

FORUM

9-11, a year later



Nigel Alston
Motivational Moments

"You can only get people to change their behavior if you talk their language."

— Anthony Robbins

I paid tribute to the anniversary of 9/11 by joining hands with people I work with as we bowed our heads and observed a moment of silence at 8:46 a.m. We shared our thoughts and perspectives about the events of 9/11/01, their impact on our lives then and now, and joined hands for a second time in a final moment of reflection before returning to the work at hand.

With the exception of watching a few minutes of the nightly — local and national — news, I didn't watch any of the commemorations during the day. I have seen sufficient images of the World Trade Center Towers collapsing, as people ran for their lives. I have also discontinued reading the numerous stories in newspapers and every magazine, it seems. I have compassion for those who lost loved ones, the children born since 9/11 without a parent and clearly under-

stand that there is a "war on terrorism."

That said, just what have we learned, one year later?

On Monday, Sept. 10, 2001, it was business as usual for millions of people around the world. Terrorism — the magnitude of which happened on 9/11/01 — didn't happen here — not in our back yard! It was something reported on in nightly news briefs, happening to someone else, at a distance. No more.

On Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001, around 8:46 a.m., that changed. There is now a clear and present danger. And it continues to change, and change some more and then again after we think it can't change anymore. Why would someone do this to us? I know we don't agree with what happened, but surely we have some idea why it happened.

A single event provided a common thread that connected the world, instantly.

Within 24 hours, our world changed and so did the lives and behaviors of millions of people, all linked by that event.

I updated my calendar the night before and talked to a group of college students about life beyond college and the preparation needed to navigate the corporate world successfully. I facilitated a Dale Carnegie

class on the evening of Sept. 10, listening to class members share their expectations and visions of success after accomplishing their goals. A year later, a different group is sharing similar goals and expectations. Not much has changed.

On Sept. 11, 2001, I attended an early morning meeting, going about my day as planned, when everything changed. What a difference a year makes. As our office closed for business on the afternoon of 9/11, I sat at my computer, numb, stunned and shell-shocked. I canceled an evening meeting and attended a prayer service instead, where I cried.

I didn't cry on the anniversary of 9/11. Instead, I thought about the difference 24 hours made from Monday to Tuesday last year, and now, one year later. On 9/10, there was opposition to prayer in schools. The day after, no one asked for permission. One year later, people are challenging "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance being recited in schools.

Racial profiling was an issue on Monday, 9/10. On Tuesday we were all holding hands, united as one. One year later, racial profiling has taken on a different meaning. Add inappropriate comments to that profile and you have another "terror scare." Ask the medical

students detained for 17 hours in Florida.

On Monday, 9/11, politicians argued about budgetary surpluses. On Tuesday, grief stricken, they sang "God Bless America." One year later, they are still singing, but we have a budgetary crisis.

On Monday President Bush was reading to children in a classroom in Florida. He was shocked too. On Tuesday he returned to Washington to protect the future of America for the children of today. Now, he is set on going to war against Iraq, alone if necessary. I wonder what the children think.

We will continue to remember the tragic events of 9/11/01, the lives lost and honor the day and their memories appropriately. We must. We will continue to fight terrorism wherever it exists and we should. We know now, more than ever, that 24 hours makes a difference, as our world, as we see it, changed from Monday (9/10) to Tuesday (9/11).

It's also a different world, one year later. What have we learned to make it a better world for tomorrow?

Nigel Alston is a radio talk-show host, columnist and motivational speaker. Visit his Web site at www.motivationalmoments.com.

Work to be done



Marian Wright Edelman

Guest Columnist

We black folks have come a long way and have much to celebrate. Colin Powell is secretary of state. Condoleezza Rice heads the National Security Council. Ken Chenault is at the helm of American Express, and Richard Parsons heads AOL Time Warner. Tiger Woods has broken almost every golf record. Michael Jordan is unmatched on the basketball court. And the Williams sisters have taken tennis by storm. Oprah is queen of talk. Ruth Simmons is the first black woman president of a top Ivy League university (Brown), and David Levering Lewis has won two Pulitzer prizes for his stellar biography of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois.

In 1965 — the year the Voting Rights Act was passed — there were an estimated 300 black elected officials in the United States. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies recently reported there are about 9,000 black elected officials.

I became the fourth lawyer in Mississippi to take civil rights cases in 1964 and the first black woman admitted to that state's bar. Today there are hundreds of black lawyers in Mississippi, and two of my former law clerks have served on the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Those who say the Civil Rights Movement didn't make a difference did not live under the rigid system of racial apartheid as my generation did.

But the Civil Rights Movement has much unfinished business. And you and I must finish it, and we cannot stand idly by as more and more black children are tracked for failure rather than a



File Photo

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice made history when President Bush appointed her to the post in 2001. She is the first African-American to hold the post.

future of success, and for prison rather than for Princeton.

It was clear to me in 1964 and 1965 that the crucial struggle of black citizens to tear down the walls of legal apartheid in Mississippi and across the South, and to get the right to vote, would leave millions of poor blacks behind unless the social and economic underpinnings were put beneath the hard-won political and civil rights. Children must have food to eat, a place to sleep and health care when they are sick. Parents need jobs for dignity, and wages sufficient to support their families. Their children need quality Head Start, sound early childhood experiences, and education and training to build and sustain strong black families, black communities, self-sufficiency and wealth. And I knew then, as now, that those able to walk through the doors of opportunity opened by the Civil Rights Movement had to look back and share their talents and resources with those left behind.

That's why I joined Dr. King's Poor People's Campaign and began the Children's Defense

Fund's parent organization after his death to help lay the foundation for the next movement: the Movement to Leave No Child Behind®. The mission of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is to Leave No Child Behind® and to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

For nearly 30 years, CDF has provided a strong, effective voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. Although we pay particular attention to the needs of poor, black and other minority children, and those with disabilities, our research shows how children of every race, income group, faith and place need help.

CDF encourages preventive investment in children before they get sick, into trouble, drop out of school or suffer family breakdown. We challenge the values and priorities of a nation that would rather invest \$30,000 to lock our children up in jail but refuses to provide them a Head

Start to get ready for school. We challenge states that invest three times more on average per prisoner than per public school pupil. And it is a disgrace that a majority of our current political leaders voted for a \$1.3 trillion tax cut that primarily benefits the truly non-needy people with average incomes over a million dollars. The top 1 percent of wealthiest Americans will get 52 percent of the total tax cut when it is fully phased in.

We don't have a money problem in America. We have a values and priorities problem. The black community must lift its voice not only to get our nation to ensure the justice the prophets and the Gospels tell us God demands, but also to do what is economically sensible for its children and all of us. Only we can save our families and reweave the fabric of community all our children need.

In my next column I'll share the staggering odds black children face and we must address.

Marian Wright Edelman is president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund.

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