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"We will change, but much of that
change may be for the better."

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The Story of the Day After

The America of 8am September 11, 2001, was shaped by a rich heritage of stories. All of these narratives have determined our sense of what is possible and who we think we are.

The America of 11am September 11 had new stories to add. Let us tell each other the tales of narrow escapes and tragic loss. Let us take the time to remember the lives of those we lost. Then let us reflect long and hard about the significance of those stories in our lives.

We will change, but much of that change may be for the better. It is a good thing to be fully present in each moment as I was this morning when I made careful partings from those most dear to me. It was multiple acts of love and concern that prompted me, my family and thousands of others to check in with each other all over the country yesterday — I'm OK; are you all right?

Above all, let us be very careful about the story we choose to tell of September 11. It was, indeed, the day of emergency: 911. But there are other ways to frame those events. One powerful and ancient narrative promises that out of the ashes rises the phoenix of hope. I choose that version, the one that tells of a better future, tempered by lessons we will take to heart, even those brutally pushed down our throats on September 11, 2001.

—Janet Wright Starnes, Kutztown
Writing Center Director, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre