

The following is excerpted from a Romanian newspaper. Written after 9/11 by Cornel Nistorescu, it was entitled "Cântarea Americii," which means "Ode to America."

## ***Ode to America***

Why are Americans so united? They would not resemble one another even if you painted them all one color! They speak all the languages of the world and form an astonishing mixture of civilizations and religious beliefs. Still, the American tragedy turned 300 million people into a hand put on the heart.

Nobody rushed to accuse the White House, the Army, or the Secret Service that they are only a bunch of losers.

Nobody rushed to empty their bank accounts.

Nobody rushed out onto the streets nearby to gape about.

Instead the Americans volunteered to donate blood and to give a helping hand.

After the first moments of panic, they raised their flag over the smoking ruins, putting on T-shirts, caps and ties in the colors of the national flag. They placed flags on buildings and cars as if in every place and on every car a government official or the president was passing. On every occasion, they started singing: "God Bless America!"

I watched the live broadcast and rerun after rerun for hours listening to the story of the guy who went down 100 floors with a woman in a wheelchair without knowing who she was, or of the California hockey player, who gave his life fighting with the terrorists and prevented the plane from hitting a target that could have killed other hundreds or thousands of people.

How on earth were they able to respond united as one human being? Imperceptibly, with every word and musical note, the memory of some turned into a modern myth of tragic heroes. And with every phone call, millions and millions of dollars were put into a collection aimed at rewarding not a man or a family, but a spirit, which no money can buy.

What on earth can unite the Americans in such a way?

Their land? Their history? Their economic power? Money?

I tried for hours to find an answer, humming songs and murmuring phrases with the risk of sounding commonplace. I thought things over, I reached only one conclusion—only freedom can work such miracles.

—Cornel Nistorescu