

**2009 TRIBUTE TO THE SACRIFICES MADE ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001
CENTRAL JURY ROOM BOROUGH HALL, QUEENS
SEPTEMBER 11, 2009**

Administrative Judge Queens Supreme Court Criminal Division Fernando Camacho:

Please remain standing while Commanding Officer Major Lewis Bianculli leads us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Major Lewis Bianculli: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

Administrative Judge Camacho: Please remain standing as Nicole Carrington, high school student from the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School sings our national anthem.

Administrative Judge Camacho: On September 11, 2001, during some of the darkest hours of our nation's history, 2,974 innocent people lost their lives. Of those, 343 were New York City firefighters; 37 were Port Authority police officers; 23 were New York police officers; eight were EMS workers; and three were New York state court officers: Captain Harry Thompson, Sergeant Mitchell Wallace and Sergeant Thomas Jurgens. We gather here this afternoon as people united in our connection to the New York state courts in order to once again grieve for the loss of innocent life on September 11th and to remember three of our own whose families have honored us with their presence here this afternoon.

Introducing our first speaker brings to mind my own personal lasting image from that day. It was

news footage of the Brooklyn Bridge. On the Brooklyn-bound side there were hundreds of cars and pedestrians fleeing Manhattan; on the opposite side a lone and solitary fire truck manned by New York City firefighters raced towards the scene. With that image in mind I often wonder what Harry Thompson, Mitchell Wallace and Thomas Jurgens felt as they ran toward the towers passing hundreds of fleeing people looking at the terror, and the fear in their eyes and pushing forward. Weren't they themselves afraid? What caused them to push forward without hesitation? One of my favorite films is about the inception of the U.S. space program. It's about the first astronauts to go into space knowing that they might not come back. It is called "The Right Stuff." What is "the right stuff?" We know Harry Thompson, Mitchell Wallace and Thomas Jurgens had it. We also know that Joseph Baccellieri has it. Chief Baccellieri is a commanding officer of the New York City Court Officers Academy. He not only knew Captain Thomas and Sergeants Wallace and Jurgens, but he himself was one of the first to respond to the north tower after the plane hit, coming from his command post in the Court Officer Academy. Through his efforts in assisting in the evacuation, he saved hundreds of lives. We're proud to have him here today, Captain Chief Joseph Baccellieri.

Deputy Chief of the Department of Public Safety Joseph Baccellieri: Thank you, your honor. Good afternoon. We are here today to honor and pay tribute to three remarkable human beings and it's fitting that we start this off by introducing their family members. I ask that they stand as I introduce them. The family of Captain William Harry Thompson, the family of Sergeant Thomas Jurgens and the family of Sergeant Mitchell Wallace. Thank you Judge Fisher, Judge Camacho, Judge Weinstein, honored guests, brother and sister officers, friends and colleagues. It's hard to believe that eight years have passed since the unprovoked and vicious attacks on our

nation on September 11, 2001. What can I possibly say that hasn't been expressed before? How weak and fruitless any words I may say can even attempt to ease the pain of those who suffered a loss so deep. Not a day goes by that I don't think of or relive that horrific day and the carnage inflicted upon so many by so few, the thousands of lives cut short, and the anguish and destruction inflicted upon all of us by the forces of evil. While some have asked why would anyone put themselves in imminent danger to help complete strangers, why did Harry, Mitch and Tom put the needs of others above their own safety? Why? While seemingly complex, the answer is quite simple, especially to those of us who have taken an oath to defend, protect and serve others, and even more clear to those who are blessed to have known Harry, Mitch and Tom. Harry, Mitch and Tom responded because of the conviction of their values, values instilled in them by their parents and their family. They responded because they were trained to do so. They responded because their fellow Americans needed help. They responded because their fellow human beings needed help. They responded because it was the right thing to do. They responded because they cared, and they responded because they are heroes. True heroes. Now, we in America throw this term "hero" around a lot. When I say "hero" I'm not talking about somebody that can hit more home runs in a single season than somebody else. They're gifted athletes. I'll give you that, but they're not heroes. Harry, Mitch and Tom are heroes. True heroes. Harry, Mitch and Tom gave everything in the service of others. They made the ultimate sacrifice. Their actions are a testament to the inherent good of America and its people and ought to be revered, admired and respected. Their actions are also a stark and sad reminder of the sacrifices made by so many of our countrymen on the altar of freedom. We must honor them and all those who answer the call of their nation, who set themselves apart for their selflessness and their resolve for the greater good, no matter the personal cost. We must commit every fiber in our

being to honor these brave men by following their lead and the principles for which they stood. We owe that to them and the loved ones they left behind. Grieving the loss of those we've loved and lost and honoring their memory is a personal and most times private matter. At the Court Officers Academy where Harry worked we have begun a proud tradition of starting each day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and observing a moment of silence to reflect and remember our brothers and all those lost in the service to others. Harry, Mitch and Tom will forever live in our hearts and minds. We love them. Thank you for the privilege and the opportunity to be here as we remember and honor them. God bless you all and God bless America. Thank you.

Administrative Judge Camacho: Thank you, Chief. I think it's important and appropriate at this point to recognize the other New York state court officers who responded to the scene on September 11th, along with Captain Thompson and Sergeants Jurgens and Wallace. They include the Chief, as you know, as well as Tyre Bacon, the Supreme Court officer assigned to this building. In talking to him about what they did, Tyre said something that the family might appreciate. I said, Tyre, weren't you scared? Weren't you afraid? He said, "Well, first I was there with Mitch and Tommy and those guys were really, really good so I knew I was safe. They were taking care of me. And then Harry showed up, and once I saw Harry there, then I got so calm and so peaceful because I knew everything was going to be okay." I think it's also important to recognize that in the weeks and months following September 11th dozens of New York state court officers, after putting in a full day at their courthouses, went down to the site to dig for their fallen brothers. And I applaud them and commend them for that. At this point in the program, I'll ask our chief clerk, Anthony D'Angelis, to step up to the podium and introduce the next speaker.

Chief Clerk Anthony D'Angelis: Good afternoon. I am pleased to introduce the president of the Queens County Bar Association, Guy R. Vitacco, Jr.

Queens County Bar Association President Guy R. Vitacco, Jr.: I would like to thank the Office of Court Administration (OCA) and our Administrative Judges Jeremy Weinstein and Fernando Camacho for asking me to say a few words this morning. On behalf of the Queens County Bar Association, I would like to recognize all the fallen heroes of 9/11 and especially our court officers Captain Harry Thompson, Sergeant Mitch Wallace and Sergeant Thomas Jurgens, who made the ultimate sacrifice on 9/11, and our thoughts and prayers go out to their families. I would like to recognize Nicole Carrington of the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy for her lovely rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner." I will never forget that day. It started out as a typical Tuesday morning. I was driving on the LIE to my office, where I was going to pick up my files and head over to the Supreme Court in Jamaica for the usual Tuesday calendar call. As I was driving on the LIE I noticed a big cloud of smoke over the skyline of Manhattan. I didn't think much of it at the time. When I got to my office the phone was ringing off the hook and my secretary informed me that a plane had crashed into the Twin Towers. One of the calls was my wife and while I was talking to her on the phone and she was watching the news, she screamed that, "Another plane just flew into the second tower!" It was truly unbelievable. I then went to the Supreme Court in Jamaica and answered the calendar call. When I got there everybody was in shock. At that time, Justice Levine was sitting in Part One, and when I went in to check in he was standing by the robing room and informed everyone that the towers had fallen. The whole courthouse was in shock. Of course, later we learned of the fate of all those in the towers and all those who responded and came together in true New York spirit to try and help. It is something

that should never be forgotten and the memory of those who have lost their lives. Again, I thank OCA and Justice Weinstein and Justice Camacho for this tribute to those officers from Queens County who were true American heroes. Let's never forget our fallen heroes. Thank you.

Administrative Judge Camacho: Our next speaker is the president of the Borough of Queens, the Honorable Helen M. Marshall. One of her aides told me an interesting story. On 9/11 she was -- it was election day -- and she was at the polls. She was at one of the schools, and there was a dangerous situation involving some parents who insisted on going in and taking their kids and she single-handedly calmed them down and defused a potential dangerous situation. So here she is, our own president of the Borough of Queens.

Queens Borough President Helen Marshall: Thank you very much, Judge Fern Fisher and Judge Fernando Camacho for organizing this event at the seat of Queens County, Queens Borough Hall. I would also like to acknowledge our wonderful Queens County Clerk Gloria D'Amico, who over the years has contributed so much to improve the efficiencies of our local courts. Gloria, thank you for all of your efforts in that direction. Like all of you, I will never forget where I was on the bright, sunny September morning. It was primary Election Day and everybody was up bright and early. I was up at 5:30 and I'm going around to the schools to see if everything is all right. The image of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center and then the second, that is when myself and many others finally realized that our country was under attack. We've had people try to pass by the World Trade Center and do different things but that second one did it. The horror of that is a memory that has stayed with me right up until this very day, ultimately brought home by the many funerals, memorials that I attended over the whole year.

That was my first year in office. To see families sometimes in the firehouse, sometimes in a church and young children who had been told their father had passed away, but they were still kind of being children. And there was the mother. She was holding back her tears because she didn't want her children to know how sad she really was. Today we're here to honor the memory of three court officers who died that day, Sergeant Mitchell Wallace, Captain Harry Thompson, and Sergeant Thomas Jurgens. And to all of their families, I know that each year the tragedy of your loss will be hitting you especially around this time. And even when it's not this time, you're going to be thinking of your loved ones and what you're missing from them, but take comfort in that we all share your concern and we all share your burden with you. As in the case with all of those in the uniform services, these three individuals went to work every day to serve the people of New York City, all showing a commitment to public safety and service as their life's work. I always commend those who are going into tragedy and trouble when everybody is running out, because they're going in to help everybody else get out. And I say that every year when they bring in the new recruits into the police department or the fire department. On September 11, 2001, when the planes hit that building there was no question which direction these three men were going. They were going into the building while everyone else was running out. They were going into the building to help more people get out alive. These men thought only about the safety of others and unfortunately they were involved. The building began to implode as they walked in the door. There are almost 3,000 stories to be told from that tragic day and three of those stories are being told today about three court officers who gave their lives in service. We will never forget their sacrifice and we will never forget September the 11th. Thank you.

Administrative Judge Camacho: For the next part of our presentation, high school students from the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School will be reciting poems which they wrote for the families for this occasion. I first came in contact with these kids when I was asked to speak at their graduation last year by Judge Brown. The district attorney is on the board of directors for their school, and when I went there I got to know them. They have a special connection to this ceremony. Their school is located on Battery Place, which is a stone's throw from the towers and they were in session on September 11th. When the first plane hit, their building suffered some structural damage and the kids were evacuated to the street. Once they were on the street they observed the second plane hit the tower. Under the leadership of their principal, Ron Tabano, who's here today, and their teachers and with the help of the first responders, perhaps even our own officers, all the children were able to leave the area and by 9:00 p.m. they were all accounted for. We're going to begin with a poem by a student named Luis Flores, which he has written and which he calls "September 11th."

Mr. Luis Flores: Good afternoon everybody.

September 11th

September 11th is no time to play.
September 11th is a time to pray.
Due to the service our hearts will never be done.
Let's all give a blessing to all our loved ones.
September 11th is a sacred day, a
sacred day to let us know anything can happen.
This world ain't safe.
More than 1,000 people died this day.
It does change lives in so many ways.
Who do we all blame for this day?
The Terrorists is what most of you might say.
Do you know that there's only one man who's
responsible for every action that takes place?
Everything happens for a reason.
That's what the good Lord told me to say.

On September 11th loved ones died.
On September 11th loved ones were lost.
Prayers are helpful.
A moment of silence is respectful.
So on September 11th the choice is yours.
The choice is yours to make a sound.
Don't be afraid to cry or smile.
This day and the next day and the last
I will never ever forget those of the past.
More than 20 court officers entered
and three didn't make it out.
They gave their lives for others
not caring for their whereabouts.
These three men got a special spot inside of me.
So Mitchell Wallace, Thomas Jurgens
And Harry Thompson, rest in peace.

Administrative Judge Camacho: Next, another student Shakoya Bumbury wrote a poem called

“To the Heroes, New York Heroes, Everyday Heroes.”

Ms. Shakoya Bumbury:

To the Heroes, New York Heroes, Everyday Heroes.

At times I run away as you run to it.
You climb up as I climb down.
But on that day you weren't selfish.
You didn't think twice about endangering your life.

On September 11th some lost their lovers, best friends.

Beginnings came to an end.
But to you doesn't seem like a job.
You don't dread going because your heart
and soul overflow just knowing that every
little kid says “when I grow up,
I want to be just like you.”
You're New York's every day heroes
and I just want to thank you and
congratulate you because especially
on September 11th when the buildings came tumbling
You went running.
Some got out alive as others were laid to rest.
You're not just FDNY or NYPD,

But everyday heroes to me.”

Administrative Judge Camacho: Finally, Shannen Gonzalez, another student started out to write a poem and then decided she wasn't a poet. So instead she wrote a letter to the families she entitled "Speaking From the Heart."

Ms. Shannen Gonzalez:

Dear All:

When the school called my house and told me they wanted me to perform, I didn't want to come here. I became angry and upset. For the first time in my life I didn't know what to write or say. I feel I'm not a part of this. I can't remember what happened on that day. I didn't go through the loss and the pain you all went through. I don't know how to tell you have faith, have courage and be strong because anyone can look in your eyes and see that you have already found courage, faith and strength already. I came today and I'm standing here hoping to see that for myself. I'm lost for words so I thought what would my mother say to me if I went through something like this. She would say, "You have to be strong for the ones you lost. You have to be strong because if you don't, who will? They wouldn't want to worry about you. You would want to show them that you're strong and that you have faith." If I lost my mom, I would want to go anywhere with her, even if it meant death, but how weak would I be? I would disappoint her and she wouldn't have wanted me to feel that way. She didn't raise me that way and that's not what she taught me. Because I can't remember what happened that day, I hope this will fill in that empty space because I lost my inspiration. I hope that when I leave I can take this as my inspiration. And this is truly from the heart.

Love,
Shannen.

P.S.: To those who are lost from the chorus of 9/11

Administrative Judge Camacho: I want to thank Ron Tabano, the principal at the school for arranging the kids to participate in the program. I especially want to thank you guys. I'm so proud of you. Talk about courage. You know what it takes for a high school student to stand up in front of a large group being web cast for approximately 17,000 people. That's courage. And they were here all afternoon yesterday practicing. Thank you, guys. I'm very, very proud of you.

Next we're going to hear from Jeremy S. Weinstein, the county administrative judge for civil matters.

Administrative Judge Queens County Supreme Civil Division Jeremy Weinstein:

Sometimes it's very painful to remember tragic events, but not to do so may not only doom us to relive them but also dishonors the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice during such events. Today, as we have done each year since September 11, 2001, as Americans we remember this day and as a court family remember the courage and heroism of Captain Thompson and Sergeants Wallace and Jurgens. What they did on 9/11 has been well documented and we will forever honor their memory. It should also come as no surprise to those familiar with the brave men and women who comprise our court personnel, acts of selflessness are no stranger to the court system. The stories of courage are legion. I am particularly fortunate because the court officer with whom I work every day, Frank Pastore, is one such example. Hearing what sounded like an argument between a man and a woman while on duty outside the Queens County Supreme Court in Jamaica, Officer Pastore approached the scene to find a male pummeling a woman seated in her car in attempt to steal the vehicle. Responding in typical selfless fashion, he rushed to the woman's aid, grabbing her attacker from behind, pulling the assailant from the vehicle and handcuffing him. Turns out just moments prior to this attack this same assailant stabbed a teacher, speeding off with and crashing the woman's SUV before abandoning it near the Queens courthouse. Thanks to Frank's brave and decisive actions, this individual was saved from serious injury and a dangerous criminal was removed from our streets. For this Frank received the prestigious Merit Performance Award for Heroism and today we'd like to acknowledge him. Please join me in acknowledging Frank Pastore. Frank Pastore is an example

of the outstanding men and women who work in our courts every day and dedicate themselves to all the individuals who use the court system. The sense of shock and loss and even fear we experienced eight years ago will forever be a part of us. So will the immense pride we felt as Americans and New Yorkers as we came together as one to show the entire world our humanity. Thank you very much.

Administrative Judge Camacho: The Honorable Fern Fisher is the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts and is also charged with statewide responsibilities for access to justice issues. We're very pleased that she is here to deliver the closing remarks.

Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts Fern Fisher: Good afternoon. Judge Camacho, Judge Weinstein, President Marshall, other distinguished guests, friends and family. I speak instead of Judge Pfau to you today because she just simply could not be here, but know that her heart and her mind is here with you today. Unlike today, September 11, 2001 was a sunny, clear, bright day but today the skies open with tears for the 2,751 victims lost in the World Trade Center towers and the other victims in Pennsylvania and in the Pentagon. We gather on the eighth anniversary of the terrorist attacks in this country to remember. We have come here today to remember that when faced with an incredibly dangerous situation our court officers responded without fear or concern for personal safety. We pause today to remember that, like firefighters, our officers are brave and, like police officers, our court officers are the finest. And there were no braver or finer than Captain Harry Thompson, Sergeant Mitchell Wallace and Officer Thomas Jurgens, who made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. We remember these

three officers each year along with all of the friends and family members that were lost in the World Trade Center attack. We each will recall the events of September 11th as we experienced that day and the days thereafter. I recall the feeling of helplessness, of being in Albany when the towers collapsed with all the other court administrators and not knowing how to ensure that those in the Manhattan civil courthouse were safe and secure. I recall the days thereafter waiting to hear the fate of our three officers and the sense of deep loss when the sorrowful news came about the first, then the second, and then the third officer. You will also remember that day with clarity long into the future and I assure you that each year the Court will remember Harry, Tom and Mitch every single day. While we must continue to remember the horror of that day, to honor the dead, and to be reminded of how fomented hate can yield to irrational, despicable acts, we must remember that good emerged from this great tragedy. Remember our losses, but also remember that when tested we stood together as one nation -- east, west, north, south, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Muslim, Christian and Jewish -- to mourn together but also to help together. A staff member of mine who was employed at the Office of Court Administration on Beaver Street, in recalling that day, told me that they fled from downtown covered in the soot from the falling towers. Chinatown merchants handed out slippers and shoes to those who had lost theirs running from the scene. Other merchants along the way handed out bottles of water. First responders came from all over the country to assist in searching for survivors and later when the search switched to recovery of the deceased. Volunteer attorneys were so numerous there was a line going into the New York City Bar Association that went all the way around the block. Today, you probably already heard from our President more eloquently than I, that today has been deemed a National Service Day in honor and remembrance of those that were lost in the terrorist attack. This calls for action, for action comes at a time when mental illness, hunger,

unemployment, homelessness and foreclosures are at an all-time high. Our nation is being tested. Let us each pledge today an act of public service to assist those who are in need. By doing so, we summon the same spirit that brought us together as a nation on September 11, 2001. By honoring our lost loved ones, we continue to remember that our small differences on the issues of the day are what make us a free nation, but when our institutions and our citizens and residents are threatened, our differences no longer separate us. We respond as one people, one indivisible nation standing to assist. May the memory of your family members or friends who perished on September 11, 2001 sustain you now and into the future. Thank you so much for coming today.

Administrative Judge Camacho: It's been brought to my attention that Sergeant Craig Lovitch, who was also down at the site with Tom and Harry and Mitch is here with the families. We're going to close the ceremony by calling upon Nicole again to sing "God Bless America."

Administrative Judge Camacho: Thank you all. This concludes the ceremony.