

9/11: Answering the Call

MRS headquarters received an outpouring of messages from people around the world expressing their horror and sadness at the devastation from the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. While the shock of the event had seemed unyielding, such notes of support from colleagues immediately comforted me, and made clear the human side of materials science. We are more than a community of scientists and engineers. We are a community of people.

Sitting at home the night of the attack, I watched CNN as materials, human lives, and freedoms we take for granted crumbled. I yearned for a way to stop it. Firefighters quenched the fire, rescue workers removed debris bucket by bucket in search of survivors, relief organizations stepped in to provide aid, government officials calmed the masses by their simple presence, psychologists and social workers stood "on call" to help prevent emotional scarring. Everyone took action.

Except for me.

I was paralyzed. What did my knowledge of atoms and crystal structures have to offer? How was I relevant? I gave no more support than the steel beams soft-

ened by the flames of torched jet fuel.

Anguished and drained, I turned back to my routine. Just as the *New York Times* appeared on my doorstep the next day, I had to keep going.

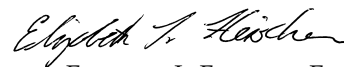
Almost immediately e-mail messages started coming into the MRS office from colleagues in Russia, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, England, Australia, India, Japan, France, and other countries. Emotions welled up in me with each message I read. These messages did not laud materials science. They did not offer materials solutions. Indeed they had nothing to do with science at all. But without the science, the connections never would have been formed.

When we as scientists gather around the world in the pursuit of materials research, we achieve much more than new theories, technology development, and scholarly achievement. We have learned about variations in cultures, nuances of languages, and the obstacles caused by political and financial impediments. We have gained sensitivity, and we have become friends.

In the wake of this crisis, the minds of science are certain to find ways to detect, prevent, or escape such horrific danger in

the future. But to even begin that process, we need to regain our footing and recall our reasons for moving forward. The kind thoughts passed from one individual to another in our community help give purpose and speed the recovery. The materials research community forms only one of the many webs spun connecting the world. But our part in building such relationships with diverse people, one person at a time, can only help in the world's struggle for peace.

Let us take pause and think not just of this attack, but of every hardship that is suffered around the world, be it from personal loss, internal strife, or global conflict. The messages that follow are a reminder of the freedom to communicate that is the fabric of our existence as a community of scientists and engineers. We at MRS gratefully acknowledge this show of concern from our colleagues, and hope that the network of materials scientists will hold and grow stronger. Through research, teaching, writing, political change, or personal contact, we each meet the call.



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This is awful what is happening. I sympathize with all the American families that were hurt by this tragedy. I am just speechless. I also have a lot of friends in New York and whoever planned this must be not human.

Thank heavens everything is ok (I am touching the wood) where you are.

A student from Russia

... as a simple manifestation of doing person to person to even that I have in USA) of solidarity with American people regarding the heinous and condemnable attack suffered ago. In Argentina we have had in the past two similar attacks, one to the Israel Embassy and the other to the AMIA in which hundreds of people have died and, in spite of the difference of magnitude, there is not a difference in the significance. The American people had managed in the past other difficult situations like this, and I have no doubt that it will occur the same in this opportunity with the full adhesion of the civilized world.

A member from Argentina

Manhattan will be rebuilt!

Let us hope that the murderers will be identified and found.

And that in the months, years, and decades to come, the civilized world will be able to keep what we have gained together over centuries: trust, optimism, progress, culture—life.

My thoughts are with the victims, their families and friends, and with you.

A member from Germany

We were shocked and stunned when we started to hear and see the news of the terrible, unbelievable, treacherous attack by the terrorists' criminal minds to New York and Washington.

This was a great and ominous offense not only to America, but to all the people of the free world.

We feel included and together with you in this treacherous aggression.

We are united in feeling the pain that Americans are

With the same untamed fire that you have you will outlast this situation.

Colleagues from Brazil

Firstly, my thoughts are with you this morning. I hope that you and your families are safe.

A member from Australia

We were deeply shocked at the attack on America on Tuesday by faceless terrorists. Our hearts go out to the victims and their loved ones. On Friday, all of India joined the USA in mourning and prayers.

Since Tuesday we have been constantly thinking of our relatives and friends in the USA. We trust that you and your family members are safe.

A member from India

We are very sorry in connection with the awful tragedy descended on the American people.

We are praying for you and hoping that you, members of your families, and people close to you were far away from the places of catastrophe and therefore they all are safe.

We wish you fortitude and strength to come through and to overcome this disaster.

Always with you.

Members from Russia

Our flags are at half-mast in honour of the victims and the atrocities.

A member from France

We opened a European convention yesterday. It was so sad to ask the center to fly the Stars and Stripes together with the Danish flag at half staff. We opened with a minute of silence.

A colleague from Denmark

On a somber note, our hearts and prayers are with all of America at this very difficult time.

A colleague from Israel

My email is likely a drop in an ocean...

I was away from my office at scientific meetings, and I did not email thereof, but I was a back and share my feelings with you; I thought much about the event, in particular what happened in PA due to that crashed plane, and about the MRS staff in Washington.

Let me simply first say that to whomever MRS member is concerned, I present my full sympathy. And to the PA staff, in particular, I hope that you will find some peace of mind soon.

A member from Belgium

We join you in grief and outrage over Tuesday's horrible terrorist attack on the United States. We extend our sympathy to the many Americans who lost loved ones. We hope that you, your families, colleagues, and friends are all safe.

colleague from France

I hope you and your family are all well. These days many things are occurring which we cannot even think of. The terror in New York and in Washington are the worst among these. It seems the world is moving to worse things. I hope you and your country are safe from this dreadful disaster so that you can live peacefully.

A member from Japan

Well, this week brought terrible moments to your country. I perhaps know how the American people are feeling these days. I have very much hope that you are OK and also your relatives and friends. I am very sorry about what happened and would like to express my cordial solidarity with your country.

A member from the Czech Republic