

As we approach the tenth anniversary of September 11th, we, The Peace Islands Institute and its volunteers (formerly The Interfaith Dialog Center) would like to reflect upon and honor the loss of that tragic day and recognize tremendous acts of resilience and compassion that prevented even further disaster on 9/11 and since.

Once again, we condemn the brutal terrorist attacks in the strongest terms. We believe that our nation must stand united against those who are involved with terrorism by any means, and plant seeds of fear and hatred in the community. As the Peace Islands Institute, we believe we must summon the spirit of dialogue, understanding, and respect, on an everyday basis, firmly and consistently, to grapple with extremists' and terrorists' vision of a world of fear and hatred.

The events of September 11th were extremely tragic for many of us on a personal level as we lost our loved ones. While the 10th anniversary is a time of sorrow, we cannot disregard how communities around the nation and in New Jersey in particular, came together as one, demonstrating the strength of the human spirit after experiencing unimaginable loss.

Peace Islands Institute took upon itself to be a leading force, organizing communities to come together, and getting to know and support each other at a time of fear, distress, and estrangement following the tragic events of 9/11. Communities from diverse religious, cultural, social, and economic backgrounds responded with tremendous enthusiasm, diligence and hard work to the Peace Islands' mission and call. From the hospitality and ingenuity of New Jersey's Law Enforcement members, to the selfless and understanding service of religious and educational communities, time and again we have seen our nation and State meet head-on the gravest of challenges. Once again, we have experienced that our ability to bounce back better and stronger from adversity comes down to our communities' and civil society's strength which can only be established through dialogue, understanding, and respect for each other. It is this resilience that we wish to honor and celebrate during the 10th anniversary.

Resilient and compassionate communities are the foundation for a strong, wise, and vibrant nation. They are also our strongest assets when faced with further tragedy, ranging from economic, social, natural and man-made disasters. We must strengthen our relationships

across communities to withstand, respond, and recover from catastrophic events, especially the ones that threaten the harmonious co-existence of our diverse backgrounds.

As we mark this solemn anniversary, let us once again call upon the spirit of dialogue, understanding, and respect – necessary characteristics of resilient and compssioante communities. And let us show that dialogue and understanding are enduring virtues – not just for one day, but for every day.

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The Peace Islands Institute
(formerly The Interfaith Dialog Center)