminded the audience of how their whole world changed sixteen years ago, calling it a "terrible, terrible day", an "hour of darkness" and that the "horror and anguish of that dark day were seared into our national memory forever."⁹⁶ He compared the attacks of 9/11 to Pearl Harbor, stating that this is the worst attack the country has had to endure since then. This is something that president Bush also did in his speech to Congress, even though he did not mention Pearl Harbor by name.

⁹⁵ "Remarks by President Trump at the 9/11 Memorial Observance," The White House, September 11, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-9-11-memorial-observance/>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Something that the speeches of president Obama and president Trump have in common is that they both shared the story of a citizen. Trump told the story of Pentagon police officer Isaac Ho'opi'i, who was actually on duty and present at that day's ceremony. Trump dedicated quite a bit of his speech by telling the audience in great detail how Isaac helped and saved "as many as twenty people" on the day of the attacks.⁹⁷ The purpose of telling this story is to show how Isaac has served the nation, and that he is doing it up until this day.

As said before, this speech is focused on the strength and power of the nation and its service members. This focus makes sense, as Trump's entire presidential campaign and presidency has been revolving around the power of America and 'making America great again'. There is also a form of exceptionalism that runs throughout his speech, illustrated for example in the section below, where he used an 'us vs. them' rhetoric and separated the Other by placing them into a negative light. In this section, Americans are great, civilized people, while the enemy is barbaric, evil and destructive. This again is a technique to justify why this War on Terror is still going strong and why millions of people have joined the military. By stating that *American* forces are the ones who are pursuing and destroying the enemies of *all* civilized people and that there is nowhere that those enemies can hide, Trump was declaring America the exceptional power who will save them all.

"In the years after September 11th, more than 5 million young men and women have joined the ranks of our great military to defend our country against barbaric forces of evil and destruction. American forces are relentlessly pursuing and destroying the enemies of all civilized people, ensuring — and these are horrible, horrible enemies — enemies like we've never seen before. But we're ensuring they never again have a safe haven to launch attacks against our country. We are making plain to these savage killers that there is no dark corner beyond our reach, no sanctuary beyond our grasp, and nowhere to hide anywhere on this very large Earth."⁹⁸

Trump also used metaphorical speech, especially related to the American flag. He used the verb 'to pledge' several times, a verb which is commonly associated with The Pledge of Allegiance, an American ritual to express loyalty to the flag and the nation. The two paragraphs below explain Trump's reasoning behind this metaphor. Once again, this reinforces this idea of American exceptionalism:

⁹⁷ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump."

⁹⁸ Ibid.

“[W]here they left a mark with fire and rubble, Americans defiantly raised the stars and stripes – our beautiful flag that for more than two centuries has graced our ships, flown in our skies, and led our brave heroes to victory after victory in battle. The flag that binds us all together as Americans who cherish our values and protect our way of life. The flag that reminds us today of who we are, what we stand for, and why we fight. Woven into that beautiful flag is the story of our resolve. We have overcome every challenge — every single challenge, every one of them — we’ve triumphed over every evil, and remained united as one nation under God. America does not bend. We do not waver. And we will never, ever yield.”⁹⁹

This quote shows how, more than with Bush and Obama, Trump combined many different themes of American collective memory: Trump referred to 9/11, to the ideals of freedom found in the American Dream and represented by the Star-Spangled Banner, and to the religious tradition of the United States. He combined this with military metaphors to illustrate the strength of ‘America’. In this way, Trump’s commemoration speech at the Pentagon utilizes many facets of classic American imagery to paint a picture of a militaristic form of exceptionalism. The focus on the military and the present raises extra attention to the War on Terror, which seems to indicate that the present is getting more important in this commemoration speech than the past.

All in all, this chapter has analyzed several presidential 9/11 speeches over the years. There is a difference in tone amongst the three presidents since the attacks, but each speech still incorporates the same elements that form the dominant discourse. In each speech, there is a rhetoric of how the attacks have created a rupture and a national trauma, and in each speech there is a certain form of 9/11 or American exceptionalism which is created through rhetorical techniques such as an ‘us vs. them’ division and utilizations of typical American ideals and cultural references.

Presidents Bush and Trump each focused on the power and strength of the United States, and how the nation will never be defeated. Moreover, they stressed how the free world depends on the leadership of United States in the struggle against terrorism. The idea that only the US can fulfill this role, and is therefore exceptional, is implied in these speeches. President Obama took another approach, and focused on love, faith, and the concept of the American family. However, he still created this idea of a superior American people, be it in another way. This

⁹⁹ The White House, “Remarks by President Trump.”

thesis will now move on to analyzing 9/11 documentaries and the discourse that is used throughout them, in order to create a broad understanding of the used discourse in different areas of commemoration.

Chapter 3: Discourse in 9/11 documentaries

Finally, this thesis will consider the discourse used in three different documentaries that deal with 9/11. The chosen documentaries all vary in their style, which will create a broad overview; *102 minutes that changed America* is portrayed as a ‘neutral’ documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11* on the other hand is strongly critical and political, and *11’09”01 – September 11* provides a global perspective. The documentaries will be discussed in chronological order of publication.

Documentaries are often seen by the audience as a form of truth, and within documentaries there are often truth claims. However, they are still a form of constructed representation crafted by the filmmakers.¹⁰⁰ These three documentaries differ in their way of construction and how they attempt to persuade the viewer to accept the message as the truth. Film theorist Bill Nichols’ theory on different modes of documentary will be used to identify this. This chapter will analyze the documentaries using discourse analysis, focusing on the same key themes as chapter two. It will answer the question: In what ways is the collective memory of 9/11 constructed in 9/11 documentaries?

11’09”01 – September 11

With its release in September 2002, *11’09”01 – September 11* was one of the earliest 9/11 documentaries. The film is composed of eleven contributions from different filmmakers, each representing a country; Iran, France, Egypt, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, United Kingdom, Mexico, Israel, India, the United States and Japan. The documentary has received several awards, including the UNESCO Award at the Venice Film Festival in 2002 and the Freedom of Expression Award from the National Board of Review. It has been rated 7.0/10 on IMDb, which is the lowest of the three chosen documentaries, but still generally positive.

Each director was given complete freedom of expression to, as it states at the beginning of the documentary, show a point of view committing their subjective conscience. The only limitation was the timeframe, which had to be eleven minutes, nine seconds and one frame, 11’09”01, symbolizing the date of the attacks. Some review sites label this project a ‘docudrama’, because it consists of re-enacted scenes of actual events. This way of constructing relates to the performative mode of Nichols’ theory, because it “operates to convey the subjective and affective dimensions of our knowledge of the world.”¹⁰¹ This emphasis on subjectivity and artistry results in a weaker claim to a general truth, and is more about individual experiences.

¹⁰⁰ Hall, *Representation*, 60.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

In many of the short films, there is less of a focus on the events of 9/11 themselves and more on the stories of individual people living their lives. The audience occasionally sees brief shots of the attacks on a television screen, but these images are often neglected. In the 'France' film by Claude Lelouch, the protagonist is deaf and unaware that things are happening, even though she lives in Lower Manhattan. Sean Penn also used this same method in 'The United States' film: the protagonist is an old man who is sleeping through the attacks, which are happening right outside his house. The shadow of one of the Twin Towers was blocking sunlight from his room, and when the tower collapses, he is woken up by the sunlight, but his only reaction is happiness, because the wilted flowers in his room suddenly brighten up. These segments very much break with the narrative of 9/11 conveyed by the memorial and the presidential speeches.

Alejandro González Iñárritu, producer of the 'Mexico' film, used images of 9/11 in an unusual way as well; his production is an almost completely black screen, with just a few flashes of images from falling bodies from the towers. Flashes of images are often a symptom of trauma, of seeing the same horrific image over and over again, and Iñárritu played with this concept. He combined this with a chaotic collection of sounds relating to the attacks; screaming and crying people, the sound of planes, the crashing of the buildings, phone calls to loved ones and 9-1-1, and American and foreign reporters. By doing so, he tried to create an effective representation of the pure chaos of that day as well as the trauma that followed. In this way, Iñárritu's representation of 9/11 fits the narrative of national trauma, fear, and loss.

There are several short films in which 9/11 is being compared and linked to other events that have happened on a similar date. Ken Loach, the producer of the 'United Kingdom' film, compared it to the overtaking of the Chilean government on September 11, 1973. The protagonist, a Chilean singer-songwriter in exile, states that "[o]n September 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against *our* country. [...] September 11th, 1973. A day that destroyed our lives forever."¹⁰² Loach used the same words that Bush used in his Congress speech, to stress the similarities between the events. The protagonist is writing a letter to the people of New York, stating: "Mothers, fathers and loved ones of those who died in New York, soon it will be the 29th anniversary of our Tuesday, 11th of September and the first anniversary of yours. We will remember you. I hope you will remember us."¹⁰³

Danis Tanović, producer of the 'Bosnia-Herzegovina' film, also used a comparison, focusing on the widows of the war in Srebrenica who protest every 11th of the month. They hear what happened in New York on television, and the protagonist states that "We have to demonstrate.

¹⁰² *11'09''11 – September 11*, directed by Alain Brigand, et al. (2002; CIH Shorts et al.).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

For them and for us!”¹⁰⁴ Amos Gitai, producer of ‘Israel’, let the protagonist state a list of historic and tragic events that have happened on a particular September 11th, in 1777, 1855, 1944, 1997 and that same day in 2001 in Tel Aviv. By doing this, the producers made people aware that there is more tragedy in the world, and that 9/11 cannot be seen as an exceptional event. All these different short films thus critique the discourse of 9/11 exceptionalism, which was so prevalent in the speeches analyzed in chapter 2.

Another theme that is dealt with and critiqued is this broader idea of American exceptionalism. Youssef Chahine, producer of the ‘Egypt’ film, starts a conversation with the ghost of a soldier who was killed in the Beirut bombings in 1983. Chahine states: “America should protect its own values, its principles of freedom, democracy and tolerance. But it destroys other civilizations.” The soldier responds that America is defending its own interests, to which Chahine responds with: “Defending them at whose expense?! Always that of others. Only your soul is sacred, and the world owes you everything? No one else deserves even a tear? It’s a vicious circle of destructive stupidity.”¹⁰⁵ This section broadens the topic of the entire documentary, and does not only focus on 9/11, but also on the War on Terror. By including this in a 9/11 documentary, Chahine integrated the War on Terror within the collective memory of 9/11. The documentary illustrates how early on in the formation of a collective memory of 9/11, the War on Terror becomes connected to the narrative.

All in all, *11’09’01 – September 11* shows the viewer a variety of narratives and interpretations of 9/11. Some do fit in the narrative as seen in the presidential speeches, but do this in an artistic and experimental way. Others seem to actively break the dominant narrative, by putting the events in perspective with events in the past or outside of the United States, which are claimed to be no less impactful or significant. In doing so, narratives of 9/11 and broader American exceptionalism are broken down.

Fahrenheit 9/11

The documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* was released in 2004 by producer Michael Moore, a documentary filmmaker who is known for his critical documentaries on various sensitive political topics in the United States, such as gun culture, the healthcare system, and, with this documentary, the War on Terror. The documentary has been awarded many prizes including the Palme d’Or, the highest prize of the Cannes Movie Festival, where the movie made its debut.

¹⁰⁴ *11’09’01 – September 11*, Brigand et al.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

It has been rated 7.5/10 on IMDb, which is impressive for a political film on a highly sensitive subject.

This documentary is heavily montaged, and consists of many different types of footage; media clips, broadcasted news as well as pre-, post- and non-rolls¹⁰⁶, interviews that Moore filmed himself, as well as popular images from old movies. Within the theory of Nichols, *Fahrenheit 9/11* uses both the reflexive and performative mode of narrating.¹⁰⁷ This means that Moore made it clear that this is indeed constructed, and that it is *his* vision and truth. We see Moore throughout the documentary, for instance interviewing people and protesting against the Senators, and he provides the voice-over. The editing of the footage is meant to support the spoken narrative, and footage is used as evidence to support the documentary's point of view. This is done in two ways; in a direct way, but also through sarcasm and cynicism, where Moore states one thing, and the footage displays the exact opposite.

Fahrenheit 9/11 primarily focuses on the events that occurred *after* 9/11, and not per se on the attacks themselves. It especially deals with president Bush and how he supposedly failed during his presidency. The documentary starts off with the presidential elections of 2000, and begins discrediting Bush by claiming his presidency was corrupt, implying that he won through family ties and election fraud. This is followed by the statement that, during the first eight months of his presidency, he was on vacation 42% of the time. It then moves on to the events of 9/11; there is only a blank screen where the audience can hear the collapse of the Twin Towers. Afterwards it cuts to citizens in the streets, looking shocked towards the sky. There is no footage shown of the terrorist acts themselves. Instead, Moore returns to the topic of Bush, specifically to the reaction of Bush and his administration.

Moore implies that Bush should have done more, both to prevent the attacks, and in his first response. Bush was visiting a primary school in Florida when he heard about the attacks, and Moore states that: "Not knowing what to do, with no one telling him what to do, and no Secret Service rushing in to take him to safety, Mr. Bush just sat there and continued to read 'My Pet Goat' with the children."¹⁰⁸ Moore then showed how Bush cut terrorism funding from the FBI, how he was briefed in August about the fact that bin Laden was planning to attack America by hijacking airplanes, and how the report was explicitly titled 'bin Laden Determined to Attack

¹⁰⁶ Pre-rolls are segments while the camera is rolling but before the footage is fed live on television, post-rolls are segments from after the live feed but while the camera is still rolling, and non-rolls are segments that were not broadcast. Weber, *Imagining America at War*, 138.

¹⁰⁷ Hall, *Representation*, 69-70.

¹⁰⁸ *Fahrenheit 9/11*, directed by Michael Moore (2004; Fellowship Adventure Group).

Inside the United States'. Moore continues his accusations by stating that "a report like that might make some men jump, but as days passed, George W. just went fishing."¹⁰⁹

One of the main themes of this documentary is state censorship, which is implied through the title. It refers to the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, a dystopian novel by Ray Bradbury which is set in a time "when reading the written word is banned".¹¹⁰ The title of *Fahrenheit 9/11* implies that post-9/11, there is state censorship in the United States. He illustrates this by showing how the Bush administration as well as the media have created this culture of fear: "The world has changed after September the 11th. It's changed because we're no longer safe", and "[w]e've entered what may very well prove to be the most dangerous security environment the world's known."¹¹¹ In other words: Moore's documentary reflects on the way in which the Bush administration directed the whole narrative of 9/11 and its results to a narrative of danger and fear. Moore suggests that this was done so that the Bush administration could enact the Patriot Act, which according to Moore, had the main purpose of providing the government with more power over American citizens. Moore strengthened this idea by inserting a clip without context of Bush stating that: "No, a dictatorship would be a heck of a lot easier, no question about it."¹¹²

The people who watched Moore's documentary "had significantly more negative attitudes toward Bush (...), even after controlling for demographic, political, and media use differences between the groups."¹¹³ This means that it has had an influence on the collective memory of both 9/11 and president Bush. This influence is especially important because this movie was released right before the presidential elections of 2004, where president Bush was trying to be re-elected. This documentary therefore does not only aim to inform and educate, but is also playing a political role of addressing voters. There are two segments where people explicitly express their political opinions; one is when a wounded soldier states that he "was a Republican for quite a few years. And for some reason, they conduct business in a very dishonest way. I'm gonna be incredibly active in the Democratic Party down where I live once I get out. I'm gonna definitely do my best to ensure that the Democrats win control."¹¹⁴ Another segment is where a mother reads a letter that she received from her son, who was fighting in Iraq, but was killed in the war: "What in the world is wrong with George? Trying to be like his dad, Bush. He got

¹⁰⁹ *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore.

¹¹⁰ Cynthia Weber, *Imagining America at War*, 135.

¹¹¹ *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Natalie Jomini Stroud, "Media Effects, Selective Exposure, and Fahrenheit 9/11" *Political Communication*, 24:4 (2007).

¹¹⁴ *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore.

us out here for nothing whatsoever. I am so furious right now, Mama. I really hope they do not re-elect that fool, honestly.”¹¹⁵

In this way, Moore seemed to actively try to discredit believe in Bush, and with that, the belief in American exceptionalism. He did this to the clearest extent by using the story of Lila Lipscomb from Flint, Michigan, Moore’s hometown. Lila works at an employment agency, and she tells people that going into the military is a good option. She proudly claims that both her daughter and son have been in the military and have fought in Iraq. Moore showed her to be a true patriot, who raises the American flag every morning, wears a cross and is proud of the U.S. army. However, her opinion changes when her son was killed in Iraq, and in his last letter he states that the war is useless. As Cynthia Weber states in her book *Imagining America at War*, Lila represents “not just a mourning mother but the moral center of a betrayed America.”¹¹⁶ In a different segment, a soldier is shown stating: “We have to, as you go back to the old saying, win the hearts and minds of the people. That’s our job. We have to bring ideal of democracy and freedom to the country and show them that the American people are not here to rule Iraq.” This idea embodies American exceptionalism, but by portraying the United States as corrupt and unfree, this narrative is broken.

102 Minutes That Changed America, 15th anniversary edition

102 Minutes That Changed America is a documentary produced by the History Channel, which claims to be an objective and educational channel, stating in its Twitter bio: “What you need to know about the past to help inform the present and understand the future.”¹¹⁷ The documentary was originally released on American television on September 11, 2008, and in 2016 they released an updated version, fifteen years after the attacks of 9/11. This section will focus on the 15th anniversary edition, and will look at how this updated documentary commemorates the attacks. The documentary has been praised a lot: it has won three Primetime Emmy Awards in non-fiction categories, and on IMDb it has been rated 8.3/10. This rating is almost a point higher than the other two documentaries, which indicates that a lot of viewers empathized with the movie.

Unique to the documentary is the way in which out of raw footage filmed by many eyewitnesses, a seemingly “objective” narrative is constructed. In terms of the different modes Bill Nichols has created, this documentary uses the observational mode, where the filmmakers

¹¹⁵ *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore.

¹¹⁶ Weber, *Imagining America at War*, 141.

¹¹⁷ “HISTORY”, Twitter.com, accessed 14 June 2018. <https://twitter.com/history>.

do not intervene by means of narrating the footage.¹¹⁸ In the anniversary edition, they revisited some of the eyewitnesses and interviewed them. The documentary starts off with a disclaimer and an explanation of what this documentary entails:

“The following program contains material of a graphic and disturbing nature, and may not be suitable for some viewers. Viewer discretion is advised. This program contains footage collected from more than 100 different eyewitnesses who grabbed their cameras to record an event that became history. It originally aired in 2008, and has now been updated with new material and interviews featuring some of those 9/11 eyewitnesses.”¹¹⁹

However, even though the documentary contains a lot of raw footage, it is still constructed with certain framing. In terms of editing, the filmmakers have decided on a certain order of the footage, the placement of the different sections, and the addition of music which sets the mood for upcoming scenes. They have also added black frames that only display a highly detailed clock, emphasizing the quickness of the events, but also to build on prior knowledge of the spectator. For viewers who are aware of the exact time of the events, and even for a regular viewer, this creates tension, as the ticking of the clock clearly leads up to a specific devastating moment.

The analysis of this documentary will focus on a few different things. First of all, it will discuss the idea of a rupture and trauma, which was previously established as one of the key factors of the collective memory of 9/11. The title of the documentary is already in line with the dominant discourse that the attacks *changed* America, and comes up throughout the documentary. An eyewitness makes the comparison that “it’s like Pearl Harbor”, since no one expected it, and it is also early in the morning. President Bush and Trump have also used this comparison in their speeches. Later on, when the towers collapse, the situation is being compared to a nuclear war. A reporter states that “[i]t is Tuesday morning, the 11th of September, and you will not forget this date.”¹²⁰ Later on, another reporter says: “Ladies and gentlemen, there are times in our lives that are life-changing, where your life can never be the same, and this appears, certainly, to be one of them.”¹²¹ This all shows that the discourse of rupture and trauma was established from the start.

¹¹⁸ Hall, *Representation*, 67.

¹¹⁹ *102 Minutes That Changed America: 15th Anniversary*, directed by Nicole Rittenmeyer and Seth Skundrick (2016; Chicago: Siskel/Jacobs Productions, History Channel).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Another factor that coincides with trauma is the use of emotions. There is a strong build-up in emotions connected to 9/11 in this documentary. It starts off with the confusion that people felt, not knowing what was going on, then moved to speculation amongst themselves about what was happening, which ended with shock, fear, disbelief and panic when the second plane hit the South Tower and the towers collapsed. At the end of the documentary, there is more attention for emotions of anger and vengeance, with citizens making claims such as: “I think we should go to war now”, “[w]e should go to bin Laden, all those Arab countries, and just blow them up, kill them”, “[t]hese animals, they don’t deserve to live on this earth. They should eliminate them. Pulverize them, the mothers (...).” and “[w]e should retaliate right away, that’s it. And I wish that it could be done today, like they did to us.”¹²²

A technique that is used in this documentary, but also in the memorial and museum, is the focus on size and numbers. A lot of the conversations that the viewer hears during the documentary are from firefighters and police officers who are communicating over the radio. There is one section where a lady is stating all the different battalions, engines and ladders, and while these names and numbers do not particularly mean something to a general audience, the sheer number of the stations illustrates how many people were trying to help that day. While the memorial and museum showcase the actual size of the towers, the documentary tries to indicate the size of support from police officers, firefighters and other personnel involved.

The additional scenes from the anniversary edition serve different purposes. The first segment is an interview with two women whose footage was included in the documentary. They revisit the place where they lived during 9/11, and explain how, fifteen years later, it still brings back memories of “the worst day of your life”.¹²³ They were college kids at the time, and did not understand why the History Channel asked for their footage. Fifteen years later they do understand, stating that they provided a unique perspective in which they were “old enough to understand what’s going on, almost instantly, kind of young enough to not know what’s going on with my point of view, and mature enough to be able to sort of narrate it without realizing we were narrating it.”¹²⁴ This segment therefore explains the purpose of their own documentary: offering unique perspectives of what happened that day.

Another scene from the anniversary edition is an interview with the Cross family. Dennis Cross was chief of the fire department in New York City, and he passed away during 9/11. The family did not know what happened exactly; they heard many different stories of where he was,

¹²² *102 Minutes That Changed America*, Rittenmeyer and Skundrick.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

what he was doing at that time, et cetera. When *102 minutes* was released in 2008, they saw Dennis in one of the shots, and they finally knew what he was doing that day: “It’s nice to find something to put together all those puzzles to see exactly what was the right story. Where was he stationed working at the moment, at the time.” (...) “We got that last little glimpse.” “He wasn’t nervous, he wasn’t afraid, he wasn’t worried, you know, he was strong, working, ready, in charge”.¹²⁵ To them, the documentary serves as an objective instrument that finally tells them the truth which they have longed for so long.

The documentary also includes footage from way before 9/11. Around forty minutes into the documentary, it switches to thirty-nine years before the attacks, and you see old footage from the World Trade Center. The narrator tells how the towers dominate the skyline, and that there are over 50,000 people working in the buildings for more than seven hundred firms and organizations from over sixty nations. This footage is combined with what looks like holiday footage from someone visiting the Center with their children in 1999. An on-screen text states that “[b]efore 9/11, the World Trade Center was visited by more than 200,000 people per day”, and that “[s]ince opening in 2011, the World Trade Center Memorial has been visited by more than 24 million people.”¹²⁶ This section shows how important the WTC was to many people, and the number of memorial visitors indicates how important it still is to this day.

Another significant segment from the past is where the viewer is taken back to two days before the attacks. In this section one can see black frames with text, and in between these frames there is footage from a police car giving someone a speeding ticket. The full text is stated below:

“2 days before. 12:04am, 12 miles from the Delaware state line. A Maryland State Trooper pulls over a speeding driver. The driver is not on any terrorist watch lists. 34 hours from now, Ziad Jarrah will crash United Flight 93 into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania (*sic*) at 10:03am. As of 2016, the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) contains over 2.4 million names.”

This segment shows that the filmmakers have the tendency to relate the history of 9/11 to the present, and specifically to the ongoing battle against terrorism. It also ensures the viewers that measures against terrorism have developed and improved, stating that there are currently over two million names in the database, and that because of this, an attack such as 9/11 is less likely to happen again.

¹²⁵ *102 Minutes That Changed America*, Rittenmeyer and Skundrick.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

These documentaries have illustrated different functions of documentaries through various modes of construction. *102 Minutes That Changed America* was mostly trying to portray the traumatic events of 9/11 as ‘truly’ as possible by using raw footage and taking on an observational mode of construction. *Fahrenheit 9/11* on the other hand was very critical towards president Bush, his dealings with 9/11 and the War on Terror, which makes the documentary highly politicized, also because it was released right before the 2004 presidential elections. *11’09’01 – September 11* was critical in a more indirect way, by creating distance and taking an outsiders’ perspective, as well as trying to break the American narrative of 9/11. The two latter documentaries are also trying to (partly) counter the narratives of 9/11, as represented in the memorial, museum and the presidential speeches. An interesting difference between these documentaries is the way in which similar ideas are framed to tell different stories. While *11’09’01 – September 11* used big traumatic events that happened on September 11th in other years to counter 9/11 and American exceptionalism, *102 Minutes That Changed America* actually used a reference to Pearl Harbor to connect the terrorist attack to an older narrative of fighting for freedom; to support American exceptionalism.

Conclusion

How is the dominant discourse of the collective memory of 9/11 established in different expressions of commemoration in the post-9/11 era?

Having studied the 9/11 discourse through three different commemorative areas, it can be said that the dominant discourse surrounds two main themes. Whether the discourse is constructed by an institution such as a memorial committee or a museum, by politicians from different political parties, or by the movie industry, it can all be narrowed down to the same discursive elements that ultimately forms the collective memory of 9/11. Within this collective memory, however, the different mediums emphasize different aspects of this discourse. This conclusion will sum up the differences, but also the similarities, between the three areas of commemoration and their way of establishing the dominant 9/11 discourse. First the two main aspects of the discourse will be explained, after which each will be related to the different mediums researched.

First of all, the discourse of 9/11 is built up from the generally accepted idea that the attacks have caused a rupture in American history, resulting in a form of national trauma. Words such as ‘void’, ‘incalculable loss’ and statements like ‘life as we have known it stopped’ are very common when speaking of the attacks, and this has ascribed an immense weight to the events in the collective memory of citizens of the United States. Part of this weight stems from the accompanied culture of overpersonalization, which helped to create a victim identity for American citizens, as they have felt a loss of safety in what was previously seen as an invulnerable nation.

The second main theme is the idea of 9/11 exceptionalism, rooted in the broader idea of American exceptionalism. After the attacks, a growing dichotomy can be noticed between Americans and ‘the Other’; the terrorists. Different values are prescribed to the two groups, where Americans are linked to democracy, peace and freedom, and the terrorists are seen as barbaric. In the different mediums discussed, especially in the presidential speeches, there is a sense of moral superiority for the Americans, stating that the United States will take on the burden of ridding the world from these terrorists once and for all, through the War on Terror. As said, this is connected to the bigger idea of American exceptionalism, where older ideological rhetoric enters the conversation. Especially the presidential speeches often referred back to this, by including the Founding Fathers, the Pledge of Alliance, and the Star-Spangled Banner into their narrative.

These two aspects are indeed used in the construction of the different commemorative areas. The National September 11 Memorial & Museum is filled with symbolism of the national trauma and the rupture of 9/11. In the architecture, the makers used size and remnants of the Twin Towers to literally show how big the impact of the destruction of the towers has been. The institution focuses primarily on the trauma and personal aspects of 9/11, using heavy emotions such as resilience, hope, rebirth and survival as well as focusing on individual people and their stories. However, is not consequent in this role: by displayed the brick, taken from the compound where Osama bin Laden was shot down, the museum contributes to the connectiveness between the attacks of 9/11 and the War on Terror. It illustrates one cannot be remembered without the other. All in all, the Memorial & Museum contributes to the overpersonalization of 9/11 and to the narrative of the War on Terror.

The presidential speeches also incorporate both themes. There is a lot of focus on the uniqueness and traumatic experience of 9/11: president Bush stated that “night fell on a different world”, president Obama that they “awoke to a world in which evil was closer at hand”, and president Trump that “horror and anguish of that dark day were seared into our national memory forever.”¹²⁷ Bush also talked about how people made the grief of strangers their own, which links back to Bond’s theory of overpersonalization and trauma culture. Obama especially focused on the power of family bonds and has shared their personal stories, both to show what 9/11 has done to them, but also to serve as a persuasion that there is hope when you as a family are strong and resilient. Trump also added to the overpersonalization like Obama did, by focusing on a personal story, but in Trump’s case, this is not a story of familial resilience, but a story of heroism. Trump thereby shifted the discursive emphasis from Obama’s hope and unity to heroism and justice.

All three presidents show rhetoric regarding 9/11 and American exceptionalism. Obama used the rhetoric of the American Dream, which connects the American discourse of freedom with the attacks of 9/11. In turn, 9/11 has been commemorated as attacks on this freedom itself. President Bush started this narrative in his first speech, and continued to increasingly interweave the War on Terror with the attacks of 9/11. He presented a new role for the United States on the international playing field. By stating that the free world would now be in a war against “enemies of freedom”, together with the claim that the United States is “the brightest

¹²⁷ Office of the Press Secretary, “Address to a Joint Session.”; Office of the Press Secretary, “A Concert for Hope.”; Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President.”

beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world”¹²⁸, 9/11 exceptionalism was forged: the United States would lead the War on Terror. President Trump only held one commemoration speech during his presidency so far, and focused on this military side of the commemoration even more than Bush, by making the U.S. military and its power the central focus of his speech. He used the metaphor of the Star-Spangled Banner and American ideals to construct his idea of exceptionalism.

Discourse is a “particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it”¹²⁹, and in the case of the presidential speeches, the discourse of exceptionalism explains why the War on Terror was accepted. The War on Terror was, and is, an important part of the commemoration of 9/11. President Obama’s speech just after the killing of Bin Laden illustrates this by *not* mentioning the War, because it shows that victories within the War on Terror have become essential for the United States to move forward. When there was a new threat in 2016, ISIL, he did use the story of their defeat of bin Laden to illustrate that the United States is capable of defeating the new terrorists as well.

Finally, this thesis analyzed three different documentaries and how they incorporated trauma and exceptionalism. The documentaries illustrate how the different forms of mediums discussed in this research relate to each other. *102 Minutes That Changed America* together with the memorials tries to do justice to the collective emotional state of the United States during and following the attacks of 9/11. The producers did this by using an observational mode of documenting, where they used raw footage from eyewitnesses to create a perspective that is as close to the truth as possible. The other two documentaries have an entirely different goal: in critiquing the political discourse as used in the presidential speeches, they seem to actively react to the narratives of the Memorial & Museum and the presidential speeches. *Fahrenheit 9/11* does this in a very direct way, where Michael Moore is explicitly stating what Bush did wrong during his presidency. *11’09”11 – September 11* takes a more artistic, indirect approach, where the moral behind the different short films illustrates certain critiques against the dominant 9/11 discourse.

The documentaries and presidential speeches help understand the interaction between different narratives of 9/11. They illustrate how different perspectives and political strategies can create, support, or try to counter the narratives expressed by the others. The memorial and museum seem to reflect all these ideas: from the general commemoration of that day to the

¹²⁸ Office of the Press Secretary, “Address to a Joint Session.”; Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President.”

¹²⁹ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 187.

resulting War on Terror. These different narratives all come down to one dominant discourse, in which 9/11 is seen as a day that changed America and caused nationwide trauma, and the United States positioned themselves in the exceptional position to take revenge through the War on Terror.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: 9/11 Address to the Nation by President Bush, September 11, 2001¹³⁰

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong.

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.

America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America -- with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.

Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts.

Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks.

The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight, and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business, as well.

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance.

America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism. Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater

¹³⁰ <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>

than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me."

This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.

Thank you. Good night, and God bless America.

Appendix 2: Address to Congress by President Bush, September 20, 2001¹³¹

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore, members of Congress, and fellow Americans:

In the normal course of events, Presidents come to this chamber to report on the state of the Union. Tonight, no such report is needed. It has already been delivered by the American people.

In a historic address to the nation and joint session of Congress Sept. 20, President Bush pledges to defend America's freedom against the fear of terrorism. White House by Eric Draper. We have seen it in the courage of passengers, who rushed terrorists to save others on the ground -- passengers like an exceptional man named Todd Beamer. And would you please help me to welcome his wife, Lisa Beamer, here tonight. (Applause.)

We have seen the state of our Union in the endurance of rescuers, working past exhaustion. We have seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers -- in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. We have seen the decency of a loving and giving people who have made the grief of strangers their own.

My fellow citizens, for the last nine days, the entire world has seen for itself the state of our Union -- and it is strong. (Applause.)

Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done. (Applause.)

I thank the Congress for its leadership at such an important time. All of America was touched on the evening of the tragedy to see Republicans and Democrats joined together on the steps of this Capitol, singing "God Bless America." And you did more than sing; you acted, by delivering \$40 billion to rebuild our communities and meet the needs of our military.

Speaker Hastert, Minority Leader Gephardt, Majority Leader Daschle and Senator Lott, I thank you for your friendship, for your leadership and for your service to our country. (Applause.)

And on behalf of the American people, I thank the world for its outpouring of support. America will never forget the sounds of our National Anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris, and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate.

We will not forget South Korean children gathering to pray outside our embassy in Seoul, or the prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque in Cairo. We will not forget moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia and Africa and Latin America. British Prime Minister Tony Blair (center, left) Mrs. Laura Bush attends a joint session of Congress in which President Bush praised the efforts of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (far right) and named Pennsylvania

¹³¹ <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

Governor Tom Ridge (far left) to a newly created cabinet-level position in which he will oversee the homeland defense initiatives. White House photo by Paul Morse.

Nor will we forget the citizens of 80 other nations who died with our own: dozens of Pakistanis; more than 130 Israelis; more than 250 citizens of India; men and women from El Salvador, Iran, Mexico and Japan; and hundreds of British citizens. America has no truer friend than Great Britain. (Applause.) Once again, we are joined together in a great cause -- so honored the British Prime Minister has crossed an ocean to show his unity of purpose with America. Thank you for coming, friend. (Applause.)

On September the 11th, 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.

Americans have many questions tonight. Americans are asking: Who attacked our country? The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda. They are the same murderers indicted for bombing American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and responsible for bombing the USS Cole.

Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world -- and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.

The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics -- a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam. The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinction among military and civilians, including women and children.

This group and its leader -- a person named Osama bin Laden -- are linked to many other organizations in different countries, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror. They are sent back to their homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction.

The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan, we see al Qaeda's vision for the world.

Afghanistan's people have been brutalized -- many are starving and many have fled. Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough.

The United States respects the people of Afghanistan -- after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid -- but we condemn the Taliban regime. (Applause.) It is not only repressing its own people, it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder.

And tonight, the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. (Applause.) Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. (Applause.) Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating.

These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. (Applause.) The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.

I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. (Applause.) The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. (Applause.)

Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated. (Applause.)

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber -- a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms -- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.

They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.

These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us, because we stand in their way.

We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety. We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions -- by abandoning every value except the will to power -- they follow in the

path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies. (Applause.)

Americans are asking: How will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command -- every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war -- to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.

This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat.

Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. (Applause.) From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

Our nation has been put on notice: We are not immune from attack. We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans. Today, dozens of federal departments and agencies, as well as state and local governments, have responsibilities affecting homeland security. These efforts must be coordinated at the highest level. So tonight I announce the creation of a Cabinet-level position reporting directly to me -- the Office of Homeland Security.

And tonight I also announce a distinguished American to lead this effort, to strengthen American security: a military veteran, an effective governor, a true patriot, a trusted friend -- Pennsylvania's Tom Ridge. (Applause.) He will lead, oversee and coordinate a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard our country against terrorism, and respond to any attacks that may come.

These measures are essential. But the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows. (Applause.)

Many will be involved in this effort, from FBI agents to intelligence operatives to the reservists we have called to active duty. All deserve our thanks, and all have our prayers. And tonight, a few miles from the damaged Pentagon, I have a message for our military: Be ready. I've called the Armed Forces to alert, and there is a reason. The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud. (Applause.)

This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.

We ask every nation to join us. We will ask, and we will need, the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world. The United States is grateful that many nations and many international organizations have already responded -- with sympathy and with support. Nations from Latin America, to Asia, to Africa, to Europe, to the Islamic world. Perhaps the NATO Charter reflects best the attitude of the world: An attack on one is an attack on all.

The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next. Terror, unanswered, can not only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments. And you know what -- we're not going to allow it. (Applause.)

Americans are asking: What is expected of us? I ask you to live your lives, and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat.

I ask you to uphold the values of America, and remember why so many have come here. We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith. (Applause.)

I ask you to continue to support the victims of this tragedy with your contributions. Those who want to give can go to a central source of information, libertyunites.org, to find the names of groups providing direct help in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

The thousands of FBI agents who are now at work in this investigation may need your cooperation, and I ask you to give it.

I ask for your patience, with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security; and for your patience in what will be a long struggle.

I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. Terrorists attacked a symbol of American prosperity. They did not touch its source. America is successful because of the hard work, and creativity, and enterprise of our people. These were the true strengths of our economy before September 11th, and they are our strengths today. (Applause.)

And, finally, please continue praying for the victims of terror and their families, for those in uniform, and for our great country. Prayer has comforted us in sorrow, and will help strengthen us for the journey ahead.

Tonight I thank my fellow Americans for what you have already done and for what you will do. And ladies and gentlemen of the Congress, I thank you, their representatives, for what you have already done and for what we will do together.

Tonight, we face new and sudden national challenges. We will come together to improve air safety, to dramatically expand the number of air marshals on domestic flights, and take new measures to prevent hijacking. We will come together to promote stability and keep our airlines flying, with direct assistance during this emergency. (Applause.)

We will come together to give law enforcement the additional tools it needs to track down terror here at home. (Applause.) We will come together to strengthen our intelligence capabilities to know the plans of terrorists before they act, and find them before they strike. (Applause.)

We will come together to take active steps that strengthen America's economy, and put our people back to work.

Tonight we welcome two leaders who embody the extraordinary spirit of all New Yorkers: Governor George Pataki, and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. (Applause.) As a symbol of America's resolve, my administration will work with Congress, and these two leaders, to show the world that we will rebuild New York City. (Applause.)

After all that has just passed -- all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them -- it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead, and dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world. (Applause.)

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us. Our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail. (Applause.)

It is my hope that in the months and years ahead, life will return almost to normal. We'll go back to our lives and routines, and that is good. Even grief recedes with time and grace. But our resolve must not pass. Each of us will remember what happened that day, and to whom it happened. We'll remember the moment the news came -- where we were and what we were doing. Some will remember an image of a fire, or a story of rescue. Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever.

And I will carry this: It is the police shield of a man named George Howard, who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others. It was given to me by his mom, Arlene, as a proud memorial to her son. This is my reminder of lives that ended, and a task that does not end. (Applause.)

I will not forget this wound to our country or those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people.

The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them. (Applause.)

Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice -- assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America.

Thank you. (Applause.)

Appendix 3: Speech by President Obama, September 11, 2011¹³²

The Bible tells us -- “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

Ten years ago, America confronted one of our darkest nights. Mighty towers crumbled. Black smoke billowed up from the Pentagon. Airplane wreckage smoldered on a Pennsylvania field. Friends and neighbors, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters -- they were taken from us with a heartbreaking swiftness and cruelty. And on September 12, 2001, we awoke to a world in which evil was closer at hand, and uncertainty clouded our future.

In the decade since, much has changed for Americans. We’ve known war and recession, passionate debates and political divides. We can never get back the lives that were lost on that day or the Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in the wars that followed.

And yet today, it is worth remembering what has not changed. Our character as a nation has not changed. Our faith -- in God and in each other -- that has not changed. Our belief in America, born of a timeless ideal that men and women should govern themselves; that all people are created equal, and deserve the same freedom to determine their own destiny -- that belief, through tests and trials, has only been strengthened.

These past 10 years have shown that America does not give in to fear. The rescue workers who rushed to the scene, the firefighters who charged up the stairs, the passengers who stormed the cockpit -- these patriots defined the very nature of courage. Over the years we’ve also seen a more quiet form of heroism -- in the ladder company that lost so many men and still suits up and saves lives every day, the businesses that have been rebuilt from nothing, the burn victim who has bounced back, the families who press on.

Last spring, I received a letter from a woman named Suzanne Swaine. She had lost her husband and brother in the Twin Towers, and said that she had been robbed of, “so many would-be proud moments where a father watches their child graduate, or tend a goal in a lacrosse game, or succeed academically.” But her daughters are in college, the other doing well in high school. “It has been 10 years of raising these girls on my own,” Suzanne wrote. “I could not be prouder of their strength and resilience.” That spirit typifies our American family. And the hopeful future for those girls is the ultimate rebuke to the hateful killers who took the life of their father.

These past 10 years have shown America’s resolve to defend its citizens, and our way of life. Diplomats serve in far off posts, and intelligence professionals work tirelessly without recognition. Two million Americans have gone to war since 9/11. They have demonstrated that those who do us harm cannot hide from the reach of justice, anywhere in the world. America has been defended not by conscripts, but by citizens who choose to serve -- young people who signed up straight out of high school, guardsmen and reservists, workers

¹³² <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/11/remarks-president-concert-hope>

and business-people, immigrants and fourth-generation soldiers. They are men and women who left behind lives of comfort for two, three, four, five tours of duty. Too many will never come home. Those that do carry dark memories from distant places and the legacy of fallen friends.

The sacrifices of these men and women, and of our military families, reminds us that the wages of war are great; that while service to our nation is full of glory, war itself is never glorious. Our troops have been to lands unknown to many Americans a decade ago -- to Kandahar and Kabul; to Mosul and Basra. But our strength is not measured in our ability to stay in these places; it comes from our commitment to leave those lands to free people and sovereign states, and our desire to move from a decade of war to a future of peace.

These 10 years have shown that we hold fast to our freedoms. Yes, we're more vigilant against those who threaten us, and there are inconveniences that come with our common defense. Debates -- about war and peace, about security and civil liberties -- have often been fierce these last 10 years. But it is precisely the rigor of these debates, and our ability to resolve them in a way that honors our values and our democracy, that is the measure of our strength. Meanwhile, our open markets still provide innovators the chance to create and succeed, our citizens are still free to speak their minds, and our souls are enriched in churches and temples, our synagogues and our mosques.

These past 10 years underscores the bonds between all Americans. We have not succumbed to suspicion, nor have we succumbed to mistrust. After 9/11, to his great credit, President Bush made clear what we reaffirm today: The United States will never wage war against Islam or any other religion. Immigrants come here from all parts of the globe. And in the biggest cities and the smallest towns, in schools and workplaces, you still see people of every conceivable race and religion and ethnicity -- all of them pledging allegiance to the flag, all of them reaching for the same American dream -- e pluribus unum, out of many, we are one.

These past 10 years tell a story of our resilience. The Pentagon is repaired, and filled with patriots working in common purpose. Shanksville is the scene of friendships forged between residents of that town, and families who lost loved ones there. New York -- New York remains the most vibrant of capitals of arts and industry and fashion and commerce. Where the World Trade Center once stood, the sun glistens off a new tower that reaches towards the sky.

Our people still work in skyscrapers. Our stadiums are still filled with fans, and our parks full of children playing ball. Our airports hum with travel, and our buses and subways take millions where they need to go. And families sit down to Sunday dinner, and students prepare for school. This land pulses with the optimism of those who set out for distant shores, and the courage of those who died for human freedom.

Decades from now, Americans will visit the memorials to those who were lost on 9/11. They'll run their fingers over the places where the names of those we loved are carved into marble and stone, and they may wonder at the lives that they led. And standing before

the white headstones in Arlington, and in peaceful cemeteries and small-town squares in every corner of the country, they will pay respects to those lost in Iraq and Afghanistan. They'll see the names of the fallen on bridges and statues, at gardens and schools.

And they will know that nothing can break the will of a truly United States of America. They will remember that we've overcome slavery and Civil War; we've overcome bread lines and fascism and recession and riots, and communism and, yes, terrorism. They will be reminded that we are not perfect, but our democracy is durable, and that democracy -- reflecting, as it does, the imperfections of man -- also give us the opportunity to perfect our union. That is what we honor on days of national commemoration -- those aspects of the American experience that are enduring, and the determination to move forward as one people.

More than monuments, that will be the legacy of 9/11 -- a legacy of firefighters who walked into fire and soldiers who signed up to serve; of workers who raised new towers, and citizens who faced down their private fears. Most of all, of children who realized the dreams of their parents. It will be said that we kept the faith; that we took a painful blow, and we emerged stronger than before.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

With a just God as our guide, let us honor those who have been lost, let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals that define our nation, and let us look to the future with hearts full of hope.

May God bless the memory of those we lost, and may God bless the United States of America.

Appendix 4: Speech by President Obama, September 11, 2016¹³³

Good morning. Scripture tells us, “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you...write them on the tablet of your heart.”

Secretary Carter, Chairman Dunford, outstanding members of our Armed Forces, and most of all, survivors of that September day and the families of those we lost -- it is a great honor, once again, to be with you on this day, a day that I know is still difficult, but which reveals the love and faithfulness in your hearts and in the heart of our nation.

We remember, and we will never forget, the nearly 3,000 beautiful lives taken from us so cruelly -- including 184 men, women and children here, the youngest just three years old. We honor the courage of those who put themselves in harm’s way to save people they never knew. We come together in prayer and in gratitude for the strength that has fortified us across these 15 years. And we renew the love and the faith that binds us together as one American family.

Fifteen years may seem like a long time, but for the families who lost a piece of their heart that day, I imagine it can seem like just yesterday. Perhaps it’s the memory of a last kiss given to a spouse, or the last goodbye to a mother or father, a sister or a brother. We wonder how their lives might have unfolded, how their dreams might have taken shape. And I am mindful that no words we offer, or deeds we do, can ever truly erase the pain of their absence. And yet, you -- the survivors and families of 9/11 -- your “steadfast love and faithfulness” has been an inspiration to me and to our entire country. Even as you’ve mourned, you’ve summoned the strength to carry on. In the names of those you’ve lost, you’ve started scholarships and volunteered in your communities, and done your best to be a good neighbor and a good friend and a good citizen. And in your grief and grace, you have reminded us that, together, there’s nothing we Americans cannot overcome.

The question before us, as always, is: How do we preserve the legacy of those we lost? How do we live up to their example? And how do we keep their spirit alive in our own hearts?

Well, we have seen the answer in a generation of Americans -- our men and women in uniform, diplomats, intelligence, homeland security and law enforcement professionals -- all who have stepped forward to serve and who have risked and given their lives to help keep us safe. Thanks to their extraordinary service, we’ve dealt devastating blows to al Qaeda.

We’ve delivered justice to Osama bin Laden. We’ve strengthened our homeland security. We’ve prevented attacks. We’ve saved lives. We resolve to continue doing everything in our power to protect this country that we love. And today, we once again pay

¹³³ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/11/remarks-president-obama-911-memorial-observance-ceremony>

tribute to these patriots, both military and civilian, who serve in our name, including those far away from home in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Perhaps most of all, we stay true to the spirit of this day by defending not only our country, but also our ideals. Fifteen years into this fight, the threat has evolved. With our stronger defenses, terrorists often attempt attacks on a smaller, but still deadly, scale. Hateful ideologies urge people in their own country to commit unspeakable violence. We've mourned the loss of innocents from Boston to San Bernardino to Orlando.

Groups like al Qaeda, like ISIL, know that we will never be able -- they will never be able to defeat a nation as great and as strong as America. So, instead, they've tried to terrorize in the hopes that they can stoke enough fear that we turn on each other and that we change who we are or how we live. And that's why it is so important today that we reaffirm our character as a nation -- a people drawn from every corner of the world, every color, every religion, every background -- bound by a creed as old as our founding, *e pluribus unum*. Out of many, we are one. For we know that our diversity -- our patchwork heritage -- is not a weakness; it is still, and always will be, one of our greatest strengths. This is the America that was attacked that September morning. This is the America that we must remain true to.

Across our country today, Americans are coming together in service and remembrance. We run our fingers over the names in memorial benches here at the Pentagon. We walk the hallowed grounds of a Pennsylvania field. We look up at a gleaming tower that pierces the New York City skyline. But in the end, the most enduring memorial to those we lost is ensuring the America that we continue to be -- that we stay true to ourselves, that we stay true to what's best in us, that we do not let others divide us.

As I mark this solemn day with you for the last time as President, I think of Americans whose stories I've been humbled to know these past eight years -- Americans who, I believe, embody the true spirit of 9/11.

It's the courage of Welles Crowther, just 24 years old, in the South tower -- the man in the red bandana who spent his final moments helping strangers to safety before the towers fell. It's the resilience of the firehouse on Eighth Avenue -- patriots who lost more than a dozen men, but who still suit up every day as the "Pride of Midtown." It's the love of a daughter -- Payton Wall of New Jersey -- whose father, in his last moments on the phone from the towers, told her, "I will always be watching over you."

It's the resolve of those Navy SEALs who made sure justice was finally done, who served as we must live as a nation -- getting each other's backs, looking out for each other, united, one mission, one team. It's the ultimate sacrifice of men and women who rest for eternity not far from here, in gentle green hills in perfect formation -- Americans who gave their lives in faraway places so that we can be here today, strong and free and proud. It's all of us -- every American who gets up each day, and lives our lives, carries on. Because as Americans, we

do not give in to fear. We will preserve our freedoms and the way of life that makes us a beacon to the world.

“Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you...write them on the tablet of your heart.” And how we conduct ourselves as individuals and as a nation, we have the opportunity each and every day to live up to the sacrifice of those heroes that we lost. May God bless the memory of the loved ones here and across the country. They remain in our hearts today. May He watch over these faithful families and all who protect us. And may God forever bless the United States of America.

Appendix 5: Speech by President Trump, September 11, 2017¹³⁴

Thank you, General. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to thank you, Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, members of the Cabinet, members of the Armed Forces, first responders, and most importantly, to the families and to the survivors: It's an honor to join you on this very, very solemn occasion. This is an occasion that is extraordinary, and it will always be extraordinary.

Before we begin, I'd like to send our nation's prayers to everyone in the path of Hurricane Irma and to everyone suffering through the devastation of Hurricane Harvey. These are storms of catastrophic severity, and we're marshaling the full resources of the federal government to help our fellow Americans in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and all of those wonderful places and states in harm's way.

When Americans are in need, Americans pull together — and we are one country. And when we face hardship, we emerge closer, stronger, and more determined than ever.

We're gathered here today to remember a morning that started very much like this one. Parents dropped off their children at school. Travelers stood in line at airports and getting ready to board flights. Here at the Pentagon and at offices all across the country, people began their early meetings.

Then, our whole world changed. America was under attack. First at the World Trade Center, then here at the Pentagon, and then in Pennsylvania. The horror and anguish of that dark day were seared into our national memory forever. It was the worst attack on our country since Pearl Harbor and even worse because this was an attack on civilians — innocent men, women, and children whose lives were taken so needlessly.

For the families with us on this anniversary, we know that not a single day goes by when you don't think about the loved ones stolen from your life. Today, our entire nation grieves with you and with every family of those 2,977 innocent souls who were murdered by terrorists 16 years ago.

Each family here today represents a son or daughter, a sister or brother, a mother or father, who was taken from you on that terrible, terrible day. But no force on Earth can ever take away your memories, diminish your love, or break your will to endure and carry on and go forward. Though we can never erase your pain, or bring back those you lost, we can honor their sacrifice by pledging our resolve to do whatever we must to keep our people safe. (Applause.) On that day, not only did the world change, but we all changed. Our eyes were opened to the depths of the evil we face. But in that hour of darkness, we also came together with renewed purpose. Our differences never looked so small, our common bonds never felt so strong.

¹³⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-9-11-memorial-observance/>

The sacrificed [sanctified] grounds on which we stand today are a monument to our national unity and to our strength. For more than seven decades, the Pentagon has stood as a global symbol of American might. Not only because of the great power contained within these halls, but because of the incredible character of the people who fill them. They secure our freedom, they defend our flag, and they support our courageous troops all around the world.

Among the 184 brave Americans who perished on these grounds were young enlisted servicemembers, dedicated civil servants who had worked here for decades, and veterans who served our nation in Korea, in Vietnam, and in the Middle East. All of them loved this country and pledged their very lives to protect it.

That September morning, each of those brave Americans died as they had lived: as heroes doing their duty and protecting us and our country. We mourn them, we honor them, and we pledge to never, ever forget them. (Applause.)

We also remember and cherish the lives of the beloved Americans who boarded Flight 77 at Dulles Airport that morning. Every one of them had a family, a story, and beautiful dreams. Each of them had people they loved and who loved them back. And they all left behind a deep emptiness that their warmth and grace once filled so fully and so beautifully.

The living, breathing soul of America wept with grief for every life taken on that day. We shed our tears in their memory, pledged our devotion in their honor, and turned our sorrow into an unstoppable resolve to achieve justice in their name.

The terrorists who attacked us thought they could incite fear and weaken our spirit. But America cannot be intimidated, and those who try will soon join the long list of vanquished enemies who dared to test our mettle. (Applause.)

In the years after September 11th, more than 5 million young men and women have joined the ranks of our great military to defend our country against barbaric forces of evil and destruction. American forces are relentlessly pursuing and destroying the enemies of all civilized people, ensuring — and these are horrible, horrible enemies — enemies like we've never seen before. But we're ensuring they never again have a safe haven to launch attacks against our country. We are making plain to these savage killers that there is no dark corner beyond our reach, no sanctuary beyond our grasp, and nowhere to hide anywhere on this very large Earth.

Since 9/11, nearly 7,000 servicemembers have given their lives fighting terrorists around the globe. Some of them rest just beyond this fence, in the shrine to our nation's heroes, on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery. They came from all backgrounds, all races, all faiths, but they were all there to dedicate their lives, and they defend our one great American flag. (Applause.)

They — and every person who puts on the uniform — has the love and gratitude of our entire nation.

Today, as we stand on this hallowed ground, we are reminded of the timeless truth that when America is united, no force on Earth can break us apart — no force.

On the morning of 9/11, Pentagon Police Officer Isaac Ho'opi'i and — a special person — was one of many heroes whose love for his fellow Americans knew no bounds. He was a mile away when he got the call over his radio that a plane had crashed into the Pentagon. He sped to the scene and raced into smoke and fire. Few people would have done it. He ducked under live electrical wires and trudged through puddles of jet fuel only steps away from sparks and from vicious flame.

In the pitch black, he began calling out people in need of help. Isaac heard faint voices and he wanted to answer those faint voices. One by one, he carried people out of the burning rubble. He kept going back into the smoldering darkness, calling out to anyone who could hear, anyone who was alive. He saved as many as 20 people who had followed his voice; he carried eight himself.

For nearly 36 hours, Isaac kept on saving lives, serving our nation, and protecting our safety in our hour of need. And today, Isaac continues to do exactly that. Isaac still works at the Pentagon, now as a sergeant. He's on duty right now, and he's joined us here today for the ceremony. And this morning, all of us — and all of America — thank Isaac for his service. Where is Isaac? (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you, Isaac. Thank you.

To Isaac and to every first responder and survivor of the attack, you carry on the legacy of the friends you lost. You keep alive the memory of those who perished. And you make America proud — very, very proud.

To the family members with us today, I know that it's with a pained and heavy heart that you come back to this place. But by doing so, by choosing to persevere through the grief, the sorrow, you honor your heroes, you renew our courage, and you strengthen all of us. You really do. You strengthen all of us.

Here on the west side of the Pentagon, terrorists tried to break our resolve. It's not going to happen. But where they left a mark with fire and rubble, Americans defiantly raised the stars and stripes — our beautiful flag that for more than two centuries has graced our ships, flown in our skies, and led our brave heroes to victory after victory in battle. The flag that binds us all together as Americans who cherish our values and protect our way of life. The flag that reminds us today of who we are, what we stand for, and why we fight.

Woven into that beautiful flag is the story of our resolve. We have overcome every challenge — every single challenge, every one of them — we've triumphed over every evil, and remained

united as one nation under God. America does not bend. We do not waver. And we will never, ever yield.

So here at this memorial, with hearts both sad and determined, we honor every hero who keeps us safe and free, and we pledge to work together, to fight together, and to overcome together every enemy and obstacle that's ever in our path.

Our values will endure. Our people will thrive. Our nation will prevail. And the memory of our loved ones will never, ever die.

Thank you. May God bless you. May God forever bless the great United States of America. Thank you very much. (Applause.)