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COLUMN NAME: Countdown to Infinity

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COLUMN TITLE: Creating Great Good Following Great Evil

The 21st century has been heralded as the beginning of a new age for human civilization, being labelled as the Century of Peace, and even a Century of Life. But following the horrific, and unimaginable tragedy in New York and Washington DC by fanatical terrorists, this self-proclaimed 'Century of Peace and Life' would seem one step further away from concrete reality.

Watching the events unfold as I sat on my futon in my relatives' house in Tokyo while I was on vacation, I was simply in shock to see the surreal images of airplanes flying into the World Trade Center, the horrific aftermath of people jumping out of windows, and the buildings themselves collapsing, killing the thousands of people stranded within them. Later on, I would discover that two people I was associated with, died in the terrorist attack; one on Flight 11 and another in one of the World Trade Center buildings.

Being among the suffering individuals who have lost associates, friends and family, it would seem only natural that I develop a jaded and pessimistic view of the future of humanity. With so much death and destruction rampant, even at a time when peace has supposedly prevailed, it is easy to say that life sucks, and is filled with nothing but suffering and sadness. And I will admit, that for a little while, I felt as if the world had gone one step backward, and fell into the trap of wanting nothing but revenge, all in the name of justice.

But I came across an old Buddhist proverb that said, "Great events do not have small omens. When great evil occurs, great good will follow." On the surface, it sounds like a simplistic piece of optimistic hogwash, but the more I repeated the statement in my head, the more I realized the truth inherent within it. It dawned on me that if we were interested in creating a Century of Life and a Century of Peace, that such an era could only be created by our own efforts as individuals, connected to each other in a community and as a society. When great evil occurs, we have the choice of either creating more evil, by engaging in futile revenge, or creating great good in the aftermath of a great self-inflicted, human tragedy.

Despite the great losses that thousands of families and friends will have encountered because of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC, we all have an opportunity, and I dare say, we all have a *responsibility*, to create great good in the aftermath of such a tragedy, evoking all that is good in ourselves.

In the end, if we are to truly honour those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks, then we must make a determination to not let those lives be lost in vain. From their sacrifice, we must create passionate waves of positive action to build an even stronger foundation for the peace of humanity, and exemplify all the virtues of human civilization.