

Mr. W. Brown Davis
Post Office Box 1843
Rockville, MD 20849

Dear Bill,

Recently, on September 11, our country marked the first anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. Last year I was on my way to Dulles Airport that same sad morning to catch a flight back home to Fort Lauderdale. I was quickly caught up in the confusion and pathos of the moment. It could easily have been my flight, my family or my friends.

I ended up driving back to Florida and listened to the radio as I went. The initial news coverage talked, understandably enough, about the expected loss of American lives. Only later did it become clear that in England, for example, this was also to become the greatest loss of life due to an act of terrorism. I had to consult foreign newspapers to read about victims from other countries. For the most part these losses were not covered in our press.

A feeling began to grow in me that our country was missing an important opportunity by not being on record as seeing this horrific loss in global terms. Do we not have a right to expect of ourselves, as citizens of the most powerful country on the planet, a parallel concern of how this loss was also affecting others throughout the world? Do others have a right to expect that of us?

As part of our one-year remembrance of those who perished several of the major television networks scrolled victims' names across the bottom of the television screen. This was done as their names were called by different readers throughout the morning. CBS, in particular, displayed these names as well as pictures, if they were available. CBS did not allow additional coverage to interfere with its giving equal recognition to each person who died. It was a very respectful gesture.

I was transfixed by this slow streaming of names, trying to imagine the horror being experienced by these poor souls that time last year. As this roll call proceeded, it was increasingly apparent just how culturally diverse they all were.

It was during the Calling of the Names that an idea developed of what the focal point for the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site might be. I also knew that I needed to communicate it to you. There is no one else with your perspective who I could also call a friend. The idea was this:

Buildings which were among the world's tallest should be replaced by a Cultural and Learning Center which would be among the world's most beautiful. This Cultural and Learning Center would be the focal point for the redevelopment of the area,

as architecturally significant for New York as the Opera House is for Sydney.

This would be a lasting tribute to the lives which were lost;

a celebration of the cultures from which they came;

a place for study and to search for greater peace in the world.

Bill, terrorists have hijacked a respected religion to legitimize their ideas. Much of what fuels the negative energy spread by them is a belief among the Disaffected that America may have turned its collective back on the Muslim world. First on the list of this Center's objectives should be an outreach to Muslims and a restoration of our credibility with them. Every Muslim would eventually know that a place of great tragedy has been turned into a place of hope and reconciliation:

As the apple differs from the orange,

and the eagle from the dove,

so, too, do the

Muslim from the Jew

from the Christian

from the Buddhist,

from the Hindu, and

from Any Other Man.

We should enjoy and share Our Diversity

as part of the Abundance of the World.

Many Americans accept the view that what makes this country a "World Leader" is its projection of military and economic power. Much of the rhetoric from our politicians seems to revolve around these twin themes. Are we leading our children and young adults into a more secure world by husbanding, only, our military and economic resources, or is

there more to this critical equation? A second objective of this Cultural and Learning Center would be this:

There would be a great coming together of young people from throughout
the world

who would study each other's culture with a mind to learn and to share.

Out of this would come two broad programs:

[1] What do young people in this country need to learn to be
responsible citizens of a country like ours, a World Leader?

[2] What do young people of other countries need to know to
progress with their lives in a modern world?

Such an undertaking would become the heart and soul of the re-development of this site. It would bring a renewed vitality and purpose to what is now seen by many as a sacred place. What better opportunity is there to regain trust, on a global basis, than at this unique location? And, what better means is there than through the young people so affected by what this country does in the world?

If such an idea takes root I know in my heart it would be through you, Bill, and certainly it would become an amalgam of inputs from a diversity of people. But, I do see several elements which I'll share for the sake of possible future discussions:

- Design of the Cultural and Learning Center would be a result of an international competition. Its design would borrow from architectural forms found throughout the cultures of the world and have as its intent a celebratory piece of architecture that would withstand the ages. It would simply be one of the most beautiful structures ever built: an inspiration.
- Office, retail and residential development would radiate around this Cultural and Learning Center. The architecture of these buildings would complement the CLC.
- Visual Arts displayed within the complex would come from each country whose citizens were lost on 9/11/01. No one would ever visit the CLC without acquiring a respect for these diverse cultures. The thoughtful display of these objects would

be a lasting statement on the part of our country that we do care, that we do wish to learn from this, and that we are a loving, respectful people.

- Performing Arts of every sort would be accommodated by the CLC. Again, priority would be given to the countries whose citizens were lost on 9/11.
- The interiors throughout the complex would be radiant and joyful: a celebration of life and its manifest opportunity.
- A special place would be created for meditation. It would be a sanctuary within the complex, reserved initially for relatives and close friends of those who died. Priority would be given each child, who lost a parent. A bell tower would be nearby used once a year to remember those four moments, in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia, when life changed so radically for us all.
- Mozart's "Requiem" would be played every 9/11, as it was throughout the world last September. Each orchestra that participated last September would be invited, in rotation, to perform. This would become an annual tradition and mark a time of renewal.
- The site plan for the redevelopment would be organized in a way that would allow for search lights to probe the sky for one month each year in the shape of the original World Trade Center Towers. This would not be a reaching into the past, but would symbolize a reaching for a higher solution. It would be a lasting reminder of that which was lost being turned into something positive and truly beautiful: a reaching outward of the American spirit.
- The inter-connectedness of world events would be a central focus of the CLC. The tenets based upon which this country was founded would be overtly shared and allowed to grow in the hearts and minds of people everywhere. Freedom and Democratic Ideals should be without borders: Coupling these objectives with the CLC would serve to assure that our foreign policy would have far less of a chance of coming back to haunt us.

- The CLC would seek to reconcile cultural diversity not only between countries, but within countries as well. It would be a place of healing; a place to build tolerance of alternative points of view.

My friend, Violence has many textures and colorations. Intolerance is a form of violence because it **seeds** violence. Intolerance in the mouth of a religious leader can ultimately leach into national policy. Hate and Intolerance are a form of Currency, after all. Without them many religious leaders would lose their audience. Perhaps that ancient Chinese philosopher had it right when he said “The more we think we know, the less we do.”

How we Americans project abroad and what we allow our leaders to do in our name should be an amalgam of our own cultural thinking. We are a democratic society, after all. The Cultural and Learning Center would nurture a better result for everyone. It would seek to make the world safer by allowing Americans and citizens of other countries to better understand one another and to celebrate and respect our differences. There is no greater courtesy than listening to another’s point of view with an open mind. Pride and conviction should never get in the way of deeper understanding.

As you and I have previously discussed, The test of any Premise is to expand it to see if it still works. Hate and Intolerance only get worse the more widely they are applied. Ultimately, one might end up hating his own brother. How could that be?

Love and understanding, however, only get better the more widely they are applied. There is a passage from the Bible that demonstrates this point, but it could just as easily have come from another source. It is a beautiful expression of what could be the best in each of us:

“Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
It is not rude, it is not self-seeking,
It is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.
Love never fails.”

No portion of this famous passage fails in its broader application.

It only gets better the more widely felt it is. Love never fails.

Bill, if this idea has merit, I know and trust it will be magnified through you.

As strongly as I feel about the possible lasting benefit to our nation of such a Center, I feel YOU are the one to act on it. The understanding you have acquired of other cultures throughout your career puts you in a unique position to evaluate this suggestion and bring it to the attention of the right people. As you have quoted several times in recent conversations:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to Justice everywhere.”

Would Martin Luther King be any less justified in saying this today, as he did so many years ago? Is this a simple truth that has not occupied as central a place in our foreign policy as it deserves? If Americans had more earnestly pursued this path, would the World Trade Center disaster have been LESS likely to occur? Would a Cultural and Learning Center, as proposed, help safeguard our young people from something worse?

Is it true that you cannot hunt down terrorists to the point of extinction without also addressing the issues they use to justify their criminal activities? Is it easier to empty the ocean with a cup than it is to siphon hate from the world in the absence of Trust? How does one lead without being a citizen of the world, rather than of a nation?

The price of a bomb represents the money it would take to support a young American abroad; of a Cruise Missile the cost to furnish all the classrooms in the Cultural and Learning Center. The expense to our country of a major military campaign might be sufficient to fund the cost of replacing the World Trade Center, perhaps with something even better. And, the future heartache caused innocent bystanders, who get in the way of bullets and bombs, could be replaced with something more fulfilling and ultimately safer for our country: Hope!

With Respect and Admiration,

Chuck