

Musser, Christine. "Preserving Memory: National Holocaust Memorial Museum Controversy." *Suite101.com*. Suite101.com Media Inc., 30 Oct. 2008. Web. 20 Dec. 2010.

The following is excerpted from an article published on a Web site for freelance writers and journalists.

It had to be done, but is The Mall* in Washington, D.C. the proper place for a museum that is dedicated to victims and survivors of the Holocaust?

It is not surprising that immediate and intense controversy erupted when plans were publicized to build a Holocaust museum on The Mall in Washington, D.C. The controversy grew from Jewish and non-Jewish communities, primarily due to the fact that a museum dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust would be built in the United States, who did little to stop the Holocaust from occurring, or as one protester said, "Imagine a Holocaust museum in the town whose political sages refused to lift a finger to halt the Holocaust or open our shores to the few survivors! How offensive to any informed individual!"

As the controversy grew, the supporters of the museum felt that building a museum on The Mall would enhance The Mall's already diverse stories. For example, George Will, a political columnist, states, "No other nation has a broader, graver responsibility in the world . . . No other nation more needs citizens trained to look life in the face". . . .

Holocaust Museum Design

The design of the building encouraged further controversy. Supporters did not want a duplicate of other buildings on The Mall, nor did they want something that would cause further anti-Semitism or to down play the atrocities of the Holocaust.

The Commission of Fine Arts refused the first design, stating the design was too "massive". The members of the commission felt the massive building would overcome The Mall and take away the main purpose of the museum, which was meant to be a place of remembrance and not to overpower The Mall or its visitors.

Albert Abraham was ready to scratch the design until he realized that the design could still work by downsizing it. Still not overly enthused by the design, it was approved by the Commission. Eventually the Commission would decide not to use Abraham's firm and asked James Ingo Freed to design the museum.

*The National Mall: a park in Washington, D.C., that stretches from the Lincoln Memorial to the United States Capitol. It contains a number of memorials, museums, and governmental buildings.