



**Deborah Slocum**

**Guidance Counselor**

**Interviewed by Gaby Mikael  
May 8, 2015**

*Deborah Slocum was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, went to Wesleyan University, and started at Staples in 2000.*

***What were you doing during the attack?***

I was meeting with a student that was having a difficult emotional time. And then I was interrupted by the principal who said we were all going to have a meeting in the conference room.

***How did you learn of the attack?***

From the principal. She got us all together in the guidance conference room and told us and honestly I didn't really understand. I didn't actually see a video of it until later that day, so that's how I learned, from the principal.

***How did you react immediately?***

I definitely just did not understand. At that point I do not think that the towers had fallen, I think the plane had just gone into them, I just didn't understand. She was trying to explain it to us without a visual. It was very difficult, and then I felt scared and sad. Very sad.

***Do you think your life would be any different today if the attacks didn't happen?***

Yes, I do. My husband works in the city, but luckily that day he was on an outing. I think that I as an American feel more vulnerable than we ever have before. I feel our physical geographical place on the planet; we have been able to feel a distance from everything. I, since then have not felt that distance. I feel what's going on in the rest of the world impacts us, where before it didn't so much.

***Do you remember the government's response to the attacks?***

What I do remember is the mayor's [Mayor Rudy Giuliani's] response to the attacks. I don't remember the government though. I remember President Bush being put into a bunker and things like that, but not the government so much as the local community handling the situation.

***The international community?***

No, I kept the *New York Post*, but not the international community because it felt so local to us.

***What did you think about terrorism before the attacks?***

Again, I felt that distance, we did have Oklahoma City, but I became aware what other countries thought of us - that there was some hatred and dislike. One can argue whether the reasons are good or not, but I think again that when I hear about terrorist attacks in other countries, I feel more empathy I think for the people that are involved than I did in the past.

***Did the attacks change your view on terrorism?***

It horrifies me. It horrified me before, but I would say that it feels more personal now; personally horrifying.

***Did you have to inform any student directly?***

I did. I had to tell a couple of my students whose father was in the building, and I was really new at my job so I don't think I handled it well. It wasn't one of my prouder moments. I think I would be much more likely to be able to handle it now. I had to let both of them know, and then we got in contact with their mother, who came and picked them up, and the next day we found out that he was one of the people who made it out. At the time I wasn't sure if anyone had gotten in touch with him, and truly didn't understand that everything was shut down. I didn't understand the state of New York City at the time. There had been no visuals at that point. I felt a little clueless.

***In the coming days did you have to deal with more kids coming in dealing with the attacks?***

We were really blessed that so few people from the Westport community were impacted directly. I think mostly what we had to deal with was the anxiety and fear that this could happen so close to our home.