

September 11th, 2001. For the United States of America it was unbelievable. The nation was brutally violated. Enemies tortured and tore up the country. All quite unexpectedly: no forewarning signal to foreshadow the horror. But it was not the first time. Even on 7th December 1941 the nation was stunned breathless. No clue, no premonition. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto gave the order and horror ensues. Three hundred and fifty aircraft in just over an hour sank 4 battleships of the US Navy and damaged many others. The humiliation of Pearl Harbor. Rudely awakened, America was left holding her breath, her weapons blunted. There is a form of “etiquette” to follow even in war, but it had not been respected.

And yet there is one image that stands as the symbol of compensation for this lack of respect. Leafing through the New York Catalogue we can see "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima": Joe Rosenthal's world famous photograph showing marines hoisting the stars and stripes flag on top of Mount Suribachi. A small strip of land torn from the Japanese enemy after a tooth and nail fight. It was a comeback for the US. The flag being thrust into the ground with such eagerness was not just the US flag; it was a flag and a statement. The statement that the shame had been washed away and America had raised its head again.

Even today, 11th September 2011, we are celebrating not the destruction but the rebirth. The New York of today is no longer the city of ten years ago: it is less carefree and more reflective and solemn. Just like in 1944, New York has not given up. Just like a good fighter, New York has rolled up its sleeves and is looking to the future.

Anyone visiting Ground Zero today can stand witness to the new life growing. The construction site, where people work 24 hours a day, will have a memorial which includes two pools fed by waterfalls and a skyscraper, formerly known as Freedom Tower, and now as the One World Trade Center. It is no coincidence that taking the place of the old Twin Towers designed by a Japanese architect, there will be four new skyscrapers growing at the same pace as the city's ability to process the disaster. Layer upon layer, floor after floor. We've reached 61st floor and we'll be getting to a height of 1776 feet. If we wish to play with symbols, 1776 is also the year of the Declaration of Independence: the new independence of New York.

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