

**PERSPECTIVE  
A TIME FOR HUMANISM  
BY MARI GORMAN  
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**Through the tragedy of Sept. 11, Mari Gorman realizes that ‘since the one thing we all share is our humanity, it would seem that the time for humanism has arrived.’**

On Sept. 11, I was on my way to the subway in Astoria, Queens, across the East River from Manhattan, to report for jury duty. Two people came out of a drugstore and called to another passerby and me, “A plane just crashed into the World Trade Center!” At first, I thought it must have been a terrible accident, but as I looked in the direction of the World Trade Center and saw the huge plume of black smoke in the sky, the thought crossed my mind that it was terrorism. I took the subway out to the Queens courthouse and was there for a very short time when, after both towers had collapsed, they told us to go home.

Because the trains had stopped running, it was a long and difficult trip. On the crowded bus that eventually dropped me off an hour’s walk from my home, emotions were running high. While people were not panicking, there was an atmosphere of worry and anticipation. A heated argument broke out between two people, one of whom thought we should immediately get out the war planes and another who said we have to work to stop the violence. The argument was ended by others on the bus shouting at them not to argue, that they weren’t helping matters.

I remember that during the Gulf War, it seemed to become dangerous to speak out against war; if one did so, they were often branded unpatriotic, perhaps even subversive. As the days pass since the terrible events of Sept. 11, I feel the same atmosphere returning. Yes, arguing doesn’t help matters, and using common sense as to the time and place for dialogue is important, but I believe that it is crucial to find ways to speak out against war, which was what the young person on the bus was doing.

At an SGI-USA district meeting that night, our chapter leader pointed out that it was Sept. 12 in Japan, the anniversary of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. Nichiren Daishonin revealed his true identity as the original Buddha as result of that event. Perhaps what happened here marks the time for people to reveal their true identity as human beings. Despite the wonderful display of unity as people rally around the flag, nationalism isn’t the answer. Humanism is.

I think those who have committed the atrocious acts of terror and those who harbor and support them are all heinous criminals and must be found and dealt with as such as soon as possible. Yet we definitely must find a way to deal with this problem without destroying and causing misery in the lives of countless innocent people in the process. We certainly mustn’t turn around and do to other people what has just been done to us. When I see all the American flags, I worry that the great spirit of America is being twisted into an excuse to commit heinous acts ourselves.

I am definitely a patriotic American, and a committed Buddhist as well. In the SGI, we have always deeply honored the spirit and principles of this country and those who founded it. SGI President Ikeda has talked at great length about the forefathers of our country as great leaders who spoke up and worked for the happiness of others. He himself has the courage to speak up for and work on behalf of people’s happiness all over the

world, and has been outspoken about the evils of war. Indeed, this is our legacy. Our organization's great founder, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, died because of his stand against war and the tyrannies of nationalism.

We have a global economy but no global government. Since the one thing we all share is our humanity, it would seem that the time for humanism has arrived. If we, as SGI members, don't speak up for it, who will?