

Changing Perspectives  
Atlanta Lewis, August 2014

In 1995, I was eight years old. Most of my first memories are about events within the United States. There are several events that I can remember happening, however, I did not understand the ins and outs of the situation surrounding those events. As I grew older, I have learned more about those events and I have developed my own views of the years that have passed since my childhood.

One of my earliest memories is from April of 1995 with the Oklahoma City Bombing. On April 19, 1995 Timothy McVeigh parked a rental truck outside of a building in Oklahoma that was equipped with a bomb ([www.history.com/topics/oklahoma-city-bombing](http://www.history.com/topics/oklahoma-city-bombing)). The explosion killed 168 people and 19 of those people were children. I remember images of the devastation and bloodied individuals as they walked out of the building. Looking back I also recall a music video that was made by Garth Brooks for the song "The Change." The song is a powerful one, but as a child, I paid more attention to the images that played across the screen rather than the lyrics ([vimeo.com/8716214](https://vimeo.com/8716214)). The chorus of the song reads:

"And I hear them saying you'll never change things

And no matter what you do it's still the same thing

But it's not the world that I am changing

I do this so this world will know

That it will not change me. ([www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/garthbrooks/thechange.html](http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/garthbrooks/thechange.html))

Fortunately, McVeigh and his accomplices were caught and tried. Timothy McVeigh was put to death on June 11, 2001 for his crimes ([www.history.com/topics/oklahoma-city-bombing](http://www.history.com/topics/oklahoma-city-bombing)). The Oklahoma City Bombing is historically significant, especially to me, because it was an example of domestic terrorism. It was crazy to me that someone could attack their own country, their

neighbors and especially children that were helpless. For some, the bombing proved that these events could and would take place around the world as people would see terror as a way to get attention or cause destruction to others' lives.



[content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1982767\\_2126406,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1982767_2126406,00.html)

In October 1995, O.J. Simpson was found not guilty of the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. While this event has little historical importance to the world, it had an impact on my life. I can remember the trial being on television every day throughout the summer while I was home every day. It was on the evening news as well. In October when the decision was made, it was amazing that the verdict was not guilty when everyone was certain that he had in fact committed the murders. As an adult, my favorite television shows are about murder and/or crimes and I am intrigued with the criminal justice system and fascinated by the human mind. I trace some of that intrigue back to the O.J. Simpson trial and the not guilty verdict ([law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/simpson/simpson.htm](http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/simpson/simpson.htm)).

By the end of 1995, peace was trying to be established in the Balkan region of Europe. At the age of eight, I do not believe that I could have found Bosnia on a map if my life depended

on it, but I do remember hearing the country's name in the evening when my parents watched the news. I realized that there was an armed conflict and that certain people were being killed, but beyond that, I did not comprehend the severity of the event.

As Yugoslavia began to break into independent countries, violence erupted as differing ethnic groups demanded independence and control of their own nations. The conflict lasted for three years in which the Serbians, Croatians, and Muslims battled against one another. One horrific part of this conflict was the ethnic cleansing that the Serbs carried out against the other groups. Concentration camps were established, which were reminiscent of the camps setup by Adolf Hitler during World War II. Most of the world looked on in horror, but did very little to make the violence stop. This should have been a lesson to world leaders for them to understand that, at times, humanitarian needs require the intervention of other countries.

(<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/bosnia>)



Countries created from the former Yugoslavia.  
[www.icty.org/sid/10152](http://www.icty.org/sid/10152)

The impeachment of President Bill Clinton in 1998 was another event that I can clearly remember. I was 11 years old and I can remember the news stories surrounding the president.

President Clinton had been caught having an affair with a staff member, Monica Lewinsky. He had been asked to testify as to the nature of his relationship, which he denied ever having with Lewinsky. Ken Starr was determined to catch Clinton in his lies. Lewinsky was given immunity from prosecution if she were to testify about her relationship with the president. She agreed and proceeded to give Starr the details of her affair and went as far as to provide a dress that had President Clinton's DNA on it. The term impeachment began to be said in the news and at that point, no president had been impeached during my lifetime. For me, it is historically significant that President Clinton was impeached. As a teacher, I have found that many of my students believe that he was impeached for having an affair and I have to tell them that he was impeached for lying under oath. Students then question whether morality in their personal lives should determine whether or not they are an effective leader. I do believe that this event was important historically to the world because the proceedings were widely publicized. Governments across the globe were aware of the situation and could see how it had become a joke to so many Americans. For a time, it was an embarrassment for the United States.

([www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/impeachments/clinton.htm](http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/impeachments/clinton.htm))

When I was 12, the Columbine Shootings occurred. On April 20, 1999 in Littleton, Colorado, two students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, entered their high school and began shooting fellow students. It was later discovered that Harris and Klebold had been planning an attack on their school for over a year. The original plan was to bomb the school, which they may have been motivated by Timothy McVeigh's bombing in Oklahoma City in 1995. When their bomb did not detonate, they returned to the school with weapons and began firing upon their peers. By the end of the ordeal, they had killed 13 people and wounded another 20 individuals.

([www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings](http://www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings))

Across the United States there has been speculation as to what caused both Harris and Klebold to go on the killing spree. Some believe that they had been bullied in school while others pointed the finger at the “Goth culture” that both followed ([www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings](http://www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings)). Others took the event and wanted to use it as a platform for gun violence ([www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings](http://www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings)). For me, it was a frightening revelation that school may not be a safe place. It was scary to think that something like this could happen in a school and to a community. I was naïve to think that some places are sacred and are protected from the bad that life can bring. At 12 years old, it was a shock and it implanted a fear in the back of my mind that now, as a teacher, still is there. As a teacher, I watch students’ behavior and I attempt to protect each one of my students by learning who they are and noticing when there is a change in their demeanor. I live in Rockbridge County, Virginia and if a school shooting occurred here, it would devastate the community in which I have lived my entire life. I think that many people in the small communities in the United States and in other parts of the world do not think that it will happen to them, their town, their community, their home. Unfortunately, Columbine was my first lesson that in fact it can happen anywhere.



The two Columbine shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, in the cafeteria.  
[remembercolumbine.synthasite.com/](http://remembercolumbine.synthasite.com/)

One major event that never happened, but the world was terrified it would, was Y2K. Looking back now, it is funny at how everyone was worried that computer systems were going to fail and life as we knew it was over. At the stroke of midnight on January 1, 2000, technology systems were doomed to fail. Our telecommunications infrastructure was going to collapse. Needless to say, this collapse never occurred and since that time, technology has continued to grow and thrive. I do wonder if world leaders today have given any thought to what will happen if computer systems do fail. Do all countries have a plan in place should there be a disaster of this magnitude? Since we are a global community, are their joint efforts in trying to determine the best ways of protecting ourselves against a breakdown in our technological infrastructure? While I do look back at December 31, 1999 as an amusing night (since I did wait up to midnight to see what would happen), I do realize that a crash could occur and in the modern world we live in today, I wonder what would happen to our society. ([www.quetek.com/dictionary/y2k-scare.html](http://www.quetek.com/dictionary/y2k-scare.html))

November 7, 2000 was the Election Day in which the next president would be elected. Al Gore was the democratic candidate while George W. Bush was running on the republican ticket. At the end of the election, the results were too close to name the next president. For weeks, legal battles ensued and it was unclear as to who would be named the winner. At the end of the legal battles, George W. Bush was named the next President of the United States. There are two main reasons that this election is significant. First, Gore won the popular vote as most Americans cast their ballot in his favor. Bush, however, won the most Electoral College votes. Therefore, Bush won. Many Americans were outraged that a candidate that did not get the most Americans to support him could win the election. Immediately, citizens began to call for reforms to the Electoral College, which was established in the Constitution of the United States.

While some states over the last 14 years have made attempts to split their electoral votes, most states still follow the winner-takes-all system. The other reason that this election was significant is because it greatly influenced the next eight years of America as well as the rest of the world's history. Under Bush's leadership, America entered a War on Terror that led it to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and in many ways led the United States into a debt that continues to grow each and every day, which in turn threatens our economy and the economies of other countries.

([www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1570192/United-States-presidential-election-of-2000#toc285282](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1570192/United-States-presidential-election-of-2000#toc285282))

On September 11, 2001 I was a freshman at Rockbridge County High School, the same school where I teach today. I vividly remember walking down the hallway after lunch on my way to my 4<sup>th</sup> period class. As I continued down the hallway, I remember seeing some of the teachers with televisions on in the room. I can remember seeing paper falling from the sky, dark, black smoke, people running around. In one word, it was chaos. At that moment, I had no idea as to what had happened. My initial thought was that the images were of some foreign place, not New York City. My teachers did not want to tell us what had happened and at that moment, it was still unclear as to what exactly had taken place. That evening when I made it home, I sat in horror in front of the television as the news of airplanes being crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and then in a field in Pennsylvania. I had never seen such destruction and devastation caused to the United States. I had also never felt as vulnerable as a citizen of the United States. Prior to 9/11, I do not think that the term terrorism had been part of my every day vocabulary. Since then, terrorism is something that people around the world are aware of and have to deal with. Terrorism knows no boundaries. It can be inflicted on all groups of people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, and faith. Sadly, incidents of terrorism continue to take

place. The threats are both domestic and foreign and often times, people are unaware that they are being targeted. September 11, 2001 was a terrorist attack against the United States, however, it changed both the history of the U.S. and other parts of the world as well. It influenced leaders of countries to make changes to their national security, airport protocol, foreign relationships and policies between nations. The effects of the terrorist attacks in 2001 are still felt today and made terror a part of our daily lives as we are part of a global community. ([www.history.com/topics/9-11-timeline](http://www.history.com/topics/9-11-timeline))



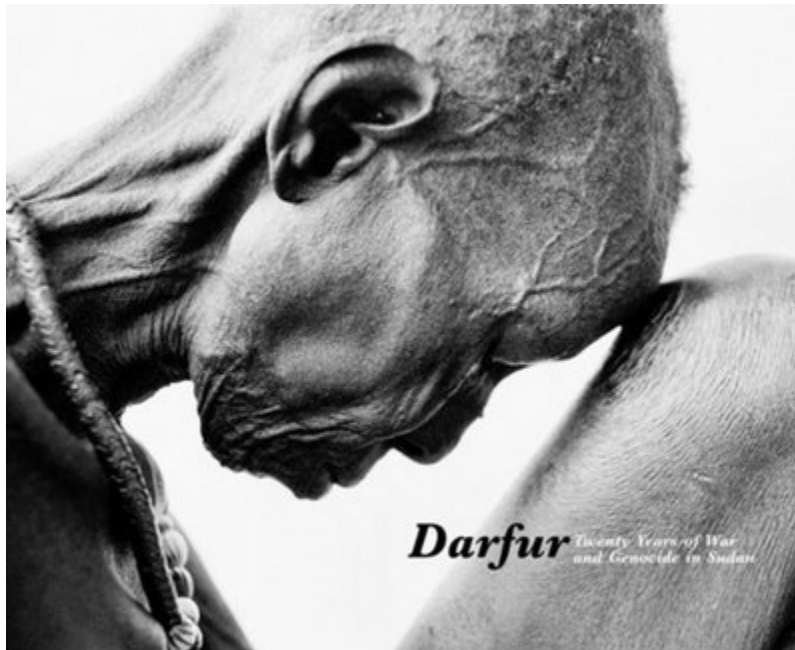
[thenextfamily.com/2011/09/the-anniversary-of-september-11th/](http://thenextfamily.com/2011/09/the-anniversary-of-september-11th/)

In Europe, the idea to create an economic union called the European Union began after World War II ([europa.eu/about-eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/index_en.htm)). The European Union was created to end trade and travel barriers throughout the member nations. On January 1, 2002 members of the European Union began using the euro as its currency. While the European Union and the euro have eliminated barriers among member countries, there are now concerns over how stable the

system of using one currency is. In 2013, fears over a collapse of the Greek economy could and would lead to a collapse of the value of the euro ([www.kas.de/brasilien/en/publications/35633/](http://www.kas.de/brasilien/en/publications/35633/)). Member countries scrambled to figure out a way to stabilize Greece's economy without destroying the euro and other European countries' economies as well. The European Union seemed like a good idea, however, in a time economic uncertainty, the idea for most member nations to use the same currency appears to be dangerous. Should one nation's economy begin to fail, then the others must come to its aid, which could devastate their economies or they could allow the one country to collapse and have to deal with that aftermath. The reason that this event has any significance is because, in time, it will either be the best idea with success for member nations, or it will disastrous as the currency and thus economies will collapse. A economic collapse in Europe can and will lead to a collapse in other areas of the world as well.

In the fall of 2004, I began my senior year of high school. For Government, I had an unconventional teacher. She did not simply focus on United States government (which is the intent of the class). One of the assignments dealt with the situation in Darfur. I will admit that at 17 years old I knew very little about what was actually happening in Sudan. From Ms. Myrick, I learned that Sudan was home to many different ethnicities that had fought for years over resources and control. In 2003, conflict erupted between Arab and non-Arab peoples in Sudan. Between 2003 and 2005 hundreds of thousands had been killed or died due to the conflict and over two million had to flee their homes ([www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/darfur](http://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/darfur)). I remember the stories of the rapes of young women and girls, children being taken from their parents and children being forced to fight. It was disturbing to me that genocide was taking place in 2005 and that other countries seemed not to be paying attention or doing anything to stop it. I think that the best way to

combat events such as the one in Sudan is education. We have to teach one another tolerance, acceptance and basic respect for human life. A Christian's life is no more valuable than a Muslim's and vice versa. I hope that as time continues to pass, that future generations teach their children about these events and teach them *not to hate*.



[hysterias1.wikispaces.com/Darfur](http://hysterias1.wikispaces.com/Darfur)

On December 26, 2004, a tsunami destroyed the coasts of Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Burma, Bangladesh and Indonesia. A 9.0 magnitude earthquake caused the tsunami, which killed tens of thousands of people and left thousands homeless and stranded. This event stuck in my mind because of the destruction that the tsunami had caused and at that point in my life, I had never heard of one occurring. At school, clubs began to collect money and items that could be sent to the ravaged areas. Natural disasters have a way of making us realize that we are all human and at times we are helpless.

([news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/12/1227\\_041226\\_tsunami\\_2.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/12/1227_041226_tsunami_2.html))

Over the course of the last seven years, the world has been dealing with an economic recession. Beginning in 2007, economies around the world began to slow down. People were losing money in the stock market. Businesses were forced to close or reduce their workforce, which caused many people to lose their jobs. Unemployment rose to its highest rates since the Great Depression in the 1930s. The recession has made it more difficult to find jobs that pay enough money to make ends meet. Students graduating from college find themselves unemployed for months or years. Once many of these young adults find a job, they are not working in a career that correlates with their education. The current economic situation in the United States is discouraging to the younger generation. At 27 years old, I find myself very fortunate to have a steady job that is directly associated with my education in college. I will say that there have been moments where I look for other positions, but I do not leave for fear of the unknown. Starting a new job means that I would have to begin at the bottom of the ladder. The economic uncertainty allows employers to be selective because there is a large pool of candidates to choose from. I hope that there is a solution that will jumpstart the struggling economy that will provide some stability for employers and employees. The reason that there is any significance to this is that the economic downturn has changed society: the availability of money, approval for loans, the amount of spending money budgeted per household and overall financial security has decreased for many families.

([money.cnn.com/2008/12/01/news/economy/recession/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2008/12/01/news/economy/recession/index.htm))

Another major event that has occurred in the last 19 years is the Arab Spring Movement which began in 2011 in Tunisia. A man named Mohamed Bouazizi was planning to sell produce on the street in Tunisia. He was not licensed to do so and he was struck by a police officer, which was embarrassing for Bouazizi so he set himself on fire in front of a government building

([www.npr.org/2011/12/17/143897126/the-arab-spring-a-year-of-revolution](http://www.npr.org/2011/12/17/143897126/the-arab-spring-a-year-of-revolution)). This action outraged citizens of his town and country and protests began to erupt and eventually the leaders of the nation fled. The collapse of the administration was viewed as a success. Events just like the one in Tunisia began to spread across the Arab world and this became called the Arab Spring. Revolutions continued to break out in Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and Syria to name a few ([www.npr.org/2011/12/17/143897126/the-arab-spring-a-year-of-revolution](http://www.npr.org/2011/12/17/143897126/the-arab-spring-a-year-of-revolution)). Most of these areas are still suffering from unstable governments that are failing to protect their citizens.

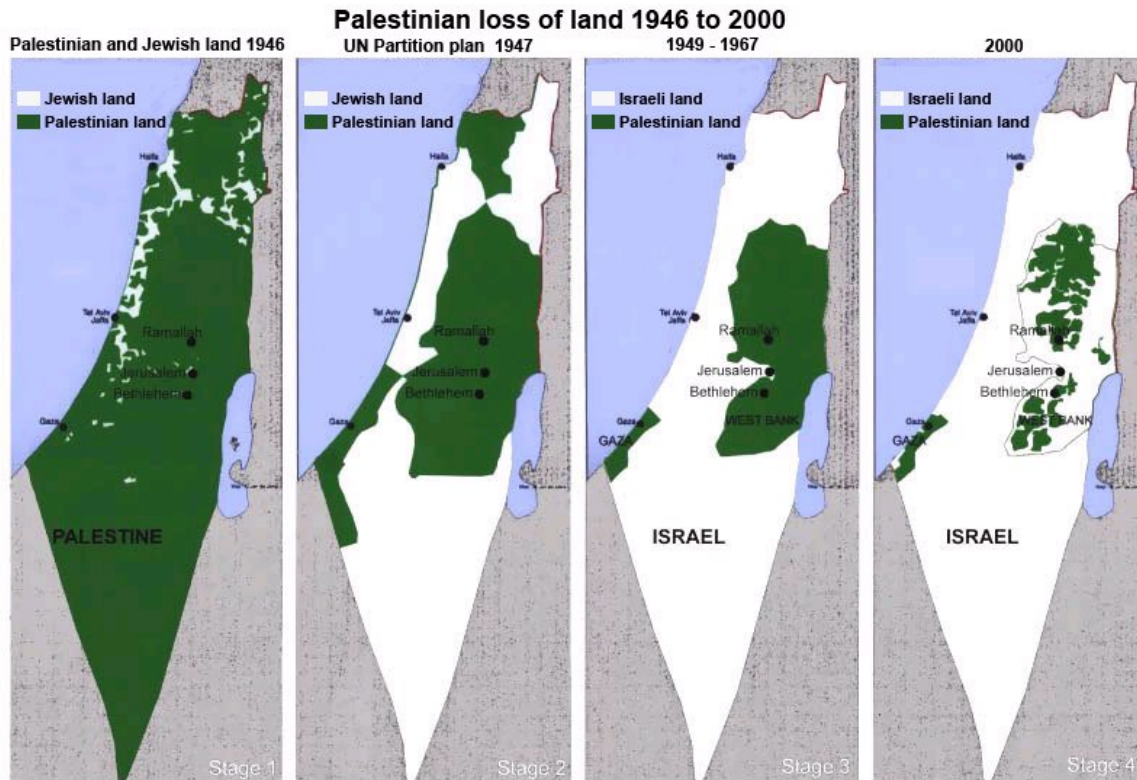


Political cartoon depicting the Arab Spring.  
[www.eruditiononline.co.uk/article.php?id=1264](http://www.eruditiononline.co.uk/article.php?id=1264)

In Syria, war broke out in an attempt to get rid of the president, Bashar al-Assad. The conflict has displaced thousands of people. This has caused a refugee problem in neighboring countries. There has been speculation about the government using chemical weapons against the people of Syria. The government claims that the militants rebelling against the government used

the weapons. Regardless of who used the chemical weapons, the people of Syria are not safe in their own nation. ([www.cbsnews.com/pictures/chemical-weapons-attack-in-syria/](http://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/chemical-weapons-attack-in-syria/))

Palestine is another area greatly affected by the Arab Spring. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to exist and recently has reached another level of hostility. When I was a child, I remember hearing about Israel and the conflict between the Jews and Muslims. The perception that I had was that the Muslims were attempting to take the Jews' homeland. However, as I have gotten older and I have learned about the creation of Israel, I understand the anger and hostility that the Arabs feel towards the Israelis. Essentially in 1948, land was taken from the Palestinians and given to form a Jewish state. Where were the Arabs supposed to go? In the last 60 years, Palestinians have been forced to live on tiny portions of land. They are not considered citizens of Israel and therefore they are not citizens of any nation. What about their home? The significance of the events in Syria and Israel is what will happen? What is the world willing to allow to happen? Should foreign powers such as the United States step in an attempt to establish a peace or should they allow the Syrians, Israelis and Palestinians to find their own peaceful ends to their conflicts? Will intervention from foreign powers only cause more difficulty in establishment of stronger governments? These events in the Middle East are troubling to me. History has proven that tension in one part of the world can spin the entire world into a war. The consequences of another world war would be deadly for us all. The Arab Spring movement is not over and I am not sure what could stop it.



I use this map when teaching world history to show how Palestinians have lost land since Israel was created.

[www.washingtonsblog.com/2014/07/facts-us-citizens-need-know-israel-palestine.html](http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2014/07/facts-us-citizens-need-know-israel-palestine.html)

The last major event that I want to include is the Boston Marathon Bombing on April 15, 2013. Hundreds of thousands of spectators turned out to watch the marathon. Two bombs exploded at the finish line of the race that killed three people and injured over 200 others. It was determined that Tamerlan Tsarnaev and his younger brother Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were responsible for building the bombs that were made using pressure cookers. The police pursued the two brothers and Tamerlan was killed and Dzhokhar was captured and is awaiting trial. The reason that I find the bombing to be important is because it is proof of the society in which we live. It is irrational to me to consider constructing a bomb to cause havoc in people's lives, especially those I do not know. It is hard for me to fathom using terror for no other reason than

to cause pain and suffering to others. Our upbringing cannot serve as an excuse for how we interact with the world. Life usually is not fair, but we each as individuals have the ability to make choices for how we live our life. We choose how we want to change the world in which we live. Regrettably the “War on Terror” that former president, George W. Bush entered, is a losing battle. Conflict is not going to end terror or the use of it to accomplish certain goals.

([www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/14/boston-marathon-timeline\\_n\\_5145615.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/14/boston-marathon-timeline_n_5145615.html))



[bostinno.streetwise.co/2013/04/16/boston-marathon-bombings-more-questions-than-answers/](http://bostinno.streetwise.co/2013/04/16/boston-marathon-bombings-more-questions-than-answers/)

Since 1995, my life and the world in which I live have changed in ways that I never could have predicted. As I look back, I realize that there are events that have taken place that have greatly altered my perspective on life. Before writing this paper, I may have been able to recall these events, but I do not think that I ever examined how they may have affected my outlook on the world. I love life and its value cannot be measured and I realize that as I grow older, my perceptions of these events may change as I learn more details about what happened or how they affected some other part of my reality.