

Fordham University
Center on Religion and Culture | Center for Ethics Education

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MORAL OUTRAGE AND MORAL REPAIR:
Reflections on 9/11 and its Afterlife

WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

NANCY BUSH: Good morning. I am Nancy Bush and I am the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and Chief Research Officer here at Fordham University. It's my pleasure to begin the Spring 2011 Center for Ethics Education Conference, "Moral Outrage and Moral Repair: Reflections on 9/11 and its Afterlife."

Ten years ago, on September 11, 2001, America was shocked out of its isolation by terrorist attacks focused on New York and Washington, D.C. Like most New York institutions, the Fordham community responded first with grief — grief at its losses of alumni, parents of students, and children of faculty. But we also had to respond in a way that was consistent with our mission. Given that the primary mission of a university is academic, as a university we also responded in an academic way. Fordham's academic response was a series of academic events, entitled "Transcending Tragedy," that was designed to encourage dialogue about the September 11th attacks and their aftermath and to explore the vast array of issues that would affect New York, the United States, and the world for many years to come.

Some of those many years have come, ten in fact — it's hard to believe — and our country and the world are trying to strike the right balance of preserving moral integrity while preventing harms, addressing issues of rights, redress, and our common humanity — in Congress and around the world, in Afghanistan, but also in Libya, the Ivory Coast, and other conflicts.

At Fordham the background of moral outrage and moral repair demands that we too continue our academic consideration of these issues to advance public dialogue of moral understandings through multidisciplinary discussion. To begin that discussion, I am very pleased to introduce Fordham's thirty-second president, Reverend Joseph McShane of the Society of Jesus.

Father McShane.

JOSEPH McSHANE, S.J.: Nancy, am I all right down here?

NANCY BUSH: You are right wherever you want to be, Father. [Laughter]

JOSEPH McSHANE: Ah, that raise — it's coming, I'm telling you. [Laughter]

On behalf of everyone here at Fordham, it is a grace and a joy to welcome you to this important and not easy conference. I do want to point out that the importance that Fordham attaches to this conference is signaled by the presence of the Chair of our Board of Trustees, Mr. John Tognino, who is in the front row right down here. John lost many friends that day. John worked on Wall Street. As a result of that, he has kept alive in our hearts and in our minds the events of that day and what the world should do to make sure the events of that day are teaching events, and events therefore that will lead us all to conversion of heart and mind.

Conversion of heart and mind — friends, I think as you dig into this conference, that has to be a central concern. It is all too easy for us to dwell in the past. It is all too easy for us to tap into moral outrage that

we all felt on September 11th and in the months that succeeded it. But, as men and women of great faith, it is our very important duty to move beyond moral outrage to conversion of heart and mind, so that with converted hearts and minds we might minister to a world that is deeply and sorely in need of repair, deeply and sorely in need of compassion.

Therefore, this conference will continue the difficult and important work, asking questions that get beyond the easy, easy issues to the deeper issues that are found in all that our world has experienced since September 11th.

We at Fordham in a special way, as Nancy has already told you, suffered deeply as a New York institution, as the City of New York suffered. We suffered very deeply. We responded, as Nancy said, in the best way that we could, by entering into dialogue and into deep, deep questioning of all the causes behind what happened that day. But also, as a Jesuit university, we responded, we believe, in one of the most important ways of all. We responded by praying with one another, for one another. We prayed for victims. We prayed for those whose lives were so filled with a sense of ignominy that these events were able to happen.

This day, as you begin your conference here at Fordham, what I would like to do right now is ask you to stand and spend a few moments in quiet reflection and in prayer, commending to God our Lord, not only those who died that day, not only those who mourned and those who have made it their special, special business to repair the world so that we never know that kind of horror again in our lifetime or in any lifetime. Let us join our hearts in prayer.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. May they rest in peace. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed in the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

Please be seated.

Welcome to Fordham. Please be assured of all of our prayers as you enter into dialogue and work together to point the way forward, not only for us here, but for our nation and the world. God bless you in all that you do. I hope you don't mind if I pause for a second and welcome in a special way our panelists. It's a grace to have you here.

Among the panelists there is one that I want to welcome, and that is Scott Appleby, who was in grad school with me back in the last century, in the last millennium, in Chicago. He went much farther than I. So I am honored and graced to have you here in our midst, "Scooter" Appleby.

CELIA FISHER: We are very grateful for Father McShane to take the time to help us consider the event and begin our explorations today. My name is Celia Fisher. I am Director of the Center for Ethics Education, and along with my colleagues Peter and Margaret Steinfels from the Center for Religion and Culture, we are very happy to have you here today.

We will be exploring from an interdisciplinary perspective, as we do every year, very controversial as well as heart-rending types of issues, how the heartbreaking, terrifying, and heroic events of 9/11 and its aftermath have influenced and been influenced by our nation's moral character. But before we get into our proceedings, I wanted to thank Margaret and Peter, our wonderful Directors, and their Program Manager, Patricia Bellucci; in addition, our Associate Directors of the Center, Barbara Andolsen and Mike Bauer, who helped with the vision of today's dialogue. Also, as with all of our Center events, Dr. Adam Fried, the Assistant Director of our Center and also the Director of the Masters Program in Ethics and Society, is owed a great deal of debt for every detail that goes on at this conference, even last-minute arrangements. He has been assisted by our very dedicated staff, Erika Harrington and Jen Owens, who has to be outside.

As we reach the tenth anniversary, as Dean Bush was saying, of 9/11, it's important to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue that will inform and help shape a just society that both protects its citizens from harm and nurtures the full flourishing of peoples of diverse faiths and cultures.

Recent events prompt us to consider anew the moral tension between homeland security and respect for

the rights, especially the right to be different, of our fellow citizens. When we were thinking about this conference at the beginning of last year, we knew that it was going to be very emotional for all of us, especially as New Yorkers, to be grappling with 9/11. But we also were hopeful that there wasn't continued controversy about some of the moral issues underlying that. Unfortunately, as we all know, in the past year a series of events have revived the fears and moral dilemmas of September 11th.

Recently, we had the burning of a Quran in Florida, which became a lightning rod for violence against a UN compound in Afghanistan. A maelstrom arose across the United States earlier this year, as citizens disagreed on issues of morality and safety associated with the proposed building of a mosque near Ground Zero. And recently, congressional hearings on homegrown terrorists ignited controversy over the morality of ethnic profiling in the service of homeland security.

For this conference we have convened an extraordinary group of scholars from diverse disciplines to explore moral questions that continue to emerge a decade after the tragedy we all experienced. Our speakers will help shed light on the psychology of terrorism; why terrorist acts erode political tolerance for diversity; how religious beliefs can lead us to act with compassion, reason, and justice, or blind us to religious intolerance, or inspire acts of terrorism; how we, especially as New Yorkers, grapple with our moral outrage against the perpetrators of 9/11 and our personal and community quest for moral repair.