

When is the next 9/11?

By Claire Pavlik Purgus

It irks me to look at the clock, which I do nearly every hour, to see 6:11, 7:11, 8:11, 9:11, and so forth. My subconscious is anxious: When is the next 9/11? The next 3/11? It will arrive, scarlet splashes, grey smoke, rubble, all over our newspapers and television screens. That'll give the media something to gnaw. A real event.

I'd like to believe 9/11 won't happen again. I'd like to believe whoever sits in the White House will have the presence of mind to read warning signs of imminent attack, and then act effectively to stop it. I'd like to believe whoever is responsible for these attacks – al Qaida and Osama bin Laden – will lay down their weapons and their hatred for the USA.

Having said that, I'd like to believe the USA will learn some humility and stop bulldozing and bullying the rest of the world. Maybe these are simple fancies and I must stop pulling on wishbones, hoping to get the biggest piece of bone. Bones, indeed.

I was in Mauritius when 9/11 happened. I heard the first news of it in Creole on my car-radio. It was 6:30 in the evening and I was driving home, breathing in the soft purple-blue and mango colors of the evening sky. The urgency in the radio announcer's voice pricked my ears and I strained to understand what he said. Something terrible had happened in New York City. Airplanes were crashing into buildings? It couldn't be true! Perhaps I had misunderstood. (My understanding of the Creole language was very basic.). It sounded like an advertisement for a disaster movie – I envisioned the *Towering Inferno*. It couldn't be.

When I arrived home I turned on CNN. Live via satellite, I watched the horrific events of September 11, 2001, a day the entire world remembers and one I don't have to describe here. We remember 9/11. The outpouring of sympathy from all corners of the Earth was tremendous and touching. Everyone had a response. Most were sympathetic, supportive and compassionate; a few believed the USA got what it deserved.

In the months prior to and following 9/11, Americans abroad were warned to stay away from large crowds and to practice vigilance. I felt particularly vulnerable as an American woman walking or driving the streets of Port Louis, Mauritius's capital city, past graffiti-splattered walls applauding Hizbullah. But my Muslim friends and business associates assured me: There was no animosity between us. Only compassion. I had

nothing to fear. But these were my friends. From fanatical strangers hoping for an easy entry into heaven, I'd better be careful.

And why must I fear for my safety? Because of American arrogance. Because little people, fueled by their hatred for American domination, have joined forces, utilized technology, and exploded into powerful entities. Their goal: Destroy America.

Our response? Outrage! Yet what are we doing, as Americans, to build up the empire of the Earth? We, too, are stockpiling bones. Each in our own corner that has only virtual boundaries, we pile bones. Whose bone pile will be the highest, deepest, widest? Who will be the winner?

I tell my children regularly, when they quarrel with each other or their friends and cousins, "Everyone's a winner." If only it was true... There I go again, pulling on wishbones.