

Points of View

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

9-11-01

An Open Letter



On Tuesday, 11 September 2001, one world came to an end. Another began on that day ruthlessly and violently with the terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon. And that new world will probably be with us through the lifetimes of all of us who are alive today. Challenges have been presented that will take time to understand

before they can be met and overcome. But let there be no doubt: they will be overcome.

Architects are in a unique position among the major professions of the world. As architects—whose mission it is to create and build—it is telling to us that in these outrageous acts terrorists have chosen to strike at two of our nation's most recognizable architectural icons. The destruction of human life and national confidence were the obvious goals, but the means to those terrible ends were our work and our responsibility. Thus, the tragedy has a deep and personal meaning for all architects.

As we go forward, we will study and learn from these terrible events. As we do so, we will reconfirm our commitment to make sure the structures we design are both comfortable *and* secure. Can we design with these seeming contradictions constraining us? We certainly can—and we must!

Ours is, indeed, a remarkable profession. We should all be deeply proud that this is what we have chosen to do with our lives; that this is our calling. The public looks to us to design buildings that are truly safe. They trust us to understand how the structures we design affect people at the deepest levels of their being. In the days that come, they will depend on us to ensure that beauty and delight need not, and must not, be moved aside or compromised.

11 September 2001 was a day of tragedy, pain, and outrage. Those feelings will last a lifetime. But we now sense other feelings coming forward as we hear from countless colleagues and their organizations from around the world. Those feelings speak to the unity, collegial bond, and common purpose that will be needed for the ultimate rebuilding of a global community that reflects and ratifies not our fears, but our hopes, our dreams, and the dignity of every human life.

John D. Anderson, FAIA, 2001 President

Gordon H. Chong, FAIA, 2002 President

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