

Governor Phil Murphy

Remarks by Governor Murphy on the 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 Attacks September 11, 2021 Empty Sky Memorial, Jersey City

09/11/2021

Good afternoon.

Thank you, Glenn Schuck, for that introduction.

It is truly an honor to join you all for this commemoration.

I am honored to be among many friends ... Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker ... from my cabinet, the Adjutant General, Brigadier General Lisa Hou and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn LaTourette ... Mayor Steven Fulop ... New York Waterway CEO and Chairman Armand Pohan ... Survivor Wendy Lanski ... 9/11 Memorial Foundation Chair Faith Miller.

Thank you, as well, to all the performers and units with us.

I will be brief. Not just because I want everyone I just mentioned to have time to share their thoughts, but also because today is not a day for words.

Today, words give way to reflection and remembrance. Today is a day to renew our commitment to the ideals upon which this country was founded, and which have flourished over more than 200 years – the ideals which were under attack 20 years ago today, liberty and unity.

For every generation, there are moments seared into our collective memory – the events we can recall, without hesitation and with near-perfect clarity, no matter how much time has passed, exactly where we were, and what we were doing.

September 11th is one of these days.

We feared for friends and loved ones – many who, to our great relief, were safe, including the thousands of precious lives that New York Waterway ferried to safety.

But there are also the 750 New Jerseyans – among the many, many hundreds more – who, to our extreme grief, were lost.

And there are also the towers, removed from the skyline in a matter of hours.

A span of twenty years means that while so many of us were alive to witness the attacks and their aftermath – whether we watched on television, gazed across the Hudson River from this spot, or stood on the streets of lower Manhattan – there is now an entire generation for whom 9/11 is just pictures and words.

They are a generation who never viewed the silhouette of the Twin Towers against a rising sun. They never experienced the rite of so many schoolchildren before them of a class trip to the roof – where it seemed you could touch the sky itself.

And, hard as it is to believe, twenty years means they are now entering adulthood.

For them, there is a new tower. But, for us, we will always remember the Twin Towers, and empty sky of the night of September 11, 2001.

Faith and the 9/11 Memorial Foundation, along with survivors and their families, are doing tremendous work to ensure that September 11th isn't ever relegated to textbooks. The Empty Sky memorial is vital to this effort, as are the countless stories we must remember.

But the work is not theirs alone.

As we commemorate this 20th anniversary, all of us must ensure this and future generations continue to honor all those lost on that day...

...The men and women who went to work, and the families who boarded planes, not knowing what lay ahead.

...The first responders who rushed to help, whether it be the those receiving the wounded here in Jersey City, those rushing into the once-proud towers in New York, those racing to the smoking ruins at the Pentagon, or those called to an open field in the small town of Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

And we honor the ordinary Americans who showed extraordinary resolve in extraordinary times.

There is a saying, "Time heals all wounds." Of course, for every saying, there is an exception. Today is certainly one. Time may have dried our collective tears, but time will never erase the names and the stories of those who were lost.

They will always be in our hearts. Their memories will live within us, and as we look toward the heavens, the sky will never truly be empty.

Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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