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Steel resolve

ANTHONY Whitaker's photograph, "Steel Standing," is still as riveting and moving as the day he took it — seven days after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

"It is a powerful symbol that honors the spirit of courage, strength, resilience and rebirth of our nation, especially New Yorkers, because it refused to fall in the face of one of the most shocking premeditated criminal acts on our people on September 11, 2001," he says.

"It literally identified itself by virtue of what it was — a huge monument of steel that was standing. This distinctive symbol was not created by a graphics art firm but was forged by the thousands of people whose lives were sacrificed on that fateful September morning. It is a unique and symbolic portrait of their heroic souls that serves as a transcendent message and an enlightening and visual memorial."

Whitaker, a 47-year-old artist, fashion designer, graphic designer and senior district operator at Con Ed for the past 22 years, decided to take his camera to work at the World Trade Center when he was dispatched there just after 9/11.

"It dawned on me that this is his-

Harlem's Anthony Whitaker captured one of 9/11's most iconic photographs

tory that I wanted to document," he remembers.

Little did he know that, 10 years later, this black-and-white photograph of the monolithic piece of steel of the Tower, taken at the northeast corner of Albany and Washington Streets early in the morning when the sun was just rising, would become an inspirational artistic statement in response to the tragedy of 9/11.

"The physical essence of this piece of steel was so charged it was as if I could hear the ruin speak in my head — 'I am steel, I am standing, I am steel standing' — and at that moment I knew this was a spiritual message of inspiration. As I looked at it, I thought of us as a nation and realized how symbolic it was of America."

In June 2010, "Steel Standing" was the first photographic poster offered to visitors at the 9/11 memorial preview site.

Whitaker founded the Steel Standing Memorial Foundation (steelstandingmemorial.org) to memo-



In June, Anthony Whitaker received a Proclamation award from Manhattan Borough president Scott Singer in honor of his historic photographic achievement.

rialize the events of that tragic day via selected decorated memorabilia such as t-shirts and posters incorporating the iconic image (available at 911memorial.org/catalog.)

A significant portion of the proceeds will be donated to the non-profit organizations the National September 11 Memorial and Museum and the Wounded Warrior Project.

— Georgett Roberts