

# Notable Quotables

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A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.



Bringing Political Balance  
to the Media

## Terrorist Attack on America Media Coverage: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

It was a bloodthirsty assault on freedom. Nineteen terrorists seized four commercial jetliners on September 11, crashing three of them into the U.S. Department of Defense's Pentagon building and the twin towers of the World Trade Center. The loss of innocent life numbers more than 6,000.

In the face of this unprecedented calamity, our national news media generally responded with professionalism and patriotism, a fact which should make all Americans proud. Yet some reporters and columnists reacted with ideological blinders, while a few blamed America itself for the terrorists' murderous attacks. This special four-page edition of *Notable Quotables* presents a sampling of the good, the bad and the ugly of the media's coverage of the first days of America's New War.

### THE GOOD...

#### No Apologies For Patriotism

"I am willing to give the government, the President and the military the benefit of any doubt here in the beginning. I'm going to fulfill my role as a journalist, and that is ask the questions, when necessary ask the tough questions....I'm going to do my job as a journalist, but at the same time I will give them the benefit of the doubt, whenever possible in this kind of crisis, emergency situation. Not because I am concerned about any backlash — I'm not — but because I want to be a patriotic American without apology."

— Dan Rather on CNN's *Reliable Sources*, September 22.

"I couldn't feel stronger, David, that this is a time for us, and I'm not preaching about it, George Bush is the President. He makes the decisions, and, you know, it's just one American, wherever he wants me to line up, just tell me where. And he'll make the call."

— Rather on CBS's *Late Show*, September 17.

#### "These Colors Do Not Run"

"To keep our economy strong, and truly to eradicate the new terrorist threat, as our leaders have promised us this week, will take not only anger, but sustained dedication. Do we have it? Let us hope for our sake and the world's that we truly do. And let me add one encouraging personal observation. Yesterday, in the streets of mid-town Manhattan, as well as all over our nation, stores were selling out of American flags. And one street vendor's sign said it all: 'These colors,' it read, 'do not run.'"

— Louis Rukeyser at the start of PBS's *Wall Street Week*, September 14.

#### • Enemies of America, Beware

• "As the bodies are counted, into the thousands and thousands, hatred will not, I think, be a difficult emotion to summon. Is the medicine too strong? Call it, rather, a wholesome and intelligent enmity — the sort that impels even such a prosperous, messily tolerant organism as America to act. Anyone who does not loathe the people who did these things, and the people who cheer them on, is too philosophical for decent company....The worst times, as we see, separate the civilized of the world from the uncivilized. This is the moment of clarity. Let the civilized toughen up, and let the uncivilized take their chances in the game they started."

• — Lance Morrow on the back page of the special *Time* published after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

• "I swear to God, in their very success — I mean this — they [the terrorists] have sown the seeds of their own destruction. We are pissed off as a nation."

• — Geraldo Rivera on CNBC's *Rivera Live*, September 24.

#### • One Nation, Under God

• "The United States had a spirit before it had a name — one of faith and freedom, of ambition tempered by piety. We once were a nation of neighbors and friends, we are again today. We once were a nation of hardship-tested dreamers — we are again today. We once were a nation under God — we are again today. Our enemies attacked one nation, they will encounter another, for they underestimated us. Today in our grief and in our rage, our determination and hope, we've summoned what's best and noblest in us. We are again Americans."

• — Tony Snow at the end of *Fox News Sunday*, Sept. 16.

## The Spirit of America

"I have spent this week wiping my eyes and grinding my teeth and wondering why. I've drawn strength from a story about a man I knew, Father Mychal Judge. The chaplain of the New York City Fire Department, a Franciscan, he raced to the World Trade Center after the explosion to comfort the injured. While administering the last rites to a dying rescue worker, he, himself, was killed by flying debris. New York's bravest physically carried Father Mike away....Together, firemen, priests, and brothers wept and sang the prayer of St. Francis, 'May the Lord bless and keep you and show his face to you and have mercy on you.' That is the way of New York. That is the spirit of America."

— NBC's Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, September 16.

**Jane Clayton:** "I can't get over the spirit of the firefighter that you just spoke with. You know the outpouring in this city for the firefighters, for people like him, just generally for the victims, it's been incredible. In fact, the outpouring of blood alone, they have three times the amount of blood that they need in this city now....You pass by fire houses throughout this city and there are candles and flowers and notes attached and people there praying, it's just an incredible sight throughout this city."

**Bryant Gumbel:** "It's one of the great pluses that has come out of an awful lot of ugliness."

— Exchange on CBS's *The Early Show*, September 18.

## "Bandages of Patriotism"

"Suddenly, they're everywhere: large and small; cloth and paper; store-bought and handmade; half-staff and flying high; red, white and blue. They're being flown, waved, displayed, worn, driven, carried, as if to say as loudly and clearly as possible, 'Don't tread on me, I'm an American.' Almost as soon as the twin towers came down, the flags went up. They began to grow in every crevice of America. Someone said the sight of them is like countless bandages of patriotism covering a nation's wounds. The Stars and Stripes are the fabric of America when the nation needs a familiar and reassuring symbol, a quick fix of national pride....Soon bullets and missiles will fly, but first the flag, red, white and blue."

— Tom Brokaw on the Sept. 17 *NBC Nightly News*.

## Grateful for Expert "Retreads"

"No President makes decisions alone. They rely on trusted advisors, sometimes a tiny handful....Some in the inner-circle are longtime familiar faces like Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, men who also served President Bush's father in Desert Storm; and Donald Rumsfeld on his second tour as Defense Secretary, a former White House Chief of Staff, known as a capable Washington insider. During the presidential campaign political opponents called them 'The Retreads'....Today the critics have evaporated and 'The Retreads' are now the experts — capable and getting high marks from both Republicans and Democrats for their resumes and experience."

— NBC's Jamie Gangel on the September 17 *Today*.

## Bush's Moment in History

"A powerful speech, powerfully delivered to a nation now at war....No President since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, has delivered anything approaching a speech such as this and there may be those who observe that no President in the history of our country has ever delivered a speech such as this."

— CBS's Dan Rather following President Bush's address to Congress, September 20.

"It was an excellent speech and a necessary one. We are a country on the verge of war, hovering near a recession, in a capital that was targeted for attack, and I think the President laid out very, very clearly what's ahead of us. I was quite taken by him saying that the country is on a mission and found our moment. He clearly is a Commander-in-Chief on a mission and knows this is his moment in history."

— NBC's Tim Russert following the President's speech on September 20.

## Wishing For Reagan's Military

**Dan Rather:** "The U.S. military is not nearly at the strength today it was when we embarked on the Gulf War."

**David Martin:** "That's true. When we embarked on the Gulf War, the U.S. military was enjoying all the benefits of Reagan buildup during the 1980s. The U.S. military today is 40 percent smaller than the force that went to war in the Gulf War and, as a couple of people have pointed out, the globe is not 40 percent smaller and there are not 40 percent fewer bad guys out there. This is a smaller, stripped down version of the military that fought in Desert Storm."

— CBS News after the President's speech on Sept. 20.

## THE BAD...

### Arguing For Mild Response

"We don't want this to change America too much. There's been a lot of talk today about how we're going to live in a different country. Maybe we should resist some of that. We don't want to become the Middle East. We don't want to get into an unending cycle of violence. Yes, we must retaliate, but if we go on too much of a war footing, then we'll get into a cycle that folks in the Middle East have been living with for many, many years and would truly change the nature of what it is to be an American."

— *Newsweek's* Jonathan Alter to Brian Williams during MSNBC's live coverage just before 2:00 am EDT, Sept. 12.

### Fewer Defenses Now Needed

"There's been a lot of talk recently, Secretary Cohen, about missile defense and spending billions of dollars to put some sort of missile defense system into place. And this morning, we're reminded, once again, that what it really takes is just perhaps an airline ticket to wreak havoc on this nation. Does it make talk of a missile defense seem a bit unnecessary?"

— NBC's Matt Lauer questioning former Defense Secretary William Cohen on the September 12 *Today*.

## “Hypersensitive” White House

**Bryant Gumbel:** “Bill, still no hard evidence that, in fact, the White House or Air Force One were targeted. Are you somewhat surprised by the hypersensitivity of this White House?”

**Bill Plante:** “I’m not surprised by their hypersensitivity. They don’t want to look like the President was running and that’s why they seem to be going out of their way to try to establish that there was a reason that he didn’t come back. We do know, I can confirm independently, that the Secret Service was very concerned about the White House complex being a possible target. We have that from other people, but they seem to be very sensitive indeed to the notion that he was running when he should have come right back or when he said he was coming right back.”

**Gumbel:** “But again, no hard evidence that we’ve seen yet.”  
— Exchange on CBS’s *The Early Show*, September 13.

## Flunking the Fugitive President

“George W. Bush could not find the beat. He jarringly referred to the terrorists as ‘folks’ in his first public comments, during which he looked more apprehensive than resolute. He allowed himself to be hauled about the country like a fugitive to bunkers at air bases in Louisiana and Nebraska....The capital of the free world was a ghost town in a desperate hour. Bush said the attack was a ‘test’ for the country. It was also one for him. He flunked.”

— *Washington Post* columnist Mary McGrory, Sept. 13.

## Liberal Definition of “Realism”

“Assembling that broad coalition...has to be our top diplomatic priority now. If that means heeding their arguments for postponing deployment of a theoretically workable missile defense system against a theoretical ‘rogue nation’ missile threat, then that is what realism requires of Bush.... And if the price for [a] short-term budget deal is suspension of the long-term tax cut Bush pushed through when the economy and the world situation looked far different — a tax cut that threatens the future viability of Social Security — that too would be a victory for realism.”

— *Washington Post* reporter and columnist David Broder in his September 13 column.

## Don’t Frighten the “Allies”

“This was a very firm message to the international community, and it’s not necessarily the message those abroad wanted to hear. Moderate Arab nations, even NATO allies, were not looking for a lot of bellicose language about war. They weren’t looking for ultimatums, but that’s what they got, and that’s what they’ve been hearing in private. In fact, the only thing that I think some of the nations abroad, especially the moderate Arab nations, were looking to hear was the fact that this is not a war against Islam, it’s not a war against Arabs. They got that part of the message, but for the most part, this is not going to be reassuring to the international community, which was looking for something probably a little bit softer.”

— ABC’s Claire Shipman following President Bush’s address to Congress on September 20.

## ...AND THE UGLY

### Rebuking American Arrogance

“Whoever attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and our sense of daily trust and freedom, must be found. But America must find itself, too. The targets clearly represented America’s global power, a power that is not innocent of arrogance, either militarily or economically. With all the condolence that can be offered, it is incongruent to think that the world’s leading exporter of the tools of death and destruction would not someday be visited with an evil in return.”

— *Boston Globe* columnist Derrick Z. Jackson, Sept. 12.

“When stock traders sing ‘God Bless America,’ and [New York Stock Exchange CEO Dick] Grasso says, ‘America is ready to go back to business,’ it is unclear how much of America’s business is worthy of God’s blessing. So much of it is so obviously decadent, a nation of SUVs backing out of huge, energy-sucking suburban houses to purchase insane stores of food at Sam’s Club — with a stop at Starbucks along the way. There is no regard to how it came to be that the rich can get goods and grains so cheaply while the poorest 20 percent of the world can access only five percent of the world’s meat and fish.”

— Jackson’s column in the September 19 *Boston Globe*.

“Americans felt they had the power, and the right, to act alone, to pursue national interests regardless of the wishes of others. In that spirit...a new administration came to Washington this year determined to pursue its vision of American interests without much regard for the wishes of others, even old allies. The United States, the world’s finest monument to the rule of law, has often shied away from international arrangements that might protect our interests. At home we long ago rejected the idea that might makes right; in world affairs we’ve been much less certain. Now, ironically, we have been attacked by murderers who, through twisted logic and a blinding hatred, seem to have concluded that their might will set us right.”

— *Washington Post* Associate Editor Robert Kaiser writing in the September 16 “Outlook” section.

### Consumerism = Terrorism

“There are billions of have-nots in our world. Most of them lack adequate housing, basic sanitation, access to health care, clean water and decent food — not to mention a lack of schools, cars, televisions or telephones. When one U.S. Congressman said on the House floor that he wanted to make those responsible for the acts of terrorism ‘rue the day they were born,’ he seemed unaware that for many people in the targeted areas, death would be a relief.

“...question your own appetites and desires and think about their impact on the world. The next time we go shopping, note that those \$100 sneakers that you like so much cost only \$2 to make in some foreign sweatshop. And the diamonds that adorn so many fingers and ears may have cost some boy in Africa his fingers and ears.”

— *Washington Post* columnist Courtland Milloy, Sept. 19.

## Despising the Stars and Stripes

"My daughter, who goes to Stuyvesant High School only blocks from the World Trade Center, thinks we should fly an American flag out our window. Definitely not, I say: The flag stands for jingoism and vengeance and war. She tells me I'm wrong — the flag means standing together and honoring the dead and saying no to terrorism. In a way we're both right....[The flag] has to bear a wide range of meanings, from simple, dignified sorrow to the violent anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bigotry that has already resulted in murder, vandalism and arson around the country and harassment on New York City streets and campuses."

— *The Nation's* Katha Pollitt in an October 8 column.

## U.S. Also Guilty of Mass Murder

"Am I angry? You bet I am. I am an American citizen, and my leaders have taken my money to fund mass murder. And now my friends have paid the price with their lives.

"Keep crying, Mr. Bush. Keep running to Omaha or wherever it is you go while others die, just as you ran during Vietnam while claiming to be 'on duty' in the Air National Guard. Nine boys from my high school died in that miserable war. And now you are asking for 'unity' so you can start another one? Do not insult me or my country like this!

"Yes, I, too, will be in church at noon today, on this national day of mourning. I will pray for you, and us, and the children of New York, and the children of this sad and ugly world."

— **Message posted by left-wing filmmaker Michael Moore on his Web site, September 14.**

## America, Nation of Cowards

"The disconnect between last Tuesday's monstrous dose of reality and the self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions being peddled by public figures and TV commentators is startling, depressing. The voices licensed to follow the event seem to have joined together in a campaign to infantilize the public. Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a 'cowardly' attack on 'civilization' or 'liberty' or 'humanity' or 'the free world' but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? How many citizens are aware of the ongoing American bombing of Iraq? And if the word 'cowardly' is to be used, it might be more aptly applied to those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky, than to those willing to die themselves in order to kill others. In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards."

— **Novelist and playwright Susan Sontag writing for the "Talk of the Town" section of the Sept. 24 *New Yorker*.**

## Separated at Birth?

"We have been the cowards. Lobbing cruise missiles from 2000 miles away, that's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, not cowardly."

— **ABC's Bill Maher, *Politically Incorrect*, September 17.**

"You people are cowards, who's throwing missiles from thousands miles, an act of cowardice. Don't expect this kind of cowardness from us."

— **Khalid Kwaja, described by Dan Rather as "Osama bin Laden's teacher, comrade-in-arms and spiritual brother," in a July interview with CBS shown on *60 Minutes II* Sept. 17.**

## PLUS THE TRULY INANE

### Real Problem: Male Nixonites

"Rather than seek the ideas of young, and possibly female, experts with new ideas, *Washington Post* op-editors give column inches to Nixon administration Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Nixon speechwriter George Will. The *Post* editors are apparently time-warped by the soothing sounds [of] the failed patriarchs of the past: Former Nixon advisor Donald Rumsfeld, and former Nixon administration bureaucrat Dick Cheney, our Vice President 'in charge of the government,' as network television reassuringly put it, while President Bush officially went missing when Manhattan's towers crumbled."

— **Former *Time* magazine correspondent Nina Burleigh, in a Sept. 12 commentary for TomPaine.com.**

### If Only Welfare State Were Bigger

"We have gone through, I think, a kind of, what I would call a silly season, of thinking that there is really no need for a federal government, when in fact the federal government fought the Civil War, solved the Great Depression, fought the First and Second World Wars, won the Cold War. And now we're going...to find out why we are not just a loose confederation of states, but a republic and a federal national government and that's what this period is for."

— **NPR's Nina Totenberg on *Inside Washington*, Sept. 22.**

### Call It an "Unpleasant Incident"

"We all know that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter and that Reuters upholds the principle that we do not use the word terrorist....To be frank, it adds little to call the attack on the World Trade Center a terrorist attack."

— **Steven Jukes, global head of news for Reuters News Service, in an internal memo cited by the *Washington Post's* Howard Kurtz in a September 24 article.**

## Notable Quotables

**PUBLISHER:** L. Brent Bozell

**EDITORS:** Brent H. Baker, Rich Noyes

**MEDIA ANALYSTS:** Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmouth, Ken Shepherd, Patrick Gregory

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE:** Kristina Sewell

**COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR:** Liz Swasey

**DIRECTOR OF EDITORIAL SERVICES:** Tim Jones

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