

Political Impetus, and Moral Imperative: The United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum

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Built with more than bricks and mortar, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was created from memories, not of American soil, nor American history. "memory must be sufficiently ambiguous and open ended so that others can inhabit the space, can imbue forms with their own memory," writes James Ingo Freed, chief architect of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Young 349). Each memory is evoked by a particular place immortalized in time, in the echoes of eloquence, simple and profound, and in the memories of those not here with us. "To be effective, a national memorial must create a place to assemble, as well as one of reflection, prayer, and personal emotion" (Hartman 55). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is home to more than just the historical record and its artifacts. At its core resides the personal story of the victims; their lives continue to tell humanity's story. Therefore, within the museum's walls dwell the darkest parts of our humanity juxtaposed against a continuing celebration of life and humanity's infinite potential.

This powerful dichotomy of human nature, manifested as political gain, and moral responsibility, is at the center of a debate that questions the motivations behind the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Many argue that millions of lives are trivialized by the political agenda which they unknowingly continue to serve. Each generation of visitors that enters the museum, enters with its own unique experience in tow and leaves with its own imperative for change. The visitor leaves with three basic choices. First he can choose direct action, from the smallest scale to the most radical. His second choice is inaction, demonstrated by his willingness to share his experiences, but his words never manifest themselves as direct action. His third choice is to let apathy guide his choice of actions, always waiting for someone else to speak out for him. For the



millions of victims, their choice for the visitor is clear: action over inaction, and especially over apathy.

It is this moral imperative, which future generations of visitors to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum will find the most heavily challenging in a world caught in the quagmire of entangled political agenda. Despite the continued efforts of survivors and scholars to discuss the events surrounding the Holocaust objectively, the ongoing discussion of the Holocaust remains subjectively tied to the political agenda, either deliberately or by topical association. This moral bog has mired the reputation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., beginning with its conception during the President Carter's Administration, to more recent concerns over the museum's role in diplomatic affairs. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is faced with the challenge of reconciling its relevance with current world affairs and its moral relationship with those claimed as victims during the Nazi Holocaust.

The events collectively known as the Nazi Holocaust, is defined by the President's Commission on the Holocaust as: "The systematic, bureaucratic extermination of six million Jews by Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War . . . . As night descended, millions of other people were swept into its net of death . . . . Never before in human history has genocide been an all pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral constraint" (PCH 3).

The first ceremony in the United States to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust took place on December 12, 1942. That day, 500,000 Jewish workers stopped work to remember the victims and call attention to the ongoing destruction of Europe's

Jews. Later that day, New York City radio stations paused for two minutes of silence before airing memorial services at 4:30 p.m. Two years later, on April 19, 1944, the largest act of public remembrance during the war took place. Thirty thousand people gathered on the steps of City Hall in New York City to commemorate the first anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. An additional three years passed before the first physical memorial to the holocaust was proposed and dedicated. On October 19, 1947, an eternal flame was lit in Riverside Park, on the mall between 83<sup>rd</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> Streets. The monument, like so many other attempts in the future to build a national holocaust memorial, was subject to a myriad of concerns, among them the political agenda of the 1950s. A plaque marking the still un-built monument reads: "This is the site for the American Memorial to the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Battle April-May 1943 and to the Six Million Jews of Europe Martyred in the cause of human liberty"(Young 74).

Many Holocaust survivors continue to be critical of the United States for not doing enough save the Jews. They argue the United States had the opportunity to bomb the gas chambers and railway lines leading to Auschwitz-Birkenau, but failed to do so. A toxic environment of xenophobic, and isolationist immigration policies, were fueled by anti-Semitic attitudes, even within the United States, at whose harbor, the Statue of Liberty stands, imploring the tired, the weak, the down-trodden, to lay down their burdens on her soil, and start anew.

This is the great irony of the Jewish American community which included more than 80,000 displaced persons between 1948 and 1952. Arriving in the United States, these "new Americans" wanted to "forget their experiences and build new lives. The



communities in which they lived encouraged little else” (Miller 220). The former National Director for the Anti-Defamation Leagues B’nai B’rith, Abraham H. Foxman, describes his immigrant experience this way: “They expected us to look like we had come right out of a camp—emaciated, wounded. They hinted that they wanted to know what we had gone through, only they didn’t...” (Miller 221). Still others including, David Bergman, recalled: “I was just getting on my feet, starting college, when I get a letter from Uncle Sam. That was when the Korean War was happening. They told me I would be drafted and then I tried to explain to them that I just went through hell” (Berenbaum 217).

“The 1950s were years of public assimilation and private pain” (Miller 221). Beneath the outward struggle to blend into American society each survivor struggled, in his own way, with his memories of the past. Many chose silence, like Helen Lebowitz Goldkind, who feared she might “talk about it so much. And to me it was if my kids will hear what I have gone through that Hitler will get them too and I sort of wanted to save them from that” (Berenbaum 218).

A generation later many survivors still felt a need to share their stories to bring those loved ones back from the grave. Others, however, spoke of a decision to share their experiences for the benefit of future generations, realizing they could not bring their family, their children back from the grave: “[B]ut perhaps I could reach some people and make them understand that this did happen and can happen again if we are not going to be aware of our surroundings” (Berenbaum 219).

The American consciousness regarding the Holocaust began to awaken with the publication of Anne Frank’s diary in 1952. A study conducted in 1996 at the University

of Michigan asked students to identify their primary source of education regarding the events surrounding the Holocaust. Anne Frank's diary was named by a majority of the students, of which over half indicated that the book was required reading in high school. "Even those who had not read the book knew Anne Frank's name and could connect it to the Holocaust, which is something they could not as consistently do with Adolf Eichmann, the Warsaw Ghetto, or Dauchau" (Flaznbaum 3). Authors concur with the, author of Americanization of the Holocaust, Heliene Flazenbaum's assertion that "our knowledge of the Holocaust in America has rarely been delivered by direct witness" (Flaznbaum 4). The author has the benefit of time with which to make her observations about the initial trends in Holocaust remembrance. However, one must also account for the social climate of the 1950s and recognize that Jewish immigrants were struggling to reconcile their past with becoming Americans. These two distinct pieces of the human puzzle, living as a Jew, or an American, were thought to be mutually exclusive, the majority's choice struggling to become an American.

The 1963 broadcast of Adolf Eichmann's trial for crimes against humanity awakened the memories of survivors, and spoke directly to the American people,. For the American-Jewish community the trial marked the "first time survivors were telling their stories in public, expressing their pain on television, before the world" (Miller 222). For those outside the Jewish community, the trial was the first instance in which the accounts of the Holocaust were delivered first hand, thereby creating a deeper sense of reality for those untouched by personal experience.

Despite the power of the spoken word to convey firsthand to the public the events surrounding the Holocaust, another equally powerful force was at play, the United States



diplomatic relationship with the State of Israel. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, recognizing the Zionist movement's call for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the Declaration, written as a part of a letter penned by Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild states:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country" (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm>).

Also referred to as the Palestine Mandate, the Balfour Declaration was given legal recognition by the League of Nations in 1922.

The Palestine Mandate placed the creation of a Jewish homeland, and its protection and administration under the purview of Great Britain. The British mandate lasted until 1947, when United Nations General Resolution 181 called for the gradual withdrawal of British Forces concluding no later than August 1, 1948. The continued violence taking place between the Arab and Jewish inhabitants of Palestine prompted the United Nations to act, creating a framework for a partitioned state of Palestine. It also laid out a framework for an independent state of Israel. It is at this crucial moment that the United States began to codify its benevolent relationship with the state of Israel.

The history of Palestine, and later the State of Israel, is littered with violent examples of a millennia-old dispute. The land known presently as Israel is claimed by both Muslims and Jews as holy ground. Following the destruction of European Jewry,

the remnants of the Jewish people felt an even greater need for a Jewish homeland located within the Holy Land. The contemporary historical record reflects the ongoing relationship between the Israeli people and the government of the United States. It has been suggested that the organized American-Jewish community within the United States, as a well organized and act voting constituency, have leveraged their votes to promote the United States benevolence toward Israel (Saidel 14-26).

On May 15, 1967 President Gamal Abdel Nasser mobilized Egyptian troops, sparking the Six Day War of 1967, between the Egyptians and Israelis. Despite the tense situation surrounding the events of June 1967, it was the Egyptian leader's intent to annihilate Israel that brought the Holocaust to the forefront of the American Political agenda. For the Jewish community, the Six Day War signaled the real possibility of another Holocaust, this time taking place in Israel. At the conclusion of the Six Day War the United States political consciousness was forced to reconcile the plausibility of a second holocaust taking place, and its perceived apathetic role some twenty years prior. This new reality was reinforced again in 1973 during the Yom Kippur War, when the United States was called to break away from its historical complacency and recognize the real possibility of a second Holocaust taking place.

Former President Jimmy Carter and his administration are directly responsible for the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Before concluding that President Carter was motivated by an emerging American consciousness regarding the Holocaust, the circumstances under which the museum was proposed must be examined. Biographers and historians alike agree that Jimmy Carter's religious affiliation with the evangelical Christian church and his comments supporting a Palestinian



homeland made him an unlikely friend of the Jewish community. The Carter Administration was faced with the promise of a powerful organized voting constituency within the Jewish community at large; however, an olive branch was first needed to heal the growing rift.

At the suggestion of his administration, President Carter announced that the sale of F-15 fighters promised to Israel would also be made available to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The administration's announcement to sell F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia and Egypt only widened the rift between the administration and its Jewish constituents. Further conflicts emerged with President Carter's announcement that the United States would allow the Palestinian Liberation Organization, PLO, to participate in the upcoming Geneva peace talks (Linenthal 17-18).

A flurry of memos began to circulate around the White House with regard to the President's relationship with the American-Jewish community. President Carter's Chief of Domestic Policy, Stuart Eizenstat, discreetly looked for ways to heal the rift between President Carter and the Jewish Community. One possibility suggested was a visit to the Center of Holocaust Studies in Brooklyn, New York, and the creation of a panel "to recommend a Holocaust memorial" for the United States (Linenthal 18).

A 1978, march led by a Chicago-based American-Nazi group in Skokie, Illinois, generated new concerns for the emerging American consciousness. Despite its obvious implications with regard to the First Amendment, the march generated increasingly stronger arguments for the creation of a permanent memorial in the United States. It was suggested that if the administration announced a plan to build a national memorial,

it might be an appropriate gesture in honor of Israel's thirteenth anniversary and a symbol of the United States' support of Israel's birth and continued life. The idea deserves consideration on its merits, although such a move might appear to some people to be glib public relations, (Linenthal 19)

The political implications are clear; such a memorial would further solidify the United States relationship with the state of Israel, thereby bridging the gap between the administration and its Jewish constituents.

Former President Carter's announcement of the creation of a fifteen member commission to recommend an appropriate permanent national memorial to the Holocaust, during a White House Rose Garden ceremony, May 1, 1978, coincided with the thirteenth anniversary of the establishment of the Nation of Israel. During his presentation, President Carter remarked: "I read Arthur Morse's 'While Six Million Died,' the tragic account of the ultimate in man's 'inhumanity to man, the Holocaust.'" President Carter went on to say, "out of the ashes was born the state of Israel," directly attributing United States foreign policy with regards to Israel to the "indelible memories of the past. . . ." (Linenthal 19). In what those present have described as an abrupt change of topic, he went on to announce the need for a national memorial to "insure that we in the United States never forget," thus announcing the creation of a fifteen member commission to recommend an "appropriate memorial . . . to the six million who were killed in the Holocaust," (Linenthal 19).



A series of events to create and establish a national memorial, and later the museum itself, dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust was set in motion by President Carter's announcement. The first in this series of events was Executive Order Number 12093, November 1, 1978, which created the President's Commission on the Holocaust. The Commission would include a complement of twenty-four presidential appointments, and five representatives from each of the houses of Congress. Simply appointing men and women of character would not be enough to satisfy the demands of demographic representation. Furthermore, there is little evidence to suggest that politics played a less than central role in the selection of commission members. Several authors agree that it was more than a moral imperative which provided the forward impetus for the project.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were at least eight other "Holocaust memorial/centers in existence or being planned across the country [and] scores of proposals for program having to do with Holocaust studies being submitted to, the Endowments for grant assistance" (Linenthal 20). With each day that passed the Administration risked looking as though the proposal was just "glib political relations," as argued by author Edward Linenthal. To bolster the Administration's support for the Commission and the proposed memorial, quick action was necessary to capitalize on the growing trend in Holocaust studies. Recognizing this, the Administration began searching for a chairperson who lacked organizational affiliation, outside Democratic Party, who would lead from a strong political background, utilizing his skills in fundraising and as moderator. The list of personal attributes reads more like the résumé of a person seeking political office, rather than a moral compass to guide President's Commission on the Holocaust.

The Administration's first choice, then President of Orion Films, Arthur Krum was an ideal choice for the reasons enumerated above. Krum took issue with the limited scope of the initial proposal to create a memorial dedicated to the six million who died, rather than the eleven million other such projects proposed. Ultimately he declined the offer citing a preference to use his creative talent to create something for the future rather than the past. Further deliberations led the White House to consider Elie Wiesel as a potential chairperson for the Commission. His appointment, they argued, would be without attack either politically during the appointment process, or from the Jewish community at large. Despite his consummate credentials to lead the Commission, the Administration was still wary of his un-established political and fundraising capabilities. (Saidel 103).

From behind the scenes it is apparent that politics were an integral an intentional part of the Commission and the future of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Author Rochelle Saidel, in Never Too Late to Remember: The Politics Behind New York City's Holocaust Museum, argues that politics have played a crucial part in each project's history. Citing various sources, including White House memos and key administration officials Saidel dissects the political machine behind the Commission, and ultimately the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The author cites personal conversations with Chairman Elie Wiesel, in which he indicated to her, "the commission was created for political purposes" (Saidel 100). Still other members of President Carter's Administration chose to downplay the importance of politics, citing a strong moral imperative instead, as echoed by Stuart Eizenstat, who says, "It was not done for political reasons, but we knew it should be popular in the Jewish community" (Saidel 100).



Saidel, again quotes a personal conversation with presidential aide, Mark Siegel, to emphasize the administration's knowledge of the sway politics held over the project. Siegel states: The Holocaust memorial was born out of politics, and it was born out of domestic political crisis. I know that's the case" (Saidel 100). Each comment moves the "moral imperative" to the side of consideration, and the political needs of a troubled administration to the forefront.

Despite the tempestuous political background of the Commission, its agenda was clearly laid forth in Executive Order 1209, issued November 1, 1978, by President Carter. The Commission was charged with making "a report to the President and Secretary of the Interior containing its recommendations with respect to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust." Second, the Commission was asked to address the "feasibility of obtaining funds for the creation and maintenance of the Memorial through contributions by the American People." Finally, the Commission was asked to make recommendation for "appropriate ways for the nation to commemorate April 28-29, 1979, which Congress had resolved shall be "Days of Remembrance".

The introduction of S.J. Res. 97 was the first step taken by the United States towards commemorating on a national level the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. The joint resolution was introduced on behalf of thirty-five cosponsors by Senator John Danforth. It was recommended that the days between April 13-19 be set aside as "Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust" (United States Holocaust Memorial Council 174). "Whereas the people of the United States should continually rededicate themselves to the principles of equality; Whereas the people of the United States should remain

eternally vigilant against all tyranny, recognizing that tyranny provides a breeding ground for bigotry to flourish" (S.J. Res. 97). The joint resolution calls upon the American people to join the international community in commemorating the victims of the Holocaust on the 13<sup>th</sup> April, Yom Hashoah, internationally recognized as a day of remembrance.

In addition to the congressional record, including the remarks by Senator Danforth, and the body of S.J. Res. 97, is a memorandum written by Benjamin Meed of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization based in New York City. The memorandum explains in greater detail, the Jewish traditions of remembrance with regard to the Holocaust. Meed writes "[S]urvivors established that nearly every day of the year represented an anniversary of the destruction of some Jewish community during the Holocaust. . . . The Most prominent came to be the first day of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on April 18, 1943, which was then the eve of Pesach (Passover) festival. This particular anniversary became the symbol of commemoration of Jewish armed resistance in World War II. . . ." The need arose to choose a date that would conform with the Jewish traditions with regard to mourning. Jewish tradition does not allow Jews to "mourn on the Sabbath, and on Holidays. It was found that the date of 27 Nissan, which is close to that date in 1943 . . . never falls on the Sabbath, or on a Jewish holiday" (S.J. 97). Additionally, Mr. Meed suggests, that the President's Commission on the Holocaust set aside a full week of observances to allow plenty of time for communities across the United States to hold various commemorative activities. Later that same year, the President's Commission on the Holocaust provided, further recommendations for appropriate civil commemoration activities.



The President's Commission on the Holocaust, chaired by Elie Wiesel, presented its findings to President Carter in a White House Rose Garden Ceremony, September 27, 1979. "Because of the magnitude of the Holocaust, its scope and the critical issues it raises, the Commission recommends establishment of a living memorial that will speak not only of the victims' death but of their lives, a memorial that can transform the living by transmitting the legacy of the Holocaust" (PCH 9). President Carter echoed the Commission's message, during his remarks made at the National Civil Holocaust Commemoration Ceremony, April 27, 1979: "It is our collective task as well as to learn from this process of renewal, the roots of hope-- a hope based not on illusion or ignorance, but hope grounded in the rebirth of the human spirit and reaffirmation of the sacredness of life" (PCH). The Commission went on to recommend that the proposed living memorial would have three components: a memorial/museum, an educational foundation, and a Committee on Conscience.

Before work could begin on the national "memorial/museum," it was necessary for the Commission to consider a working definition of the event they were charged with memorializing. "The word *holocaust* comes from the ancient Greek, *olos* meaning "whole" and *kaustos* or *kautos* meaning "burnt." Appearing as early as the fifth century B.C.E., the term can mean sacrifice wholly consumed by fire or a great destruction of life, especially by fire" ([www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)). But its roots in the ancient Greek remain far removed from events in the twentieth century. However, at the center of a heated debate is the struggle to maintain the uniqueness of the Holocaust with respect to the Jewish experience. The lexicographical evolution of the term is explored in the following

paragraphs, with particular attention to the term's relationship to Jewish tradition and secular academics.

The Old Testament, or Torah, as it is known by those of the Jewish faith, delineates Judaic laws and social customs, and in particular provides a religious context for the term "holocaust." Leviticus, Chapter 1, "Ritual Sacrifices," clearly delineates the acceptable means of making a ritual sacrifice. It commands Israelites wishing to bring an animal sacrifice before Yahweh, it must be a part of the herd or flock. If chosen from the herd or flock, the offering must be male without blemish. "To find favor with the Lord, he shall bring it to the entrance of the meeting tent and there lay his hand on the head of the holocaust, so that it may be acceptable to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:1-5). The chapter continues, "the priest shall then burn the whole offering on the altar as a holocaust, a sweet-smelling oblation to the Lord" (Leviticus 1:9).

There is no strictly academic standpoint from which one can define the term "holocaust". Rather, the accepted academic meaning of the term reflects its traditional religious definition, and echoes its socio-historical context. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "holocaust" as: (1) A sacrifice wholly consumed by fire; a whole burnt offering (2) transferred sense and figuratively; (a) Complete sacrifice or offering (b) sacrifice on a large scale (c) complete consumption by fire, or that which is so consumed; complete destruction, especially of a large number of persons; a slaughter or massacre" (OED 334).

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum suggests that three events played a crucial role in our association of the term holocaust with the events that took place in Nazi occupied Europe, Those events included the official English translation of the



Israel's Declaration of Independence written in 1948, the initial translation of documents held at Yad Vashem During the 1970s, the cultural context for Holocaust, the extermination of six million European Jews, was added to the term's canonical meaning. A second definition is more culturally aligned. The American Heritage Dictionary defines holocaust as: "(1) Great or total destruction, especially by fire. (2) Holocaust the genocide of European Jews and others by the Nazi's during World War II" (American Heritage Dictionary 400).

In a report filed by the President's Commission on the Holocaust (PCH), the Holocaust was defined as: "the systematic, bureaucratic extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War; as night descended, millions of other peoples were swept into its net of death" (PCH 3). These definitions share one common thread: they are all defined by the relationship to Jewish ritual and history. None of the above mentioned definitions make mention of any other groups, with the exception of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Those groups consisted of: Gypsies, the physically and mentally handicapped, Soviet prisoners of war, Polish and Soviet citizens, political prisoners, religious dissenters, and homosexuals.

Executive Order 12169, when contrasted with the Commission's definition, placed equal emphasis on Jewish and non-Jewish victims. The report defined the Holocaust as the "systematic and state-sponsored extermination of six million Jews and some five million other peoples by the Nazi's and their collaborators during World War II" (Linenthal 41). Edward T. Linenthal in, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum asserts that the addition of the word "and" creates a new

emphasis, acknowledging the victimization of other non-Jewish groups. Therefore, he argues that both “implicitly and explicitly” there was now “competition over first place in the Holocaust’s body count” (Linenthal 41).

David Niewyck and Francis Nicosia, authors of The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust, argue that proponents for a Judeo-centric approach to the Holocaust base their arguments on three criteria: motive, intent and scale. “Motive or cause of action” rests upon the virulent anti-Semitism that was not was not present for any of the other groups. “Intent” refers back to motivation and is revealed through such events as Kristallnacht, (“night of broken glass”), and other such state sponsored acts culminating in what became known as the “Final Solution,” a comprehensive plan for the total annihilation of the Jewish people. Lastly, the scale of the event in statistical terms, roughly half of European Jewry, estimated at a population of eleven million, were destroyed.

The authors propose that if the other groups are to be recognized and included in the definition, a broader approach must be implemented, beginning with the statistics. Often quoted, the figure of six million Jews should be expanded to nearly seventeen million victims in total. The authors assert that those groups wishing to expand the definition of the Holocaust often cite Nazi ideology. “They maintain that the Nazi state was ideologically driven to “purify the body of the nation” from everything “alien,” “asocial,” and “hereditarily ill,” and that Nazi racial and social policy must be understood as an indivisible whole (Niewyck & Francis 46).

The evidence for inclusion, and for Judeo-centric interpretations of the Holocaust can both be reduced to the same evidence pool. The uniqueness of the Holocaust experience within Jewish culture is widely disseminated through such groups as the



Simon Wiesenthal Center and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. In a 1978 report presented to President Carter, the President's Commission on the Holocaust outlines those qualities that make the Holocaust a uniquely Jewish experience.

As previously mentioned, the President's commission defined the Holocaust as a "systematic, bureaucratic extermination" carried out as a "central act of state" by the Nazis and their collaborators. The genocide of the Jewish people was an "end in itself independent of the requisites of war" (PCH 3). The commission argues, "the concept of the annihilation of an entire people, as distinguished from the subjugation, was unprecedented: Never before in Human history has genocide been an all-pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral or religious constraints" (PCH 3). The commission also contends that in addition to the organized genocide of the Jews, "the holocaust was not a throwback to medieval torture or archaic barbarism but a thoroughly modern expression of bureaucratic organization, industrial management, scientific achievement, and technological sophistication" (PCH 4).

For example, the location of the extermination camps was determined by "accessibility and cost effectiveness," which casts the Nazi regime as a modern business venture. Yet another example is found at Auschwitz where a "privately owned and corporately sponsored" camp run by I.G. Farben, a petro-chemical complex, repeatedly experimented with a wide variety of gases until the discovery of Zyklon B. This gas, at the cost of a half-cent per body, would kill two thousand people in less than thirty minutes. The most glaring example of this modern business machine at work concerns

Jewish children. As the war drew to a close, the Nazi's began to look for ways to save both money and gas. It was determined that if children were directly placed in the ovens or thrown into open burning pits, economic savings would result (PCH 4).

The commission also argues that the Holocaust would not have taken place without the collapse of certain religious norms. The Holocaust was furthered by the "increasing secularity [that] fueled a devaluation of the image of the human being created in the likeness of [Yahweh]" (PCH 5). The absence of morality, as defined within a religious context, severs the responsibility of government as guardian of its citizens. "Confronting the Holocaust threatens to sear our souls and challenge our perceptions, our complacency. It introduces a tone of somberness and tragedy into human discourse and heightens our awareness of the precariousness and vulnerability of life" (PCH 6). Out of this collapse, however, rises a new humanity charged by moral obligation to remember the events of the past; to thank those who chose active resistance over complacency, and inaction. To honor the lives' of those who are not here with us by challenging society to remember the "night" that fell over Eastern Europe.

Humanity's moral responsibility to actively remember those victimized by the Nazi regime is best expressed via poetry and scholarship. Authors and scholars alike have grappled with the moral and ethical dilemmas brought to light by the events which took place in Nazi occupied Europe. Rather than sitting in direct judgment of the past, poets and philosophers alike argue for the moral right, both in memory, and in direct action.

During the dedication ceremony for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, held April 21, 1993, a reading of Chaim Potok's "America Remembering"



moved the audience to consider their role and the museum's role as vessels of memory. Chaim Potok wrote, "We who live in a free land bordered by protective oceans and/ friendly nations have taken upon ourselves the duty of/ remembering forever a distant tyranny. . . ." When people ask why we must have here, thousands of miles away, a physical manifestation of a memory not of our history? Chaim Potok suggests: "Our oceans have brought us many pasts and presents. Faraway deeds wash upon our shores, some unsightly, some ringed with grandeur" (Chaim Potok "America Remembering"). The essences of those memories, though not of our history, have found their way to our shores. Jewish immigrants are the essence of Chaim Potok's metaphor. Their memories have become a part of our national tapestry, a part of our story.

The imperative to remember is also expressed by the twentieth-century philosopher Hannah Arendt, herself a refugee from Nazi Europe. "Comprehension does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedence, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden which our century has placed on us—neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight" (Berenbaum 220). This burden, though heavy, and often highly charged, must remain our constant charge, a memory alive within the vessels of humanity.

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, Hannah Arendt suggests that: "[m]any people today would agree that there is no such thing as collective guilt, or for that matter, collective innocence, and if there were, no one person could ever be guilty or innocent" (Arendt 298). However, political responsibility does exist apart

from the individual members of the group but cannot be judged according to moral terms, nor prosecuted in a criminal court. Arendt continues: "Each government assumes political responsibility for the deeds and misdeeds of its predecessor and every nation for deeds and misdeeds of the past.... Every generation, by virtue of being born into a historical continuum, is burdened by the sins of the fathers as it is blessed with the deeds of the ancestors" (Arendt 298). "Political responsibility" therefore must remain responsive to both the sins and burdens of our human nature if ethics and morality are to be judged by a court of law.

American ideological history places great faith in human nature, in the inherent possibility for goodness within man. The individual is valued at a premium, above the community at large to which he belongs. According to John Locke and other Enlightenment philosophers, each individual enters his life, a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate. As a result, he is able to make decisions based upon his own experience. Each individual has a choice. Inaction therefore is not absolved, or tacitly condoned. The bystander who says nothing in the face of inequity is no less guilty than the active participant. This same human quality is the very foundation of our "republican experiment." Juxtaposed against the bystanders, and perpetrators of the Nazi Holocaust, our humanity is the same; fundamentally we are no different. The difference, however, lies within each individual: the power to choose for himself, whether he will go quietly into the night, or whether his voice will move others to action.

Despite the clarity with which the Commission presents the moral imperatives regarding the uniqueness of the Jewish experience during the Nazi Holocaust and the redemptive quality of remembrance, the individual's choice itself is rarely so subjective.



Outside the scholarly realm of academic and philosophical idealism, the American people are challenged to accept the Holocaust as apart of their history. Prominently featured among national monuments dedicated to American ideals and their champions stands the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Therefore, the task at hand asks each individual to accept a small piece of responsibility for the continued life the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Their continued life is ensured by institutions like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, but their future lies in the hands of museum visitors. Visitors who are readily aware, that they are being asked to commemorate an event far removed from their understanding of the "American" experience.

Herein lies the source of contention regarding the Holocaust's gradual assimilation into the American consciousness. Its place within American history is only revealed once one accepts the pluralistic tenants which have given the United States much of its self-identity. "In being defined as the ultimate violation of America's Bill of Rights as the persecution of plural groups, the Holocaust encompasses all the reasons immigrants, past, present and future have for seeking refuge in America" (Young 73). Each statement defending the acceptance of the Holocaust as part of American history uses the language of our republican experiment. Arguing in favor of placing the national memorial to the Holocaust on the Mall in Washington DC, James Young asserts:

This museum belongs at the center of American life because as a democratic civilization America is the enemy of racism and its ultimate expression, genocide. An event of universal significance, the Holocaust has special importance for Americans, in act and word the Nazi's denied the deepest tenants of the American people. (Young 73)

Again, the language used to make the argument is filled with American allegories that allude to events from our own past in order to rationalize events taking place outside our borders.

For every scholar who invokes the language and imagery of American history, there are still those who find the allegories detract from the uniquely Jewish nature of the event. Some authors continue to argue that the increasing trend towards “Americanization of the Holocaust” conjures images of “America at its worst: crassness, vulgarization, and selling out” (Flaznbaum 4). Jewish scholar and author Alvin Rosenfeld asserts that there is a fundamental problem with attempting to reconcile the events surrounding the Holocaust with American democratic ideals. Rosenfeld “wonders how any story of the crimes of the Nazi era can remain faithful to the specific features of those events and at the same time address contemporary American social and political agendas” (Flaznbaum 5).

Michael Berenbaum, author of The World Must Know: The Story of the Holocaust as Told by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the museum’s first Director, asserts that the process of “Americanization” is both necessary, and a part of the “noble evolution of Holocaust remembrance” (Flazenbaum, 5). He defends the Americanization of the Holocaust, citing its incorporation into the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s mission. Michael Berenbuam defends the purpose of the museum as a means “to tell the story of the Holocaust in such a way that it would resonate not only with the survivor in New York and his children in San Francisco, but with a black leader from Atlanta, a Midwestern Farmer, or a Northeastern Industrialist” (Flaznbaum 5). In her introduction to The Americanization of the Holocaust, Heliene



Flazenbaum suggests that “if the Holocaust, as an image and symbol seems to have sprung loose from its origins it does not mean we should decry Americanization; rather the pervasive presence of representations of the Holocaust demands responsible evaluation and interpretation” (Flaznbaum 8).

To that end, statistics support the growing trend towards the “Americanization” of the Holocaust in recent years. Flaznbaum cites cultural statistics as a basis for her observations of the growing trend toward Holocaust remembrance. Beginning in the early 1990s an estimated 80 books were published on Holocaust related subjects. Just five years later that statistic had increased to include over one hundred doctoral dissertations on the subject. Daniel Goldhagen’s Hitlers Willing Executioners (1997) attained popular success, making an appearance on the New York Times Best Seller’s List at number ten. In addition, the growing field of Holocaust-related studies that are currently offered at academic institutions and are made increasingly available through mass media outlets such as publishing and film.

The release of Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* (1993) won critical acclaim, winning seven Oscars including Best Picture, while opening new avenues of holocaust remembrance. Despite its critical acclaim, however, *Schindler’s List* has been criticized for praising the rescuer instead of celebrating the survivors and commemorating the victims. Yet therefore, provided Americans with a powerful touchtone a touchstone and shrouded has generated a renewed interest in Holocaust remembrance. No longer is the study of the Holocaust purely an academic endeavor reserved for scholars and students. The general public could no longer say the Holocaust was an event of the past, for it was now taking on new life as a living memory in the minds of the American people.

Under the early direction of Elie Wiesel, the President's Commission on the Holocaust set in motion plans to create a national memorial and living museum dedicated to the memory of the 6,000,000 Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust. As mentioned previously, the commission maintained the Holocaust was a uniquely Jewish experience. The Carter administration Chief Domestic Policy Advisor, Stuart Eizenstat concedes that the "Museum's definition was a political compromise which preserved the essence of Elie Wiesel's insistence on the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish event, while at the same time enabled the project to reach out to others who had suffered" (Miller 254). A journalist reviewing the early stages of the Museum's development chose these words to describe the museum's compromise: "All Jews were victims, but not all victims were Jews. Hence, all would be represented in the museum" (Miller 254). Regardless of political intent, it was widely acknowledged that the success of the museum depended on the balance of support it received from the gentile community.

The most outspoken opponents of the Judeocentric plans for the memorial were the members of the Armenian community, who insisted that "Turkish deportations of the Armenians between 1915 and 1923" should be included in the museum's permanent exhibit. A wealthy member of the Armenian community, and sole representative of the community on the council, pledged one million dollars to the new project with the tacit agreement that the Armenian genocide would be included in the museum's permanent exhibit. However, the Turkish Ambassador to the United States intervened, citing Turkey's place among modern nations as an unwavering supporter of a Jewish homeland in Israel. Although, neutral during World War II, the Turkish government had accepted thousands of Jewish refugees. As a modern nation, Turkey boasts a thriving Jewish



community, and albeit predominantly Muslim, Turkey has maintained diplomatic relations with Israel (Miller 259). The Turkish ambassador stated that inclusion of the Armenian genocide would jeopardize the safety of the Jewish community in Turkey and also upset the precarious diplomatic balance between Turkey and Israel.

During the early stages, the Council also maintained an open line of discourse, and friendship with the Federal Republic of Germany. Elie Wiesel began meeting with Peter Peterson, a member of the Christian Democratic Union, who provided German insight to the Council during the project's early stages. Through his conversations with Elie Wiesel, Peterson broached the subject of including Germany's present state, a journey which has created a staunch ally of both the United States and Israel within the European community. He argued that there was more to Germany than its past, and urged inclusion of a few "kind words" about the "moral" progress of the German State. In light of these examples it became increasingly more apparent to Elie Wiesel that the project was "becoming too politicized, too "homogenized," and that this would ultimately degrade the quality of the tribute he had hoped to pay Holocaust victims: "Either this place will be a sanctuary, or it will be an abomination" (Miller, 262).

Politicization of the Holocaust is not only relegated to impromptu diplomatic relations or issues of fundraising in the interests of inclusion. Politicization also seeped into the discussions about the museums architecture design, and function as a "national" memorial. James Edward Young, author of Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, suggests that "memory is not shaped in a vacuum . . . monuments by themselves are of little value but as a part of a nation's rites or the objects of a people's national pilgrimage they are imbued with national soul and memory" (Young 68). He

argues that “American memorials seem to be anchored not so much in history as in the ideals that created them in the first place” (Young 71).

James Young argues that the Museum “enshrines by dint of its placement, not just the history of the Holocaust but American Democratic and egalitarian ideals as they counterpoint the Holocaust. That is, by remembering the crimes of another people in another land it encourages Americans to recall their own idealized reason for being” (Young 72).

Critics of the museum, however, do not wish to recognize the altruistic intentions of the museum’s placement on the Mall. The idealism expressed by James E. Young is not shared by the museum’s critics. Richard Cohen, writing for *The Washington Post*, categorically denies the idealized rationale for placing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall in his article, “Blemishes on the Holocaust Museum” (March 1, 2003 Final Edition). He states, “I happen to believe that this museum does not belong adjacent to the National Mall in the first place, since the Holocaust was not an American event” (Cohen A-19).

However, such a broad interpretation of the events which engulfed Nazi-occupied Europe has left many in doubt of the event’s universal applications and acceptance within a pluralistic society. Critics argued that the museum would cast a dark cloud over the accomplishments made in the name of American ideals. Despite concerns for “tarnishing” the Mall’s sacred place in our civil religion, Survivors in the community argued that much of the meaning would be lost if egalitarian ideals were allowed to determine the nature of the museum both in location and contents.



Former Memorial Committee Chairman, Harvey Meyerhoff, suggests that “if the Smithsonian represents the accomplishments of civilization, the Holocaust raises fundamental questions about the capacity of individuals and of society, of technology, and human genius for evil” (Young 338). There are deeper implications for this juxtaposition. Juxtaposing the Smithsonian and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum poses a dangerous tourism. Michael Berenbaum, former chairman for the Holocaust Memorial Council, argues that “attendance gives the museum legitimacy” (Baum 1). To support his argument Berenbaum cites visitor demographics and statistics. “The Naval Academy sends its entire class of midshipmen after basic training; the State Department sends its senior foreign affairs officers; inner-city kids come everyday” (Baum 1).

Authors John Lennon and Malcom Foley, in Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster, assert that “the emergence of simulations, replications and virtual experiences as part of the tourism product has been a critical factor in the development of dark tourism” (Lennon & Foley 34). They continue, “Notwithstanding the gravity of its subject matter, neither the site of the museum (in downtown Washington) nor many of the displays (some of which are replicas) have an “authentic” connection with the Jewish Holocaust” (Lennon & Foley 35). If one is to juxtapose the Smithsonian with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, then “it becomes clear the use of the term ‘tourist attraction’ represented both a judgment and the motives and rationales for making the site available to the public and a commentary about experiences of visitors”(Lennon & Foley 147).

Statistics presented by journalist Geraldine Baum, writing for *The Los Angeles Times*, are supported by authors John Lennon and Malcom Foley. The total number of visitors for 1998 were estimated at 9,000,000 people. Estimated at eighty-five per cent or higher, were non-Jews. Two thirds of that majority were between the ages of 18 to 44 years of age, and therefore too young to have first hand memories of the events of 1933-1945 (Baum 1). Related to the educational mission set forth by the museum, "research points out that 88 per cent of visitors possessed some form of college education, including 71 per cent with a college degree or more and 38 per cent with post graduate work or beyond . . . Perhaps most telling is the relatively high proportions of visitors (over 60 per cent) who indicated an intention to return" (Lennon & Foley 157).

The Holocaust Memorial Council, the Museum's governing body, has adopted an educational mission that is congruent with the writings of Hannah Arendt, author of Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil: "The Musuem believes that one of the Holocaust's fundamental lessons is that to be a bystander is to share in the guilt . . . Only the bystander can help society to become more human" (Berenbaum 18). As a result, the most challenging aspect of the museum's educational mission is "demonstrating the applicability of the moral lessons learned from the Holocaust to current and future events" (Berenbaum 19). In addition to the complex nature of the Museum's educational mission, the museum must also address the ethnic boundaries promoted by misinformation, and stereotypes. Therefore, the museum has to reveal the Holocaust's universal significance beyond any limited ethnic experience. Teaching the lessons of the Holocaust implies, therefore abstract conceptualization and



“universalization” of the moral conclusions stemming from a concrete, unique, seemingly ethnic event (Berenbaum 19).

Any attempts to reconcile the historical event with its symbolic interpretations, and seemingly universal implications, would diminish the event’s ability to remain a living historical force. Despite the trends in museum methodology, in particular, that of historical narrative museums, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum presents events following a storyline. The implications for such a decision are apparent. If told as a chronology of events, dates, statistics, and people, the moral impact of the museum would be greatly compromised. Presenting the event along a storyline therefore provides a humanistic quality, more readily identifiable to the visitor.

Traditional historical museums “collect and preserve, research and publicly display authentic objects belonging to their specific field of interest” (Berenbaum 41). Additionally, these “collections”-based museums often deny visitors direct access to primary sources. Finally, traditional collection-based museums “do not emotionally, mentally or morally change their visitors’ perspective on the events presented” (Berenbaum 41). In danger, however, is a reduction of an entire people’s rich history to a “collection of ownerless items; junked”(Young 346). By contrast narrative museums, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, present artifacts in the context of the life which once animated it.

The narrative format begins a process of personal identification within the visitor. “Visitors project themselves into the story and thus experience it like insiders while at the same time remaining at a distance, with the intellectual perspective of outsiders” (Berenbaum 41). The visitor’s experience is equated by some with that of the movie-

goer or reader of a novel “gripped by the plot, projecting ourselves into it, identifying with its heroes and developing resentment toward its villains we get emotionally involved. This emotional involvement opens us to educational influence” (Berenbaum 41).

Statistics speak of mathematically-derived conclusions, far removed from human experience, or emotional involvement, a fact understood, and practiced by the Nazi regime. The saying, “One person killed is a tragedy—ten thousand killed is statistics,” attributed to a French General serving in the First World War, and was later used by Joseph Stalin, is a gruesome testimony to the obscuring action of statistics upon the reality of individual victims. Despite the presence of documentary exhibits which take the place of narrator, personal stories are told through oral histories and video footage. To counteract the distance that many visitors bring to the museum, each individual is issued an identification card for their journey. These identification cards tell compelling individual stories of victims, thereby closing the distance, between present and past generations and providing a face and story to an event many people know only by its statistics. “It also encourages a certain critical blindness on the part of visitors. Imagining oneself as past victim is not the same as imagining oneself or another person—as a potential victim, the kind of leap necessary to prevent other “holocausts” (Young 344).

If one is to accept this shifting sense of identity, one must also acknowledge the irony of the identification cards. Many Jews scrambled to obtain the papers of non-Jewish citizens with the implication that the process is working in a reverse fashion. Rather, it is the visitor who enters the exhibit an outsider to get a glimpse of Jewish life during and after the Holocaust. Author James Young, argues that if this process were



valid, “then precisely the opposite effect of a unifying experience has been achieved: Americans enter whole, only to exit their constituent parts” (Young 344).

Journalist Philip Gourevitch, writing in *Harper's Magazine* characterizes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a behemoth, just one more American theme park (Gourevitch 55). In particular, he is critical of the Museum's use of the identification cards that were to be included in the Museum's fundraising literature. Gourevitch cites an identification card that belonged to a young boy, “described as having converted from Judaism to Americanism before his death at the hands of Nazi collaborators” (Gourevitch 58). The identification cards, he argues, are used by the museum, “to ease the passage from the festive present of a visit to the Mall to the alien hell of Nazi Europe by discovering that hell through American eyes” (Gourevitch 58). For journalist Philip Gourevitch, the ultimate show of inhumanity is to revive the lives of countless victims and survivors, only cards carelessly cast aside or laid to rest in trash cans.

The conclusions critics hope their audiences draw from their commentary is the real potential for the museum to become an instrument of political agendas. In acknowledging this, critics rightly recognize the museum's political origins and express concern over the political future of the museum. Jonathan Mahler, writing for *The Washington Post*, asserts that “the museum derives a great deal of its cachet from the fact that it is, for all intents and purposes, an extension of the American diplomatic apparatus” (Mahler W11).

The museum, he argues, was created out of a government mandate that was entirely politically motivated. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that politics will

continue to play a role in the museum, even after its public dedication. Mahler did not have to look very far into the daily operations to find support for his theory. Then president of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, was invited by the Holocaust Memorial Council to participate in the museum's dedication ceremony, which was held on April 22, 1993. Elie Wiesel, former chairman of the council, expressed deep concern that a noted Holocaust revisionist, and alleged war criminal was invited to participate in the dedication ceremony. During his remarks, Elie Wiesel later took advantage of the opportunity to implore then President Bill Clinton to take direct action against the ongoing genocide in the former Yugoslavia.

Further departures from the Museums, stated moral imperatives, were made apparent when at the behest of the State Department, Yasser Arafat, was invited to the Museum as a head of state. In an article, "An invitation to Arafat," for *The Washington Post*, Richard Cohen, described Yasser Arafat as more than an "ordinary tourist." Cohen says that Arafat "is both the leader of the Palestinian people, both those residing in the area controlled by the Palestinian Authority and those living elsewhere—in lands still controlled by Israel or in the vast Palestinian Diaspora. Like it or not, he is a world leader" (Cohen A15). Middle East peace negotiators Dennis Rose and Aaron Miller first suggested that the museum extend an invitation to Yasser Arafat, as the head of the Palestinian state. In his article, "Not in this Museum," Charles Krauthammer, asserts "that it is silly to duck an issue simply because of internal Jewish division. Moreover, any decision, whether to invite or not, would necessarily become political" (Krauthammer A21).



Journalist Richard Cohen also points out that “by visiting the museum Arafat would have effectively acknowledged the moral justification for the state of Israel—not some legal charter, not some declaration by a retreating colonial power (Britain’s Balfour Declaration).” In effect, he would have to answer for his own moral culpability for the continued violence between Palestine and Israel. The State Department, was therefore hoping that a moral appeal could still be made to Yasser Arafat to bring about greater security and lasting peace in the Middle East.

However, many agree that Arafat’s visit “fits perfectly in his double game. It allows him a show of concern—to Americans—about Jewish suffering, even as his own people at home are, alternatively, mocking and denying it” (Krauthammer A21). To this end Krauthammer, writing in *The Washington Post*, uses the Palestinian Authority’s own propaganda machine as evidence of Arafat’s deception. Newspapers and radio reports alike dredge up Nazi propaganda, and use it to incite Palestinian violence, and distrust of Israel. A representative of the cultural affairs programming on Palestinian Authority TV announced: “The Jews exaggerate what the Nazi’s did to them. They claim there were 6 million killed, but precise scientific research demonstrates there were no more than 400,000.” As “evidence” for his accusations, Arafat explained “the Jews have profited materially, spiritually, politically, and economically from the talk about the Nazi Killings ...so they inflate the number of victims all the time” (Krauthammer A21). Furthermore, the Palestinian representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights reports that Israel has injected Palestinian people with the AIDS, he is drawing on past Nazi propaganda, of Jews as infecting the human race. (Krauthammer A21).

As a result of the invitation, a congressional mandate was passed requiring the National Academy of Public Administration to make recommendations that would prevent such abuses in the future. The invitation, it has been argued, “was a naked attempt to use the museum as a prop for a photo opportunity” (Reich A19). The presidential appointment of Middle East peace negotiators, Dennis Ross and Aaron Miller, to the Museum’s governing body, the Holocaust Memorial Council, would, in light of the invitation, be considered a conflict of interest. The study, commissioned by House appropriations subcommittee chairman Ralph Regula (R-Ohio), concludes that “federal institutions, especially one that carries the moral weight of the Holocaust, are vulnerable to political pressure from the executive to achieve particular political purposes.... Presidential appointments of State Department officials as full council members may be inappropriate because conflicts of interest may result” (Reich A19).

Despite growing concerns that the museum would again be used as an arm of the diplomatic apparatus, further forays into politics were still in the museum’s future. Rabbi Irving Greenberg, former chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Council, used official letterhead to implore former President Clinton to pardon convicted felon Marc Rich who was indicted for doing business with Iran during the hostage crisis and for his role in an oil price fixing scheme. Fleeing the country before being indicted Rich lived in luxury in Switzerland. During his fifteen-year exile, Marc Rich contributed up to fifteen million dollars to prominent Jewish organizations around the world, even gaining Israeli citizenship before leaving for Switzerland. Rabbi Irving Greenberg hoped the moral weight of the museum would sway then President Bill Clinton to “perform one of the most God-like actions that anyone could do” (Cohen A19).



The museum it appears may likely continue to be connected to its politicized past. As long as individuals continue to be swayed by the power, and influence of politics, and continue to act from political motivations, the museum will remain mired in the political moment. Politics and morality are intertwined. Thus, as a result of a president's political agenda, a national memorial to the victims of the Nazi regime arose. Although many Survivors would claim their lives and those of the victims are trivialized the political agenda which they served, the survivors, and victims alike continue to gain new life through future generations of museum visitors.

People will continue to be critical of the Museum, attacking its architecture, its place of prominence on the Mall standing along side shrines to American values, and American history. Critics will continue to question this museum and its place on American soil. Its critics will not grow silent. However, even the critics have take the museums value to heart, the value of its own citizens to think.

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