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## N.Y. attack reveals nation's greatness

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By Patrick L. Anderson / Special to The Detroit News

One could say the 21st century started on Sept. 11, and that this tragic day marked an end to "the American Century" the world had enjoyed for much of the past 100 years. Given the tragedies of the past 100 days, one can forgive those who are fearful of the future. But such fear carries a heavy price, and a clear-eyed view whispers to us of a brighter future ahead.

The last few months have revealed to us the depths of the campaign against America, and against everything it stands for -- its free economy, its civil rights and its open society. But the reaction of the American people has demonstrated more vividly than ever the depths to which we cherish and defend those principles. If we must fight a war, we should know it is a war for the right reasons. These are the right reasons.

On Sept. 11, I know of five men from Michigan attending an economists convention in the World Trade Center. The other four were in an auditorium on the first floor, and got out relatively quickly after the first plane hit. It took me some minutes longer to climb down from the fifth floor and find shelter under a providentially provided Mack truck, just before the debris from the second plane hit around me.

By the grace of God, all five of us survived a day when many others did not, including some who were raised in our home state and whose families still grieve.

One of the survivors was born in a faraway land, and raised in the faith of Islam. We drove back to Detroit together, and I learned that his heartbreak over the catastrophe was compounded by knowing that the perpetrators claimed to represent his religious tradition.

This twist of fate reminded me of the motto "E Pluribus Unum," which is Latin for "From Many, One." Such an inscription celebrates one part of the genius of America, which is its welcoming and integration of people from far-flung lands. Such immigrants have enriched our society, and indeed largely created our society. Such



Associated Press

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immigrants -- including my friend -- can continue to enrich us.

Our country would do well to remember this as we face calls to shut our borders, curtail our freedoms, and alter the fundamental nature of our republic. If we do any of these things, we let those who would destroy us win a battle.

It is said Winston Churchill refused to close the museums in London even in the darkest days of World War II. To close these institutions, he believed, would be to let the enemy win. And when faced with an enemy that would destroy the fabric of his society, Churchill's invocation to the English in 1941 was "never give in, never, never, never, never."

We have such patriots in America today. I saw them in New York, and I continue to see them here in Michigan. The week after Sept. 11, Oakland County held a rally on the courthouse lawn. It was a sea of flags and some tear-stained faces; it was also a simple demonstration of what makes America great.

I recall Sheriff Mike Bouchard reporting back from a relief mission he and some of his men had taken to aid their brethren in New York City; the choir from a church in Pontiac, and the faces of neighbors, coworkers, and friends revealing their deep patriotism and faith. I also recall moments of small defiance against a hidden and cowardly enemy; Oakland County Executive Brooks Patterson telling the crowd that, despite the calls to shut down government offices, he wasn't going to give those -- I expurgate here -- unpleasant people the satisfaction of knowing they had made even one door shut in Oakland County.

Perhaps such gestures are insignificant. I think they are powerful. For if you looked only at the carnage and wrecked buildings this past September, you might have thought America was on the run. But if you saw the American flags on trucks and cars, or the faces of the men and women singing the national anthem at a Saturday football game, or the lines of men willing to go fight on foreign soil again, you knew it wasn't America that was on the run. It was a great country once again rising to a challenge.

As we welcome the New Year, be thankful we live in a great country.

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