



## Looking Back on September 11, 2001

September 11, 2021 by Educator Barnes

When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, it was a blow to many Americans. Several of my relatives who were alive and old enough to remember the event have shared with me what they were doing when they found out about King's death and how they felt in the weeks and months after he was assassinated. My dad recounted a sense of lost hope and fear about what might happen next. Although I had listened to my family members share their stories, I had not experienced a situation where so many other people had common feelings until the Oklahoma City bombing happened. I was in sixth grade and could not believe this had occurred. Then, years later, I had the same experience with September 11. Although it has been 20 years, I can still remember the event clearly.

In 2019, I recounted where I was when the events on September 11, 2001 took place:

*When 9/11 took place, I had recently turned 18 and was a freshman education major at Purdue University in West, Lafayette, IN. Although I had only been in college for a little over a month, I had earned the nickname, "Mom" because as my dorm mates put it, I had a parent-like concern about their choices. In hopes of shaking this name, I reluctantly attended an event on the night of Monday, September 10, 2001 with my dorm mate. Since we didn't get back until early the next day, I had slept through my first class. When I finally woke up, I remembered how my all-female dorm was quiet, absent of the country music that was typically blaring.*

*I sprinted to campus to arrive at my next class, minority leadership, on time. In class, everyone was somber. I finally asked a classmate about what was going on, and he told me about the attacks. Our professor let us speak freely and discuss the events. Classes were canceled for the rest of the day. When I decided to walk back to my dorm, I remembered what I was told during Boiler Gold Rush, a Purdue orientation program, "You are adults now. Welcome to the real world!" At the time, this event made me think I'm not ready for the real world if events like this would be taking place.*

As an educator, this was a historical event that I knew my students had to learn. It is hard to discuss traumatic events because they could be triggering for teachers and students. You never know how a discussion will impact a person especially when tragedy is at the center. Although it is important to share what occurred, it is also important to share how people worked together for the common good. This should not be an attempt to brush over the lives that were lost or the people who suffered physical and mental health challenges after the tragedy. It is to help students see how even in the worst situations, there is always hope.

Hope is needed right now. We all are living through an event that will become history to others. When the story is told about what occurred, in addition to the deaths, I hope people remember the heroes who risked their lives.

When the first responders went to help during Sept 11, they put others first. They helped to save others even if that meant losing their lives. They made the ultimate sacrifice. Everyone should take a moment of silence to think about the people who died and the family members who are living and still impacted by the loss. We should also keep the heroes in our thoughts and prayers because they experienced up close an event that we hope will never occur again.