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## 9/11 Then and Now: How the Performance of Memorial Rhetoric by Presidents Changes to Construct Heroes

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9/11 Then and Now: How the Performance of Memorial Rhetoric by Presidents  
Changes to Construct Heroes

by

Kristen M. Grafton

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
with a concentration in Rhetoric and Composition  
Department of English  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

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## **Abstract**

This study is concerned with American presidential rhetoric at the cross-section of hero rhetoric and memorial address. It analyzes presidential memorialization of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. 9/11 is arguably the most significant tragedy in recent American history. The purpose of this study is to identify the type of hero each president since 9/11 has attempted to construct of himself for the public and discuss the rationale behind that hero construction. To complete this objective, I analyze the second 9/11 memorial speech from the presidencies of Bush, Obama, and Trump for hero construction. A close reading examining the rhetorical genre, historical context, and keywords reveals the following hero constructions: Bush establishes himself as the war hero who fights back aggressively against a threat; Obama establishes himself as the peacemaker hero who encourages unity and rejects hate that is a result of tragedy; Trump establishes himself as the patriotic activist hero who seeks to return America to a glorious age before the tragedy occurred and prevent future tragedies. This research fills a gap in hero rhetoric and crisis rhetoric which does not have the three presidents in conversation with each other.

## **Introduction and Research Questions**

“Where were you when the planes hit the Twin Towers?” This is a question that almost every adult American can answer. They remember how old they were, where they were, what they were doing, what the people around them were doing. They remember what was said on the news by President Bush, and by their family and friends. The event became a historical landmark by which Americans marked history as a before-and-after in the same way that previous generations had used the 1929 stock market crash, the moon landing, Pearl Harbor, and President Kennedy’s assassination as markers in America’s timeline. The event has irrevocably scarred American memory and American culture and society in a way that has securely settled 9/11 as an event which must be acknowledged for its importance and significance.

It has been nearly nineteen years since the September 11<sup>th</sup> (9/11) terrorist attacks of New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, and America has had three presidents in that time: George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama, and Donald J. Trump. Since the day of the attacks in 2001, it has become an unspoken expectation that the president of the United States honor and commemorate the event in speech each year. Most of the speeches of the last three presidents have been given on the site of a major 9/11 memorial. These memorials and their accompanying presidential speeches have become increasingly influential as time goes by due to the increased distance we have from the event.

The last three presidents have all delivered speeches honoring those who died in 2001. The purpose of those speeches has gone far beyond simple memorialization. As a tragic event that occurred less than two decades ago, it still weighs heavily on the hearts of many Americans, and as such, unfortunately becomes an easily exploitable source of memory. Presidents can easily “alter the national imagination and get us to think of possibilities... that only specialists had imagined before.”<sup>1</sup> Political candidates need not do more than mention 9/11 in order to capture the attention of Americans. The more distanced from 2001, the more the memories of 9/11 fade or are nonexistent for the American citizens. It becomes a major role of the president to frame that past for the American people. 9/11 speeches also are an opportunity when presidents advance their own political agendas through their memorialization. Who presidents honor, what events they foreground, and what political message they deliver contribute to a production of memory that elicits feelings, reactions, and beliefs from Americans. The timing of this realignment is particularly advantageous as many of the youngest voters have little to no memory of 9/11 at all, allowing for a complete construction of memory, while the older voters are becoming too far removed from the event itself – already plagued by memory reconstruction due to the media coverage, news rhetoric, and presidential rhetoric – to prevent an intentional clouding of their memories. This thesis forwards that conversation specifically by analyzing how the last three presidents have constructed their personas along with 9/11 as they advance their political agendas and legacies. I identify the type of hero each president constructs of himself as part of an American past.

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<sup>1</sup> James Arnt Aune and Martin J. Medhurst, eds., *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric* (n.p.: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 244-245.



Literature related to presidential communication is vast, and tends to focus on the rhetorical presidency, presidential performance, and election rhetoric. The rhetorical presidency is a thematic shift from the president directing speech to government to speaking directly to the people.<sup>2</sup> The rhetorical president chooses his message specifically to achieve the goal he wants and makes specific choices about “selection, framing, phrasing, evidence, organization, and style, as well as about staging, choreography, and other aspects of presidential performance.”<sup>3</sup> The rhetor also has distinct relationships with the audience, text, and message.<sup>4</sup> The rhetorical presidency represents a shift in leadership and communication style.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, the president must define himself as a successful leader “in response to situations, events, and the interplay of those situations and events.”<sup>6</sup> Rhetorically, he must construct this image. Recent scholarship argues for a shift from the rhetorical presidency to the ubiquitous presidency, a presidency that is highly visible and thus leads to a multi-faceted image construction.<sup>7</sup> The media also plays a role in this image construction.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, each president constructs an image of himself based on his own style, societal context, the media, and goals as president.<sup>9</sup> This continued attention

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<sup>2</sup> James W. Ceaser et al., "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (June 1981). See also Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, princeton classics ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (September 2004): 609.

<sup>4</sup> Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric," 609; Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1993), 191-196.

<sup>5</sup> Norman C. Thomas and Joseph A. Pika, *The Politics of the Presidency*, fourth ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1997), 139. See also Waterman, Wright, and St. Clair, *The Image-Is-Everything*, 10-15.

<sup>6</sup> Aune and Medhurst, *The Prospect*, 29-35.

<sup>7</sup> Joshua M. Scacco and Kevin Coe, "Talk This Way: The Ubiquitous Presidency and Expectations of Presidential Communication," *American Behavioral Scientist* 61, no. 3 (2017). See also Joshua M. Scacco and Kevin Coe, "The Ubiquitous Presidency: Toward a New Paradigm of Studying Presidential Communication," *International Journal of Communication*, April 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Richard W. Waterman, Robert Wright, and Gilbert St. Clair, *The Image-Is-Everything Presidency* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 125-148; Thomas and Pika, *The Politics*, 116-130; Kernell, *Going Public*, 55-57. See also David Michael Ryfe, *Presidents in Culture: The Meaning of Presidential Communication* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 61-92.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas and Pika, *The Politics*, 148-149; Ryfe, *Presidents in Culture*, 19-60.

should consider many factors, including the images of presidents that are constructed through a joint effort of president and people, which is only briefly discussed here. Similarly, there is substantial research related to the rhetoric and communication of presidents during their campaigns. Such rhetoric includes the following: partisan rhetoric distinct to the two major parties;<sup>10</sup> whether or not campaign rhetoric is a true indicator of rhetoric to come for governance;<sup>11</sup> increased usage of class, populism, and wealth language;<sup>12</sup> the contemporary successes of extreme, eccentric, or unusual rhetoric;<sup>13</sup> media involvement in primaries and how they impact message and transmission;<sup>14</sup> and how presidents can prey upon emotions of fear, anger, and malcontent to win elections.<sup>15</sup> While this scholarship is useful for establishing the parameters of presidential speech, it is ultimately tangential to this study.

More central is scholarship on presidential rhetoric that focuses on 9/11 as a speaking event. Much literature exists related to 9/11 rhetoric during Bush's presidency as this was such a foundational time, and Bush had a unique opportunity to begin that historical construction as the sitting president when the attacks occurred, as discussed below from scholars such as Kathleen Hall Jamieson, John Murphy, Bonnie Dow, Mary Stuckey, Herbert Simons, and others. Major

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<sup>10</sup> Jesse H. Rhodes and Zachary Albert, "The Transformation of Partisan Rhetoric in American Presidential Campaigns, 1952-2012," *Party Politics* 23, no. 5 (September 2017); Kathleen E. Kendall, *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates and the Media, 1912-2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 29-52.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremiah Olson et al., "The Teleprompter Presidency: Comparing Obama's Campaign and Governing Rhetoric," *Social Science Quarterly* 93, no. 5 (2012). See also Thomas and Pika, *The Politics*, 89-90.

<sup>12</sup> Jesse H. Rhodes and Kaylee T. Johnson, "Welcoming Their Hatred: Class Populism in Democratic Rhetoric in American Presidential Campaigns, 1932-2012," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (March 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Edward C. Appel, "Burlesque, Tragedy, and a (Potentially) 'Yuuuge' 'Breaking of a Frame': Donald Trump's Rhetoric as 'Early Warning'," *Communication Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (April 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Kendall, *Communication in the Presidential*, 129-224. See also Jeffrey E. Cohen, *Going Local: Presidential Leadership in the Post-Broadcast Age* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 210-219.

<sup>15</sup> Jesse H. Rhodes and Amber B. Vayo, "The Historical Presidency: Fear and Loathing in Presidential Candidate Rhetoric, 1952-2016," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (December 2019).

themes of that literature are presidential hero construction,<sup>16</sup> language use to reconstruct the memory of an event,<sup>17</sup> epideictic versus deliberative crisis rhetoric,<sup>18</sup> and rhetoric of aggression and war.<sup>19</sup> Some scholarship exists related to Obama due to his significance as a minority president and first president to be elected following the attacks,<sup>20</sup> but much of the scholarship surrounding him is related to his rhetoric concerning peace, hope, and change.<sup>21</sup> That literature focuses on Obama's intentional shift away from Bush's policies and identity, which plays a role in conversations about hero construction comparisons between the presidents. Very little exists about Trump's 9/11 rhetoric, and that which does exist discusses the angry nature of his rhetoric that establishes himself as the billionaire who understands the plight of the common man by constructing his audiences as victims.<sup>22</sup> The literature on Trump's rhetoric deals with the civility (or lack thereof) of his rhetoric and deals with the shaping of public opinion and whether or not Trump's rhetoric style is ushering in a new form of what we know as political civility, but not

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<sup>16</sup> Michael J. Hyde, "The Rhetor as Hero and the Pursuit of Truth: The Case of 9/11," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>17</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Mary E. Stuckey, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Presidency and Presidential Rhetoric," *Review of Communication* 10, no. 1 (February 4, 2010); John M. Murphy, "'Our Mission and Our Moment': George W. Bush and September 11th," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (Winter 2003); Bonnie J. Dow, "The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53, no. 1 (Summer 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Colleen Elizabeth Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric: A Study of Protofascist Discourse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 127-163.

<sup>20</sup> Denise M. Bostdorff, "Obama, Trump, and Reflections on the Rhetoric of Political Change," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2017); Megan D. McFarlane, "Visualizing the Rhetorical Presidency: Barack Obama in the Situation Room," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2016). See also Robert Terrill, *Double-Consciousness and the Rhetoric of Barack Obama: The Price and Promise of Citizenship* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2015); Mark Lawrence McPhail and Roger McPhail, "(E)raced Men: Complicity and Responsibility in the Rhetorics of Barack Obama," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14, no. 4 (2001).

<sup>21</sup> Joshua Reeves and Matthew S. May, "The Peace Rhetoric of a War President: Barack Obama and the Just War Legacy," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 16, no. 4 (2013). See also Laura Samponaro, "The Old Is New Again: Cicero, Barack Obama, and the Campaign Rhetoric of the 'New Man,'" *Rhetorica* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Denise M. Bostdorff, "Obama, Trump," 698-700.

specifically related to 9/11.<sup>23</sup> While this material concerning Trump's rhetoric is significant, it ultimately says very little about the performance of the presidential hero as part of 9/11. The scholarship does inform of the importance of the rhetorical performance of the president, 9/11 as a speaking event, and the personas of each president. We know that 9/11 is a critical event that shapes the remembrance of the past and who is involved, so in this study, I ask what sort of presidential legacy is being tied to one of the most momentous events of the 21st century.

This study compares the type of hero of which each president foregrounds himself during 9/11 speech. When the presidents' constructions of history are discussed in a vacuum or alone, there is something to be gleaned from that analysis. My comparison of all three provides a more substantial and sophisticated perspective. Thus, I answer the following two research questions:

- How do each of the last three presidents construct their heroism through 9/11 speech?
- What are the qualities of each performance of heroism?

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<sup>23</sup> Bostdorff, "Obama, Trump," 696; Robert L. Ivie, "Trump's Unwitting Prophecy," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 20, no. 4 (2017): 707. See also Mary E. Stuckey, "American Elections and the Rhetoric of Political Change: Hyperbole, Anger, and Hope in U.S. Politics," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 20, no. 4 (2017). See also Mark L. McPhail and David Frank, "Racing the Trump Card: Rhetorics of Whiteness and the Politics of Adaptive Resistance after Obama," *Rhetoric Review* 36, no. 4 (2017); Kirsten Theye and Steven Melling, "Total Losers and Bad Hombres: The Political Incorrectness and Perceived Authenticity of Donald J. Trump," *Southern Communication Journal* 83, no. 5 (2018).

## Heroes in History

Historical heroes fulfill certain qualities that people look for in specific times or during specific events. The idea of the American hero is part of a long history of heroic narrative in which a hero has a political and social reputation which was powerful enough to “shape the course of events.”<sup>24</sup> Heroes become symbols of something else outside of them that attracts people to them.<sup>25</sup> “Political symbols, then, are the direct link between individuals and the social order.”<sup>26</sup> People seek out these symbolic heroes as some kind of connection beyond their ability as citizens. The American hero represents “ideals which will not be unseated,” which feeds into the patriotic tendencies of the country.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the president becomes such a crucial figurehead because America’s young age means that it lacks any other enduring symbols, so the investment in the president becomes more significant.<sup>28</sup> We may look for American heroes to be “attractive, strong, and fearless” with military savvy, democratic commitment, and relentless American patriotism and optimism.<sup>29</sup> In crisis, heroes embody some of these same qualities, but other qualities become more important.<sup>30</sup> A hero in times of crises displays the courage or fortitude

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<sup>24</sup> Marshall W. Fishwick, *American Heroes: Myth and Reality* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1954), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 8. See also Benjamin Hufbauer, *Presidential Temples: How Memorials and Libraries Shape Public Memory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 1-9.

<sup>26</sup> Robert E. Denton, Jr. and Dan F. Hahn, *Presidential Communication: Description and Analysis* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1986), 52,174.

<sup>27</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 226; Waterman, Wright, and St. Clair, *The Image-Is-Everything*, 10-11.

<sup>29</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 226-227. See also Bert A. Rockman and Richard W. Waterman, eds., *Presidential Leadership: The Vortex of Power* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1-9.

<sup>30</sup> Amos Kiewe, ed., *The Modern Presidency and Crisis Rhetoric* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), xviii-xix.

that the average person lacks and desperately wants.<sup>31</sup> On 9/11, people looked for the heroes of Flight 93, the World Trade Center, and first responders.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the everyday heroes that inspire hope, people need the ultimate hero who will be the strong leader in uncertain times. This usually translates to the president.

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<sup>31</sup> Pomper, *Ordinary Heroes*, 28-29.

<sup>32</sup> Gerald M. Pomper, *Ordinary Heroes and American Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 2-3.

## The President as Hero

The president is uniquely positioned to be the hero in that he has the ability to speak to national events and define them for the American people. He is the natural leader that citizens will look to for explanations.<sup>33</sup> At all times, the president is the hero, and citizens will look for the heroic qualities they expect (i.e. honesty, determination, goodness).<sup>34</sup> The president is expected to define (or as Stuckey puts it, to interpret) policy, events, and any other understanding with which American citizens will grapple.<sup>35</sup> Crisis rhetoric magnifies this effect because, in times of tragedy, fear, or uncertainty, people will automatically look for a hero who will act as a kind of savior figure and fix the problems created by the tragedy.<sup>36</sup> Some may even look for a military hero or a rescuer-type of hero to step in and save the day.<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, people are looking for someone to be strong and make decisions when they feel powerless and unable to act.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 3; Pomper, *Ordinary Heroes*, 100.

<sup>34</sup> Pomper, *Ordinary Heroes*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Leroy G. Dorsey, ed., *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership* (n.p.: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 6-9.

<sup>36</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 225; Pomper, *Ordinary Heroes*, 22-23; Rockman and Waterman, *Presidential Leadership*, 270-274.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas and Pika, *The Politics*, 113.

## Situating the President in History

However, the president's ability to be that hero is dependent upon, and maybe even restricted by, the current events at the time. The historical events surrounding the president's time in office play a role in what the president chooses to foreground and how the audience will receive the message.<sup>39</sup> This is the context in which the president exists, the situational exigence,<sup>40</sup> and it defines everything about how they function, why they say what they say, and how they conduct themselves.<sup>41</sup> In fact, it may even limit what they can say or how much rhetorical liberty they may take.<sup>42</sup> Because of these constraints, it is important to consider the historical context of each president at the time of the speech. The speech cannot be discussed in isolation without losing significant points of analysis because each president is a product of his time in history. The international and domestic conditions and events affect what the president says and what policies he promotes. Further, the expectations of the American people at that time dictate, at least partially, how the president is expected to act. For this reason, the historical context of each president at the time of the speech will be explored individually below.

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<sup>39</sup> Fishwick, *American Heroes*, 229-230.

<sup>40</sup> Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 (January 1968).

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, *Going Local*, 219-222.

<sup>42</sup> Simons and Aghazarian, *Form, Genre*, 13.



## Heroism and 9/11 Presidential Address

Rhetorical discussions surrounding such events of colossal importance as 9/11 arise out of an honest search for the truth behind an event and the hero that will not only define that truth, but act on it. Often, the rhetor becomes that hero. 9/11 provided such a scenario for the ruse of a hero because it “defined a monumental occasion for would-be rhetorical heroes to display their talents as they sought to disclose the truth, make sense of the horror and chaos at hand, and thereby help in the treatment and guidance of an anxious and terrified American public.”<sup>43</sup> Such turbulent events lead to the desperate search for someone to organize the chaos, rhetorically speaking. The rhetorical hero – in this case the president – has a job they must fulfill; that is, “Heroes provide the material that directs a society’s moral compass, offers instructions for understanding what human greatness is,” which gives the country a sense of security.<sup>44</sup> Bush capitalized on a rhetorical opportunity to present himself as a seeker of truth and define these events as a classic good vs. evil battle.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Bush became that rhetorical hero: “The president [Bush] was doing what the rhetor as hero is supposed to do: answering the call of conscience and being an honest-to-goodness ‘home-maker’ to a people whose home was attacked.”<sup>46</sup> Bush focused on the heroism displayed by those who responded to the attacks and offered help in any

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<sup>43</sup> Hyde, “The Rhetor,” 4.

<sup>44</sup> Hyde, “The Rhetor,” 8.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas Kellner, “Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the ‘War on Terror,’” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 2007): 627-629.

<sup>46</sup> Hyde, “The Rhetor,” 10.

way they could as a way of establishing them as heroes. This in turn reflected well on Bush, as political critics said he “spoke of the brave and the free, the spirit of democracy that they embodied, and how he, too, would sustain this spirit. Bush was the rhetorical hero.”<sup>47</sup> Bush became a man of the people who “represented our experiences, feelings, and actions” and created a sense of unity, patriotism, and hope.<sup>48</sup> Bush’s reputation was boosted beyond the political arena to embody this hero who stepped in at a critical moment.

Of the scholarship on presidential address and heroism, I focus on attributes that lend themselves directly to aspects of the speeches I analyze here, specifically those that are related to genre, current events, and keywords. In addition, presidential address is a topic of interest to numerous fields including political science, public policy, psychology, and sociology. There is a significant difference in the ways that each of these fields frames, analyzes, and answers questions about presidential address. Because of that, this literature draws from rhetorical studies of presidential address, which tend to favor questions about the humanistic qualities of oration and support critical methodologies. The result is a study that is simultaneously nuanced but also narrow. While the study lacks interdisciplinary breadth, it speaks directly to concerns drawn directly from rhetorical studies of presidential address.

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<sup>47</sup> Hyde, "The Rhetor," 12.

<sup>48</sup> Murphy, "Our Mission," 621.

## Rhetorical Genres of Heroism

Beyond the event of 9/11 itself, the rhetorical genre of the speech directly affects its content and reception. The sitting president's selection of a speech's exigence is one of the most foundational parts of a president's address. Under the Aristotelian classifications, we could divide genre into epideictic, deliberative, and judicial.<sup>49</sup> Presidential speech naturally exists in genre as it suits rhetorical purpose. In fact, they may exist entirely separate from the man delivering the speech entirely.<sup>50</sup> For example, selecting contexts that invoke epideictic rhetoric position the president differently than deliberative or judicial rhetoric. Jim Kuypers notes that crisis rhetoric as it relates to the before and after of the Cold War, which dates the book significantly for this discussion, but as with Dow, the merit of the discussion still exists. Through discussion of previous scholars such as Theodore Windt and Amos Kiewe, who were instrumental in defining crisis rhetoric, Kuypers argues that crisis is defined as such once the president refers to something as a crisis.<sup>51</sup> "By announcing the crisis, the president asks for his decision to be supported, not for debate upon what should be done."<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, though the president does not cause an event to happen, he turns it into a crisis through his rhetorical actions

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<sup>49</sup> Herbert W. Simons and Aram A. Aghazarian, eds., *Form, Genre, and the Study of Political Discourse* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 6-9.

<sup>50</sup> Windt and Ingold, *Essays in Presidential*, 61-64.

<sup>51</sup> Jim A. Kuypers, *Presidential Crisis Rhetoric and the Press in the Post-Cold War World* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 17; Kiewe, *The Modern*, xvii-xxiii. See also Julie Drew, "Identity Crisis: Gender, Public Discourse, and 9/11," *Women and Language* 27, no. 2 (September 2004): 75.

<sup>52</sup> Kuypers, *Presidential Crisis*, 17.

and then uses it to demand support for a position. Here, we see the beginning of the construction of the president's image.<sup>53</sup>

Presidential address encouraging crisis is often deliberative rather than epideictic. Presidential crisis rhetoric must be analyzed based on the current events of the time and the ultimate purpose the president hopes to achieve with his rhetoric. For this reason, political speeches are "socially sanctioned public performances... This is not to say that political candidates... whom we label political actors never speak their own minds. Sometimes their interests coincide with their audiences' interests."<sup>54</sup> For example, Bonnie Dow discusses President Reagan to point out how crisis rhetoric responds to its context to encourage expedient action. When discussing Reagan's deliberative strategy in terms of the military action in Grenada and Libya, she writes that "the President's discourse [is] structured to establish clearly that his policy was expedient, reasoned, and prudent," and by extension, Reagan establishes himself as those characteristics as well.<sup>55</sup> Dow's analysis highlights how the reason for speech introduces an opportunity to develop the president's image. Dow's focus on Reagan provides a lens to better understand the reasons presidents give their speeches and how they enable their heroic personas. In support of a more epideictic strategy, John Murphy compares Reagan's epideictic rhetoric to Bush's, and argues that Bush is almost exclusively epideictic in his language and presentation.<sup>56</sup> It was necessary for Bush to define 9/11 for the American people and offer a form of solace.<sup>57</sup> I similarly argue "that rhetoric which responds to critical events is characterized by epideictic strategies that function to allow the audience to reach a communal understanding of the events

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<sup>53</sup> Kuypers, *Presidential Crisis*, 28-29.

<sup>54</sup> Simons and Aghazarian, *Form, Genre*, 48.

<sup>55</sup> Dow, "The Function," 303.

<sup>56</sup> Murphy, "Our Mission," 609-610. See also Kelley, *Post-9/11 American*, 197-204.

<sup>57</sup> Murphy, "Our Mission," 611-612.

which have occurred. In contrast, presidential rhetoric that is crisis-creating (in Windt's sense) or justificatory (in Cherwitz and Zagacki's sense) is characterized by deliberative strategies that function to establish the expediency of action taken in an effort to gain public support."<sup>58</sup> Obviously, all crisis discourse will contain elements of both kinds of strategies.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Dow, "The Function," 296.

<sup>59</sup> Dow, "The Function," 296.

## Extending Memorialization to Agenda Performance

Speeches like the 9/11 memorial provide an exigence for setting national agendas. Presidents rely heavily on their ability to “mobilize the public as a routine means of governance.”<sup>60</sup> In order to use the memorialization of a tragic event to motivate citizens, the president must act a certain way. This extends to performance: “Presidents potentially possess an enormously important power over our national definitions... they help constitute us as a nation through the symbolic performance of their office.”<sup>61</sup> Presidents, through a certain kind of rhetorical performance, elicit an intimacy with the American people that benefits their image.<sup>62</sup> This kind of intimacy serves as a vehicle for promoting any causes, images, ideals, or other political opinions they may want to advance.

Presidents capitalize on national events (here, specifically tragedies) to promote a specific agenda, ideal, or opinion because “A president can justify nearly any action or policy or mobilize public support for a specific policy by defining the issue in terms of national security.”<sup>63</sup> Bush had a rhetorical opportunity to advance his own political agenda by framing 9/11 in a way that

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<sup>60</sup> Stuckey, “Rethinking the Rhetorical,” 40.

<sup>61</sup> Stuckey, “Rethinking the Rhetorical,” 41.

<sup>62</sup> Stuckey, “Rethinking the Rhetorical,” 45-46.

<sup>63</sup> Denton and Hahn, *Presidential Communication*, 53.

made his agenda for war make sense to most Americans.<sup>64</sup> Herbert Simons offers the following explanation:

The 9/11 attacks and the melodramatic crisis rhetoric that followed in their wake made the invasion of Iraq politically feasible. No sooner had the president completed his televised 'Address to the Congress' on 9/20 than the pundits joined as one in concluding that the president had demonstrated extraordinary leadership ability.... Thus did the administration's post-9/11 crisis rhetoric morph into its case for war with Iraq. In subsequent speeches Bush would continue to capitalize on the appeal of his antiterrorist rhetoric, finding new enemies and new rationales for aggressive action.<sup>65</sup>

Logically, to preach aggressive action, aggressive language was necessary.<sup>66</sup> Aggression leads to a variety of positions, such as priest and custodian.<sup>67</sup> Beyond, aggressor, Bush established himself as "the voice of America" and made opposing him equivalent to "stand[ing] against Lisa Beamer, and we were not likely to do that."<sup>68</sup> Extending that dichotomous us vs. them rhetoric, Bush established himself in an irrefutable position of hero and he "accentuates the pure motives of the United States."<sup>69</sup> The war that Bush sought to promote as a result of 9/11 sees him using extremely aggressive rhetoric and referencing the terrorist attack as justification for the war.<sup>70</sup>

Aggressive rhetoric is not the only option for garnering support for a cause, however. Whereas Bush sought to encourage support for the war as a war hero before the war actually began (as Simons argues), Engels and Saas argue that Obama's rhetoric was more of a "status

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<sup>64</sup> Jeremy Engels and William O. Saas, "On Acquiescence and Ends-Less War: An Inquiry into the New War Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 2 (May 2013): 227.

<sup>65</sup> Simons, "From Post 9/11 Melodrama," 185-187.

<sup>66</sup> Jeanine E. Kraybill and Raul Madrid, Jr., "The Rhetoric of Crisis: George W. Bush during the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars," *American Communication Journal* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 6, accessed January 24, 2020, <http://www.ac-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Kraybill-.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating*, 93-94.

<sup>68</sup> Murphy, "Our Mission," 620.

<sup>69</sup> Windt and Ingold, *Essays in Presidential*, 65.

<sup>70</sup> J. Maggio, "The Presidential Rhetoric of Terror: The (Re)Creation of Reality Immediately after 9/11," *Politics and Policy* 35, no. 4 (December 2007).

update,” where “Americans are called to acquiesce to decisions already made and actions already taken.”<sup>71</sup> This is a different approach with the same goal. Instead of getting support pre-action, the president has the opportunity to gain support post-action, using the memorialized events as justification for actions taken. With either approach, the image is the same: the president is the person in control. Megan McFarlane discusses Obama’s rhetorical actions the night Osama bin Laden was killed. She argues that Obama’s image in the situation room that night had a “continued impact of visual rhetoric on the rhetorical presidency and in the advancement of President Obama’s role as Commander in Chief.”<sup>72</sup> She argues that visual rhetoric plays a significant role in how the American people perceive the presidency, and while this study is not particularly concerned with visual rhetoric, the effect is the same: Obama’s perception as it relates to the killing of the 9/11 perpetrator is critical in defining his image as a strong president. The discussion of the multiple roles the president embodies is still topical now, and the performative nature leads to this kind of ability to promote agendas.

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<sup>71</sup> Engels and Saas, “On Acquiescence,” 230.

<sup>72</sup> McFarlane, “Visualizing the Rhetorical,” 5.



## Keywords of 9/11 Presidential Rhetoric

A critical component to the construction of an event and therefore agenda is the language used to define the event. The use of the words ‘terror,’ ‘terrorism,’ and ‘terrorist’ is certainly not limited to 9/11, but the use of these words exploded in frequency after 9/11, partially due to Bush’s extensive use of this language.<sup>73</sup> The use of these words is complicated for historians and social scientists because agreeing on a cohesive definition to these terms is nearly impossible within academia; this does not even account for the variations in definition among law enforcement, lawyers, media, and politicians (i.e. the president).<sup>74</sup> Despite the lack of a cohesive definition, this language still carries power. Words like “terror,” “attack,” and “evil” were thrown around to rile up Americans in support of a war instead of a collective questioning of whether or not war was even the right answer.<sup>75</sup> “Rhetors can also fan the flames of anger” to rally support for themselves or their policies.<sup>76</sup> This language gained new life and new meaning in 9/11 as a means to identify an us vs. them style dichotomous message.<sup>77</sup> This was a rhetorical

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<sup>73</sup> Beverly Gage, "Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (June 2011): 75-81. See also Jeffrey Kaplan, "History and Terrorism," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (June 2011): 101-104; Kelley, *Post-9/11 American*, 127.

<sup>74</sup> Ann Larabee, "Why Historians Should Exercise Caution When Using the Word 'Terrorism,'" *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (June 2011): 106-109. Kaplan, "History and Terrorism," 101-104.

<sup>75</sup> Sandra Silberstein, *War of Words: Language, Politics and 9/11* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>76</sup> Bostdorff, "Obama, Trump," 696.

<sup>77</sup> D.J. Mulloy, "Is There a 'Field?' And If There Isn't, Should We Be Worried about It?," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (June 2011): 111-112.

move intended to redefine what we mean when we say “terrorism” by focusing America’s attention on the events of 9/11 by playing on the horror of the events.<sup>78</sup>

This purpose of identifying a hero vs. villain rhetoric (or what Windt terms the devil-angel nature)<sup>79</sup> has roots in construction of events and in construction of who exactly the hero is that is opposing the “villain” of terrorism, and the language used to define the heroes and villains is carefully chosen to create an exact type of hero and villain.<sup>80</sup> The specific language used in this construction is critical to the creation of this contrast. The hero and the villain must both be clearly defined as who they are and what they represent. The hero is not necessarily a man, but rather an idea of American exceptionalism that is represented by a man.<sup>81</sup> Here, the hero is the president, specifically Bush in the wake of 9/11.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Bush established “terrorism” as the villain, careful to dissociate al-Qaeda from Arabs and Muslims who were not involved.<sup>83</sup> The president is uniquely positioned to establish this hero vs. villain rhetoric because “The identity of presidents... gives this discourse a distinctive character. In turn, the identity and character of the presidency arise out of such discourse.”<sup>84</sup> Crisis only amplifies this power as “the president assumes the right to define for the country the meaning of the catastrophe and to assuage the associated trauma.”<sup>85</sup> This is the opportunity the president has to redefine events to suit their purposes and may be broadly dealing with an event such as 9/11 as Campbell and Jamieson discuss, or it can be very minute and related to the exact word choice used as diction can

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<sup>78</sup> Kaplan, "History and Terrorism," 103-105.

<sup>79</sup> Theodore Windt and Beth Ingold, eds., *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric* (n.p.: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1983), 65.

<sup>80</sup> Mulloy, "Is There," 112; Michael J. Lee, "Us, Them, and the War on Terror: Reassessing George W. Bush's Rhetorical Legacy," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (March 2017): 3-5.

<sup>81</sup> Mulloy, "Is There," 112. Kaplan, "History and Terrorism," 104.

<sup>82</sup> Kellner, "Bushspeak and the Politics," 628.

<sup>83</sup> Lee, "Us, Them," 7-9.

<sup>84</sup> Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating*, 7.

<sup>85</sup> Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating*, 77.

influence how people think about an event. To perform as a hero, the president must reconstruct the event first with precise language which will be explored in the speeches.

## Methods

While the arguments of these scholars are certainly legitimate, and their emphasis on President Bush as the acting president when 9/11 happened is appropriate, I would like to widen the argument by analyzing the presidents who followed him and putting them in conversation with one another. Putting these three presidents in conversation with each other will expose the differing rhetorical goals of each of the three men. For each president, one speech has been chosen for analysis. Though each president has multiple 9/11 speeches from which to choose, limiting the analysis to one speech each allows for a closer line-by-line reading. The 9/11 speech from the second year of the presidency of each president was chosen for analysis. Because Trump has not yet completed his term, and Bush and Obama both served for eight years, a speech from the early years of the presidency is logical for consistency. During the second year of the term, the president is still trying to define what kind of president he will be, but is not so new that he has no identity at all. Also, the first 9/11 speech of Bush's presidency would have been the same day, which means that we lose that memorial quality. Each speech also takes place in a different location which allows for a conversation about the role place plays in these constructions. Of course, the time elapsed since the event varies with each president, and each president occupies a different time with different historical circumstances. This can be used to emphasize how each president is ensconced in current history, location, and memory to construct his own hero rhetoric. Ultimately, I argue that Bush constructs himself as the military hero who

strikes back aggressively at any threat, real or perceived; that Obama is the peacemaker hero who, through a rejection of much of Bush's policies, encourages unity and forgiveness and seeks to put an end to the perpetual wars and the hate that goes with it; and Trump, the political activist hero, who wants to reestablish a "glorious" time of America through a rejection of Obama's policies and act as the protector of the country, preempting any violence before it can happen.

To identify the type of hero each president is constructing for himself, I read for the following three categories: genre, national events, and keywords. The speeches are read paragraph by paragraph to establish whether or not they are epideictic (focused on the present), judicial (focused on the past), or deliberative (focused on the future) to inform the kind of message each president is sending as a hero. The historical context of each speech and presidency will also be critical to evaluating the identity of the president because the time of the speech will not only inform the message and delivery of that message but will establish the parameters in which the president is speaking. The current national events at the time of the speech influence what kind of hero the American citizens are looking for, and therefore the president will need to pay attention to that beyond the events of 9/11. Finally, keywords used by each president and how they are defined will also impact the hero image based on how they choose to frame certain language. How they speak of the Americans vs. the perpetrators of 9/11 reveals their rhetorical goals. These three components together will elucidate the kind of hero construction each president is performing in these memorial speeches.

## **George W. Bush at Ellis Island, 2002**

When President Bush delivered his speech at Ellis Island, NY, it was the first time 9/11 had been memorialized by a president. Just one year removed from the event, Bush had an obligation and an opportunity to speak about the events of that day and what the country now looked like as a result. Bush delivered this speech from Ellis Island. At that time, there was no official 9/11 memorial, so Bush did not have any obligations regarding location for the speech. Locating the speech at Ellis Island is significant due to its proximity to the 9/11 attacks. New York placed Bush in the part of the country most impacted by the attack to communicate “we haven’t forgotten about you.” His use of epideictic and deliberative rhetoric reflects his goal of encouraging war as a reaction to the Americans affected by 9/11 by promising revenge on behalf of those affected. This is relevant to his position historically as the president when 9/11 occurred, so a swift reaction was expected and demanded. To justify his extreme actions, he must create a clear dichotomy of the hero (America) vs. the villain (terrorism). In the following sections I analyze Bush’s speech to show how he enacted his version of heroism through his memorial address.

### **Genre Analysis of Bush’s 2002 Speech**

This speech is 906 words long and consists of fourteen paragraphs. This speech is primarily epideictic with several deliberative phrases encouraging one response: revenge. Bush was the first president to memorialize 9/11. He declares 9/11 as a “fixed point in the life of

America,” establishing its role as a crisis and as a time marker in American history.<sup>86</sup> He reminds the American people of their commitment a year ago never to forget and to remember those lost, to do something in their honor, to change the future of America.<sup>87</sup> This all serves to establish himself as the hero of the moment. Both by reminding everyone of their emotions and feelings and by spurring them to action, he places himself as the leader of such memorialization and reminds everyone of the hurt caused. It is then easier for Bush to encourage violent action in response because he has reminded everyone of their pain. This makes it difficult for his image to be anything but a hero: everyone remembers the pain and the hurt, so they look to Bush for answers, solace, and direction, all of which he provides. Further, he deepens that divide between the hero and the enemy, arguing that the value of life and liberty is what “separates us from the enemy we fight.”<sup>88</sup> It is important for Bush to make the hero and the villain as different as he can to vilify them effectively, making him the hero for combating them.

This reinforcement of the hero (America) vs. the villain (terror) leads to the only two paragraphs of judicial rhetoric in this speech. After a lengthy memorialization, Bush devotes a small portion of the speech to the ethical judgement of the terrorists and the moral juxtaposition between them and America. Bush makes a moral claim about the value of life, saying, “The attack on our nation was also an attack on the ideals that make us a nation. Our deepest national conviction is that every life is precious, because every life is the gift of a Creator who intended us to live in liberty and equality.”<sup>89</sup> Here, Bush is passing judgement on the actions of the terrorists on 9/11 because they violated the moral values of life and freedom. Bush elevates the

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<sup>86</sup> Kuypers, *Presidential Crisis*, 17-29.

<sup>87</sup> Bush, "President's Remarks."

<sup>88</sup> Bush, "President's Remarks."

<sup>89</sup> Bush, "President's Remarks."

hero vs. villain rhetoric that establishes America as the morally superior, and the terrorists as the enemy not just of America, but the enemy of life and freedom.

There is a line in our time, and in every time, between those who believe all men are created equal, and those who believe that some men and women and children are expendable in the pursuit of power. There is a line in our time, and in every time, between the defenders of human liberty and those who seek to master the minds and souls of others. Our generation has now heard history's call, and we will answer it.<sup>90</sup>

Bush rhetorically aligns America with such virtues as liberty, freedom, life, and defense, and by extension aligns himself with those values as well. Bush puts this conflict on a higher plane than just a conflict between two groups of people; he elevates this to a question of good vs. evil, wrong, vs. right, moral vs. immoral. The dichotomous “either/or” phrases combined with the harsh language of people being “expendable in the pursuit of power” or the description of the terrorists as seeking to “master the minds and souls of others” speak strongly enough to classify the terrorists as the abject evil villains without redemption. Such lofty claims deepen the divide between the “hero and villain” so that Bush’s actions seem all the more justified. The more severe and drastic he can make the contrast, the more effective his point will be. He then provides a transition statement at the end of “we will answer [the call]” that will lead into his deliberative rhetoric.

Bush ends with mostly deliberative rhetoric, delineating exactly what values he is pursuing as commander-in-chief. He encourages a pursuit of valuing life and freedom, reinforcing the core of American values. Further, he adds a litany of characteristics that must define America’s actions moving forward:

America has entered a great struggle that tests our strength, and even more our resolve. Our nation is patient and steadfast. We continue to pursue the terrorists in cities and camps and caves across the earth. We are joined by a great coalition of nations to rid the world of terror. And we will not allow any terrorist or tyrant to threaten civilization with

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<sup>90</sup> Bush, "President's Remarks."



weapons of mass murder. Now and in the future, Americans will live as free people, not in fear, and never at the mercy of any foreign plot or power.<sup>91</sup>

He reinforces the hero vs. villain dichotomy while promoting action already taken and action to be taken. He allows for a reference to other countries who are similarly aligned with America but does not name them so that America and American values and American efforts remain the focus. Bush then makes a critical statement that Americans will not live in fear. This is a powerful moment in the speech considering how he spends the first half of the speech reminding Americans of the fear they felt then and still feel now. This is a crucial moment in Bush establishing himself as the war hero who will be the aggressor instead of the victim. This sentiment is then expanded. Bush reminds Americans of previous American victories in war, drawing attention to such monumental events such as the liberation of concentration camps in World War II. Here he defines America's legacy as he wishes the people to understand it, positing the argument that what he is doing is not new or different: it is the way of America. He reinforces this idea by saying that the 9/11 terrorists "are discovering, as others before them, the resolve of a great country and a great democracy."<sup>92</sup> This furthers the idea that what he is encouraging is not his own but is the core of the American attitude. This validates his strong, militaristic actions. He makes claims of not giving up or backing down until justice has been served, staying true to his vengeful attitude. Concluding his agenda, he puts the terrorists entirely at fault by saying "What our enemies have begun, we will finish."<sup>93</sup> Claiming that the terrorists started this conflict puts the terrorists entirely at fault, absolving himself from any blame. The entire responsibility has been placed on their shoulders, meaning that any criticism of Bush's actions can be explained away as nothing but the only reasonable response. Should anyone point

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<sup>91</sup> Bush, "President's Remarks."

<sup>92</sup> Bush, "President's Remarks."

<sup>93</sup> Bush, "President's Remarks."

a finger at Bush and blame him for starting an unwanted war, he can direct the pointed finger elsewhere, maintaining his pristine hero status.

Bush dominates his speech primarily with epideictic rhetoric to keep the emotions of the American people at the forefront of memory so that he can win the title of the military hero who fought back when his constituents were threatened. The secondary deliberative rhetoric defends past and future actions in the face of such injustice. By aligning himself with military action of the past, he can align himself with past militaristic presidential heroes, creating for himself this militaristic, defensible image.

#### 2002 Context

Though many consider 9/11 to be the unofficial start date of the War on Terror, the Iraq War, which is an offshoot of the War on Terror, did not begin until 2003. Thus, for Bush's entire presidency, he is often either seeking permission to act according to his pro-war foreign policy or he is seeking approval for actions already taken. In the wake of 9/11, Bush takes advantage of patriotic sentiments to rally support for his cause. This is a common approach for a president in the aftermath of a crisis because "Americans feel a patriotic obligation to support the country's elected leader."<sup>94</sup> Because Bush is the acting president when 9/11 occurs, he enjoys a lengthy period of unquestioned support for anything he might suggest as a result of 9/11.

Specifically, in 2002, Bush is tasked with the first memorialization of 9/11, and with it, the first defining of 9/11 and the first justification for actions taken post-9/11. Actions like the establishment of Homeland Security and the passing of the Patriot Act to more extreme actions like the pursuit of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

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<sup>94</sup> Yuval Feinstein, "Rallying around the President: When and Why Do Americans Close Ranks behind Their Presidents during International Crisis and War?," *Social Science History* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 305.

become increasingly more controversial as time passes.<sup>95</sup> In the year following 9/11, Bush enjoys extraordinarily high approval ratings, so it becomes his job to maintain those numbers.<sup>96</sup> To do so, Bush engages in the act of writing history as it happens, defining 9/11 and its effects before they are fully complete.<sup>97</sup> He must convince Americans how 9/11 will be discussed years from now when it is just a page in a history book, and whether or not his definition was correct, he played the role convincingly. This is why we see such dedication and attention to detail in Bush's efforts to define the hero vs. the villain and articulate exactly what 9/11 means to America.

### Keywords

Bush emphasizes the trauma felt by many Americans as a result of 9/11. He does so in mostly emotional terms, defining the time elapsed since that day as “painful,” “a year of sorrow,” “a year of adjustment,” and “difficult.”<sup>98</sup> This language commemorates the people who lost their lives and those who are still living the ramifications of that day, either through trauma, military service, or loss of loved ones. Because Bush's speech is heavy with epideictic rhetoric, his defining of the heroes is not an emphasis, although he does specifically classify the first responders and Flight 93 passengers as heroes. More often, though, he speaks abstractly of these people and of Americans in general as “great,” “compassionate,” “valuing life,” “patient,” “just,” “tolerant,” and “light.” This language is intentionally general in contrast to the specific language used to discuss the villain below because Bush's emphasis is not on America but on the

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<sup>95</sup> Meena Bose, "Comment: Defining U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-9/11 World," *Diplomatic History* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 621.

<sup>96</sup> Bose, "Comment: Defining," 621.

<sup>97</sup> Bose, "Comment: Defining," 623.

<sup>98</sup> George W. Bush, "President's Remarks to the Nation" (speech transcript, Ellis Island, New York, NY, September 11, 2002).

opponent. He must construct the enemy as the threat in order to promote war, so the language surrounding America is less important.

In contrast, Bush's word choice concerning the terrorists is consistently aggressive and strong. He uses "terror" or "terrorist" four times in this short speech, and alongside this term, we see the use of "hijackers," "enemies," "masterminds," "gang," and "fanatics." This language is all harsh and derogatory, which supports Bush's hero vs. villain rhetoric. These very words elicit an emotional reaction, and while some of the terms may have racially or religiously charged negative connotations, the effect is the same: the villain is clearly defined as the perpetrators of 9/11. This enables Bush's pro-war rhetoric because it establishes the villain as a tangible opponent that can, and should, be conquered. Thus, Bush can act as the one to strike back and be the hero.

## **Barack H. Obama at the Pentagon, 2010**

President Obama, still new to the presidency and establishing his policy and position as the first African American president, secured 9/11 memorial speech as an opportunity to frame the event in a new way for Americans, a way they had not seen under Bush. Obama delivered his speech at the Pentagon, which is where most of the 9/11 memorial speeches have been given. But Obama clearly states his purpose for choosing the Pentagon as a place “where the names of the lost are forever etched in stone.”<sup>99</sup> He chooses this place specifically to draw attention to the remembrance of the lives lost. Obama has an even balance of epideictic, judicial, and deliberative rhetoric which functions to portray himself as balanced, fair, and calm. He seeks to encourage people to resist the temptation of prejudice and hate, promoting peace and moving forward. Obama faces a lot of opposition, so an image everyone can support is crucial. For this reason, his language of the hero vs. villain dichotomy is not as drastic as Bush’s. He focuses on peace rather than villainizing others.

### **Genre Analysis of Obama’s 2010 Speech**

Obama’s speech is 1085 words long and consists of seventeen paragraphs. Of the three presidents, Obama most balances epideictic, judicial, and deliberative rhetoric. This balance indirectly contributes to Obama’s image as level-headed and calm.

Like Bush, he begins with an extended remembrance of the 9/11 events. Nearly a decade removed from the event, Obama refers to the memories of 9/11 as “scars of tragedy and

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<sup>99</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the Pentagon Memorial" (speech transcript, The Pentagon, Arlington, VA, September 11, 2010).

destruction,” which is appropriately phrased for a memorial speech.<sup>100</sup> Early on in this speech, still within the epideictic section, Obama begins to establish his peaceful message, referring to the 9/11 anniversary as “a day of remembrance, a day of reflection, and - with God’s grace - a day of unity and renewal.”<sup>101</sup> Obama foregrounds his message of peace and unity early in the speech, including it with the language about 9/11’s memory. He sympathizes with the “scars of tragedy and destruction” that many are still feeling, but urges people to avoid hate and anger.<sup>102</sup> Instead, he frames this reaction as a temptation to be resisted and encourages people to remember those lost in the good lives that they lived and what they meant to their families and friends, promoting a more nostalgic, happy form of memorialization, a sharp contrast to the anger Bush sought to ignite. He unifies the victims by naming race, gender, and religion, saying that “They were white and black and brown - men and women and some children made up of all races, many faiths,” further promoting Americans to come together as one.<sup>103</sup> This early remembrance motivates the rest of his speech. He offers condolences and shares in that pain, telling the families of the victims that “it must seem some days as though the world has moved on to other things. I say to you today that your loved ones endure in the heart of our nation, now and forever.”<sup>104</sup> This gentleness is critical to his message. If he does not acknowledge the pain and suffering that is still at the forefront of Americans’ minds, then his message will be rejected. This sets the tone for his shift to judicial rhetoric.

The remainder of the speech shifts back and forth between judicial and deliberative rhetoric. This blend is intentional: it shows that they are closely connected and that a change in

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<sup>100</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

<sup>101</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

<sup>102</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

<sup>103</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

<sup>104</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

how our enemy is perceived will change our action/reaction directed toward that enemy. This reframing begins with a judgement of the terrorists. Obama does not minimize their actions: rather, he too elevates it beyond one day to a moral battlefield, saying that “The perpetrators of this evil act didn’t simply attack America; they attacked the very idea of America itself - all that we stand for and represent in the world.”<sup>105</sup> Though he doesn’t immediately identify what it is that America stands for, the message is clear: this event was not a question of one country against another, but of good vs. evil. He then devotes several paragraphs not to passing negative judgement on the actions of the “villain,” but positively passing judgement on the actions of the “hero,” that is, America:

They may seek to strike fear in us, but they are no match for our resilience. We do not succumb to fear, nor will we squander the optimism that has always defined us as a people. On a day when others sought to destroy, we have chosen to build, with a National Day of Service and Remembrance that summons the inherent goodness of the American people.

They may seek to exploit our freedoms, but we will not sacrifice the liberties we cherish or hunker down behind walls of suspicion and mistrust. They may wish to drive us apart, but we will not give in to their hatred and prejudice. For Scripture teaches us to “get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”<sup>106</sup>

Instead of focusing on the villain, Obama focuses on the hero, praising and celebrating everything that America has done to memorialize in the wake of 9/11. By emphasizing America’s responses of memorialization, Biblical responses, and optimism, not only does Obama highlight America as good, but he highlights actions not based in anger or retaliation. He further emphasizes the religious conversation and separates Islam from al-Qaeda while reinforcing the American idea of freedom of worship. Perhaps most significantly, he emphasizes what America will *not* do instead of what they will. His speech forwards what kind of country America is and

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<sup>105</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

<sup>106</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

should be. By defining America in terms of what it is not and what it does not do, he speaks to the moral and societal standards that represent America. He concludes this judicial section with a final emphasis of American exceptionalism: “Those who attacked us sought to demoralize us, divide us, to deprive us of the very unity, the very ideals, that make America America -- those qualities that have made us a beacon of freedom and hope to billions around the world.”<sup>107</sup> This judgment of the goals of the terrorists is strong enough to portray them as the enemy, but not so strong that it compromises the message of unity. Unity is at the forefront of this speech, and Obama defines the relationship between unity and America as equal.

Obama ends his speech with deliberative rhetoric, but it is different than Bush’s because it does not promote concrete actions, but rather the promotion of ideals. He says that, as a country, America should unite “to affirm certain inalienable rights, to affirm life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness... to stay true to our best selves.”<sup>108</sup> The “action” that Obama is encouraging is not a physical action or even a policy action but a moral action: Americans should cling further to American ideals and values in the face of a threat because, in his opinion, that will be the best way to honor the lives lost and protect the country moving forward.

By maintaining a balance between the three branches of rhetoric, Obama establishes himself as the peacemaker by promoting unity and giving his constituents the moral obligation to rise above the tendency toward hate and anger. Obama’s balanced rhetoric portrays himself as balanced, and this image furthers his calls for similarly emotionally balanced actions from American citizens. His insistence on promoting the fundamentals of American values establishes himself as the peacemaker in times of trouble.

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<sup>107</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."

<sup>108</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President."



## 2010 Context

As the first African American president, Obama is uniquely positioned to discuss prejudice, unity, and tolerance. Obama's election may be due in part to a reaction against Bush's aggressive policies, that Obama represented something more hopeful and peaceful.<sup>109</sup> Obama, as a young African American man, represented an opportunity to put to rest ideas of prejudice in this country through his election.<sup>110</sup> It is clear that Obama's image as the new pleasant, harmonious president was being constructed for him before his first day in office.<sup>111</sup>

Obama had his share of dissent from those who did not support him. He found himself in a position of trying to defend his religion, birthplace, economic policies, and identity.<sup>112</sup> Many questioned whether or not Obama was interested in "America First" policies while pursuing globalist policies that left the economy in a steady decline.<sup>113</sup> It became necessary early on in his presidency for Obama to define exactly what his foreign and domestic policy approaches meant, and what and whom he really valued. 9/11 became that opportunity for Obama to promote unity, rebuke hatred and prejudice, and empathize with all of America in reminiscence of the terrorist attacks. This was Obama's chance to prove he was "one of us" to those who doubted his sincerity.

Obama also had to grapple with increasing discontent with the seemingly never-ending war in the Middle East started by Bush. Obama faced equally significant pressure to pull out of the war as he did to avoid pulling out too soon and leading to further attacks or Middle East

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<sup>109</sup> Stefan Halper, "President Obama at Mid-Term," *International Affairs* 87, no. 1 (January 2011): 2.

<sup>110</sup> Halper, "President Obama," 2.

<sup>111</sup> Halper, "President Obama," 4.

<sup>112</sup> Halper, "President Obama," 4.

<sup>113</sup> Halper, "President Obama," 4-5.

instability.<sup>114</sup> This may be a reason Obama avoids any war conversation in his speech altogether. Such conversation would be controversial, and by avoiding it, he avoids bad press he would get for saying the “wrong” thing.<sup>115</sup> However, he does begin to set the stage for the departure from Iraq and Afghanistan by softening the language used to define the enemy and emphasizing the ideals as the enemy, not the people. His speech would begin the process of convincing Americans to accept the end of the Middle East involvement by changing the way Americans think about it.<sup>116</sup> Encouraging peace and discouraging hate establishes that image of himself as the peacemaker so that when he ends a war, it is not a surprise nor is it unjustifiable.

#### Keywords

Obama devotes a significant portion of the speech to defining Americans in positive terms. He is the only president of the three to use the phrase “my fellow Americans,” which effectively unites him along with the rest of America. Speaking directly of Americans, he uses terms such as “family,” “loved ones,” “those we lost,” “resilient,” “optimistic,” “good,” “beacon of freedom, and “patriotic.” It is worth noting that these generic terms are not reactionary. These terms do not have a quality of heroism in them because, as discussed below, the enemy is not a person but an ideal. The American spirit as defined by Obama is independent of the actions of others; it is simply defined by what America is. This emphasizes his call to rise above the events of 9/11 and seek out unity because it is inherent to America.

In contrast to Bush, Obama only uses the word “terrorist” once in his entire speech because an overuse of this term would compromise the peaceful message he is trying to convey.

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<sup>114</sup> Mark Atwood Lawrence, “Too Late or Too Soon? Debating the Withdrawal from Vietnam in the Age of Iraq,” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3 (June 2010): 589-590.

<sup>115</sup> Marc Lynch, “Obama and the Middle East: Rightsizing the U.S. Role,” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 5 (September/October 2015): 18-19.

<sup>116</sup> Lynch, “Obama and the Middle.” See also Reeves and May, “The Peace.”

In fact, he avoids referencing the terrorists almost entirely, instead focusing on their actions or what was lost to Americans as a result. Other than specifically calling them al-Qaeda, the few terms he does use are “perpetrators,” “adversaries,” “small band of murderers,” and “sorry band of men.” The language here is much softer than Bush’s. This is intentional: if Obama speaks too harshly about the enemy, he compromises his message of peace and unity. He also avoids any language with religious connotations, thereby separating the Islamic faith from terrorism as a whole. He must clearly define the enemy without attacking in order to be effective. Instead, he focuses on the causes. He uses words such as “peril,” “danger,” “cruelty,” “fear,” and “bitterness.” Rather, the enemy is an ideal, a value, an action. By focusing on the reactions of Americans to the attacks, he validates their feelings without inciting anger. He can still promote peace and unity while empathizing with Americans.

## **Donald J. Trump at Flight 93 Memorial, 2018**

Many years removed from 9/11, President Trump enjoys a greater freedom of reconstruction and redefinition of the event than Bush or Obama had. Trump had an opportunity to highlight aspects of 9/11 previously overlooked and allow other elements to fade into the shadows. Trump delivers his speech in the field in Shanksville, PA, where Flight 93 was successfully diverted by the Americans onboard who took control back from the hijackers, avoiding another attack that was likely targeted at the White House. This is a previously overlooked location, largely because there was no memorial here until this point: it was just an empty field. But Trump's selection of this location draws attention to the heroes of Flight 93 in a new way and elevates unofficial memorial above official. Trump uses almost exclusively epideictic rhetoric with almost no judicial rhetoric because he is using the emotional memory he is constructing to act as judgement. He is not justifying action for this specific event but rather is justifying preemptive policies. Trump's election and administration are controversial, so portraying himself as a strong patriot is important for winning favor with Americans and potentially securing reelection. This also aligns with his "America First" foreign policy. His language focuses on the specific people of Flight 93, their families, and first responders because his image is founded on the idea that everything is centered on America.

### **Genre Analysis of Trump's 2018 Speech**

This speech is 1360 words long and consists of twenty-two paragraphs. As the longest speech of the three, Trump's structure varies from the other two presidents. Trump's speech is

almost entirely epideictic. Nearly twenty years removed from 9/11, Trump enacts a significant amount of memory reconstruction. The few moments of non-epideictic rhetoric are more powerful because they are interspersed with so much memorialization.

The first two-thirds of the speech are epideictic. Like Bush and Obama, he pays tribute in general terms to the lives lost on 9/11, but because of the location of his speech, he emphasizes the passengers of Flight 93. He establishes them as heroes along with the first responders, law enforcement, and firefighters who responded that day. He spends a significant portion of the speech sharing details of exactly what happened with Flight 93. These are details that many of his listeners likely know, but due to the removal in time from the event, memories may be cloudy, emotions may have cooled, and some may not remember, so Trump has an opportunity to frame a previously overlooked event any way he likes.<sup>117</sup> In back-to-back sentences, he identifies the passengers as heroes and the hijackers as “evil men bent on terror and conquest,” establishing that hero vs. villain rhetoric up front.<sup>118</sup> He includes personal details of specific passengers: what they did, who they called, and what they said. In a style that is typical of Trump speeches,<sup>119</sup> he shares a specific story of a woman who lost her husband on Flight 93, and how she wanted his wedding ring from the wreckage, a seeming impossibility, but it was found and returned to her. This all serves to reignite the sadness and even anger many felt on that day and to plant the seeds of sadness in those who may not remember or may not know of these specific events. This serves to create the kind of memory Trump wants so that he can create the right

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<sup>117</sup> Howard Schuman and Willard L. Rodgers, "Cohorts, Chronology, and Collective Memories," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2004): 224-228.

<sup>118</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump at Flight 93 September 11 Memorial Service" (speech transcript, Flight 93 National Memorial, Shanksville, PA, September 11, 2018).

<sup>119</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Doron Taussig, "Disruption, Demonization, Deliverance, and Norm Destruction: The Rhetorical Signature of Donald J. Trump," *Political Science Quarterly* 132, no. 4 (2017): 620;628.

scenario for the type of hero he wants to be: the activist hero who prevents damage before it can happen.

Of the twenty-two paragraphs in this speech, only one is judicial. Trump spends very little time passing judgement on terrorists or Americans because the pathos of his memorialization is powerful enough on its own to accomplish the same goal: he does not need to pass judgement to elevate America. Speaking of the Flight 93 passengers, he says, “We will remember their faces, their voices, their stories, their courage and their love. And we will remember that free people are never at the mercy of evil. Because our destiny is always in our hands.”<sup>120</sup> Trump gives all of the power of the situation to the American people. He does not portray victimhood and asserts America’s right and duty to take control of a situation. This is the only judicial statement he needs to make to begin his hero construction. By reminding everyone of the pain caused by 9/11, he begins to promote the idea that it can be prevented from happening again.

This leads to the few paragraphs in which Trump speaks deliberately. Speaking of the field in Shanksville, Trump says, “This field is now a monument to American defiance. This memorial is now a message to the world: America will never, ever submit to tyranny.”<sup>121</sup> Trump encourages not anger, not peace, but defiance in the face of a threat. This attitude reiterates his defining of America as the one in control. Toward the end of the speech, Trump further drives this point, arguing that “America's future is not written by our enemies. America's future is written by our heroes. As long as this monument stands, as long as this memorial endures, brave patriots will rise up in America's hours of need. And they, too, will fight back.”<sup>122</sup> By connecting

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<sup>120</sup> Trump, "Remarks by President."

<sup>121</sup> Trump, "Remarks by President."

<sup>122</sup> Trump, "Remarks by President."

the memorial to the resilience of Americans, he promotes the idea that America can defend itself, that such violent attacks are preventable. Trump connects himself to this image directly, saying “As commander in chief, I will always do everything in my power to prevent terrorists from striking American soil.”<sup>123</sup> Even though this statement feels somewhat of an afterthought in the midst of so much epideictic rhetoric overall, it is the point Trump is attempting to make. After reminding (or constructing for) everyone of the pain felt on 9/11, Trump makes a promise to prevent future attacks, strengthening his hero image as the defender.

Trump’s image is that of the protector who will defend the country and preemptively strike at threat. By dominating his speech in memory reconstruction, he creates exactly the emotional climate best suited for this kind of defiant rhetoric that is nearly void of any judicial commentary. Connecting himself to this now distant event as someone who understands the pain it caused and seeks to prevent something similar cements his hero image of the defender.

#### 2018 Context

Trump’s election was somewhat contentious as the results were not as anticipated. Polls prior to the election showed Hillary Clinton winning with wide margins, so when Trump won, there was considerable backlash against pollsters, the media, and most importantly, Trump.<sup>124</sup> The reaction was swift against Trump with many rejecting the validity of his presidency. On social media, #notmypresident spread rapidly from those rejecting Trump as their elected leader. For this reason, Trump needed to establish goodwill among those Americans who had not voted for him. Memorial speech is arguably the best opportunity for this because he can unite people

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<sup>123</sup> Trump, "Remarks by President."

<sup>124</sup> Courtney Kennedy et al., "An Evaluation of the 2016 Election Polls in the United States," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (Spring 2018)

behind their complicated emotions surrounding 9/11. He needs to establish himself, at the very least, as a likeable and relatable president before he can begin to construct himself as the hero.

A key feature of Trump's foreign policy since his election has been American exceptionalism. He has rejected most of the previous administrations' pursuits of globalism in favor of an "America First" policy.<sup>125</sup> Further, he portrays the foreign policy of previous administrations as chaotic and weak.<sup>126</sup> This all serves to differentiate his image from theirs. If he is arguing that their foreign policy was wrong, he must offer an alternative. Using 9/11 memorial speech to construct himself as the activist who will defend against threats before they materialize helps him construct that oppositional foreign policy.

Another significant post-9/11 occurrence in America has been the rise in cancer diagnoses and deaths related to toxic fumes that resulted from the plane crashes. First responders, victims, and firefighters alike are increasingly found to be suffering long term health effects.<sup>127</sup> Because this is something that has only manifested in the last few years, it is appropriate, then, for Trump to emphasize the sacrifices made by the first responders and to celebrate them as heroes. This reinforces his claims that something like this must be prevented at all costs.

#### Keywords

Of the three presidents, Trump spends the most time defining the heroes of America in specific terms. Because much of his speech is memorialization, he devotes a significant amount of effort to elevating Americans. Specific terms include "valor," "brave patriots," "incredible people," "loved ones," "sacrificial," "resolute," "defiant," "heroes," "love," "courageous," and

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<sup>125</sup> Jason A. Edwards, "Make America Great Again: Donald Trump and Redefining the U.S. Role in the World," *Communication Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (April/May 2018): 177.

<sup>126</sup> Edwards, "Make America," 181.

<sup>127</sup> "Trump Marks 9/11 Anniversary at Pennsylvania Memorial," BBC News, last modified September 11, 2018, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45487709>.



“immortal.” Trump defines the members of Flight 93 in ways that denote strength, kindness, and value. This is especially useful for creating an emotional memory. Most notably, he names specific Americans, something Bush and Obama do not do. Flight 93 passengers, their families, and members of government are called out by name to recognize their connection to 9/11. Trump’s specificity helps him construct the memory he wants so that he can construct himself as someone who cares and values individual Americans. This makes his claim to be a defender of individuals more believable

Like Bush, Trump uses a form of the word “terror” four times, though his speech is significantly longer, so the ratio is lower. However, like Obama, Trump does not speak directly of the enemy very frequently. In addition to terrorist or enemy, Trump defines the enemy as “evil men,” “hijackers,” “tyranny,” and “radical Islam.” The true construction of their definition is the indirect anti-definition of how he defines the heroes of Flight 93. He defines the enemy based on what they are not, what the passengers certainly were. This extends the previous conversation concerning the lack of judicial rhetoric. Again, it is not needed for Trump to accomplish his goal. The memory of the trauma is enough for Trump to secure his role as the activist who will protect and prevent a threat before it can manifest.

## **Conclusion**

Hero construction is an important aspect of presidential rhetoric, and as such, the types of heroes and the methods by which they are constructed reveal the image the president would like to present of himself to the American people. Each president constructs for himself the presidential hero he would like to be. Bush portrays himself as the military hero who strikes back swiftly and aggressively at a threat. He does so through mostly epideictic rhetoric and demonizes the terrorists with severe language and name-calling, thus making himself look righteous by contrast. Obama constructs himself as the peacemaker hero who speaks out against hate in the face of trauma and encourages unity. His careful balance of the three branches of rhetoric depict him as calm, which supports his pursuits of peace and his softening of language toward the terrorists. Trump is the activist hero who prioritizes America and pursues a preemptive policy regarding crisis. Through almost a complete lack of judicial rhetoric, Trump shifts the focus onto America and devotes much of his language to defining what is good about Americans, which in turn supports his status as the protector. The construction of these images is developed through the lens of memorialization of 9/11, arguably the most significant moment in current American history. 9/11 provided the presidents of the 21st century with opportunities to assert themselves as leaders. Understanding how they perform that leadership speaks to their rhetorical goals as well as their political and policy goals.

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## **Appendix A:**

### **“Presidents Remarks to the Nation” by George W. Bush**

Good evening. A long year has passed since enemies attacked our country. We've seen the images so many times they are seared on our souls, and remembering the horror, reliving the anguish, re-imagining the terror, is hard -- and painful.

For those who lost loved ones, it's been a year of sorrow, of empty places, of newborn children who will never know their fathers here on earth. For members of our military, it's been a year of sacrifice and service far from home. For all Americans, it has been a year of adjustment, of coming to terms with the difficult knowledge that our nation has determined enemies, and that we are not invulnerable to their attacks.

Yet, in the events that have challenged us, we have also seen the character that will deliver us. We have seen the greatness of America in airline passengers who defied their hijackers and ran a plane into the ground to spare the lives of others. We've seen the greatness of America in rescuers who rushed up flights of stairs toward peril. And we continue to see the greatness of America in the care and compassion our citizens show to each other.

September 11, 2001 will always be a fixed point in the life of America. The loss of so many lives left us to examine our own. Each of us was reminded that we are here only for a time, and these counted days should be filled with things that last and matter: love for our families, love for our neighbors, and for our country; gratitude for life and to the Giver of life.

We resolved a year ago to honor every last person lost. We owe them remembrance and we owe them more. We owe them, and their children, and our own, the most enduring monument we can build: a world of liberty and security made possible by the way America leads, and by the way Americans lead our lives.

The attack on our nation was also attack on the ideals that make us a nation. Our deepest national conviction is that every life is precious, because every life is the gift of a Creator who intended us to live in liberty and equality. More than anything else, this separates us from the enemy we fight. We value every life; our enemies value none -- not even the innocent, not even their own. And we seek the freedom and opportunity that give meaning and value to life.

There is a line in our time, and in every time, between those who believe all men are created equal, and those who believe that some men and women and children are expendable in the pursuit of power. There is a line in our time, and in every time, between the defenders of human liberty and those who seek to master the minds and souls of others. Our generation has now heard history's call, and we will answer it.

America has entered a great struggle that tests our strength, and even more our resolve. Our nation is patient and steadfast. We continue to pursue the terrorists in cities and camps and caves across the earth. We are joined by a great coalition of nations to rid the world of terror. And we will not allow any terrorist or tyrant to threaten civilization with weapons of mass murder. Now and in the future, Americans will live as free people, not in fear, and never at the mercy of any foreign plot or power.

This nation has defeated tyrants and liberated death camps, raised this lamp of liberty to every captive land. We have no intention of ignoring or appeasing history's latest gang of fanatics trying to murder their way to power. They are discovering, as others before them, the resolve of a great country and a great democracy. In the ruins of two towers, under a flag unfurled at the Pentagon, at the funerals of the lost, we have made a sacred promise to ourselves and to the world: we will not relent until justice is done and our nation is secure. What our enemies have begun, we will finish.

I believe there is a reason that history has matched this nation with this time. America strives to be tolerant and just. We respect the faith of Islam, even as we fight those whose actions defile that faith. We fight, not to impose our will, but to defend ourselves and extend the blessings of freedom.

We cannot know all that lies ahead. Yet, we do know that God had placed us together in this moment, to grieve together, to stand together, to serve each other and our country. And the duty we have been given -- defending America and our freedom -- is also a privilege we share.

We're prepared for this journey. And our prayer tonight is that God will see us through, and keep us worthy.

Tomorrow is September the 12th. A milestone is passed, and a mission goes on. Be confident. Our country is strong. And our cause is even larger than our country. Ours is the cause of human dignity; freedom guided by conscience and guarded by peace. This ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbor. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it.

May God bless America.

## **Appendix B:**

### **“Remarks by the President at the Pentagon Memorial” by Barack Obama**

Secretary Gates. Admiral Mullen and members of the Armed Forces. My fellow Americans. Most of all, to you -- survivors who still carry the scars of tragedy and destruction; to the families who carry in your hearts the memory of the loved ones you lost here. For our nation, this is a day of remembrance, a day of reflection, and -- with God's grace -- a day of unity and renewal.

We gather to remember, at this sacred hour, on hallowed ground -- at places where we feel such grief and where our healing goes on. We gather here, at the Pentagon, where the names of the lost are forever etched in stone. We gather in a gentle Pennsylvania field, where a plane went down and a “tower of voices” will rise and echo through the ages. And we gather where the Twin Towers fell, a site where the work goes on so that next year, on the 10th anniversary, the waters will flow in steady tribute to the nearly 3,000 innocent lives.

On this day, it's perhaps natural to focus on the images of that awful morning -- images that are seared into our souls. It's tempting to dwell on the final moments of the loved ones whose lives were taken so cruelly. Yet these memorials, and your presence today, remind us to remember the fullness of their time on Earth.



They were fathers and mothers, raising their families; brothers and sisters, pursuing their dreams; sons and daughters, their whole lives before them. They were civilians and service members. Some never saw the danger coming; others saw the peril and rushed to save others - up those stairwells, into the flames, into the cockpit.

They were white and black and brown -- men and women and some children made up of all races, many faiths. They were Americans and people from far corners of the world. And they were snatched from us senselessly and much too soon -- but they lived well, and they live on in you.

Nine years have now passed. In that time, you have shed more tears than we will ever know. And though it must seem some days as though the world has moved on to other things, I say to you today that your loved ones endure in the heart of our nation, now and forever.

Our remembrance today also requires a certain reflection. As a nation, and as individuals, we must ask ourselves how best to honor them -- those who died, those who sacrificed. How do we preserve their legacy -- not just on this day, but every day?

We need not look far for our answer. The perpetrators of this evil act didn't simply attack America; they attacked the very idea of America itself -- all that we stand for and represent in the world. And so the highest honor we can pay those we lost, indeed our greatest weapon in this ongoing war, is to do what our adversaries fear the most -- to stay true to who we are, as

Americans; to renew our sense of common purpose; to say that we define the character of our country, and we will not let the acts of some small band of murderers who slaughter the innocent and cower in caves distort who we are.

They doubted our will, but as Americans we persevere. Today, in Afghanistan and beyond, we have gone on the offensive and struck major blows against al Qaeda and its allies. We will do what is necessary to protect our country, and we honor all those who serve to keep us safe.

They may seek to strike fear in us, but they are no match for our resilience. We do not succumb to fear, nor will we squander the optimism that has always defined us as a people. On a day when others sought to destroy, we have chosen to build, with a National Day of Service and Remembrance that summons the inherent goodness of the American people.

They may seek to exploit our freedoms, but we will not sacrifice the liberties we cherish or hunker down behind walls of suspicion and mistrust. They may wish to drive us apart, but we will not give in to their hatred and prejudice. For Scripture teaches us to “get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”

They may seek to spark conflict between different faiths, but as Americans we are not -- and never will be -- at war with Islam. It was not a religion that attacked us that September day -- it was al Qaeda, a sorry band of men which perverts religion. And just as we condemn intolerance and extremism abroad, so will we stay true to our traditions here at home as a diverse and tolerant nation. We champion the rights of every American, including the right to

worship as one chooses -- as service members and civilians from many faiths do just steps from here, at the very spot where the terrorists struck this building.

Those who attacked us sought to demoralize us, divide us, to deprive us of the very unity, the very ideals, that make America America -- those qualities that have made us a beacon of freedom and hope to billions around the world. Today we declare once more we will never hand them that victory. As Americans, we will keep alive the virtues and values that make us who we are and who we must always be.

For our cause is just. Our spirit is strong. Our resolve is unwavering. Like generations before us, let us come together today and all days to affirm certain inalienable rights, to affirm life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness. On this day and the days to come, we choose to stay true to our best selves -- as one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

This is how we choose to honor the fallen -- your families, your friends, your fellow service members. This is how we will keep alive the legacy of these proud and patriotic Americans. This is how we will prevail in this great test of our time. This is how we will preserve and protect the country that we love and pass it -- safer and stronger -- to future generations.

May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

**Appendix C:**

**“Remarks by President Trump at Flight 93 September 11 Memorial Service”**

**by Donald J. Trump**

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Ryan. So beautiful.

We’re gathered together on these hallowed grounds to honor the memory of nearly 3,000 souls who were murdered on this day 17 years ago. We’re here to pay solemn tribute to the 40 passengers and crewmembers on Flight 93 who rose up, defied the enemy, took control of their destiny, and changed the course of history.

Today, we mourn their loss. We share their story. And we commemorate their incredible valor. On September 11th, 2001, a band of brave patriots turned the tide on our nation’s enemies, and joined the immortal ranks of American heroes.

At this memorial, on this sacred earth, in the field beyond this wall, and in the skies above our heads, we remember the moment when America fought back.

Melania and I are grateful to be joined for today’s ceremony by Governor Tom Wolf and Governor Mark Schweiker. I also want to thank the members of Congress in attendance: Senator

Bob Casey, Congressmen Lou Barletta, Keith Rothfus, Bill Shuster, and along with the president of the Families of Flight 93, Gordon Felt.

We're also joined by members of the National Park Service, along with firefighters, first responders, and incredible people from law enforcement. These are truly great people. Some of you here today answered the call and raced to this field 17 years ago. You fill our hearts with pride, and I want to thank you on behalf of our country. Thank you very much.

Most importantly, to the family members of Flight 93: Today, all of America wraps up and joins together. We close our arms to help you shoulder your pain and to carry your great, great sorrow. Your tears are not shed alone, for they are shared grief with an entire nation. We grieve together for every mother and father, sister and brother, son and daughter, who was stolen from us at the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and here in this Pennsylvania field. We honor their sacrifice by pledging to never flinch in the face of evil, and to do whatever it takes to keep America safe.

Seventeen years ago, your loved ones were among The Forty of Flight 93 — the 40 passengers and crewmembers onboard the 8:00 a.m. United Airlines flight from Newark to San Francisco. They were men and women from every background. They were young people returning from visiting family, moms and dads on business trips, and friends going and coming from birthdays and weddings.

They boarded the plane as strangers — and they entered eternity linked forever as true heroes.

Soon after takeoff, Flight 93 was hijacked by evil men bent on terror and conquest. Passengers and crewmembers began using their phones to call home. They learned that two planes had already crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City.

Immediately, those onboard Flight 93 started planning a response. Sandy Bradshaw, a flight attendant, called her husband and told him they were in the back of the plane preparing hot water to throw onto the hijackers. Passenger Jeremy Glick explained the plan to his wife and said, “Stay on the line. I’ll be back.”

The passengers and crew members came together, took a vote, and they decided to act. At that moment, they took their fate — and America’s fate — back into their own hands.

In the last 20 minutes, many placed their final calls home, whispering those eternal words: “I love you.” Some said the Lord’s Prayer. And then they bravely charged the cockpit. They attacked the enemy. They fought until the very end. And they stopped the forces of terror and defeated this wicked, horrible, evil plan.

Flight 93 crashed yards from where we stand, just 20 minutes flying time from the United States Capitol.

Through their sacrifice, The Forty saved the lives of countless Americans, and they saved our capital from a devastating strike.

In the days after the attack, tens of thousands of fire fighters, police officers, and recovery workers traveled to New York and Arlington to crawl through the rubble in search for survivors. There were prayer vigils, memorials, and charity drives all across our nation.

Here in Shanksville, many of you raised up the first memorial — a wooden cross, a chain-linked fence, mementos and tributes pouring in, and dozens and dozens of American flags.

A piece of America's heart is buried on these grounds but in its place has grown a new resolve to live our lives with the same grace and courage as the heroes of Flight 93.

This field is now a monument to American defiance. This memorial is now a message to the world: America will never, ever submit to tyranny.

Since September 11th, nearly 5.5 million young Americans have enlisted in the United States Armed Forces. Nearly 7,000 service members have died facing down the menace of radical Islamic terrorism.

Today, we also think of the more than 200,000 service members now serving overseas. And we think of every citizen who protects our nation at home, including our state, local, and federal law enforcement. These are great Americans. These are great heroes. We honor and thank them all.

As Commander-in-Chief, I will always do everything in my power to prevent terrorists from striking American soil.

Here with us today is Dorothy Garcia Bachler. Her husband Sonny was one of the passengers on Flight 93. On September 11th, 2001 — just over a month after their 32nd wedding anniversary — Sonny was on his way back from a business meeting. He called Dorothy — who he loved so much — called her on the plane and uttered her name before the line went dead silent.

In the days after the attack, Dorothy told the investigators there was only one thing she wanted from this field: her husband's wedding ring. They would know it by the inscription etched inside. "All my love," it said, followed by the number "8/2/69" — the date of their anniversary. The officers — great people — promised to try. But in this field of wreckage, it seemed certainly impossible.

Dorothy began to pray, and she asked her friends to do the same. Days went by, then months. Still no ring. A week before Christmas, on December 19th, she heard a knock at the door. Two officers were standing with a — really beautiful to her — she saw it was so beautiful; she knew what was happening — a beautiful, small white box. Inside it was a wallet, a luggage tag, a driver's license, a small bag with the wedding ring inscribed with those three precious words: "All my love."

Those words echo across this field. And those words tell the story of 40 men and women who gave all their love for their families, their country, and our freedom.



To Dorothy, and to every family here today, America will never forget what your loved ones did for all of us.

Earlier this week, you dedicated the final part of this memorial: the Tower of Voices. Standing at 93 feet tall, the Tower of Voices is now the first structure visitors see when they come to this now sacred ground. It will hold 40 beautiful chimes that ring throughout these fields — each a unique note, but all in perfect harmony.

Every time we hear those chimes playing in the wind, we will remember The Forty. We will remember their faces, their voices, their stories, their courage, and their love.

And we will remember that free people are never at the mercy of evil because our destiny is always in our hands. America's future is not written by our enemies. America's future is written by our heroes.

As long as this monument stands, as long as this memorial endures, brave patriots will rise up in America's hours of need, and they too will fight back.

Seventeen years ago, forty incredible men and women showed the whole world that no force on Earth will ever conquer the American spirit. We treasure their memory. We cherish their legacy. And we ask God to forever bless the immortal heroes of Flight 93.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the families. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.