NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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For New Yorkers in Crisis, TV Creates Global Village

Can you imagine what this last week would have been like without television news? It brought us the horrifying reality of the Twin Towers and Pentagon crashes, the unbearable sight of the towers melting into ash, the calming and informative appearances of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, and minute-by-minute updates about what had happened to our beautiful city.

The news coverage was an essential reason why New Yorkers were able to cope with the realization that they had been targeted anonymously for death by shadowy strangers. Television knit horrified watchers into a "global village."

Unthinkable as the terrorist attack was, however, it was not unfamiliar. We had seen such sights in the movies, from the leveling of Los Angeles in "Earthquake" to the destruction of the White House in "Independence Day" — a special effect that audiences once cheered.

Now Hollywood has shown the good sense to postpone the release of new movies having similar scenes. "Collateral Damage," with Arnold Schwarzenegger as a vengeful fireman whose family is killed in a terrorist attack, has been shelved. The release of "Big Trouble," a comic film wherein a suitcase containing a nuclear bomb ends up in an airport baggage rack, has been postponed. Promoters made these choices for bottom-line reasons: They know people have had enough of barbarism for now. The heyday of films featuring over-the-top violence may not return for some time.

The terrorist organizations suspected of the attacks hate America in part because of its consumer culture, exported to them in U.S. movies and TV shows. This past week showed that compassion is as much a part of our culture as consumerism, and our media can be sober and sensitive when the situation requires.

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