

9/11 Memorial Service, Yankee Stadium, September 23, 2001

Gov. George E. Pataki, "They Must Be Proud"

September 11th began like every other day. New Yorkers woke up to a bright sun, and the promise of a brighter tomorrow. They packed their lunches, walked their children to school and hugged them goodbye. Like every other day, husbands and wives kissed one another, said, "I love you," and left for work.

Moments later, thousands of moms, dads, and children became innocent victims of an evil war they didn't know existed. The sun disappeared behind a skyline of terror. Great symbols of freedom were reduced to graveyards of dust. Part of America died that day.

But in our darkest hour, we turned to one another and to God. With a united voice, we proclaimed that evil and death would not have the final say.

We are powerless to bring our loved ones back, but it is well within our power to bestow on them the honor they deserve. The highest honor we can pay them is to rise above the evil that claimed their lives.

In this hour of adversity, we must eulogize them with our strength. And let us draw that strength from them, for we know that their eyes are upon us.

Looking down, they must be proud. They must be proud of their fellow New Yorkers who gather at vigils and line the streets to cheer police and rescue workers. They must be proud of the tired firefighters who toil in the rubble, digging with their hands, refusing to quit.

They must be proud of the thousands of brave children in Lower Manhattan who fled their schools in fear on Tuesday, then defiantly returned nine days later. They must be proud of Muslim deli owners and cab drivers who proudly wave American flag from their cars and shop windows.

They must be proud to see this city -- their city -- and this country -- their country -- so united.

Let us have faith that they, too, are united -- with one another, and with God.

Let us have faith that on that fateful morning, from the fury of violence the souls of thousands rose, up from the cloud of dust, and above freedom's harbor... they traveled through the sky... towards God.... "and left the vivid air signed with their honor."

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