



9/11 Ceremonies and Liberty

At the risk of sounding sacrilegious, to say nothing of heartless, I confess to having little patience for the pomp and circumstance to which we are treated year after year around the eleventh of September.

For sure, the attacks of that day were as awful as any that this country has experienced during our lifetime. Those who personally suffered loss on that day are as deserving of our compassion as those who attacked us are deserving of our justice. Yet from these facts it most certainly does not follow that there is an obligation on our part to annually engage in ritualistic expressions of our collective angst over the losses that we endured a decade ago.



There is more than one reason for this verdict.

Ostensibly, we *must* annually commemorate 9/11 so that “we will never forget” what transpired on that day in our history. But we are no more at risk of forgetting *that* event than we are at risk of forgetting the attack of Pearl Harbor; the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King; the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*; and any number of other national tragedies that we refuse to commemorate by way of countrywide ceremonies. Even if we tried, there isn’t a single one of us who lived through 9/11 that will ever be able to forget it. In fact, not only are the images of the planes flying into the twin towers of the World Trade Center and innocent human beings jumping to their deaths forever ensconced in our minds; chances are we will remember what *we* were doing that day much more vividly than we will be able to recall the details of most days from our pasts.

As for those who do not personally recollect 9/11, it is as impossible for them to “forget” it as it is impossible for us to do so. The world in which we live is a world that is defined by the events of Tuesday, September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks that robbed 3,000 or so of our fellow Americans from us, though they occurred in the past, are still very much a part of our present. At any rate, if countless ceremonies must be orchestrated each year in order to impress upon future generations the significance of 9/11, then comparable ceremonies commemorating *every* significant historical event should be no less mandatory as far as instructing our posterity is concerned. But if the latter claim is ridiculous nonsensical, then it is not obvious why the former isn’t equally so.

Second, 9/11 was a *tragedy* of epic proportions for America. Due to bureaucratic incompetence, a ragtag group of Islamic terrorists from the Middle East were wildly successful (from their perspective) in striking a devastating blow against the United States. Admittedly, and thankfully, it didn’t take our country long *after* 9/11 to regain its bearings and strike back, but *on* 9/11, America wasn’t just sucker punched; she took a baseball bat to the skull.

Why, we must ask ourselves, do we continually want to remind, not just *ourselves* of this ugly fact, but



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the entire world?

Third, it is more than just a bit ironic that it is precisely those Republican politicians and “conservative” media personalities who never tire of railing against the “victim mentality” that has overcome our generation who are usually the most vocal supporters of ceremonies commemorating 9/11. Yet there could be no better illustration of this mentality, and the extent to which it has supplanted all others, than our conduct as a nation in the second week of September each year. Again, September 11, 2001 is the date on which Americans were *victimized* en masse. What is worse is that we were victimized as much by the negligence and incompetence of our own government as we were by the 19 savages who, armed only with box cutters, changed forever the most powerful nation in all of human history.

To a people devoted to liberty and the individuality that this liberty entails, public exhibitions of mourning one’s victimhood should be nothing less than anathema. It is achievements and victories, the products of strength, courage, genius, and all of the virtues the exercise of which liberty renders possible that such a people should *celebrate*. On the other hand, though they will remember weaknesses, failures, and set-backs, they will steadfastly *refuse* to adorn them in grand displays for all time.

Our liberty is potentially diminished in another way through these annual national reminders of 9/11. The ceremonies make it all too easy for our government to exploit this tragedy for the sake of amassing an ever greater scope over our lives. Whether the office holders are Republican or Democrat, as long as Americans are constantly reminded by way of these public exhibitions of remembrance and mourning of the destruction that our enemies would love to visit upon us, the easier it is for the government to prey on that fear in order to *grow and grow*.

Fifth and finally, because of their ubiquity and grandiosity, the 9/11 ceremonies have the effect of inducing in Americans the belief that nothing short of *patriotism* itself demands that they support any and all actions that are done in the name of either avenging the victims of 9/11 or of preventing “another” 9/11 on our shores. This, however, can only lead to all manner of abuse.

I will attend church this Sunday, as I usually do. There, I will pray for both those who lost their lives on 9/11 as well as their loved ones. I will not, though, be partaking of any 9/11 ceremonies.



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