

# NEWS & OPINION

## Wesleyan Community Remembers September 11, 2001

Decree staffers interviewed members of the NC Wesleyan community and invited them to offer their recollections from September 11, 2001:

### Vivian Brown

I was in the sixth grade at Hairston Middle School in Goldsboro, when 9/11 occurred. I didn't know what was going on until my mother picked me up around lunchtime. I was one of the last students to be picked up and it wasn't until my mother informed me what was happening that I learned about the devastation. Everyone else had been informed and knew about the

saying, "Turn on the news, turn on the news." I was half asleep so it took a minute to come to my senses. As soon as I turned on the TV, I saw a four-way split in the television; one side had pictures of the Twin Towers and the other of the Pentagon. The buildings were burning uncontrollably and I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I flipped through all the channels and every station had the 9/11 devastation displayed on the screen in big white letters. My first reaction was confusion. Was I dreaming? Was it real? Who would do this? It took a while for me to soak in everything.

Though there were constant reminders of the terrorist attacks in the following days, I

weekend's game. The coaching staff and I were telling the players not to concentrate on the attacks so they can focus on the game.

### John Jackson

What mostly sticks out in my mind was my mom was at the Pentagon for work. I was in elementary school and the teachers brought the students into one classroom. I was really scared because I had no idea about my mom. We didn't get sent home but they shut down the area around Arlington, Virginia. Everyone thinks the Pentagon is in D.C., but it's actually in Arlington. My dad works close to the Pentagon, so no one could come get me for a long time. I really didn't know what the World Trade Center was, but I knew they had hit the Pentagon, so I was more scared than anything. I was really relieved when my mom got home that night at 8.

### Junica Kernizon

On September 11, I was in 5th grade sitting in Ms. Calender's class. We were going about class as we would do on a regular day and then another administrator stepped in the room and whispered something to Ms. Calender and she suddenly looked worried. She didn't say anything to the class but she wouldn't let anyone leave the classroom. Our parents had already been contacted to come get us from school but we didn't know why. My mother came and picked me up, but didn't say anything, just that she needed to take me home. Once I watched the news and saw what was going on, I didn't fully understand. Then I realized that my mother works right there in Manhattan and by the grace of God she was able to make it to me.

### Matthew Marsee

I was in North Carolina at the time, in elementary school and all the teachers left the rooms. Nobody knew what was going on, so I didn't really think anything of it. Class was released and there was a mad dash to get everyone home. I wasn't directly impacted but I was just kind of mad that my parents turned the TV to the news when I got home. I had no idea it was as bad as it was and I really didn't know the true meaning of it all. We didn't go to school for the next few days and I remember everyone freaking out because they said schools were supposed to be targeted next and all kinds of crazy stuff was going to happen.

### Kevin Quicker

I remember being in the 8th grade, in my favorite class, P.E. The teachers told us to head inside quickly during the middle of one of our field sessions. When we got inside, they explained to us what was going on. This was a little scary to me because I was only 30 minutes away from Washington D.C. I remember some kid in my class joked about it and one of the teachers was furious with him. We then went on to our next class, and after the second plane hit, we were to be picked up from school and taken home. With me being so young, I was a little unsure how significant this would be. My dad told me that someday, I would be reading about this event in history books. That helped me understand.

### Kandyse Shaw

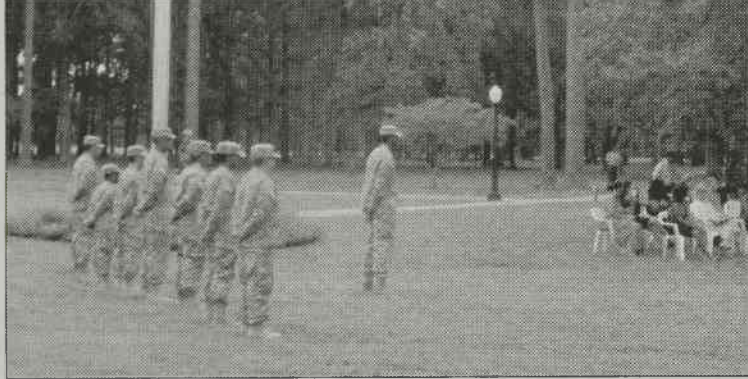
I walked to my Brooklyn school like any normal day but the only thing that wasn't so

normal was that it was chilly outside. I entered my 6th grade homeroom class to get my attendance taken and, soon after, I proceeded to the locker room to change clothes for gym class. After I changed clothes, I headed upstairs and sat in my assigned spot for class. Immediately, the fire alarm bells rang and our principal, Ms. Taylor, came across the PA and announced that everyone must be escorted to the gym and wait for their parents to come and pick us up. I didn't know what was going on and the teachers weren't telling us. So I moved around the gym and I looked out the window and saw a lot of smoke in the air. I was wondering what had happened and then my teachers started talking amongst themselves and I heard one say "we're being attacked; they've hit the Twin Towers." I was rather worried about my mom because she works right there in Manhattan. My sisters came and picked me up from school and they told me my mom was okay. We walked home from school. When I reached the house, I watched the attacks on TV.

### Sterling Smith, Jr.

I remember getting out of class early and my mom taking me home from school. I had a hard time understanding what was going on. I only realized what all was going on when I saw my mom watching the attacks on TV. I was in shock. I couldn't believe this was actually happening in America. I didn't feel as safe.

(9-11 recollections were gathered and prepared by Georgettae Fields-Turrentine, Joshua Meeks, Bristy Parker, Kevin Quicker, Melanie Rhodes, and Kandyse Shaw.)



Wesleyan's ROTC cadets at the college's 9-11 ceremony.

Grattan Photo

events, but for some reason I was unaware up until that point. My mother told me that two towers had fallen, and immediately I thought it was an accident. I inquired about how they fell and she explained that some terrorists who hated America ran planes into the Twin Towers in New York City. Anger set in because I wondered why people not only hated America, but had the audacity to bomb a building. I was scared as well because I had a brother in the army at the time and thought he would have to go fight in another country. I knew war was coming next and I blamed Bush for the attacks because he was just elected into office and, ironically, America got bombed shortly afterwards.

### James Cheatham

I was in fifth grade and all of a sudden my teacher told us to sit down in the cafeteria. On TV, they showed us two tall buildings and what was happening to them. They explained what was going on but at the time I did not know what it meant. As I heard more and more, I soon realized the devastation that was going on in our country. I remember worrying about my aunt, because she worked at the Pentagon. I was scared that she could have been hurt. Then it came as a relief to me when I learned that, although she was supposed to be at work that day, she ended up not going into the office. We were very lucky that it happened that way.

### Georgettae Fields-Turrentine

When 9/11 happened, I was in the eighth grade. It was a typical cool, breezy autumn day with a few clouds. Luckily, I was home sick (with a newly diagnosed condition called Rhabdomyolysis). I lived in Temple Hills, Maryland at the time and I had just woke up when my mother came rushing in the room

didn't know the severity of the situation until days later, when I traveled down Interstate 395, past the Pentagon, and saw all the road blocks and checkpoints. A 20-minute drive now took two hours, with bumper-to-bumper traffic. Even though I didn't lose family members or friends, people at the church I attended had loved ones injured and one man lost a brother, who worked in the Pentagon. The D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia area was never the same after the attacks. My school had stricter rules on who could pick up children, barriers were made around government buildings, security was doubled in downtown D.C., traffic worsened and it took a lot longer to reach certain destinations because you could no longer just ride up to establishments. Seeing the immediate and progressive changes in security was astounding because I never saw such caution with how you entered common places such as museums, schools etc. It felt like jail because there were police everywhere and places with little-to-no security checks were now patting you down and requiring photo id.

### Mark Henninger

I was coaching football at Wittenberg University in Ohio. My wife called after the first plane hit. There was no TV in my office, so I couldn't follow as closely as many other Americans did that day. I thought the first plane was an accident. Our team practiced that day, one of the few in the nation to do so. There was a flight path over our practice field, but on that day there were no planes except for Air Force 1. The whole team stopped to watch this huge plane fly over our heads. I was a combination of angry and scared throughout the day. Driving home that night, I thought the world was going to be different; I didn't know how but I knew it would. It was tough getting our players focused on the

## Opinion: Racism on Rise in Europe

By John Kostet  
Opinion Page Editor

I will forever remember the summer of 2011 with great sadness. May and June had been amazing and July wasn't that bad either. But on July 22, the joy of being home turned into hate and horror. The worst massacre in Scandinavian history took place on a Friday afternoon on the island of Utøya, outside Oslo. I was just about to shut down my computer and head out to the car when "bomb" headlines suddenly came flooding in through all media channels from around the world. A car bomb had exploded in Regjeringskvartalet, the governmental district in Oslo. The explosion killed eight, and ten were critically injured. Many of the government employees were either on vacation or had gone home early for the weekend, which kept the number of casualties relatively low.

After hearing that a suicide bomber failed to detonate a bomb in Stockholm, in December 2010, most people, including myself, made a quick assumption that the attack in Oslo was launched by Islamic fundamentalists as well. On the public radio, the hypothetical discussion went on about which Islamic terror group could be responsible. What was the motive? Who or what was the target? It was reported that the Norwegian Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, was safe and unharmed. Stoltenberg had not been inside the building at the time of the explosion. Instead, he had left early to prepare a speech to give at a youth camp on Utøya the day after.

About two hours later the same idyllic summer camp turned into the darkest of nightmares, as a gunman dressed as a police officer gathered people to inform them about the attack. The disguised police then picked up his semi-automatic rifle and began to indiscriminately execute everyone within sight. Some of the older leaders tried to stop him in vain. Some campers pretended to be dead and many jumped into the water to try to swim their way to safety. The gunman fired extra shots to make sure the lifeless bodies were dead, and stood by the shore to snipe any child who tried to escape. He then walked a last round of death around the island, calling on people to come out of the woods, saying "it's all over" and "you're safe now" before executing them. Among the victims was a 15-year old girl with Asperger syndrome.

When the slaughterer—he was also the bomber—felt he was done, he picked up a cell phone and made a call to the police. "Hello, my name is Anders Behring Breivik and I am a commander in the Norwegian anticommunist resistance movement against Islamization of Europe and against Islamization of Norway. My operation here is complete and I would like to surrender." The recording of this call was published in several newspapers.

A total of 78 innocent people were killed on that day, and 30 of them were young people. The camp at Utøya was hosted by Arbeiderpartiet's youth organization AUF, the ruling labor party's club for teenagers with a political interest. The annual summer camp combines lectures and discussions on democracy with soccer games, cookouts and music jamming by the bonfire. It's

a popular camp with great traditions where a lot of the well-known politicians started their careers. The attack on Utøya was not only an unprovoked bloodbath but a stab to the heart of Norwegian democracy. The massacre will go down in history as a strong expression of the contagious Islamofobia that has been spreading across Europe during the last decade. I do not think that the first world had seen such a plague since the rise of evil in Nazi-Germany during the 1930s.

With evil roots and traditions of hatred, disguised right-wing parties have lately made their way into parliaments around Europe with an obvious xenophobic agenda, forcing democratic countries to reduce their openness. Just like any disease, racism tends to spread most efficiently during times of tension. Economic recessions have a bad habit of creating naïveté, fear and hate among people. The high level of unemployment has led to discontent and pessimism among young Europeans, and some have obviously gone through a major identity crisis. The powers of the political right-wing have not been late in recognizing their weaknesses and their request for easy political solutions.

In Denmark, the right-wing Dansk Folkeparti has gained solid support since 2001 and has managed to not only enforce stricter immigration and protectionist laws, but it has also consciously changed the tone and attitude towards people who are not of Danish descent. My own country, Sweden, and our other neighbor, Finland, have seen recent examples of simple-solution parties establish themselves in each of our parliaments. Sverigedemokraterna in Sweden and Perussuomalaiset in Finland have simple policies—stop the immigration and leave the European Union. Boom, just like that and everything will be fine. But concealed in their reform packets are hints of chauvinistic undertones, such as the banning of adoption from foreign countries, restrictions of foreign languages, and bans of veils and construction of mosques.

In Holland, the Party for Freedom has become the third biggest party with an outspoken Islamophobic leader, Geert Wilders. "I do not hate Muslims, I hate Islam," he said while comparing the Koran with Adolf Hitler's book "Mein Kampf." As the construction of minarets was banned in Switzerland last year, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) concluded that, in recent years, the Swiss People's Party had taken on a "racist and xenophobic tone" that has led to racist generalizations and a "deep sense of unease in the Swiss society."

The growth of Islamofobia in Western Europe has obviously skyrocketed, but is still not as bad as the racist trends that have been established in Eastern Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the drastic change from suppressive communism to sordid oligarchy has led to immeasurable inequalities of distribution. The economic differences between the new rich elite and the poor masses in Eastern Europe are larger than ever before.

In Hungary, for example, a radical and far-right nationalist party called Jobbik has become famous for their

controversial policies. The party slogan is "A Movement for a Better Hungary" and they describe themselves as "a principled, conservative and radically patriotic Christian party," whose "fundamental purpose" is the protection of "Hungarian values and interests." Many right-leaning activists around Eastern Europe see their party as a role model, while scholars and political opponents call them fascists, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma and homophobic. The U.S. ambassador in Budapest, April H. Foley, concluded that "Racist remarks can be made without any consequences in Hungary, and ethnic minorities can be humiliated and insulted here."

The Norwegian equivalent is called Fremskrittspartiet, whose policies are similar to the rest of the right-wing parties around Europe. Their naive goal is also to stop the development of multi-culturalism, openness and democracy. Breivik was a member of Fremskrittspartiet. He defined himself as a Christian with the confused belief that the so-called "Islamization of Europe" had to stop and that the "traitors" of Norway deserved to die. These "traitors" that Breivik executed were innocent teenagers with a belief and support for an open society and human rights, such as the right to seek protection and asylum.

Five days after the attack Jens Stoltenberg held one of many press conferences, stating "The Norwegian response to violence is more democracy, more openness and greater political participation." The statement is in total opposition to the former U.S. President, George W. Bush, and his reaction after the tragedy of 9/11, which truly changed the American society. Then, in 2001, the world was told to either be with or against the United States in a new war on terror, and prevention policies were introduced to intrude on human rights and people's integrity, such as the Patriot Act.

The massacre at Utøya this summer will of course also cause a major change of the Norwegian society, but I believe that the change will and can be put in a different direction than the U.S. administration did in 2001. "I think what we have seen is that there is going to be one Norway before and one Norway after July 22," Stoltenberg said. "But I hope and also believe that the Norway we will see after will be more open, a more tolerant society than what we had before."

The democratic struggle against fear, hate and racism will continue and only grow stronger because of this tragic event. As one of the survivors, Helle Gannestad, 18, said to the New York Times about Breivik, "He can take the lives from our friends but not their thoughts and wishes and beliefs, because that's going to go on with the rest of us." I, and many with me, have certainly become even more convinced that the main political goal should from now on be to create even more open and just societies without tension and threat of violence. Stine Renate Håheim, a member of the labor party had her mind set for the future on the morning after the massacre: "If one man can show so much hate, think how much love we could show together."

## THE DECREE

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