



09.9.2011

[9/11/2001](#)

We left the [Hotel Chelsea](#) in New York City that morning on my 1970's era Schwinn "Stardust" bike – white with the beautiful banana seat. Our plan was to head down to Pastis in the Meat Packing District to meet a dear friend for his birthday breakfast. Another dear friend from Vienna was visiting, without her daughter for the first time in 6 years (and after surviving both breast cancer and her daughter's Leukemia). This day was meant to be a celebration of life. I was doubling her on my bike. We were happy. It was New York Fashion Week. We felt beautiful. We were living the dream.



We arrived at Pastis and had just received our coffee when the first plane struck the first tower.

By the time we rode my small bike back up to The Hotel Chelsea, the second tower had been hit.

It happened as we were riding my bicycle back up 8th Avenue. I was navigating morning traffic and our backs were turned as the world changed. The first tower fell moments after we arrived back to the hotel and turned on the TV. Our day of joy became a nightmare.

It was strange, but the morning went on – business as usual; we just didn't know what else to do. A bike messenger arrived to pick up samples for Vogue magazine. Should have been exciting right? It just felt wrong. He collapsed into a chair at our table and sighed. Friends of his, other bike messengers, had been delivering packages in the tower. There was no word from them. He stared at his cell phone. Silence.



My girlfriend visited the towers the previous morning at 9:00 . You can see her photos above from the observation deck of the South Tower – looking down – on 9/10. The photos below are taken from the Meat Packing District looking up on 9/11. You can see the smoke rising just above the white truck on the left. We all know the rest of the horror.



A decade has now passed and our country continues to struggle with the aftermath from that fateful day. I am still wondering what has changed for our country since September 11, 2001. I am still coming to terms with my feelings about that day and everything that has happened in its wake.

When Osama Bin Laden fell, I felt nothing. [College students marred by 9/11 cheered his death](#), but I felt no healing. Shouldn't I be happy? Why shouldn't this act of vengeance make something better? It hasn't erased the images of human beings leaping to their deaths. It hasn't stopped the civilians – many of them children – being killed in the name of something today and every day. I felt no healing. I only felt sadness.

So, what to do this weekend as we look back in memorial to a decade ago? I have only one answer: In a situation where I know that there is nothing I can do to make a difference, I know that I have to change myself.

From page 15 of [An Open Heart](#) by the Dalai Lama – edited by Nicholas Vreeland:

“In India there exists a caste system; members of the lowest caste are sometimes referred to as untouchables.... Economically, they are extremely poor. I often tell them, ‘You yourselves must make effort; you must take the initiative, with self-confidence, to bring about changes. You cannot simply blame the members of higher castes for your situation.’”

What can I do to make a difference?

There is just so much in the world to change and do that it overwhelms me. So, I choose to do what I can in a personal way. I have made my own “grassroots” 9/11 project. I commit over the next month (perhaps the rest of my life) to this manifesto:

1) I will not [complain](#). (In this big beautiful life, I should have so little to complain about. And yet...) When I find myself in a situation where I have the urge to complain, I will, instead, react positively – however small my actions, I will do something to improve each situation.

2) I pledge to be a [PeaceBuilder](#). My daughter’s kindergarten class (and entire school) says the [PeaceBuilder’s](#) Pledge each morning directly after the Pledge of Allegiance. This seems like a pretty good place to start as we begin to reflect on the last decade:

The [PeaceBuilders](#) Pledge:

I am a peace [builder](#).

I pledge to praise people, to give up put downs, to seek wise people, to notice and speak up about hurts I have caused, to right wrongs and to help others.

I will build peace at home, at school, (my work place), and in my community each day.

Who’s with me? If you are, print out the [PeaceBuilder](#) Pledge and post it in your place of business, community, kitchen, office, local bar, post office, coffee shop, hair salon, and place of worship. Print it as a post card, send it out, and make it your social media status for the upcoming weekend.

For me, I commit a month – 4 short weeks – of practicing non-complaining and peace-building in my life as a way to honor and acknowledge the anniversary of 9/11 and other atrocities of war that are still taking place each and every day.

I am excited to discover where this will take me.

I will be a [PeaceBuilder](#). Indeed.

(If you are interested in adding [PeaceBuilder’s](#) to your child’s school curriculum, [you can contact them here.](#))