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Complex Factors in Planning the September 11th Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center: Politics, Obstacles, Opportunities and a Planning Model

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Complex Factors in Planning the
September 11th Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center:
Politics, Obstacles, Opportunities and a Planning Model

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Department of Art and Music

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Abstract—Anthony M. Gardner

The implications stemming from the fourteen-year process to build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum serve as a useful model for planners of memorial museums. The methods utilized by United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planners to address these obstacles and seize the opportunities inherent in this type of institution are examined for the purposes of informing the World Trade Center Memorial Museum planning process.

A hybrid institution, the memorial museum is both memorial and tragic history museum. Its dual functions and content create planning challenges unique to this type of institution. This thesis examines the obstacles of and opportunities in institutionalizing tragic history at memorial museums. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planning process was punctuated with many divisive debates centered on four common interconnected themes that arise when planning memorial museums: 1) The politics of representation with regard to which victims are given a role in planning, how the perpetrators who committed the atrocities are represented in the exhibition, and whether or not other themes are included in the museum; 2) The museum's location and design; 3) Tensions between the museum's commemorative and historic scholarship functions; 4) Exhibition design challenges stemming from the desire to give the tragedy an uplifting ending.

Chapter One is a discussion on the concept of the memorial museum and its dual role as memorial and history museum. Chapter Two details the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planning process and, for the purposes of this paper, establishes its role as model for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum planning process. Chapter Three provides insight into the controversial ongoing process to build the memorial museum on the site of the September 11th terrorist attacks. The concluding section, Chapter Four, offers general considerations that may be useful to museum professionals, who are or will be, planning memorial museums; and, includes specific implications to enrich the World Trade Center Memorial Museum planning process.

For my big brother, Harvey Joseph Gardner III, who continues to inspire me.

Dedication and Acknowledgments

First, I would like to extend my great appreciation to historian Edward T. Linenthal, whose thoughtful scholarship on past efforts to institutionalize tragic history, is vital. I wish to acknowledge Elie Wiesel and the skilled planners of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum who continue to succeed in their mission to honor the dead, inspire the living and combat indifference. To Debra Burlingame, Diane Horning, Alice Greenwald, Jan Siedler Ramirez, Michael Shulan, and Joanne Riley, thank you for taking time out of your hectic schedules to share insights which enriched this project.

To my thesis advisor, Susan Leshnoff, I thank you for helping me through this journey, which was critical for my own understanding of the museum's powerful and essential role as educator. My thanks to my academic advisor, Petra Chu, for always being accessible and insightful and to Dr. Marie Marmo Mullaney for sparking my love of history and directing me to the Museum Studies program at Seton Hall. To my family, thank you for always encouraging me. To my love, Lorraine, and our daughters, Lia and Jacqueline, thank you for your patience and understanding for times together sacrificed for the preparation of this thesis.

I dedicate this work to my big brother, Harvey, who is loved and missed. Harvey, you continue to inspire me. I pray that you will forever be honored and that you and all the innocent people murdered during these horrific attacks will never be forgotten. May the examples of how you lived your lives, and the courage and compassion you showed each other in those final horrific moments inspire our nation's youth and prepare them for the challenges ahead.

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Chapter One

A Personal Connection to the September 11th Tragedy

In the late evening hours of September 10, 2001, Harvey Joseph Gardner III, was engrossed in a History Channel documentary on World War II. Harvey, my oldest sibling, struggled to prevent his sleepiness, a byproduct of his long early morning commute to New York City, from overcoming his interest in the battle footage. At 5:30 a.m. the next morning, he left for work, never to return. Harvey rode the bus to his job at the World Trade Center unaware that hours later his life would end, as a new chapter of American history was beginning.

My family watched in horror as we witnessed the terrorist attacks waged in real time on television. One phone call to Harvey at 9:02 a.m. confirmed that he was not killed when terrorists slammed American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center's North Tower. Harvey worked on the 83rd floor of the mortally wounded tower and, during the phone call, my brother Mark heard confusion and panic. Harvey, maintaining a steady voice, comforted co-workers. Mark told him, "I'll let you go. Call me when you get out." Harvey never called. During the immediate aftermath, we put his photograph on missing flyers and searched for him. As hope of his survival faded, we tried to be strong, taking comfort in each other and the fact that Harvey, patriotic and a student of history, would forever be honored in the chronicles of American history. Perhaps it was our shock, or maybe inexperience that rendered us completely unprepared for what would become our role in the politics of planning tragic history at the World Trade Center site.

Introduction: Planning Tragic History

Tragic history is personal and intimate to those directly affected by it. At the same time, the universal implications of the events imbue it with a civic purpose. Many scarred by tragedy hope that generations to come will harness its memory to enrich the future; that remembering the dead and what they endured will enable the living to connect with core democratic values and to heed the lessons of the past.

This thesis examines the obstacles of and opportunities in institutionalizing tragic history at Memorial Museums. Chapter One is a discussion on the concept of the Memorial Museum and its dual role as memorial and history museum. Chapter Two details the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planning process and, for the purposes of this paper, establishes its role as model for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum planning process. Chapter Three will provide insight into the controversial ongoing process to build the World Trade Center Memorial Museum on the site of the September 11th terrorist attacks. Chapter Four offers general considerations that may be useful to museum professionals, who are or will be, planning Memorial Museums; each section concludes with specific implications made to inform the World Trade Center Memorial Museum planning process. Chapters are organized by four interconnected prevalent themes that arise when planning Memorial Museums.

Although the process to build the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum and other museums where tragic history is exhibited are instructive, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has been selected as the primary model, because the issues of its planning process most closely parallel those relevant to the efforts underway at the World Trade Center Memorial Museum.

What are Memorial Museums?

Historian Edward T. Linenthal describes Memorial Museums as “ a new species of activist memorial environments, consisting not only of commemorative space, but educational and archival space, museum exhibition space, and a research institute designed to combat the dangers portrayed in the museum’s exhibition.”¹ A hybrid institution, the Memorial Museum is both memorial and tragic history museum. Linenthal suggests that these new institutions recall more than past events, they are literally “...acts of protest against the anonymity of mass death...Hence the emphasis on names, faces, life stories.”² In the early days following the September 11th attacks, victims’ families put the faces and names of their missing kin on flyers to assist them in their search. According to Diane Horning, mother of 9/11 victim Matthew Horning, the faces and names now derive a new meaning, “They become the conduit, the connection to the events, they are authentic reminders that humanize the death toll.”³

The trend in recent decades toward abstract memorials conflicts with the desire for more literal, visceral and instructional forms of remembrance; Memorial Museums are created to address that need. Memorial scholar, James E. Young, suggests:

“While contemporary designs are welcomed by the artists and architects, critics and curators, they are often run up against a wall not only of public bewilderment

¹ Linenthal, Edward T. “Violence and the American Landscape: The Challenge of Public History.” OAH Magazine of History Winter 2002, 14 Nov.

2006 <http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine_publichistory/linenthal.html>.

² Ibid.

³ Horning, Diane. Telephone interview. 15 March 2007.

but also survivor outrage. ‘We weren’t tortured and our families weren’t murdered in the abstract,’ the survivors complained, ‘it was real.’”⁴

Proponents of abstraction argue the memorial should not tell people what to think but, rather, to simply make them think. Without historical context, however, one wonders what will they think about?

The process to build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. was contentious because of this very issue. According to Sturken, veterans characterized Maya Lin’s abstract memorial Wall as “a slap in the face,” and a “black gash of shame.”⁵ They argued it was “yet another abstract modernist work that the public would find difficult to interpret.”⁶ In his *New York Times* opinion piece, Vietnam veteran and two-time Purple Heart recipient, Tom Carhart, wrote, “The design was chosen by a jury made up entirely of civilians—in other words, people who had seen no military service in Vietnam.”⁷ Carhart suggests that the jury failed to select a more literal design suitable to veterans because not a single juror experienced the combat firsthand.

September 11th family member and writer, Debra Burlingame states that while Lin’s Wall “became accepted as a locus of healing” it remained controversial “because it failed to tell the story of the War.”⁸ Recognizing this shortcoming, Jan Scruggs, the founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, won Congressional approval in 2003 to build a Memorial Museum “to tell the story of the war and those who fought it.”⁹

⁴ Young, James E. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993. 9.

⁵ Sturken, Marita. “The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Representations* 35 (Summer 1991): 118-142.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Carhart, Tom. “Insulting Vietnam Vets.” *New York Times* 24 October 1981. Opinion Section.

⁸ Burlingame, Debra. “Ground Zero: Where is the memorial?” *Wall Street Journal* 6 June 2006. Opinion Section.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Four Common Themes Emerge

When studying past planning processes to build Memorial Museums, four common themes emerge: 1) The politics of representation with regard to which victims are given a role in planning, how the perpetrators who committed the atrocities are represented in the exhibition, and whether or not other themes are included in the museum; 2) The museum's location and design; 3) Tensions between the museum's commemorative and historic scholarship functions; 4) Exhibition design challenges stemming from the desire to give the tragedy an uplifting ending.

The Politics of Representation

Who are the Victims?

When planning tragic history, a hierarchy of victims is constructed and decisions are made regarding who is given a role in the process. Like the Holocaust survivors, individuals impacted by the Oklahoma City terrorist bombing viewed their role in planning the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum as a service to memory and their murdered kin. Linenthal suggests that, "construction of accurate memorial hierarchies is a volatile task, for the stakes are very high."¹⁰ Those charged with memory's work are pressured "to get the story right."¹¹ As the smoke cleared from the deadly bomb that ripped through Oklahoma City's Murrah Building, a hierarchy of victims began to take shape.

In Oklahoma City, survivors did not view their experience as equal to that of the families of the victims. They were perceived as the next rung in the hierarchy of victims.

¹⁰ Linenthal, Edward T. The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory. Oxford University Press, 2001.195.

¹¹ Ibid.

When the decision was made to include the names of survivors on the footprint of the Murrah Building, a survivor definition subcommittee was created to answer the question: Who is a survivor? Members of the committee had to first determine a “zone of danger” within which one’s experiences would be evaluated to determine if the ‘survivor label’ was warranted. ¹² This suffering threshold would either afford or deny representation in the planning process.

Politics of Representation

The Perpetrators

In order to include the entire historical context, museum professionals face the challenge of representing the perpetrators in the exhibition narrative in a manner that does not contaminate the museum or, conversely, create an invisible evil through omission. In the 1950s, Americans living at Dachau staged a small exhibition of photographs that portrayed “guards bludgeoning inmates, a prisoner being electrocuted on the camp’s outer fence, and snarling S.S. dogs leaping at inmates.” ¹³ According to Young, the exhibition planners inhabiting Dachau at that time wanted to “remind locals of their neighborhood’s past,” though local German officials bitterly opposed the small exhibition, labeling it as “offensive to good taste but also damaging to international relations.” ¹⁴

Writer Carolyn Garrett Pool suggests that exhibit designers at the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum fell into the invisible evil trap because they “deliberately avoided a detailed account of the terrorists’ activities, and motivation, and the controversies and

¹² Ibid. 200.

¹³ Young, Ibid. 63.

¹⁴ Ibid.

unresolved issues emerging from the investigation and trial.”¹⁵ The introductory section of the exhibition describes the nature and definition of terrorism, but the perpetrators are absent. The sound of the bomb’s explosion captured in an audio recording on the day of the attack is played at the onset of the exhibition to initiate the visitor experience. Originally, the perpetrators only appeared in the section, *Investigation Story*, which is told in alcoves separated from the main exhibition narrative. The omission of the perpetrators, and by extension a motive, appears to be a common criticism of this Memorial Museum. The Memorial Museum’s staff is currently working to address this criticism.

Politics of Representation

Other Themes

The inclusion of other themes in the Memorial Museum is often perceived as a falsification of history and defilement. During the planning of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planners debated whether or not to create a general genocide museum. Linenthal states that some viewed inclusion of other genocidal events as an obstruction of the “metaphoric universality” of the Holocaust. In the summer and fall of 2005, the World Trade Center was engulfed in controversy surrounding a proposed museum of freedom for the site, one that planned to exhibit themes unrelated to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and February 26, 1993.

The Museum’s Location and Design Complicates Planning

A second theme relates to the museum’s location and design. During the planning of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Council members were pressured to

¹⁵ Pool, Carolyn Garrett. “Oklahoma City National Memorial Center Museum: Exhibition Review.” *The Journal of American History*. 89, 3 (Dec. 2002) 1005-1007.

produce a building design that was appropriate, given the museum's prominent location adjacent to the Mall. Critics argued that the museum was "misplaced," that a European atrocity should not be allowed to "cast a shadow" on the nation's celebratory soil. ¹⁶

As in the case of critics of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, some have voiced concern that the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, though located on the actual atrocity site, could serve as an unwanted reminder of the deadly attacks at a site that will soon be dominated by commerce. Irrespective of critics, the common opinion is that the World Trade Center Memorial Museum belongs at the site where the World Trade Center's Twin Towers stood and fell; however, its location has complicated the planning process in two ways. First, the site is prime Manhattan real estate that has been engulfed in controversy since the early months of the redevelopment process. Second, it is the authentic site where 2,749 people were slaughtered, 1,146 of whose remains are still unidentified. ¹⁷ Many September 11th families—and Americans around the world for that matter—consider the World Trade Center site sacred ground, a perception that enriches and complicates the process to build its on-site Memorial Museum. There are also symbolic issues relating to the museum's location and design that further complicate planning efforts.

The Politics of Object Display

Balancing the Commemorative and Historic Scholarship Functions

The Memorial Museum's dual role as memorial and history museum reveals a third obstacle: There is a tension between the museum's commemorative function and its

¹⁶ Linenthal, Edward T. *Preserving Memory: the Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 2001. 64.

¹⁷ Westfeldt, Amy. "2 New Victims Identified in 9/11 Remains." *Newsday* 3 April 2007

use of object display and historic scholarship to interpret and pose questions about past events. Regarding this dilemma, Linenthal states:

“Without the commemorative voice, history exhibits run the risk of being just ‘books on the wall,’ with little to fire people’s imaginations. Without the historic voice, such exhibits become vulnerable to the seduction of personal memory and to the expediency that so often governs what nations choose to remember.”¹⁸

It is particularly challenging to balance the two voices when the subject of an exhibition is controversial, contested history. In the early 1990s, veterans groups and members of Congress waged a public battle against the National Air and Space Museum’s planned exhibition on the Enola Gay, the B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Veterans groups and their congressional supporters branded the exhibition as politically correct and revisionist history, because planners sought to question President Truman’s decision to drop the bomb. Planners also wanted to demonstrate the bomb’s impact by personalizing its victims. At the National Air and Space Museum, four exhibition sections were to include photographs, text and artifacts whose purpose would be to illustrate the effects of the bombing on the people of Hiroshima. John T. Correll, an editor of *Air Force Magazine*, objected to the inclusion of a child’s charred lunchbox, because he said there was “a huge difference in impact about Japanese atrocities...and an emotion-grabbing artifact like a little girl’s burned lunch box...there was nothing on the other side for balance.”¹⁹ Veterans groups viewed the inclusion of Japanese victims as

¹⁸ Linenthal, Edward T. “Can Museums Achieve a Balance Between Memory and History?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 10 February 1995: B1

¹⁹ Linenthal, Edward T. and Tom Engelhardt. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996.40.

unpatriotic and the questioning of the use of the bomb as a dishonor to their military sacrifices.

In what would become an infamous memo to museum director, Martin Harwit, Tom Crouch wrote: “Do you want to do an exhibition intended to make veterans feel good, or do you want an exhibition that will lead our visitors to think about the consequences of the atomic bombing of Japan? Frankly, I don’t think we can do both.”²⁰ Despite Crouch’s doubts, museum planners worked for years trying to create a script that would balance the commemorative needs of the veterans and their own need for meaningful historic scholarship.

Federally funded museums appear to be under added pressure to put the needs of the commemorative above those of the historic. Members of Congress in opposition to the exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum threatened to slash appropriations to the museum. After several years of planning and controversy, the museum’s reduction of the estimated number of lives saved by Truman’s decision led to the demise of the exhibition. The museum director resigned and the Enola Gay was displayed in a drastically scaled back exhibition. Instead of being given a glimpse into the devastation, Linenthal states that visitors “remained with the crew. They stayed in the plane. They were completely detached from what took place on the ground. They saw little more of the bomb’s effects than a mushroom cloud.”²¹ Visitors to the scaled back Enola Gay exhibit had to stay in the plane after the bomb fell, because witnessing its effects conflicted with the demand for a purely heroic narrative.

²⁰ Ibid. 35.

²¹ Ibid. 87.

The Politics of Exhibition Design

Giving the Tragedy an Uplifting Ending

The fourth theme relates to the pressure on Memorial Museum professions to provide an uplifting ending to the tragic story, and to avoid graphic content that might traumatize visitors and earn the label, horror museum. At the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum, for instance, the concluding chapters of the permanent exhibition document “healing in progress,” the memorial process and a short film that tells the story of “ten years of hope and healing...how the city was rebuilt, and how those here are lending help to others affected by terrorism.”²² Memorial Museum planners must balance this preference with their duty to tell the whole story, for any dilution, could be seen as defilement.

²² Oklahoma City National Memorial on the Internet. Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation. 13 Feb. 2007 <<http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org>>.

Chapter Two

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a Useful Planning Model

"We must remember for our own sake, for the sake of our own humanity. Indifference to the victims would result, inevitably, in indifference to ourselves." -- Elie Wiesel

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Located on the nation's celebratory Mall in Washington, D.C., the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum serves a dual role as memorial to the victims of the Holocaust and museum of tragic history. Since opening in 1993, 24 million visitors—including 85 world leaders—have learned about the Holocaust while paying tribute to the millions of men, women and children murdered during this horrific time in human history.

I: A Useful Planning Model

The lessons stemming from the fourteen-year process to build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum serve as a useful model for planners of the World Trade Center Memorial Museum. Both institutions, conceived in politics and anchored in tragic history, serve as memorials to the dead and history museums for the living. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planning process was punctuated with many divisive debates that centered on representation of the victims in the planning process and exhibition; how the perpetrators would be presented; whether or not other themes would be included; the Memorial Museum's location and design; the tension between commemorative and historic scholarship functions; and, the pressure to give the tragedy an uplifting ending. The methods utilized by planners to address these obstacles and seize the interpretive and commemorative opportunities inherent in this type of institution

are examined in this chapter as background material for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum planning process.

Mission Statement

The unabridged mission statement of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum follows and is provided for comparison purposes for the subsequent chapter on the World Trade Center Memorial Museum.

“The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country’s memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims — six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

The Museum’s primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

Chartered by a unanimous Act of Congress in 1980 and located adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, DC, the Museum strives to broaden public understanding of the history of the Holocaust through multifaceted programs: exhibitions; research and publication; collecting and preserving material evidence, art and artifacts related to the Holocaust; annual Holocaust commemorations known as Days of Remembrance; distribution of education materials and teacher resources; and a variety of public programming designed to enhance understanding of the Holocaust and related issues, including those of contemporary significance.”²³

Architect James Ingo Freed began designing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum building in 1986. While visiting the death camps, Freed found his inspiration in the ruins of the Birkenau crematoria and utilized steel, brick and other elements in his building design to evoke the industrialized nature of the Nazi death machine.

In fiscal year 2007, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum utilized a \$69.7 million dollar operating budget (63% of which is derived from federal appropriations) and four hundred staffers to impart knowledge of the Holocaust through exhibitions, educational programs and commemorative events.²⁴ Temporary exhibitions and educational programming are utilized to extend the boundaries of the permanent exhibition, providing opportunities to focus on non Jewish Holocaust victims and other genocidal events.

²³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Internet. United States Holocaust Memorial Council. 12 March 2007 <<http://www.ushmm.org>>.

²⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Press Kit. General Museum Information. Washington: USHMM. 2007.

II: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Political Origins

On the same day Israel marked its thirtieth year of existence, President Carter announced the formation of a Commission tasked with conceptualizing a national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Carter's motivation for bringing this type of institution into existence is often cited as political, having little to do with a sincere desire to preserve Holocaust memory. Memorial scholar James E. Young suggests that Carter's decision to institutionalize Holocaust memory in America had more to do with placating Jewish supporters who were angered by his sale of F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia.²⁵ These same individuals were already incensed by the President's comments on the Palestinian right to a homeland. In the timing of the announcement, Carter and his administration harnessed tragic memory to "serve more pragmatic political ends" and, in doing so, sent a clear message of support for the state of Israel.²⁶

Elie Wiesel, author and Holocaust survivor, assumed the role as chairman of the Commission in the service of memory. Wiesel's motivation was rooted in his desire to deny "the killers a posthumous victory in the murder of Jewish memory."²⁷ He and other survivors feared that one day no one would be left to tell the story, to keep their sacred promises made to the dead to bear witness. As Wiesel wrote in the Commission's *Report to the President*: "Not to remember the dead now would mean to become accomplices to their murderers."²⁸ Regardless of the true *raison d'être*, the Commission, comprised of survivors, academics, religious leaders from all faiths, and

²⁵ Young, *Ibid.* 285.

²⁶ Linenthal, *Preserving*, *Ibid.* 17.

²⁷ *President's Commission on the Holocaust. Report to the President: President's Commission on the Holocaust.* Wiesel, Eli, Chairman. Washington, D.C.: 1979. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 2.

elected officials, worked to formulate a plan for an appropriate memorial to “all those who had perished in the Holocaust while still honoring the memory and identity of those groups singled out for mass annihilation.”²⁹ Through a series of meetings, including a fact-finding trip to the European death camps, the Commission determined a monument alone would fail “to speak to the present or inform the future.”³⁰

Edward T. Linenthal, who wrote a book on the planning process, states that Commission staffer Michael Berenbaum lobbied Wiesel to place Holocaust memory in the context of contemporary acts of genocide, arguing a memorial would garner more public support if it transcended its perceived Jewish focus. In the end, after months of intense discussions, the Commission called for the creation of a living memorial comprised of: a memorial and museum; an education foundation; and a Committee on Conscience. The Committee on Conscience would serve as a mechanism for addressing contemporary genocidal events. This inclusion as a component part of the living memorial allowed the Commission to keep Holocaust memory at the center of the memorial and museum, while expanding its relevance to contemporary society.

The *Report to the President* became the museum’s founding document and the impetus for Congressional legislation that was unanimously enacted in 1980. The public law established the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, which was charged with building the living memorial, creating a plan to implement the recommendations set forth in the *Report to the President* and commemorating national days of Holocaust remembrance. Divisive debates plaguing the project from its inception continued throughout planning efforts to institutionalize America’s Holocaust memorial.

²⁹ Ibid. 5.

³⁰ Ibid. 9.

III: The Politics of Representation: Who are the Holocaust Victims?

Vying for a Seat at the Planning Table

Who are the victims of the Holocaust? In order to advance the project, the Council had to answer this seemingly simple question. Berenbaum states that the debate on defining the victims “had political meaning and religious implications to many of the participants.”³¹ In his Executive Order establishing the Commission, Carter referred only to “those who perished,” but over time his definition evolved with the political realities of the day. At the ceremony announcing the Commission the President spoke of the “six million Jews,” then, by April 1979, Carter had adopted a more universal definition of the Holocaust victims, referring to 11 million—“6 million of them Jews.”³² Linenthal suggests that for Wiesel and other Jewish survivors on the Commission, Carter’s definition threatened the “distinctive Jewish dimension of the Holocaust,” and was perceived as “the murder of truth done in the service of memory.”³³

For many Jewish survivors on the Commission, the European Jews—men, women and children—murdered during the Holocaust “not for the identity they affirmed or the religion they practiced, but because of the ‘blood’ of their grandparents,” had to remain at the center of memory.³⁴ This resolve was strengthened by a fact-finding trip to Europe and Israel in the summer of 1979, during which survivors experienced the absence of Jews in communities and were angered by their omission on sites of memory. In the Soviet Union, survivors stood at Babi Yar, the site where the Nazis murdered 80,000

³¹ Berenbaum, Michael. The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Boston: Little Brown, 1993. XX.

³² Linenthal, Preserving, *Ibid.* 27.

³³ *Ibid.* 28.

³⁴ Berenbaum, *Ibid.*

Jews in 1941. Standing near the ravine where the victims were buried, they were shocked to find that “in both content and inscription the memorial is devoid of any reference, direct or oblique, to the fact that Jews were killed at Babi Yar.”³⁵ The Commissioners noted in their final report that this experience alerted them “to the danger of historical falsification or dilution.”³⁶

In the *Report to the President*, the European Jewry remained at the top of the hierarchy of victims. The report called for exhibitions focused “on the six million Jews exterminated in the Holocaust as well as other victims.”³⁷ Wiesel, intent on maintaining the Jewish core, was aware that the memory had to expand to include the totality of victims. By excluding other groups tortured and murdered by the Nazis, they themselves would be guilty of falsifying history.

A Broad-Based Governing Council

Despite a willingness to extend the boundaries of memory, Wiesel opposed the White House’s plan to create a broad based Council inclusive of representatives of all Eastern European ethnic groups murdered by the Nazis. Linenthal states that the administration’s resolve to create an inclusive Council, “working under an inclusive definition” of the victims “was matched by Weisel’s fear that this was a step toward the eventual effacement of Jewish victims so graphically evident in European Holocaust memory.”³⁸ The White House believed a broad-based Council was “necessary for both congressional and popular support.”³⁹ For Wiesel and other Jewish survivors, the desire

³⁵ Commission Report, *Ibid.* Appendix B. 26.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 26.

³⁷ Linenthal, *Ibid.* 17.

³⁸ Linenthal, *Ibid.* 52.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 47.

to include other ethnic groups—some they perceived as Nazi accomplices—was defilement.

During the debate over the composition of the Council, survivors invoked sacred promises made to the dead. Their objections were more than opposition to sharing memory. Linenthal states that Wiesel distrusted the “motives of the White House...and of those clamoring for representation.”⁴⁰

Aloysius Mazewski, president of the Polish-American Congress, pushed for inclusion of the Polish American community, making the case that Polish victims “shared the Holocaust with the six million Jews.”⁴¹ Polish American leaders expressed resentment over being left off the Commission and lobbied for Council positions. According to Linenthal, the director of the Ukrainian National Information Service wrote to the President that Ukrainians were “numerically the second largest group to be destroyed in Auschwitz, Treblinka and Dachau.”⁴² Mazewski also noted that Ukrainians had organized the “earliest and most effective resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe.”⁴³ As Linenthal states, the director failed to mention “this resistance movement was violently anti-Semitic and eventually reached tacit alliance with the Germans.”⁴⁴

Citing historic accounts identifying Ukrainians as “perpetrators,” working for the S.S., Berenbaum cautioned the administration that Ukrainian representatives serving on the Council would offend survivors. Wiesel and others believed their desire to be included did not stem from a desire to memorialize the event, but rather to protect their people from harsh judgment in the construction of the historic narrative. For instance,

⁴⁰ Ibid. 45.

⁴¹ Ibid. 39.

⁴² Ibid. 40.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Commission director Monroe Freedman recalled he was informed by a representative of the Ukrainian Anti-Defamation League that “membership on the Council would permit him to use political pressure to block any historical references to Ukrainian collaboration....”⁴⁵

In the end, the White House prevailed in its attempts to broaden the ethnic composition of the Council. Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians and an Armenian American joined with Wiesel as founding members. Other ethnic groups would continue to vie for a seat at the table, for their share of Holocaust memory. Ongoing debates on how the “other” victims were to be included remained divisive and problematic for the planners. The process to establish the Council is exemplary of how difficult it is to reach consensus when planning the Memorial Museum. Political considerations further complicate the process of planning memory.

According to Linenthal, Wiesel lobbied for an authoritative definition of the Holocaust because he believed the diverse Council members would not all agree on the need to preserve the Jewish core of the Holocaust. He continued to battle with the White House over the definition of the victims, reducing it at times to a battle of semantics. Today, the United States Memorial Museum offers the following definition of the Holocaust:

“The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims — six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s

⁴⁵ Ibid. 45.

Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.”⁴⁶

Representation of Polish Victims

Once planners formulate some semblance of an answer to the question of who belongs in the narrative, the question then becomes: How should they be represented? Berenbaum believed there was no conflict in preserving the Jewish core while recognizing the experiences of other victims of the Holocaust. Non-Jewish Council members like Father John Pawlikowski, argued that Polish victims should be more than just ‘interruptions’ in the Jewish narrative, for the Poles “also died because of who they were, not what they did.”⁴⁷

Father Pawlikowski lobbied successfully for greater representation of Polish victims in the permanent exhibition. The final exhibition features a section titled, *Terror in Poland*. It includes photographs of Polish victims taken seconds before their executions. One such photograph, taken on October 27, 1939, is the image of Piotr Sosnowski, a Polish deacon, who stands bravely, bodies stretched across the ground behind him, as he faces the barrel of a gun.⁴⁸ A tree stump that marked the site of a mass grave of Polish victims near Palmiry, a village where thousands of Poles were murdered in 1939 and 1940, is displayed in the forefront of a photograph of the perpetrators taunting blindfolded Polish victims. Father Pawlikowski also successfully lobbied for the inclusion of a chart of the color triangle system used by the Nazis to categorize their victims. The chart, displayed within the primary exhibition, serves as an

⁴⁶ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Internet, Ibid.

⁴⁷ Linenthal, *Preserving*. Ibid. 249.

⁴⁸ Berenbaum, Ibid. 59.

identifier for all victims including thousands of homosexuals—represented by a pink triangle—who were murdered by the Nazis.

Representation of Romani Victims

Throughout the 1980s representatives of Gypsies (Rom) struggled for a role in shaping the nation's Holocaust memory. In 1984, Rom from six states announced the formation of a United States Romani Holocaust Committee. Committee organizers hoped to gain representation on the Council and to ensure the "Nazi genocide against the Rom is fully documented in the planned Holocaust Memorial Museum."⁴⁹

Representatives of Rom were overlooked in both Commission and Council appointments. Its leaders were angered by the inclusion of one Armenian on the Council, because the Armenians were not targets of racial persecution during the Holocaust. The Rom pushed for representation. In January 1986, despite eleven Council vacancies, not one Romani was selected to serve. Instead, the Romani's sole representation would be through an "honorary post" created by the Council.

In 1987, the first Romani representative joined the Council as a voting member. Debates continued, but today, the Romani victims are represented in the permanent exhibition through photographs, artifacts, label text and testimony. They are also featured in educational programming. While this group is still cast in a supporting role in the exhibition, visitors learn about Romani victims through objects on display, including a Romani wagon from Czechoslovakia and photographs of victims prior to deportation. Exhibited belongings of murdered Rom, such as clothing and jewelry, personalize the victims.

⁴⁹ Linenthal, *Preserving*. Ibid. 240.

According to Linenthal, text and photographs convey to the visitor that the fate of two hundred thousand Rom “closely paralleled that of the Jews.”⁵⁰ Council historian, Sybil Milton, was dissatisfied with this representation because she believed the Rom shared “exactly the same fate as the Jews.”⁵¹ Linenthal states that Milton viewed the inclusion of the wagon as a “stereotypical view of all Rom and Sinti peoples as migratory.”⁵² Regardless of critics, and through the actions of the Council, the boundaries of memory expanded to document experiences of the Rom, which just a decade before, were invisible within the construct of America’s Holocaust museum.

IV: The Politics of Representation: The Perpetrators

Avoiding Defilement and Invisible Evil

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council wanted to recall the evil acts of the Nazi perpetrators, to show how they degraded and murdered their victims. There was, however, a general concern about how to present this type of information without contaminating commemorative space. According to Linenthal, there was also a genuine “fear that an effective portrayal of the Nazi’s world and their industry of murder...might be perversely fascinating as well.”⁵³

According to Linenthal, when Raye Farr joined the museum planning team in the fall of 1990, she was “surprised” by the absence of the perpetrators in the permanent exhibition plan.⁵⁴ Despite an already extensive collection of artifacts and photographs

⁵⁰ Ibid. 247.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. 249.

⁵³ Ibid. 199.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 200.

documenting the Nazis and their crimes, it appeared that the Jews and others fell victim to “an invisible evil.”⁵⁵

Planners and Council members struggled to find a solution for including the perpetrators without glorifying them or, conversely, sanitizing their depiction to the point of historic inaccuracy. The designers first sought to “mute the allure of Nazi symbols.”

⁵⁶ In the exhibition sections, *Nazi Society* and *Police State*, photographs of the Nazi state hung on scaffolding obstruct the view of a large Nazi flag, the symbol of Nazi power. The scaffolding is evocative of prison bars, forever placing the Nazi state under arrest for its crimes against humanity. A portrait of Hitler is also positioned behind the bar-like scaffolding. Hitler’s words inscribed in the museum are also diminished. Unlike all other inscriptions in the museum, which appear in raised letters, his words are silk-screened, suggesting a lack of permanence because they “could be painted over or washed away.”⁵⁷

An early proposal in 1991, called for the placement of the portraits of elite Nazis high on a wall, adjacent to an exhibit of child victims. After much discussion, planners determined that elevating the portraits of the killers on the wall might seem to memorialize them. Alternative solutions included the hanging of portraits closer to the ground or opting for photographs of the perpetrators at work. In the final exhibition, photographs of the murderers are placed on a wall near monitors looping images of Nazi war-crime trials. This approach allowed planners to present the perpetrators in a way that forever enshrines them as criminals. The trial footage reminds visitors that the

⁵⁵ Ibid. 199-201

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 200.

murderers are included not to honor them, but to shame them for their crimes, for their images can in no way be equated to those of their victims.

Upon entering the primary exhibition, visitors first encounter the results of the perpetrators' horrific deeds. In the elevator ride to the opening exhibition, visitors watch a video on an overhead monitor of American troops encountering the death camps at Buchenwald, Mauthausen, and Ohrdruf for the first time. Visitors hear the voice of a distraught soldier as he came upon the death camp: "...we have come across something that we are not sure what it is...there are people running all over. Sick, dying, starved people...you can't imagine it. You, you just...things like that don't happen."⁵⁸ The large introductory photomural of charred bodies, taken at the Ohrdruf camp, allows visitors to join with American troops in their grim discovery.

Planners deliberately selected photographs of perpetrators "taking pleasure in their work."⁵⁹ Photographs document perpetrators taunting victims. In a photograph taken in Czechoslovakia, a Nazi gleefully cuts off the beard of a Jewish man awaiting deportation. One photograph shows Germans posing like hunters with their victims. In another, a man is stomped to death, surrounded by apathetic Nazis. Photographs also portray the bystanders, who to the survivors on the Council were accomplices to the murderers through inaction.

The exhibition contains numerous photographs of Nazi rallies, as well as "business, church, political, and judicial subservience to Hitler to "dramatize the role of complicit bystanders."⁶⁰ In the *Murder of the Handicapped* exhibit, a doctor stands

⁵⁸ Linenthal, *Preserving*, Ibid. 167.

⁵⁹ Weinberg, Jeshajahu and Rina Elieli. *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1995. 58.

⁶⁰ Linenthal, *Preserving*, Ibid. 204.

comfortably in a room with the body of a murdered child. A massive scale model of Crematorium II, sculpted by Mieczyslaw Stobierski, provides visitors with a view of the Nazi's killing machine in action: victims are stripped, herded into a gas chamber, murdered; then perpetrators, in a industrialized fashion, pillage, burn and harvest the bodies of their victims. Figures of guards appear to be involved in casual conversation as the bodies are stuffed into the ovens.

The photographs of the Nazis at work sharply contrast with the civilized images of the participants at the Wannsee Conference. Held on January 20, 1942, this pivotal meeting of high-ranking Nazi officials was organized to determine the fate of the Jews. The conference is documented in the museum's *Final Solution* exhibit. According to Alice Greenwald, former staffer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and director of the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, "It is here [Wannsee] that we first learn that these people were educated, that they were people who made choices."⁶¹

According to Berenbaum, through this exhibit, visitors learn that half of the Nazi officials in attendance held doctorates from German universities and during the conference, there were no "qualms of conscience...the members of the coordinating committee were enthusiastic about doing their part."⁶² Despite this inclusion, Timothy Luke, who wrote a critique of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2002, states that the exhibition fails to "show how people could fall under the sway of Hitler...they do not illustrate how hard it was to resist the Nazi movement and the state..."⁶³

⁶¹ Greenwald, Alice. Telephone Interview. 8 February 2007.

⁶² Berenbaum, Ibid. 102.

⁶³ Luke, Timothy W. Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. 60.

V: Politics of Representation: Other Themes

The Armenians and Genocidal Precedents

During the first meeting of the Commission in February 1979, member Raul Hilberg “declared that ‘it would not be a fulfillment of the overall tasks’ to ignore the Armenians or other victims [of genocidal events].”⁶⁴ Commission member Kitty Dukakis reported that the education subcommittee “supported a curriculum that included the other dramatic examples of genocide in the twentieth century, including the Armenians.”⁶⁵ Leo Sarkasian of the Armenian National Committee pleaded with Council members for recognition of the Armenian genocide “at least as a backdrop...”⁶⁶ According to Linenthal, he argued, “for who will listen if not you?”⁶⁷ Holocaust survivor and Council member, Yaffa Eliach, like Wiesel, was concerned about the “slippery slope of inclusion of non-Holocaust related genocides.”⁶⁸ In its report, the Commission avoided recommending the establishment of a general genocide museum so as to not obstruct the universality of the Holocaust. Berenbaum, who had lobbied to place the Holocaust in the context of contemporary genocidal events, took up the cause of Armenian representation in the museum upon his return to the project in 1987.

Linenthal states that the Turkish government, intent on barring any mention of the Armenians in the museum, lobbied the White House and planners. Despite its efforts, one Armenian, Set Momjian, was appointed to the Council. Three years later, despite, plans to include the Armenians, Momjian expressed frustration that Council members

⁶⁴ Linenthal, *Preserving*. Ibid. 229.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

began to debate whether there was even an Armenian genocide to include. According to Linenthal, influential Council member, Miles Lerman couched the debate in terms of the limits of extending memory, stating: “If you are introducing the Armenian tragedy to the Holocaust, why not the tragedy... of the Cambodians? Why not the tragedy of the American Indians?”⁶⁹

The Council’s first acting director, Monroe Freedman, recalled how determined the Turkish government was to remove the Armenians from the story, telling Linenthal, “As much as anyone wanted to be represented in the museum, that’s how much the Turkish government wanted the Armenians out.”⁷⁰ In spite of the pressure and resistance from members of the content committee, Berenbaum pressed for inclusion of the Armenians in the exhibition through a short film “*Nazi Rise to Power and Genocidal Precedents* and through Hitler’s remark: “*Who today remembers the destruction of the Armenians?*”⁷¹ Ultimately, Berenbaum succeeded in retaining Hitler’s quote, but, Linenthal states, many associated with the planning team maintain this issue cost him any chance of ever becoming museum director.

According to Linenthal, Berenbaum credited “effective [Turkish] lobbyists” for the limited inclusion of the Armenians.⁷² Armenian representatives, however, found solace in the inclusion of the quote, viewing it as significant, because it “was the largest type of any engraved on an exhibit wall” and “an affirmation of the genocide, and its place in Hitler’s memory.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Ibid. 232.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. 234.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. 235-236.

VI: A Memorial Museum's Location and Design Complicates Planning

The Council was motivated to avoid being labeled a horror museum, given their location on America's celebratory Mall. In its report, the Commission recommended that the museum be built on federal land to "validate" and Americanize the Holocaust. In this location, Young states that the "museum will enshrine not just the history of the Holocaust, but American ideals as they counterpoint the Holocaust."⁷⁴ A location in the nation's capital dramatically expanded the scope of Holocaust memory and complicated the process to institutionalize it.

Given its location and all it suggested about the plurality of American culture, the boundaries of victims had to be extended to include all ethnic groups who were impacted by the Holocaust. Some Jewish survivors on the Commission preferred to locate the museum in New York, because they feared the Jewish core would be diluted by political inclusiveness. Others expressed concern that the history of the event simply did not belong on America's celebratory soil.

Despite an effort to justify its location, Young states that critics charged that the museum "contradicted the very essence of the Mall, that by recalling such horrible events, the memorial would cast a dark shadow across a monumental landscape."⁷⁵ Many Jewish survivors on the Commission also feared this location would spur a new wave of resentment toward Jews for "pushing their way on the Mall."⁷⁶ In a letter to President Ronald Reagan, one enraged citizen wrote: "...the celebratory institutions on the Mall should not be confronted by a morbid reminder of genocidal crime committed

⁷⁴ Young, *Ibid.* 337.

⁷⁵ Young, *Ibid.* 338.

⁷⁶ Linenthal, *Preserving*, *Ibid.* 63.

by an alien tyranny on another continent.”⁷⁷ According to Linenthal, the most common argument was that the museum was “misplaced” and “not relevant” to the nation’s core historic narrative.⁷⁸

Throughout the debate, the Council realized the museum would have to be both aesthetically pleasing and politically acceptable, given its prominent location on the Mall. The design would have to be approved by the Fine Arts Commission, “whose first principle is to regulate and keep a relatively uniform appearance on the Mall.”⁷⁹ Several years of failed designs threatened the very survival of the project. A design by architects Maurice Finegold and Karl Kaufman was panned for being too imposing and unapproachable. In a letter to the *Washington Post* on June 6, 1985, a critic of the plan blasted the design: “From the front, the building looks like a huge oven. From the side it looks like a huge coffin. Apart from that, it is pompous—the last sentiment I would associate with a proper memorial to Hitler’s civilian victims.”⁸⁰ The Council had to also balance the survivors’ fears that a small building would diminish memory with the fact that the building had to appeal to the larger public and be a good neighbor given its location.

Controversy over the building’s design began to take its toll on fundraising efforts. The Council needed a building plan the public could embrace to make the project real to prospective donors. Architect James Ingo Freed was tasked with the challenge of creating an acceptable design. During a trip to Auschwitz, Freed found his inspiration in

⁷⁷ Ibid. 64.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Young, Ibid. 339.

⁸⁰ Linenthal, *Preserving*. Ibid. 78.

the crematoria in Birkenau. According to Wienberg, Freed aspired to create a building that would serve as a “resonator of memory,” and the designer channeled the mechanics of the death camp into his design, using steel, brick, glass and twisted skylights to evoke the industrial form of the Holocaust.⁸¹ The exterior design of his building was aesthetically pleasing to the Fine Arts Commission and the Council. In his book Wienberg described the building as a “self contained monument to the victims of the Holocaust.”⁸²

VII: The Politics of Object Display

Balancing the Commemorative and Historic Scholarship Functions

During the deliberations about how to portray the perpetrators, some members on the Council feared their inclusion would violate the sanctity of the institution’s memorial function. The Memorial Museum’s dual purpose reveals a tension between its commemorative and historical scholarship functions. According to Linenthal, planners wanted to use authentic artifacts to combat Holocaust deniers and provide a visceral experience for visitors; however some worried about creating a “cabinet of horrible curiosities” that glorified the killers.⁸³

The proposal to display 7,000 kilos of human hair recovered from Auschwitz in the permanent exhibition sparked a charged debate among museum planners. Some believed the hair would personalize the story of the Holocaust while others viewed its inclusion as defilement. Some worried the display of human hair was inappropriate and in bad taste for a museum on the Mall. Alice Greenwald and Susan Morgenstein appealed to the Council in a letter on February 23, 1989, writing:

⁸¹ Wienberg, *Ibid.* 26.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Linenthal, *Preserving.* *Ibid.* 212-213

“While we recognize and share with you the concern for a means to convey both dramatically and soberly the enormity of the human tragedy in the death camps, we cannot endorse the use of a wall of human hair, or ashes and bones. These fragments of human life have an innate sanctity, if you will; they are relics of once vital individuals, which do not belong in a museum setting but rather in a memorial setting.”⁸⁴

Despite charged objections, Holocaust scholar Martin Smith, then director of the permanent exhibition, wanted the hair included, writing to the late Alvin Rosenfeld, then director of external affairs: “I would rather be condemned by the media than pretty up the event.”⁸⁵ Despite the Council ultimately voting 9-4 in favor of installing the hair, Linenthal states, Dr. Helen Fagin, a Holocaust survivor and Council member, promptly ended the debate with these words: “The hair displayed could be from members of my family.”⁸⁶ In the end, the privileged voice of the survivor took precedence over the curatorial vision to use the hair to dramatize the Nazi’s use of the bodies of their victims as a commodity. In this instance, the commemorative needs were prioritized, limiting, at least in Smith’s opinion, the historic didactic.

The politics of object display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum also influenced how America was portrayed in the permanent exhibition. Museum planners decided to present America as liberator, while confronting the nation for its role as bystander in the early years of the War. The Commission sought to transform visitors, to remind them of the dangers of indifference. The exhibit documents the voyage of the *St. Louis*, a luxury liner with over 900 Jewish refugees aboard when it was blocked from

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 215.

landing in Cuba. Passengers appealed directly via telegram to the State Department and the White House to grant them a haven. According to Berenbaum, “As the ship sailed along the Florida coast, the passengers could see the lights of Miami. U.S. Coast Guard ships patrolled the waters to make sure that no one jumped to freedom.”⁸⁷ The ship was turned back to Europe. As a result, more than 250 of the ship’s passengers died in the Holocaust.⁸⁸

The exhibit also poses the question of why the American military did not bomb Auschwitz. A blown up aerial photograph of Auschwitz-Birkenau taken by an allied flyer in 1944 is on display within the *Final Solution* section of the permanent exhibition. Located near the remnants of Auschwitz, it is presented to elicit historical and moral questions. Accompanying text suggests that “by July 1944, bombing the camps was technically possible: information regarding the nature of the camps and their function was available or could have been made available to those undertaking such a mission.”⁸⁹ On this topic, Berenbaum states: “All that was required was the political will to effectuate the bombing” and that an “interruption in the killing process might possibly have saved lives.”⁹⁰ In an attempt to balance the interpretation, the text also notes, “for the allies, Auschwitz was a civilian target, not a military one.”⁹¹

The Council decided to create a space, separate and apart from the museum programming, that would serve solely as a place of commemoration. The *Hall of Remembrance* became that space. Within its walls, there are no images of the perpetrators or questions posed by historians. Freed boarded the windows with limestone

⁸⁷ Berenbaum, *Ibid.* 53-54.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 144-145.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

to prevent the American monuments from intruding into the space. Upon entering, visitors are drawn to an eternal flame. Sacred soil taken from 39 death camps and Arlington National Cemetery buried below the flame sanctifies the space.

VIII: The Politics of Exhibition Design

Giving the Tragedy an Uplifting Ending

Fearing the brand of a “horror museum,” planners struggled to find a balance between history and horror. Violent photographs of naked victims, medical experiments and videos of the Nazis in the act of murder are shielded behind privacy walls. Farr recalls for Weinberg, “It was not a question of whether to put these photographs behind privacy walls or in full view. It was privacy walls or *nothing* (author’s emphasis).”⁹² Such precautions have not stopped critics like Luke from writing in 2002 that the museum is “a lost province excised from Disneyland—it is Nightmareland.”⁹³ In his exhibition review, Philip Gourevitch, wrote in 1993 that the museum employed a “peep show format” of “snuff films.”⁹⁴ Gourevitch equated the experience of standing in the railcar to the feeling of “lying in someone else’s coffin.”⁹⁵ After witnessing what he described as a “constant recycling of slaughter,” he posed the question: “Why would anyone want to be here?”⁹⁶ The fact that 24 million visitors have visited the museum since the time of Gourevitch’s critique appears to challenge his questioning of the museum experience.

Throughout the planning process, Council members deliberated on how to tell the story that was entrusted to them. In the early 1980s, exhibition consultant, Anna Cohn,

⁹² Linenthal, *Preserving*, *Ibid.* 196.

⁹³ Luke. *Ibid.* 64.

⁹⁴ Gourevitch, Philip. “Behold Now Behemoth.” *Harper’s Magazine* July 1993: 55-63.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

led a team that developed the first of many scripts the Council would consider and ultimately reject. In 1984, Cohn's team proposed a narrative in reverse chronology: "From ashes to numbers, numbers to names, names to faces, faces to communities."⁹⁷ Individuals would first encounter the "last vestiges" of the victims...a pair of glasses, a tin cup, a child's drawing..."⁹⁸ Next, visitors would encounter a can of Zyklon-B gas and a crematorium. These sections were designed to convey the "viciousness of the perpetrators."⁹⁹ This section concluded with a wall panel engraved with prisoner identification numbers. Visitors would then learn about the deportation process and view objects like a victim's suitcase, and a railcar used to transport people to their deaths. Exhibits on eviction from homes, deprivation of human rights and Nazi rallies followed sections on Ghetto life. The exhibition was to conclude with the "pre-war lives" of the victims.

While Cohn's exhibition narrative offered an uplifting ending, in a sense bringing the victims back to life, Council members rejected it, for they feared this approach denied the survivors their rightful place in the story. This approach also obstructed the linear progression of the Nazi death machine and those innocents caught in it.

The next year, Stuart Silver led a team that attempted to literally end the exhibition on an upbeat note with its inclusion of "simple music" in "a tone of celebration."¹⁰⁰ Silver's exhibit would deal with postwar trials and end with "families resuming their place in the world," communicating a "triumph of the human spirit."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Linenthal, *Ibid.* 123-125.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 132.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

This proposed warm ending was unacceptable to the Council and the plan was rejected in 1986.

Jewish survivors pushed forward to find an ending similar to those found in Israeli Holocaust museums, where resistance, rescue and the creation of the State of Israel end the story. Linenthal states that Wiesel lobbied for an ending that reflected both, “the continuation of life” and the “sober realization that the ‘predicament of the aftermath’ would remain.”¹⁰² Planners considered providing visitors with an opportunity to sign a Presidential statement opposing genocide at the conclusion of the exhibition. They debated whether or not to conclude the exhibit with images of contemporary acts of genocide.

Upon his return to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1987, Berenbaum led a team that developed a script that was acceptable to the Council. The museum’s *Permanent Exhibition Guide* notes that the concluding sections of the permanent exhibition address “liberation of the Nazi camps and the Allied victory over Nazi Germany in 1945, rescue and resistance efforts, and the aftermath of the Holocaust.”¹⁰³ The postwar “quest to render justice to those who carried out the murder” and the “efforts of Holocaust survivors to build new lives” is also presented.¹⁰⁴ After visitors leave the gas chamber model, they arrive at a section dedicated to *Danish Rescue*. A boat used by the Danes to rescue more than 7,000 Jews by transporting them to Sweden is on display. This section is followed by the *Rescuers Wall*, which includes photographs and text recounting stories of men and women throughout every country in occupied Europe who risked their own lives to save others.

¹⁰² Ibid. 251.

¹⁰³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Permanent Exhibition Guide*. Washington: USHMC. 15-18.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Jewish resistance fighters are chronicled in the next section titled, *Resistance*.

An examination of the liberation of the camps is then presented. The narrative builds to the final section of the exhibition, *Testimony Theater*. Here, visitors can choose to view two short films on American responses to the Holocaust during the war and the film *Testimony*, “in which survivors, rescuers, and liberators share their experience.” Planners used the authentic voice of those who experienced the events first-hand to engage the visitor, to remind them one last time before they leave the Memorial Museum and return to the streets of Washington D.C., that each one of them has a moral obligation to stand up for other human beings in danger.

Chapter Three

The Emerging World Trade Center Memorial Museum

“Ground Zero belongs to all the American people. If Ground Zero is lost, whether through negligence or malfeasance, it will be a loss felt for generations to come.”

---Debra Burlingame

I: A Useful Planning Model

World Trade Center Memorial Museum planners currently face many of the same obstacles and opportunities that emerged during the process to build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. These common obstacles include: 1) The politics of representation with regard to what victims are given a role in planning, how the perpetrators are represented in the exhibition, and whether or not other themes will be included; 2) The Memorial Museum’s location and design; 3) Tensions between commemorative and historic scholarship functions; and 4) Exhibition design challenges stemming from the desire to give the tragedy an uplifting ending. The methods utilized by United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planners to overcome these obstacles will serve as a useful model for World Trade Center Memorial Museum planners.

II: The World Trade Center and the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

From its construction in the early 1970s, to its destruction at the hands of radical Islamic terrorists on the morning of September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center served as a powerful symbol of America’s economic strength. Architect Minoru Yamasaki designed the World Trade Center, and at the heart of the commercial complex, stood two massive twin 110 story towers (One World Trade Center and Two World Trade Center also known as the North and South Tower respectively). The World Trade Center

complex consisted of 7 buildings and six belowground levels, spread across 16 acres. Approximately 50,000 people worked at the World Trade Center, in roughly ten million square feet of office space.¹⁰⁵ The World Trade Center was first attacked on February 26, 1993, when Islamic terrorists “detonated 15,000 pounds of explosives in a van parked in the underground public parking lot...two levels below the southern wall of the North Tower.”¹⁰⁶ Six people including a pregnant woman died in the first attack. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, a quasi-government agency that owns the World Trade Center site, transferred management of the complex to private developer, Silverstein Properties on July 24, 2001—mere weeks before the catastrophic terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001.

On September 11, 2001, al Qaeda terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners and waged an unprecedented attack against America. Using the planes as weapons of war, the terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers, tore through the Pentagon, and crashed a commercial airliner in the fields of Shanksville, Pennsylvania. In all, 2,973 innocent men, women and children were murdered that day. During the immediate aftermath, as the wreckage pile of the World Trade Center smoldered, as rescue workers began their gruesome task of searching for the living and the dead, the politics of tragic history began to take root.

III: World Trade Center Memorial Museum

A Memorial Museum at the heart of the rebuilt World Trade Center appears to have been a consideration from the onset of the planning process. In the statement

¹⁰⁵ World Trade Center Memorial Foundation on the Internet. World Trade Center Memorial Foundation. 6 April 2007 <<http://www.buildthememorial.org>>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

accompanying his *World Trade Center Site Plan*, Architect Daniel Libeskind, wrote in 2002:

“Of course, we need a Museum at the epicenter of Ground Zero [World Trade Center site], a museum of the event, of memory and hope. The Museum becomes one of the entrances into Ground Zero, always accessible, leading us down into a space of reflection, of meditation, a space for the Memorial itself.”¹⁰⁷

Despite years of heated controversy and setbacks, in 2007, a core team of museum professionals is advancing the planning process of the emerging World Trade Center Memorial Museum. Davis Brody Bond LLC is currently designing the Memorial Museum’s below ground building while Snøhetta AS is designing the museum’s street level Visitor Center/Museum Pavilion. Officials of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the agency established to manage the process to redevelop the World Trade Center site and build the memorial to the dead, noted in its *General Project Plan*, “The Visitor Center will serve as the single entry point to the Memorial Museum, in addition to having visitor amenities and its own exhibition and programming spaces.”¹⁰⁸ Builder Frank Sciamè, who was appointed by officials in May 2006 to ensure a buildable memorial consistent with the \$500 million budget-cap, states that the Visitor Center:

“Will serve an iconic presence for the Memorial Museum upon arrival at the site...will house exhibition space related to the events of September 11, 2001 and February 26, 1993, focusing on stories such as the creation of the World Trade

¹⁰⁷ Sciamè, Frank J. “World Trade Center Memorial and Memorial Museum: Draft Recommendations and Analysis.” June 2006. 5 April 2007
<<http://www.renewnyc.com>>.

¹⁰⁸ Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. LMDC General Project Plan—WTC Memorial and Cultural Program as amended February 14, 2007. New York: LMDC, 2007. 7.

Center site and New York's inspiring recovery...as well as educational spaces for visiting school groups.”¹⁰⁹

Planners envision the World Trade Center Memorial Museum as a compliment to the World Trade Center Memorial, *Reflecting Absence*, which consists of two voids marking the approximate location of the street level footprints of the Twin Towers. The names of the 2,979 September 11th victims and those murdered in the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993, will be inscribed on parapets surrounding the voids. The manner in which the names will be ordered is still a source of contentious debate between victims' families and redevelopment officials.

After entering the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, visitors “will descend between the two voids into galleries at bedrock...The primary exhibition will be located at bedrock within the historical footprint of the North Tower.”¹¹⁰ Sciame states that the “Memorial Museum experience will continue to include the requirements under the Section 106 process [federally mandated historic preservation review process] regarding historic preservation of the slurry wall and box beam column remnants [which are the remaining steel vestiges, anchored in bedrock, that outline the footprints of the original Twin Towers].”¹¹¹ As noted on the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation website, “The Memorial Museum will help facilitate an encounter with both the enormity of the loss and the triumph of the human spirit that are at the heart of 9/11.”¹¹² According to the website, the Memorial Museum will feature:

¹⁰⁹ Sciame, *Ibid.* 3, 11.

¹¹⁰ World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, Inc. “The World Trade Center Memorial Museum.” Marketing Brochure. New York: WTCMF, 2007.3.

¹¹¹ Sciame, *Ibid.*

¹¹² WTCMF on the Internet, *Ibid.*

“Dynamic interactive exhibitions including artifacts and personal effects; a resource center, contemplative areas, and innovative educational programming will convey stories of the victims and recount the experiences of survivors, responders, area residents, and witnesses.”¹¹³

IV: Mission Statement

Unlike the mission statement of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, descriptive words such as “murdered,” “victims,” and “tragedy” are omitted by the World Trade Center Memorial Museum. Instead, the planners adopted neutral language that refers to the terrorist attacks, as “events” and characterizes its victims, as “lives lost” not murdered. In March 2007, World Trade Center Memorial Museum planners published the following mission statement:

“As a museum at a memorial site, the World Trade Center Memorial Museum will honor the lives that were lost on September 11, 2001, and February 26, 1993. The Museum will communicate key messages that embrace both the specificity and the universal implications of the events of 9/11; document the impact of those events on individual lives as well as on local, national and international communities, and explore the legacy of 9/11 for a world increasingly defined by global interdependency.”¹¹⁴

Throughout 2002 and 2003, victims’ families heavily contested words like “lost” and the omission of the term “terrorist attacks” during the process to craft the World Trade Center Memorial Mission Statement. The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation’s *Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program* published in 2003

¹¹³ WTCMF on the Internet, Ibid.

¹¹⁴ WTCMF, Marketing Brochure, Ibid. 1.

states: “Descriptive words were carefully considered for their meaning and implications for the statement: ‘murdered, killed or lost,’ and ‘Islamic or Muslim terrorists’...were debated.”¹¹⁵ The LMDC’s final memorial mission statement, released in 2003, includes the words: “Murdered by Terrorists.”¹¹⁶

V: Political Origins

The Creation of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation

Just as President Carter established a Holocaust Commission and later a governing Council, New York Governor George Pataki utilized his elected office until his term ended in 2008 to oversee the planning of tragic history. The Governor announced the formation of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation on November 2, 2001, the Friday before the mayoral elections. According to architecture critic Paul Goldberger, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani agreed “to give six of the nine seats on the new organization’s board of directors to the governor’s appointees...to keep the rebuilding process firmly out of Democratic control.”¹¹⁷ Leading up to the election, the polls favored Democratic mayoral candidate Mark Green. Republican Michael Bloomberg’s victory over Green came as a surprise to officials. Over time, the board was expanded to give Mayor Bloomberg four additional appointees, “allowing Bloomberg to have nearly as much influence over the makeup of the board as Pataki did.”¹¹⁸ In announcing the redevelopment agency, Governor Pataki said:

¹¹⁵ Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program. New York: LMDC, 2003. 6 April 2007 <<http://www.renewnyc.com>>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Goldberger, Paul. Up From Zero: Politics, Architecture, and the Rebuilding of New York. New York: Random House, 2004. 44.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

“New York will not only overcome the challenges we have faced since September 11, we will thrive and reach new heights. That is our pledge to the heroes who died in the evil attack; that is our vow to America and the world. By working together, and with the help of this enormously talented team, we will prevail.”¹¹⁹

In addition to controlling the newly formed Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, Pataki, as Governor of the State of New York, shared oversight of the Port Authority with the Governor of New Jersey. According to architecture critic Philip Nobel, the Governor decided early on to honor the terms of real estate developer Larry Silverstein’s lease. Nobel describes the Governor’s decision as a “fait accompli” to “replace every square foot that the leases required and that society could be made to tolerate.”¹²⁰ Goldberger states that Governor Pataki “saw a rebuilt World Trade Center site as his legacy and perhaps even his ticket to the White House.”¹²¹ Goldberger states that the Governor realized “the most convenient route” to achieve his political ambitions would be to allow the Port Authority and Silverstein “to rebuild more or less what they had lost, with a few extras, such as a memorial.”¹²²

VI: The Politics of Representation

The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation’s Rebuilding Process

As evidenced by efforts to build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, people directly impacted by a tragic event often struggle for a voice in planning processes that are often dominated by elected officials and competing interests. In 2002, the Lower

¹¹⁹ Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. Press Release New York: LMDC, 29 November 2001

¹²⁰ Nobel, Philip. Sixteen Acres Architecture And The Outrageous Struggle For The Future Of Ground Zero. New York: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2005. 148.

¹²¹ Goldberger, Paul. “Zero Summary.” New Yorker 5 September 2006.< <http://www.newyorker.com>>.

¹²² Ibid.

Manhattan Development Corporation established distinct advisory committees made up of primary stakeholders including a Families' Advisory Committee as a means of collecting public input. Local residents, business owners and civic groups also had their own respective advisory committees. That same year, the agency launched a series of town hall meetings to gather public input. On April 9, 2002, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation released a "blueprint" to guide the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site, in which the agency suggested "the creation of a park encompassing some form of memorial to the victims of the terrorist attack; and the establishment of a museum devoted to the story of the September 11 attacks."¹²³

In April 2004, the agency announced the formation of the Memorial Center Advisory Committee to make recommendations for an onsite museum. Officials handpicked victims' family members, residents, survivors, first responders and historians to serve on the Committee. Throughout the process, numerous public and advisory committee meetings were convened. Yet, according to Goldberger:

"Officials never showed any real interest in the public's views on the all-important issue of what uses the site should contain. It was made clear from the beginning that the program was the Port Authority's, not the public's, to decide."¹²⁴

The Politics of Representation

September 11th Family Groups and A Voice in the "Process"

At the time of its formation—and not unlike non-Jewish victims in the United States Holocaust Memorial process—no families of the victims were represented on the

¹²³ Goldberger, *Up From Zero*. Ibid. 90.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 141.

governing board of the redevelopment agency. September 11th victims' families and others, like Holocaust survivors before them, struggled to secure a seat at the planning table. Victims' families began to organize in the hopes of having a voice in the planning of tragic history at the World Trade Center site. Numerous advocacy groups emerged, including September's Mission led by Monica Iken, widow of 9/11 victim Michael Patrick Iken. Iken set out initially to establish the entire site as a September 11th memorial. When the political realities became apparent to victims families, many—including Iken—united to form the Coalition of 9/11 Families. The Coalition lobbied officials to “develop the memorial first,” to build “a memorial and complex [museum] that remembers and also teaches future generations the true story and significance of 9/11 in American history.”¹²⁵

Over time, many victims' families, frustrated with the direction of the rebuilding process, took their concerns directly to the public via the media. Those who disagreed with the redevelopment officials were branded—as Robert Kolker suggests—“a self-interested obstructionist force that could hold up Ground Zero's progress for years.”¹²⁶ According to Diane Horning, mother of 9/11 victim Matthew Horning:

“Those of us who disagreed with the status quo were cast off as a ‘small handful of angry vocal families.’ While those who supported the vision of redevelopment officials were often appointed to special committees, given board seats on the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and World Trade Center Memorial

¹²⁵ Coalition of 9/11 Families. “Memorial Complex.” *Tribute* 2.1 (2003) 1.

¹²⁶ Kolker, Robert. “The Grief Police.” *New York Magazine* 28 November 2005

Foundation, and in the case of 9/11 widow, Paula Grant Berry, the one seat reserved for a 9/11 family member on the jury that was to select the memorial.”¹²⁷

Reflecting on the role victims’ families have played in the process, Debra Burlingame, a World Trade Center Foundation board member and sister of 9/11 victim Captain Charles “Chic” Burlingame, states that the families are represented, if not democratically. We had to force them to listen to our voices. We succeeded in many important ways.”¹²⁸ Attempting to learn from the mistakes made by officials at the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, Alice Greenwald, director of the World Trade Center Memorial Museum plans to:

“...talk to as many stakeholders as possible throughout the planning process, to incorporate their voices into our thinking. Input must not be gathered in an overly isolated way because the best outcomes will come from getting everyone in the room together, to have a dialogue and listen to multiple points of view.”¹²⁹

Acknowledging the process of gathering input from those directly impacted “enriches and complicates planning,” Greenwald speculates, “In the years to come, the 25,000 survivors will become an increasing vocal presence in the process.”¹³⁰ The Memorial Museum’s creative director, Michael Shulan states:

“This is an event and institution of great importance in many ways. Primary voices must inform our thinking, because even though we cannot get everything

¹²⁷ Horning, Ibid.

¹²⁸ Burlingame, Debra. Email Interview. 5 April 2007.

¹²⁹ Greenwald, Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

in, if we did not listen to those directly affected, the museum would not succeed.”¹³¹

The World Trade Center Memorial Foundation

In 2004, redevelopment officials began to formulate the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, a not-for profit organization, which is to inherit the memorial and museum projects at the time of the dissolution of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. In October 2006, the Foundation elected Mayor Bloomberg, chairman of its governing board and Governor Pataki, honorary chairman.¹³² Burlingame sums up how politics continue to affect the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site: “Money, real estate, legacy and timetable.”¹³³ Today, there are seven family members serving on the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation. Two 9/11 survivors were elected to the board in 2006, along with a downtown resident and business owner.

VII: Representation of the Terrorists

Context and A Factual Presentation

One of the “big issues” Greenwald and her staff are grappling with is the representation of the perpetrators in the World Trade Center Memorial Museum.¹³⁴ The Memorial Center Advisory Committee recommended that museum planners convey “a factual presentation of what is known of the terrorists, including their methods and means of preparation.”¹³⁵ The Committee also suggested the inclusion of “an appropriate sense

¹³¹ Shulan, Michael. Telephone Interview. 15 March 2007.

¹³² World Trade Center Memorial Foundation. “Press Release: WTC Memorial Foundation Announces New Board Leadership.” New York 5 October 2006.

¹³³ Burlingame, Interview, Ibid.

¹³⁴ Greenwald, Ibid.

¹³⁵ Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. World Trade Center Site Memorial Center Advisory Committee Recommendations For the Memorial Center. New York: LMDC, 2004. 1.

of the context, background and aftermath of the terrorist attacks.”¹³⁶ In July 2004, the LMDC invited public comment on the Committee’s draft recommendations. Of the 1,070 comments received, only 2.4% “opposed including a factual presentation of the terrorists.”¹³⁷ Jan Seidler Ramirez, chief curator and director of collections, of the World Trade Center Memorial Museum has stated that planners will “call a spade a spade, and will present a factual presentation of the terrorists.”¹³⁸ Currently in 2007, Ramirez is considering the inclusion of the terrorists’ F.B.I. wanted-posters along with the possibility of presenting airport security surveillance video footage of the terrorists boarding the doomed airliners.

According to Burlingame, “Who the terrorists were, the conspiracy and their brutal plan should be exposed and explained in as great a detail as possible; Al Qaeda should be explained and its goal exposed for all the world to see.”¹³⁹ Shulan hopes to avoid mistakes made in other institutions where the perpetrator—and by extension a context of motive—is missing from the exhibition. In a 2007 interview, Shulan stated, “We have to show them as criminals, but represent them in a way that can, in no way, be elevated or compared to their victims.”¹⁴⁰

The creative director recognizes the challenge of determining where to locate the perpetrators given that the primary exhibition will occur within the historic footprint of the North Tower, considered by many to be sacred ground. According to Shulan, planners are considering methods for “including the terrorist without violating the

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ramirez, Jan Seidler. Interview. 31 January 2007.

¹³⁹ Burlingame. Ibid, Interview.

¹⁴⁰ Shulan, Ibid.

sanctity of footprints.”¹⁴¹ During a January 2007 interview, Ramirez stated “a presentation on the aftermath of the attacks could include a discussion on Radical Islam to remind visitors of the ongoing dangers it poses to humanity.”¹⁴²

VIII: Representation of Other Themes

A Museum of Freedom

At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a deliberate effort was made to exclude other acts of genocide within the primary exhibition to avoid obscuring the historic didactic of the Holocaust. In 2003, the Coalition of 9/11 Families released a position paper, in which, the victims’ families called for the creation of a Memorial Museum “dedicated to [the events of] Sept. 11 and February 26, 1993 *only* (author’s emphasis).”¹⁴³ The Coalition organizers wrote: “We oppose any inclusion of other themes/issues within the Memorial Museum.”¹⁴⁴ That same year, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation launched a competition to find cultural tenants for the World Trade Center site. A year later, the agency selected four cultural institutions from 113 submissions. One of the selected institutions, The Freedom Center (later known as the International Freedom Center), was described as “a new organization created expressly for the World Trade Center site that will include exhibitions centered on humankind’s enduring quest for freedom.”¹⁴⁵ The Freedom Center was to include evening lectures organized by the Aspen Institute and universities. In May 2005, Center

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ramirez, Ibid.

¹⁴³ Coalition of 9/11 Families. United Vision Position Paper. New York: CO9/11F, September 2003.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. Press Release New York: LMDC, 10 June 2004

co-founder, Tom A. Bernstein, told *New York Times* reporter Robin Pogrebin, “Our ambition is not to tell you what to think. It’s to make you think.”¹⁴⁶

The next day, *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff, characterized the Freedom Center as “a theme-park view of American ideals in an alluring wrapper.”¹⁴⁷ Burlingame, in opposition to the proposed Freedom Center in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2005, wrote:

“The public will have come to see 9/11 but will be given a high-tech, multimedia tutorial about man’s inhumanity to man, from Native American genocide to the lynching and cross burnings of the Jim Crow South, from the Third Reich’s Final Solution to the Soviet gulags and beyond.”¹⁴⁸

Burlingame compared building the International Freedom Center at the World Trade Center site to “creating a Museum of Tolerance over the sunken graves of the USS Arizona.”¹⁴⁹ Richard Tofel, then president of the International Freedom Center, in a rebuttal piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, wrote: “To be sure, the International Freedom Center will host debates and note points of view with which you—and I—will disagree.”¹⁵⁰

Take Back the Memorial, a consortium of victims’ families, united to urge officials to remove the International Freedom Center from the World Trade Center site. Through the summer and fall of 2005, the victims’ families held rallies and press conferences, taking their concerns directly to the American people. *Take Back the*

¹⁴⁶ Pogrebin, Robin. “At W.T.C. Site, a Temple for Contemplating Freedom.” *New York Times* 19 May 2005, 6 Mar. 2007 <<http://www.nytimes.com>>.

¹⁴⁷ Ouroussoff, Nicolai. “A Temple of Contemplation and Conflict.” *New York Times* 20 May 2005, late ed., sec. E: 27.

¹⁴⁸ Burlingame, Debra. “The Great Ground Zero Heist.” *Wall Street Journal* 8 June 2005, A: 14.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Tofel, Richard. “A Fitting Place at Ground Zero.” *Wall Street Journal* 9 June 2005, Op Section.

Memorial organizers feared the International Freedom Center's unrelated exhibits would divert "attention from the 9/11 atrocities and the Islamic terrorists who committed them."

¹⁵¹ Victims' families also feared the Center would turn the World Trade Center site into "a powerful visual aid to promote" ideological agendas. ¹⁵² Charles Wolf, whose wife died at the World Trade Center, told reporter Michael Weissenstein, "It doesn't matter whether it's going to be left or right. It doesn't belong at a memorial. You wouldn't put a debate about Nazism and authoritarianism at Dachau." ¹⁵³ Mary Fetchet, mother of 9/11 victim Brad Fetchet, states, "This is not a place we should be dedicating to other social or political issues. The space should be dedicated to honoring the people who died that day and telling the story of 9/11." ¹⁵⁴

IX: Location

Sacred Ground, Prime Real Estate, or Both?

As in the case of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which had to be a good neighbor because of its location on the Mall, the World Trade Center Memorial Museum must also be a good neighbor, given its location on the atrocity site and its proximity to five new office towers. Since its location continues to be shaped by the political realities and economic priorities of the day, the World Trade Center Memorial Museum must also be politically acceptable to those in power.

¹⁵¹ Take Back the Memorial on the Internet. Take Back the Memorial. 6 March 2007
<<http://www.takebackthememorial.org>>.

¹⁵² Burlingame, Great Ground Zero, *Ibid*.

¹⁵³ Weissenstein, Michael. "Families of Sept. 11 victims call for cancellation of museum." The Associate Press State and Local Wire 20 June 2005.

¹⁵⁴ Garcia, Michelle. "Proposal for Two Museums At Ground Zero is Divisive; Some Victims' Families Fear Political Slant Will Mar Site." Washington Post 4 July 2005, final ed., sec. A: 03.

Since October 2006, more than 481 human remains were unearthed at the World Trade Center site.¹⁵⁵ The discoveries, while gruesome, reminds one of the brutal nature of the terrorists attacks and the symbolic power the site still possesses. In his farewell address on December 27, 2001, Mayor Giuliani called for “a soaring memorial,” that would take precedence over economic development on the site.¹⁵⁶ Giuliani told the assembled crowd, “We shouldn’t think about this site as a site of economic development,” and that if the memorial was “done right, then economic development will just happen.”¹⁵⁷

In January 2007, Ramirez stated: “The elites’ artistic preference for ‘less is more,’ affects the form in which memory can take at the World Trade Center site.”¹⁵⁸ According to Ramirez, “building the Memorial Museum on the actual site where 3,000 people were horribly killed provides opportunities to have encounters with ‘authenticity of witness,’ which will continue long after the ‘DNA connection’ disappears.”¹⁵⁹ Aware of the site’s transcendent historic, moral and spiritual significance, victims’ families lobbied for the preservation of the tower footprints and other artifacts of 9/11. In July 2002, Governor Pataki pledged to “never build where the towers stood,” declaring, “Where the towers stood is hallowed ground, thousands of Americans died there just as thousands of Americans died at Gettysburg.”¹⁶⁰ Many families of the victims view the space where the towers stood as sacred because the largest concentration of victims’ remains was recovered within the footprints.

¹⁵⁵ McKeon, Dennis. “Email: Human Remains Update.” 2 April 2007.

¹⁵⁶ “America Rebuilds.” Prod. Great Projects Film Co. PBS, WNET, New York 2002.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ramirez, Interview. Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Give Your Voice. “Remembrance Ceremony.” Speech by Governor Pataki 2 July 2002.

Despite political promises, victims' families rallied for years to preserve the sanctity of the site, to ensure the story of the terrorist attacks would be told without distraction. During the International Freedom Center controversy, victims' families urged officials to turn over its prime above ground exhibition space for the Memorial Museum.

At times, victims' families fought to ensure that the World Trade Center Memorial Museum would be built. In 2006, the cap on memorial spending imposed by Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg threatened the project. According to Burlingame, Mayor Bloomberg "suggested locating the World Trade Center Museum in the controversial Freedom Tower, declaring it 'a good use of that lobby.'" ¹⁶¹ Burlingame described the suggestion as "an insult to the memory of the 3,000 who died and to the thousands who barely escaped," and posed the question: "Would the Holocaust Museum be treated as an afterthought and crammed into such space?" ¹⁶² The *New York Times* editorial board questioned why the Memorial Museum "should exist at all." ¹⁶³ By June 2006, the Memorial Museum had survived the downsizing and a move to the Freedom Tower because of public pressure and Sciame's analysis. Sciame wrote, "Given the cost of build-out of the museum in an office tower, which would include the need for double-and triple-height spaces and reinforcing support due to the weight of the WTC artifacts, as well as rent and additional access and security necessary, the analysis did not result in significant cost savings." ¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Burlingame, *Ground Zero*, Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ "Remaking the Memorial Foundation." Editorial. *New York Times* 1 June 2006

¹⁶⁴ Sciame Report, Ibid. 7-8.

April 2007 schematics indicate that the World Trade Center Memorial Museum is to include subterranean and aboveground programming spaces. The primary exhibition will be housed within the historic footprints of the North and South Towers at bedrock.

X: The Politics of Object Display

The Composites

A major planning obstacle museum professionals face involves reconciling the tension between Memorial Museums' commemorative and historic scholarship functions. After much deliberation, planners at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum decided not to display the hair of Holocaust victims because some involved viewed its inclusion as a defilement of the commemorative function, one that threatened to turn the museum into a "cabinet of horrible curiosities."¹⁶⁵ During the debate, Greenwald argued, "If this museum were situated at Auschwitz or Treblinka or Mauthausen; if it were the very site of the atrocities and the place of death of the victims, then the evidence of their degradation...would have validity."¹⁶⁶ In her new role as director of the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, Greenwald faces a similar debate.

As of June 2007, Memorial Museum planners are considering methods to display compressed materials fused into hunks from the collapse of the Twin Towers. According to the New York Medical Examiner, the compressed objects, resembling meteorites and referred to as composites, "most probably contain human remains."¹⁶⁷ In a February 2007 interview, Greenwald stated that the human remains are "too degraded for identification."¹⁶⁸ To Horning, the composites "contain human remains and are not

¹⁶⁵ Linenthal, *Preserving*, *Ibid.* 212.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Greenwald, *Interview*. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

something to be gawked at; they should be buried with dignity.”¹⁶⁹ While Horning “does not want the museum to sugar-coat the horror or erase the history of that day,” she posed the question: “Would they think it was appropriate to place human bones and tissue on display?”¹⁷⁰

Burlingame proposes that the “composites could be exhibited as long as they are properly identified, without exaggeration or sanitizing.”¹⁷¹ Greenwald states that she took the proposal to display the composites to the Foundation Board’s Program Committee, which includes victims’ family members. The World Trade Center Memorial Museum director acknowledges, “The composites cannot be placed in the narrative, that they must be approached with a degree of reverence.”¹⁷² April 2007 plans call for the display of the composites within the *Repository Chamber*, a space that will contain the entombed unidentified remains of the September 11th dead. The space is dedicated solely to the commemorative function of the Memorial Museum. Shulan describes the *Repository Chamber* as “the first place visitors encounter; it occupies geographically the museum’s central place, everything radiates from it and the space sets the tone of the visitor experience.”¹⁷³

XI: Exhibition Design

Ascending Pass the Slurry Wall

Just as planners at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum struggled to give the exhibition an uplifting ending and avoid a horror museum label, World Trade Center Memorial Museum staff currently face the same obstacle. In a conceptual design

¹⁶⁹ Horning, Diane. Email Interview. 9 April 2007.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Burlingame, Interview. Ibid.

¹⁷² Greenwald, Interview. Ibid.

¹⁷³ Shulan, Interview. Ibid.

for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum produced by Davis Brody Bond in 2005, the primary exhibition was organized thematically and ended with an ascent back to the plaza pass the slurry wall—an approximately 80 feet deep concrete wall that was part of the original complex designed to keep the Hudson River from entering the World Trade Center’s basement. Carl F. Krebs, a partner at Davis Brody Bond, states that designers recognized—as Libeskind before them—“the metaphorical quality of the slurry wall as a survivor” and that it helped them “define the closing experience.”¹⁷⁴ Nearly two years later, despite the myriad of changes to plans for the World Trade Center site, Greenwald and staff still look to the slurry wall to help define the museum’s closing experience.

Shulan, who returned from touring war museums around the world in March 2007, describes the exhibition design as “a journey back in time, to the underworld, to bedrock.”¹⁷⁵ The creative director describes, “the journey as an apt metaphor, given the history of the terrorist attacks is ongoing and visitors will embark on a journey toward understanding.”¹⁷⁶ According to Shulan, planners are still trying to “figure out what belongs where,” but “have made a commitment not to white wash the event.”¹⁷⁷ By the same token, planners “do not want to overwhelm or traumatize visitors.”¹⁷⁸

The World Trade Center Memorial Museum is being designed in such a way that the visitors can determine their own journey path. For instance, visitors can bypass the primary exhibition entirely if they choose to do so. World Trade Center Memorial Museum planners want to “return people back to the world with a sophisticated and

¹⁷⁴ Dunlap, David. W. “Memorial Museum Will Depict Life at Trade Center.” *New York Times* 29 August 2005, lat. ed., B: 1.

¹⁷⁵ Shulan, Interview, *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

honest didactic, not with a sense of Pollyanna optimism.”¹⁷⁹ Since “history is composed of individuals, their lives, their emotions,” Shulan states, “visitors will somehow be given an opportunity to contribute reflections at the conclusion of the museum experience.”¹⁸⁰ According to Burlingame, “The museum should be a sobering, even difficult experience, which leaves visitors with a vivid understanding as to the real life consequences of terrorism on its victims and society.”¹⁸¹

Shulan expects, like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, that there will be critics eager to brand the Memorial Museum as a “horror museum” and acknowledges that there is a “pressure to provide an uplifting ending to the tragedy.”¹⁸² Shulan states, however, “Whatever we do, there will be criticism, there will be political pressures, you cannot avoid it.”¹⁸³ The primary exhibit will document the attacks; visitors will then enter the *West Chamber*, which will include sections on the 9/11 Commission, the memorial process and the rescue and recovery efforts. For Ramirez, “the uplifting message is found in the way class distinctions disappeared in the immediate aftermath, that we took comfort in our human community, and while, we saw evil in man, we also witnessed unprecedented acts of goodness, compassion and sacrifice.”¹⁸⁴ Horning states:

“Planners should demonstrate the tremendous outreach and generosity shown by so many. They should show the faces of the dead. They should show evidence of

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Burlingame, Interview. Ibid.

¹⁸² Shulan, Interview. Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Seidler, Ramirez, Interview. Ibid.

tributes and charitable acts that keep their memories alive. What better way to convey hope and survival?”¹⁸⁵

On the issue of how to end the Memorial Museum experience, Burlingame wrote,

“People should walk out of there feeling emotionally drained, disturbed and haunted by what they have seen. They should also feel hope. After all, we lost 2,973 people but we survived as a city, as a country, as a democratic society. We saw the worst of humankind that day, and the best of humankind. Visitors should leave there with a sense that life matters, that their lives matter.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Horning, Interview. Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Burlingame, Interview, Ibid.

Chapter Four

Considerations When Planning Memorial Museums

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planning process, though punctuated with many trials and near derailments, reminds one of the challenges inherent in transforming intimate, tragic memories into institutionalized public discourse and shared history. The process to build America's Holocaust Memorial provides an apt paradigm for planners at the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, as well as future planners of tragic history. Insight from the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum as well as other museums of tragic history is also instructive.

The planning process at the World Trade Center Memorial Museum benefits from the past experiences of the museum's director, Alice Greenwald, who was a participant in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planning process. However, charged political and economic agendas continue to impact the planning of tragic history at the World Trade Center site. Planners of the Memorial Museum juggle many priorities including their duty to tell the story, to honor the victims and gain the trust of their families, while working within the political confines imposed on them.

The World Trade Center's abstract memorial, *Reflecting Absence*, puts an added burden on World Trade Center Memorial Museum planners to provide the literal, visceral and authentic experience absent in the Memorial. The World Trade Center site is considered sacred ground; the final resting of thousands slaughtered in the September 11th terrorist attacks and denied a proper burial. Their families, like Wiesel and other Holocaust survivors, will continue to be a voice of morality, working to ensure the story

of the dead and what they endured is never forgotten, that it informs and prepares the living for the challenges ahead.

The following four common themes are obstacles that museum professions can anticipate when planning Memorial Museums. Each section begins with general considerations applicable to the Memorial Museum planning process and concludes with implications expressly for World Trade Center Memorial Museum planners.

I: The Politics of Tragic History: General Considerations

Lessons from the past planning efforts of other Memorial Museums should be heeded. Consider the institution within the context of political and economic realities of the day. Museum professions should be aware that the Memorial Museum may be used to serve more pragmatic political ends, including election to higher office and the personal tastes and priorities of those in power. The trend toward abstracts memorials can place a greater burden on Memorial Museum planners. As demonstrated, Holocaust survivors and families of September 11th victims demand the historic events be remembered in a literal, visceral and instructive manner. Since “less is more” memorials are now being built, it is up to Memorial Museum planners to preserve and convey the history of the events. As Linenthal states, Memorial Museums are “protests against the anonymity of mass death;” Memorial Museum planners should be prepared to convey the stories and images of the atrocity victims.¹⁸⁷

The process to establish the United States Holocaust Memorial Council is exemplary of how difficult it is to reach consensus when planning the Memorial Museum. Political considerations further complicate the process of planning memory.

¹⁸⁷ Linenthal, *Violence*, Ibid.

Professional vision that conflicts with political realities can pose career consequences. The Memorial Museum professional needs to be politically savvy—as evidenced by the Turkish government lobbying the White House and Holocaust planners to remove any mention of the Armenian genocide.

Relationships with the media, stakeholders and other players can be developed. Politics and controversy can affect the Memorial Museum’s mission, and thus impact fundraising and federal funding appropriations.

Implications for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum

The mission statement is the heart of the institution—it’s compass. The power and purpose of the mission statement can be diluted by neutral language that could fail to engage visitors, staff and funders. A flexible mission statement can allow for the institution’s evolution as time advances. During the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum process, survivors viewed the act of dilution of memory as a falsification of history and defilement. The mission statement should make a strong statement against the atrocity being recalled.

II: The Politics of Representation: General Considerations

A Role in the Planning and in the Primary Exhibition

Individuals directly impacted by tragic history should be viewed as planning assets not liabilities. As evidenced in the various processes, participation of primary stakeholders can enrich and complicate planning. Primary stakeholders are a potential resource for museum professionals to overcome some of the political roadblocks imposed by officials. Potentially, stakeholders can exert pressure from the outside. Building trust

with individuals directly impacted is critical to success and can minimize public controversy.

While it is not possible to please everyone, Memorial Museum planners can avoid simply paying lip service to primary stakeholders. An honest good faith effort to listen to the concerns of those directly impacted by the tragedy should be made. The Carter administration's creation of a broad-based Council was needed to secure political and popular support. Debate is good. If everyone shares the same vision, planners are not getting all perspectives on an issue. A one-sided perspective is dangerous, and it contradicts the very nature of democratic principles. In a March 2007 interview, Joanne Riley, operations manager at the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum, stated: "Without the involvement of the families, survivors and rescue workers, we would have lost the powerful feeling people get when they come here."¹⁸⁸

Implications for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum

Alice Greenwald suggests that it is best "to get everyone in the room together," that "gathering input in isolation is problematic and ineffective."¹⁸⁹ Include those directly affected at every step of the planning process; they should all be brought together as Greenwald suggests. In the case of the World Trade Center process, the same victims' families are appointed to serve on governing boards, committees and the memorial jury. A greater representation of survivors, rescuers, recovery workers and area residents is also needed to inform all aspects of the history of the terrorist attacks.

Incorporation of authentic artifacts, photographs, testimony and text in the primary exhibition, are an effective method for inclusion of various stakeholders in the primary

¹⁸⁸ Riley, Joanne. Telephone Interview. 13 March 2007.

¹⁸⁹ Greenwald, Ibid.

exhibition. At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum planners wove Polish victims into the storyline in *Terror in Poland*. Photographs of victims and authentic artifacts like the tree stump containing the bullet hole gives Polish victims a powerful presence in the exhibition.

At the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, artifacts like the steel I-beam cross, at which recovery workers gathered daily together in prayer to prepare for their gruesome job, could be exhibited along with testimony of those who participated in the services to bring the object to life and give the recovery workers a presence in the Memorial Museum.

III: Representation of the Perpetrators: General Considerations

In order to include the entire historical context, Memorial Museum planners face the challenge of representing the terrorists in the exhibition narrative in a manner that does not contaminate the museum, while at the same time, avoids the creation of an invisible evil. Inclusion of a factual presentation of the perpetrators will help to avoid the invisible evil. The exhibition sections, *Nazi Society* and *Police State*, at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum are exemplary models. Photographs of the Nazi state hung on scaffolding obstruct the view of a large Nazi flag, the symbol of Nazi power. The scaffolding is evocative of prison bars, forever placing the Nazi state under arrest for its crimes against humanity. A portrait of Hitler is also positioned behind the bar-like scaffolding. Hitler's words inscribed in the museum are also diminished. Unlike all other inscriptions in the museum, which appear in raised letters, his words are silk-screened, suggesting a lack of permanence.

In recent years, planners at the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum have expanded the presence of the perpetrators in their primary exhibition. Riley states:

“The museum recently became the custodian of all the Oklahoma City bombing investigation materials and launched a ‘C.S.I.-type’ exhibit that provides visitors with the context and motive of the murderers, something that was missing in the museum until now.”¹⁹⁰

Riley states that Timothy McVeigh is always “presented in handcuffs,” and “in orange prisoner attire, to forever remind visitors that he was a criminal.”¹⁹¹ The perpetrators should be forever enshrined as criminals.

Implications for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum

At the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, inclusion of the 19 terrorists’ F.B.I. wanted posters, airport security and attack footage will provide visitors with context and will forever enshrine the terrorists as brutal murderers. These artifacts alert visitors to the ongoing threats Al Qaeda and radical Islam pose to humanity. The terrorists were educated people who made choices. At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, visitors learn that the Nazi elites were educated men, which makes their crimes against humanity all the more disturbing.

If the terrorists are located outside of the historic footprints, the footprints can remain sacred ground. The terrorists violated that space on September 11, 2001. Their presence can be viewed as a contamination. Perhaps, a discussion on the terrorists can occur within the *West Chamber*, immediately outside the footprints. Such a design would protect the sanctity of the footprints.

¹⁹⁰ Riley, Interview. Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

If the terrorists are not represented in portraits or in close proximity to their victims, their images will not be elevated. The repeated unanswered calls by victims' families to include the images of the September 11th dead in the memorial and at the Memorial Museum suggests that inclusion of portraits of the terrorists can be viewed as a defilement.

IV: Representation of Other Themes: General Considerations

The structure of the Memorial Museum inclusive of educational programming, archives and temporary exhibits, by design, provides ongoing opportunities for expansion and inclusion as evidenced by current programming at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Temporary exhibitions and educational programming can be utilized to expand the scope of the institution and to keep its mission focused. At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, this type of programming provides an opportunity to focus on non-Jewish victims and other genocidal events. Planners' use of Hitler's quote about the Armenians is a prime model for extending the boundaries of the primary exhibition while avoiding dilution or distraction. The slippery slope of inclusion of other themes and events can be avoided.

Implications for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum

Using the programming of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a model, the Memorial Museum need not be a forum for ideological debate. Burlingame states that at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "They don't engage in debates about whether the Jews were somehow responsible for their situation."¹⁹² The creation of a distinct World Trade Center Action Committee—modeled on the

¹⁹² Pogrebin, Robin. "9/11 Museum Director Girds for a Challenge." New York Times 22 April 2006, lat. ed., B: 1.

Committee of Conscience—can enable planners to address other acts of terrorism around the world. The Committee can also serve as a lobbying force to improve national security and provide support to terrorist victims.

V: The Politics of Location: General Considerations

The process to locate and design the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum proves that it is possible to create a Memorial Museum that is a good neighbor— aesthetically and politically pleasing—while remaining true to its mission.

Implications for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum

The World Trade Center Memorial Museum’s location on sacred ground complicates and enriches the planning process. As recommended by the *Memorial Center Advisory Committee*, planners will “commemorate the extraordinary events of September 11, 2001, by...drawing upon the power and authenticity of the World Trade Center site.”¹⁹³ People will come to this atrocity site for the story of September 11th and they can be given a meaningful and visceral experience. As Ramirez points out, “Building the Memorial Museum on the actual site where 3,000 people were horribly killed provides opportunities to have encounters with ‘the authenticity of witness,’ which continues long after the ‘DNA connection’ disappears.”¹⁹⁴

The Memorial Museum can prove to be a good neighbor by providing a powerful visitor experience—one that will bolster and perpetuate attendance, which in turn, could spur long-term economic development in Lower Manhattan.

¹⁹³ LMDC, *Advisory Recommendations*, Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ramirez, Ibid.

VI: The Politics of Object Display: General Considerations

At the Memorial Museum, planners must reconcile the tension between the museum's commemorative and historic scholarship functions. As Greenwald states, "Memorial Museum professionals need to start from the notion that their institutions are memorial sites first, then, on a case-by-case basis determine if inclusion of the object in question undermines or violates the trust of the victims or distorts the story."¹⁹⁵ Planners should have a general acquisitions policy in place and weigh object selection and presentation next to mission. In the end, it will be about compromise. In the case of the display of human hair at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the exhibit was designed in such a way that the hair could be incorporated at a later time, but for now, it remains in storage.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Hall of Remembrance* serves solely as a place of commemoration, separate and apart from museum programming. Within its walls, there are no images of the perpetrators or questions posed by historians. Federally funded museums appear to be under added pressure to put the needs of the commemorative above those of the historic.

Implications for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum

Planners can revisit their decision to display the fused composites by inviting primary stakeholders in to discuss the proposal before finalizing plans. Perhaps the composites can be buried in the *Repository Chamber*, a photograph of the materials can mark the burial site of the sacred masses until a future time when they can be unearthed and potentially displayed within the *Repository Chamber*. Planners can also consult the

¹⁹⁵ Greenwald, *Ibid*.

medical examiner to determine if the human remains within the composites can be retrieved for further testing and proper burial.

It is possible to commemorate as well as to question the past. At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, America is presented as liberator and bystander. Ramirez suggests that planners “will stick to the evidence.”¹⁹⁶ According to Ramirez, “the facts that reveal the Port Authority gave confusing instructions to office workers during the attacks should be presented.”¹⁹⁷

The World Trade Center Memorial Museum can establish a space that serves a purely commemorative function. *Repository Hall* can remain as a space at the Memorial Museum that is purely commemorative. Photographs of the September 11th victims can be displayed within this area to “personalize the death toll” and sanctify the space.¹⁹⁸

VII: The Politics of Exhibition Design: General Considerations

Planners can overcome the challenges stemming from the pressure to omit horrific context and give the tragedy an uplifting ending. Critics eager to brand Memorial Museums as horror museums cannot be avoided. The story told in the primary exhibition can be told without dilution. As seen at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, shielding graphic content behind privacy walls and offering alternative journey paths can help to prevent traumatizing visitors with overwhelming content.

A linear telling of the story provides an inherent uplifting ending. The primary exhibit at the Holocaust Museum ends with liberation, rescue, resistance, and survival testimony. The Oklahoma City Memorial Museum concludes with rebuilding and community outreach efforts to other victims of terrorism.

¹⁹⁶ Ramirez, *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Horning, *Ibid.*

Implications for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum

A linear telling of the story of September 11th and its aftermath—the outpouring of compassion and charitable acts, the memorials, the bravery of the rescue and recovery workers who searched the smoldering wreckage Pile to recover the dead, the dedication of victims’ families to make the nation better and to preserve history—is inherently hopeful.

The authentic voice of those directly impacted can be utilized to engage and inspire visitors, to instill in them a sense of civic responsibility and purpose. Before they ascend pass the slurry wall at the conclusion of the exhibition, visitors can be made aware of the dangers of the world they are about to reenter, a world where children are groomed to become suicide bombers, where the threat that Islamic terrorists pose to humanity continues. As Greenwald suggests, “We must allow memory to have a purpose in action; the Memorial Museum must take a defiant stand against indiscriminate murder.”¹⁹⁹

Both remembrance and history are culture. After viewing New York memorials that contained little historical explanations of the events they marked, former redevelopment agency official Anita Contini questioned whether historic events should even have long-term relevance. Contini asked, “Do we want to celebrate the culture of death, instead of the culture of the living?”²⁰⁰ History is ongoing and keeping it alive will not turn the World Trade Center site into a monument to grief, or render it “nothing but a graveyard,” as some have argued.²⁰¹ As Shulan states, “History is composed of individuals, their

¹⁹⁹ Greenwald, *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Goldberger, *Up From Zero*. *Ibid.* 215.

²⁰¹ Connolly, Michael. “Letter to the Editor: Honoring the Dead at Ground Zero.” *New York Times* 24 Sept. 2005

lives, their emotions, we all have a place in it.”²⁰² Planners have the ability to help visitors find their place, inspire them to live their lives to the fullest, to value their families, their communities and themselves. What better way to honor the memory of those who were murdered than to ensure that their deaths will inspire the living?

Visitors can contribute in some way to the closing experience. A well-planned Memorial Museum can give visitors something to think about, give them the context they need to learn about the terrorist attacks so they can apply its lessons to their own lives. Visitors can have the opportunity to contribute reflections on their experience of the Memorial Museum. They can be shown as Burlingame states, “That life matters, that their lives matter.”²⁰³

If planners can overcome the obstacles and seize the opportunities when planning tragic history at the World Trade Center Memorial Museum, America will have a September 11th institution, in which every citizen can take pride, one that honors life above money and politics, pays tribute to the dead, combats indifference, and inspires the living.

²⁰² Shulan, Ibid.

²⁰³ Burlingame, Interview. Ibid.

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