

Comments of Lower Manhattan Resident and Worker

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Presented by:

Heather Swagart

Heather's Introduction:

My name is Heather Swagart and I work at a major US bank in Lower Manhattan. I am presenting these comments on behalf of my colleague Indira Singh.

Indira cannot be here because she was ordered by her doctors to leave her apartment immediately as it was re-stimulating her WTC syndrome conditions.

I am foregoing a day off work to present these comments, as this matter is important for all New Yorkers.

I am now going to read Indira's statement; the words are hers and have been submitted into the written record as such:

“My name is Indira Singh.

I work in risk and enterprise architecture and prior to 9/11 I was also a volunteer EMT. I was in athletic condition, a mountain climber. I have resided in a landmark designated building at 66 Pearl Street for the past 8 years. My building is located 700 yards South-South-East of the WTC site.

When the first tower collapsed my building rocked and the dust cloud headed in a SSE direction at over 50 mph. I responded to the site as an EMT.

I spent about one week there, walking 700 yards back and forth between Ground Zero and my apartment. Each time more dust, paper, floating particles, ash, and pieces of unknown materials and soot had made their way into my apartment. Compared to what I saw at Ground Zero this appeared insignificant.

After a week I began to experience cardiac and breathing problems, my first asthma attack.

It didn't make any difference if I was at the site, at my risk job two blocks away or at my apartment 700 yards away: symptoms were stimulated as I was always within a thousand yards of the site.

While the fires were burning, every gland in my body was swollen; I was coughing continuously. I was prescribed an inhaler for the breathing and codeine for the cough. I had no energy. My eyes were often infected. I have access to medical supplies from my climbing expeditions and was able to treat myself without constantly being at a hospital.

I had sores on my scalp and back; my hair fell out; rashes, lesions and growths appeared around my neck and nasal passages, some of which had to be lasered off. I considered myself lucky. Many of my neighbors – people had NOT responded to the site - reported the same symptoms and their dental work was also falling out.

Many called to ask me what to do, as their symptoms escalated when they cleaned their apartments. I organized neighborhood meetings with Safe Horizons and other groups and agencies.

Dr. Levin a WTC Program Director at Mt Sinai suggested I see a doctor in his program although the program's limit of 200 people had been reached. I was alarmed that my neighbors couldn't get access to a WTC program three months after the attacks.

In order to survive for every three weeks I spent in Lower Manhattan I spent one week out of it. I was lucky enough to have the resources to do this.

During 2002 whenever I left Lower Manhattan my WTC symptoms subsided, but returned when I came back. I lobbied to have the EPA mandate cleaning of the apartments. My apartment was finally cleaned in late 2002.

2003 was a year I thought would see the end of my WTC symptoms. Instead I was in for a huge surprise.

The initial EPA mandated cleaning did not abate the soot and ash in my building. Where is it coming from people asked? The outside air brings in more soot than prior to 9/11 but is that the whole answer? We need the EPA to determine this.

During 2003 my health continued to deteriorate. I still experienced all WTC symptoms in varying degrees, except now I was worn out. I was told this was just posttraumatic stress.

By November 2004, it hurt to breathe. I came to wish I had made it to the 106th floor that day, that 40 minutes of that hell would be far kinder in retrospect than the post 9/11 toxic version I have endured since then.

I was notified of a medically supervised detoxification program and after completing it, I regained my health and energy. I could breathe without coughing and I could sleep through the night. All WTC symptoms disappeared. **I am not here to sell any program, as different modalities work for different people. I am here to state that when I returned to my apartment after completing the program, all my WTC symptoms returned.**

One of my doctors wrote a letter to my lawyer who is litigating on my behalf with the apartment owners regarding failure to clean soot and ash. The letter states that the soot and ash still in my apartment are re-stimulating my WTC syndrome.

It is not helpful to deny our toxic conditions. This encourages others outside the WTC toxic zone, or with financial incentives to deny the truth, and deny us the resources and help we so desperately need.

The EPA's actions and statements set the tone with landlords, insurance companies, real estate owners, health services and the American people. People all over the world saw the entire area was blanketed. They are bemused at the EPA's testing strategies. Please test ALL apartments requesting that be done.

In my opinion, there is a national perception problem with the EPA over 9/11. The EPA has one last golden opportunity to change that.

Thank you."