

Evoking 'Spirit of 9/12' Was Once Crass Politics, but Not for Hillary Clinton

By [Kevin Gosztola](#)

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Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton urged Americans to recall the "spirit of 9/12" during her response to the massacre of 49 people by Omar Mateen on June 14. Such a call is deeply alarming, given how American Muslims were treated the day after the September 11th attacks.

It also is an expression, which has been affiliated with the Tea Party patriots of the right. Radio host Glenn Beck promoted a "9-12 Project" years ago and was widely mocked and scorned for using the tragedy of the attacks to advance his personal agenda.

Clinton [declared](#),

"Americans from every walk of life rallied together with a sense of common purpose on September the 12th. And in the days and weeks and months that followed we had each other's backs."

"President Bush went to a Muslim community center just six days after the attacks to send a message of unity and solidarity. To anyone who wanted to take out their anger on our Muslim neighbors and fellow citizens, he said, 'That should not and that will not stand in America,' Clinton added.

"It is time to get back to the spirit of those days. The Spirit of 9/12. Let's make sure we keep looking to the best of country, to the best within each of us." (Note: In the copy of her speech uploaded to her campaign website, "Spirit" is capitalized to give it gravitas.)

While it is true Bush appealed to Americans to not attack American Muslims, they [still faced](#) "chanting mobs and drive-by stone-throwers."

The New Jersey Star-Ledger reported on threats and vigilante attacks:

At the Masjid Bilal mosque in Ocean County, someone put up a poster that read, "You (expletive) Muslims! Close down you're church or I'll burn it down." In Lawrence Township, a man told a gas station attendant he would kill him. In Gloucester County, a Muslim who pumps gas was punched.

In Atlantic City, John Fotiades, 42, of Ventnor was accused of calling a taxi company and threatening to blow it up unless its taxis were pulled off the road - even though it had no Muslim drivers. Fotiades, the only person arrested in New Jersey's bias incidents, was charged with making terroristic threats.

In Paterson, a group of teens in a mostly Arabic neighborhood said a carload of people rode by waving American flags Tuesday. One reportedly shouted, "We're going to bomb you when you sleep!"

This was the true "spirit of 9/12," even if it was not the spirit President Bush promoted.

As Phyllis Bennis [wrote](#), "It was the events of September 12, when the Bush administration made the decision to take the world to war, that changed the world, and that continued to threaten the world's security and shred U.S. democracy."

The nation collectively refused to examine how the projection of American power abroad bred resentment against the country.

Bennis argued:

...[T]he biggest cause of anger against the U.S., in the Middle East and elsewhere around the world, is the arrogance with which that unchallengeable U.S. power is exercised. International law is dismissed, U.N. resolutions are ignored, binding treaties are abandoned. So while Washington demands that other countries strictly abide by U.N. resolutions and international law, and imposes sanctions or threatens military assault in response to violations, it holds itself accountable only to a separate "law of empire" which applies to the U.S. alone.

The nation did not reflect on U.S. support for regimes, which brutally crush dissent and anger Arab populations. It did not assess how backing Israel's occupation of Palestine or harsh sanctions in Iraq contributed to hatred of American superpower. Instead, President Bush signed an authorization for the use of military force, which set the stage for perpetual war on and away from any declared battlefields.

What drove high-ranking officials to believe they could get away with torture and warrantless spying, what motivated these same officials to capture detainees and subject them to rendition or transport them to Guantanamo Bay, where they could be held indefinitely without charge or trial, was the "spirit of 9/12."

Liberals typically have frowned upon this nationalistic talk of recalling the fabled unity of the day after 9/11. On September 10, 2009, MSNBC host Rachel Maddow [asked](#), in response to Beck's project, "Is there a statute of limitations, or something, on when it's okay to start being real blatant about exploiting a national tragedy for other purposes? Did that statute expire this year do you think?"

Particularly, such talk by Beck of September 12 was viewed as a way for the Tea Party to promote their toxic brand of conservative politics.

How, then, should we view talk of the "spirit of 9/12" when it is deployed by a person, who could be the first woman president of the United States?

Not only has Clinton called on Americans to return to this "spirit," but she is also suggesting the [terrorism watch list](#) must be greatly expanded. She has come out in support of more surveillance of online activities of citizens. She has also said the U.S. should ramp up air strikes in Iraq.

Clinton has engaged in the kind of tough-minded rhetoric that harkens back to the days Bush spoke about smoking Saddam Hussein out of Iraq. "If you're too dangerous to get on a plane, you are too dangerous to buy a gun in America," she said.

The country desperately needs a system of background checks and gun control policies to ban assault weapons. Yet, reforms do not stand a chance of making more than a minor impact if the politics of empire continue to be promoted by leaders like Clinton.

Donald Trump would like to ban Muslims, and perhaps, even round up American Muslims and deport the ones he can get away with removing from the country. Clinton rejects this terrible policy, but she still seems to be content with bolstering parts of the security state, which treat American Muslims as suspects. So, for a section of the American population, they can expect to be removed from the country entirely if Trump wins or treated to further measures, which make them feel like they are only entitled to the illusion of freedom because their government views them as suspect.

Neither mindset holds out much hope for peace and reconciliation. Both virtually guarantee there will be more Mateens, who are mentally unstable and abusive but turn to extremism to carry out acts they view as resistance against a wicked force in the world.

Clinton has [a cadre](#) of neoconservatives and liberal interventionists, who have lined up to support her run for the presidency. For them, her message about the "spirit of 9/12" dovetails nicely with their belief that America is a key part of "the foundation and the core of the liberal world order."

The first woman president is proud to have the opportunity to carry on the imperial tradition of American power. Or, as Glenn Beck might put it, "Are you ready to be that person you were that day after 9-12?"

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