

Remarks on the Anniversary of September 11th
September 11, 2012
Chargé d'affaires David Wolfe
Chancery Garden

Today we welcome the friends and family members of the 14 Trinbagonians killed on September 11th along with members of the Embassy community to remember that day, and to reflect on all that has happened in the eleven years since the attacks.

The victims of these attacks came from all walks of life, they represented every race and every faith. They were men and women, both young and old. They were bankers, construction workers, soldiers, police officers, fire fighters and children. The oldest victim was 85 years old, the youngest just 2 and a half.

But among the horrors of that infamous day we also saw the highest examples of heroism and nobility particularly among the first responders who raced into burning buildings as others fled. As we remember the innocent who died, let us also pay tribute to those who gave their lives so that others may live.

But as time passes memories fade.

We already see terrible campaigns of misinformation attempting to rewrite history, to convince us all that what we saw that day did not happen. Their claims have been refuted many times, in every detail, but these lies persist.

We must always be ready to answer lies and misinformation with truth.

We have also seen people who use the memory of these attacks to preach hate. An American pastor attempted to incite his followers to burn the holy Koran on September 11th in a disgraceful attempt to blame all Muslims for the acts of a handful of violent extremists.

But attempts to inspire hate on this solemn day failed. That pastor canceled his plans in the face of outrage from Jewish, Muslim and especially Christian leaders from across the United States and across the world.

He tried to use this anniversary for hatred and bigotry and found no one, no one at all supported him. Perhaps, at least on this day, we are finally learning to live by the words the great civil rights leader Martin Luther King said almost 50 years ago:

"To return hate for hate does nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and religion enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil, and this can only be done through love.

I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

Each year leaders of every faith gather at the sites of the attacks to reaffirm our commitment to tolerance in the face of hate.

I must let you know that Ambassador Welters is not here today because every year she is at Ground Zero.

Churches and Synagogues open their doors in lower Manhattan and last year a Muslim cultural center called Park 51 opened in the same neighborhood.

Many expected this so-called 'Ground Zero Mosque' would attract controversy and strife but in fact it opened without incident and today serves as an example of the tolerance and openness of American society.

In the Pentagon, the site of the attacks are marked by a memorial chapel which hosts daily prayers for Muslim servicemen and women.

This weekend President Obama marked our strength in diversity saying:

"Instead of turning on each other, we've resisted the temptation to give in to mistrust and suspicion. I have always said that America is at war with al Qaeda and its affiliates – and we will never be at war with Islam or any other religion. We are the United States of America. Our freedom and diversity make us unique, and they will always be central to who we are as a nation."

He also called on Americans and people around the world to mark this anniversary with acts of service to others to give back to their communities.

Eleven years after that dark day the human race has shown we can turn towards the light. We can combat extremists of all types with weapons of truth and words of understanding.

There is still much to be done, but since the attacks people across the world have come together to accomplish so much good. Let us take today to remember that good, as we honor the memories of the victims.

Thank you.