

# Tuning in to History

*There's no denying that this week's events have stirred up a lot of emotions in all of us.*

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I often think about how different the world would be if Adolph Hitler and Osama bin Laden had never been born.

If you are a regular reader of my Off the Beaten Patch column, then you know I'm usually making you smile or laugh. Not today.

Like most of you reading this, I was both thankful and disturbed by Sunday's stunning announcement that Osama bin Laden was (finally) captured and killed. I was glued to the television and simultaneously reading all the Facebook posts and texting a friend whom I knew would be feeling the same emotions I was.

Monday morning I hung my flag to show my patriotism and appreciation to the men and women who risked and continue to risk their lives so that we can be free. It all seemed so neat and tidy until I really started thinking about the irony of it all.

You see Sunday also was Yom HaShoah — Holocaust Remembrance Day.

And I've been thinking about that atrocity and 9/11 ever since.

Much has been written about these two events and how they changed the course of history but at the end of the day, does it come down to a case of "seeing is believing?" That's right. Does video equal knowledge?

Think about it: On Sept. 11, 2001, ABC, CNN, etc. broke in to their broadcasts with up-to-the-second details of the tragic events as they unfolded. Within minutes there were cameras outside the World Trade Center and we actually witnessed the planes going into the Twin Towers. Later, we watched the buildings implode — staring in disbelief and horror at what we had just seen.

If you are blind or didn't see the video of the planes hitting the towers, the aftermath at the Pentagon or the crash at Shanksville, Penn., does that mean they never really happened? If you didn't see photos of Osama Bin Laden after he had been killed by U.S. forces—photos some have demanded but which President Barack Obama said Wednesday would not be released to the public—would that mean it never happened?

Which brings us back to Yom HaShoah.

It is a day to remember the Holocaust and to vow 'never again.' Yet there are people who deny the Holocaust happened.

Would having Diane Sawyer or Anderson Cooper reporting live from Auschwitz make it more real? Millions of innocent victims were systematically gassed and burned but because it wasn't tweeted, emailed, posted or streamed live on TV, some people just deny it happened.

Two thirds of the European Jewish population were annihilated. Six million Jews — 1.5 million of whom were children — were tortured and killed. The Nazis also murdered millions of others, including Gypsies, political and religious dissidents, the handicapped, gays and lesbians. But some question the authenticity of the thousands of photos, artifacts and testimonies from the Holocaust because it wasn't streamed live.

More than six million people were killed during the Holocaust; the population of New York City in September 2001 was about 7.5 million. Three thousand people lost their lives that day. Can you imagine if it had been almost 90 percent of New York City? To put it in perspective, there would have to be a "9/11" every single day for more than two and a half years to equal the number of deaths during the Holocaust. But this isn't a contest because in the end we have all suffered loss and grief. And whether one person is fallen by evildoers or millions, we all bear witness to their fate.

Which brings us back to Sunday.

Bin Laden is dead and so is Hitler but that doesn't bring back any of the innocent people who were killed because of hatred and intolerance. Now more than ever, on U.S. or foreign soil, we all must vow "never again."

But for those who lost their family and friends on 9/11 or in World War II, there is no closure. For them, the world will never be the same.