

The Holocaust and American Public Memory

Interview with Fred Zeidman

Chairman Emeritus of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council

Moderated by Dr. Rachel Gross, Professor at San Francisco State University

Emerson Auditorium at Washington University in St. Louis

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4:30–6:00 p.m.

Professor Leigh Schmidt:

Welcome to this afternoon's public conversation between Mr. Fred Zeidman, Chairman Emeritus of the United States Memorial Council, and Dr. Rachel Gross, a professor at Virginia Tech University and a former fellow with us at the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics. I'm Leigh Schmidt, acting director of the Center, filling in this academic year for my colleague, Marie Griffith. The Danforth Center is very pleased to have the Jewish Federation of St. Louis as well as the Holocaust Museum and Learning Center as co-sponsors of today's event. We are delighted to have these partnerships in the wider St. Louis community. As I hope many of you know already, the mission of the Danforth Center is to serve as a nonpartisan, research oriented, public minded institute for fostering rigorous scholarship and for informing broader audiences about the intersections of religion and U.S. politics. I invite you to join our email list to contact us with any questions or feedback and to follow our online journal on religion and politics, which features writing by various academics, journalists, and commentators from across the country. I want to offer a special word of thanks upfront to Sunny Bellows, Jean Cavender, Debra Kennard, Sheri Peña, and Andrew Rehfeld for all they did to make this event possible; my warmest thanks to all of them. We are honored to be hosting Fred Zeidman and Rachel Gross today and for the opportunity to hear them discuss, together, the Holocaust and American public memory.

Mr. Zeidman, a distinguished undergraduate alumnus of Washington University from the class of 1968, went on to receive his MBA from New York University in 1970. His leadership roles in finance, education, politics, and public service have been numerous in the decades since his graduation from Wash U. Among his many responsibilities, he has served as Chairman of the Southwest Region Anti-Defamation League, Vice President and Director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, Vice Chairman for the Board of Regents at Texas Southern University, and Vice Chair of the University of Texas Health and Science Center. He is also a partner with the Washington Nationals, and usually we have to recognize that as well, but the Nationals beat the Cardinals last night. In March 2002, Mr. Zeidman was appointed Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council by President George W. Bush, a position he continued to hold until 2010. The governing board of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the council plays a critical role in supporting and guiding the museum as the nation's signature institution dedicated to preserving the stories of survivors and victims of the Nazi regime, a beacon in the nation's capital for confronting genocide and anti-Semitism. It is our profound honor to have Mr. Zeidman here to discuss his experiences leading the council, as well as his own ongoing engagement with the issues at the heart of the Holocaust Museum's charge.

We are also pleased to welcome back Professor Rachel Gross, a research fellow at the Danforth Center in 2013/2014. Professor Gross received her PhD from the Department of Religion at Princeton University, where she completed her dissertation, entitled “Objects of Affection: The Material Religion of American Jewish Nostalgia.” Focused on practices of American Jewish memory in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, her book in the making examines Jewish longing for the communal homelands of Eastern Europe, as well as familiar New World neighborhoods, particularly New York’s Lower East Side. While with us at the Danforth Center, she taught a popular course called “Food Fights: The Politics of American Jewish Consumption.” Among the classes she teaches at Virginia Tech is “The Holocaust Cataclysm and Representation.” We are delighted to have this opportunity to reconnect with her.

I was reminded anew last week of the importance of today’s event, as well as our vocation at the Danforth Center, when reading a piece in the Washington Post by James Comey, the current director of the FBI. The Post printed Comey’s commentary under the headline, “Why I Require FBI Agents to Visit the Holocaust Museum.” An excerpt of the speech he gave at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s 2015 national tribute dinner, part of the museum’s observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day. Comey, an Irish-Catholic, noted that he required every new FBI Special Agent and intelligence analyst to go to the museum not only to confront the unfathomable inhumanity of the Holocaust, but he sends them there to also see the sinister humanity of it, the human susceptibility to rationalization and moral surrender, the human capacity for evil. “I want them to walk out of that great museum, treasuring the constraint and oversight of divided government, the restriction of the rule of law, the binding of free and vibrant press. I want them to understand that all of this is necessary as a check on us because of the way we are.” In the run-up to this event, I have to admit that I was not expecting to read a religious and philosophical reflection on the significance of the Holocaust Museum from the current Director of the FBI. But then I noticed that he had majored in Religious Studies in college, and then I found out that he’d even worked on a senior thesis comparing the public engagement of two critically important, if wildly different, religious figures of the last century: Reinhold Niebuhr and Jerry Falwell. The study of American religion and politics came together to form him in crucial ways at a young age. And one can hear the echoes of that education and the way he thinks about his public service, including the way he works to educate his own agents and analysts. Through events like this one and through our wider enterprise, the Danforth Center aims to nurture that kind of learning and critical awareness among its own students. The Jewish philosopher, Emil Fackenheim, himself a survivor of the Nazi regime, considered remembering the Holocaust as a new commandment of Jewish life; one of the ways in which the Jewish people, as he said, refused Hitler any posthumous victories. “We are commanded,” he wrote, “to remember on our very guts and bones the martyrs of the Holocaust, lest their memory perish.” It is to that work of public memory that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is dedicated, and is it with great esteem that we welcome Fred Zeidman and Rachel Gross back to Washington University to discuss that institution’s role in American public life. Please join me in welcoming them now.

Mr. Fred Zeidman:

Thank you, thank all of you for coming today. We got here so late that I couldn’t see any of my friends and fraternity brothers. I did get to see Dr. Virgil, who plays such a great part in my early life at this school, I’m always really thrilled to be in your company. I also want to thank all you

Cardinal fans for giving us some hope that we might be able to beat you, although we never can seem to do that in October, you made it rough last night (10 innings) but we got there. Anyway, what a thrill to be back on this campus. Everybody gets their five minutes of fame in life, and I thought mine was over after Animal House came out and my roommate and I started the food fight. But I've had the most incredible opportunity I could have ever had in President Bush having allowed me the opportunity to Chair the U.S. Holocaust Museum, and it far surpassed anything I ever thought I was going to have an opportunity to be involved in. I didn't realize when I got there, I thought this was ceremonial, and President Bush said to me, 'this is my reward for something I had done for him before.' I got there and there was just tremendous turmoil at the museum, and I was being brought receptionists to approve everyday and secretaries, and I said, "I'm the Chairman of the board, why am I getting this?" He said, "no, you're also the CEO." I said, "okay we got to change that at some point," but it really threw me into a world that I could never have imagined, and the thrill and the rewards of having that opportunity to work with survivors and to follow in the footsteps of Elie Wiesel. As I walked this campus 50 years ago, I never thought this would happen to a little country boy from Wharton, Texas.

Dr. Rachel Gross:

Mr. Zeidman, I'm so delighted to have the opportunity to have this conversation with you today. As Leigh mentioned, I write and teach about the politics of Jewish memory, including teaching a course on Holocaust history and memory at Virginia Tech, and you've had such a hand in shaping a particularly important part of modern Jewish history and how it is represented to national and international audiences. So, thank you very much. I also want to say thank you very much to Leigh Schmidt, in particular, and to everyone at the Danforth Center for inviting me to participate in this event. I'm so thrilled to return to the Danforth Center. As a dissertation fellow here last year, I had an extraordinary productive and enjoyable year here, and many of you in this room will know how rare and winning that combination is. So, Mr. Zeidman, as you know I have a few questions for you and we'll have a conversation before we allow the audience to join us. So we might begin if you could tell us how you would describe the roles of the U.S. Holocaust Museum.

Zeidman:

Well, interestingly enough, Rachel, I think the role has changed significantly. I'm the first non-survivor to Chair the US Holocaust Museum, and the survivor generation built that Museum and paid for that Museum. Again, the federal government gave the land for the Museum under the understanding that they would build it. They built a museum under the theory that 'you build it and they will come,' and they have and they've come in droves, but my feeling was, there are 280-300 million people in America and they can't all come in person. The job that we had was to take the museum to them. Our job was to transition the museum to a non-survivor generation. The museum is so critical, and that's why it's on the Mall, so that the whole world can see that this is important to the United States of America. I was in an interview on Monday, and they said, "what do you think?" I'm sitting in my office and I said, "look out the window, there's the Washington Monument, there is the Pentagon, and twice a day the President of the United States (when he was traveling) comes right by my window in his helicopter." Now if that's not telling you what role this Museum plays; if you think about American Exceptionalism and you think about American leadership in this world, it is imperative that the United States of America take

the lead in that. I think that obviously other than Yad Vashem, we were the first country to recognize the horrors of the Holocaust and to make sure that we presented an opportunity to everybody in the world to see it.

Gross:

As someone who teaches about the Holocaust, I know precisely how valuable your online contributions are. They are immensely valuable to me as an instructor and to my students learning about the Holocaust, so thank you for those contributions.

Zeidman:

Again in this effort to do that, one of the things that I encountered when I got there was of course this: not only is the Survivor Generation dissipating, but so are all the artifacts and documentation, not only naturally but they are also being destroyed in some of these foreign countries. We really had a tremendous chore to try and grab as much as we could, and one of the things that I have decided to do and what I thought was so important was to invest in digitization and putting everything online. We were spending so much time and so much effort, along with Yad Vashem, going through all of Eastern Europe and all the satellite countries chasing artifacts and trying to grab them. I said to our partners at Yad Vashem, "why don't you do that, so that I can devote my money to something that I think is much more important," and that's going online so that the rest of the world has access to all of this information. I'm glad to see we did something right.

Gross:

You've done a beautiful job with it, it's really impressive. And it hints at a very broad audience. Can you tell us a little bit about who the audiences are that you'd like to reach and that you do reach?

Zeidman:

I wish I hadn't been gone five years because I could quote all of those statistics, I'm not sure I can do it anymore, but we found in the focus groups that we were able to reach a worldwide audience. We had and we were in thirteen or fourteen different languages. We found among other things, 85-90% of the people going online were not Jewish, they were people who were studying the history and the lessons of the Holocaust. And to me, my main job is to teach the lessons of the Holocaust so that they won't be repeated. That's my obligation to the survivors.

Gross:

Absolutely. So you have visitors who are all kinds of different backgrounds (Jewish and not Jewish), do you think of the institution itself as a Jewish institution? What kind of institution is it? Is it a religious institution or a political one?

Zeidman:

Let me tell you one of the things we faced when I got there. If you look at the history of this museum and the way it was put together, it was built by Holocaust survivors, and they wanted this to be their story, which was the Jewish story. There were seventeen million people killed in the Holocaust, six million of them were Jews. The Jews were the only ones who were killed only because of religion. We are a federally funded museum. They did not fund a Jewish museum,

they funded a museum of the Holocaust to reflect the Poles, the Russians, the gypsies, everyone that was killed. One of the big battles, if you will, that I had when I got there was this battle between 'are we a Jewish Museum or are we a museum of the Holocaust?' To me, we were a museum of the Holocaust. We were not a museum of anti-Semitism, except as to the extent that it related to the Holocaust. So, I was not going to deal with individual instances of anti-Semitism. We formed some phenomenal alliances with several organizations, with the Anti-Defamation League among them, to deal with those anti-Semitism issues. Our decision was that we can only do that as it related to genocide. We designed exhibits that showed how early anti-Semitism in the 30s evolved into the Holocaust. So that's been an ongoing issue forever and obviously as anti-Semitism has spread, the good thing is not having to deal with those issues. President Obama did a marvelous job of picking a successor to me, there were folks that were in the Museum with me and have kept that on track, and we have to deal with the modern world. We have to deal with the post-survivor generation, we have to deal with their legacy to make this the Museum of Jewish Holocaust. We do have to focus on everyone else who was killed as well, and we tried to keep it away from focusing just on anti-Semitism and individual acts of anti-Semitism, other than the way it might relate. That was a major challenge, and it was a major battle, if you will, with the survivor generation who did not want us dealing at all with anything other than their story. If you go to the museum, there is nothing from the first floor up that relates to anything other than the story of the Holocaust.

Gross:

And you've also chosen select ways to deal with other kinds of genocides. I know the Holocaust Museum was very involved in activism against the genocide in Darfur and other issues. Can you tell us more about how you made those choices?

Zeidman:

If you look at the Rwandan Genocide, there was no acknowledgement of it at the Museum or anywhere else. Elie Wiesel and his brilliance created a Committee on Conscience, which was to deal with modern day genocide. The Museum never allocated any money to it on purpose because the survivor generation did not want to move anything away from their story. I realize that if we're going to be a museum of the Holocaust, if we're going to teach the lessons of the Holocaust, we had to relate it to modern times and genocide again. I told the man, who at that time was running the Committee on Conscience, that "I'm going to allocate whatever you need to make your job important here." He came to me and he said, "I think there is a genocide about to start or starting in Darfur, and I want to go see," and I said, "here's the deal, I can't send you into a genocide. I'm not going to send you into a war zone. If you want to go, then go, and I promise I'll pay for it and I'll reimburse you." He went and he spent about a month there, and came back with pictures of what was going on over there, and there was no question that there was a genocide. We took the lead on that, and we took it to the White House. We said, "we want you to see what's going on over there in Darfur." We took it to the United Nations as well, and the White House declared a genocide. I can tell you that that was fully attributable to the homework that we had done, because, to me, that was exactly what we were there for. We got heavily involved in that, and of course, we only get involved in genocide, so if you look at the war in Iraq and whatever was happening in Syria in the chemical warfare, those raise questions about how do you make decisions as to whether or not you're in a civil war, a religious war, or a true genocide? Darfur was a genocide, Rwanda was a genocide, you can make the case that these

others have been genocides, but they were religious wars. They were fighting on both sides, and I think the Museum has smartly not gotten involved in some of that. Among one of the things that I'm exceptionally proud of is the focus and emphasis we put on the Committee of Conscience. Probably the single most impactful program that we ever put on, and to this day I get chills when I think about, is a program where we had a Holocaust survivor, a survivor of the Rwandan Genocide, and a survivor of Darfur. We put this on at the museum, and the Holocaust survivor says, "didn't you learn anything from me?," and the Rwandan survivor says, "didn't you learn anything from me?," and the Darfur survivor is sitting there saying, "are you going to learn anything from me this time?" We've all been through this, and, to me, this is what the museum needs to do. The museum had to migrate from being just a history of the Holocaust to the lessons of the Holocaust, so that we can teach this generation. You missed my session with the students, but they asked, "what's the takeaway here?" I said, "the takeaway is that each of you need to learn that you have an obligation to never forget, you have an obligation to see that museum, to see what humans are capable of doing to humans, and to make sure it doesn't happen again." I couldn't be more proud of that transition because they really had sublimated the role of the Committee on Conscience only wanting to be a museum of the Holocaust.

Gross:

Do you see that role hinted at in the dual nature of the memorial museum? Was there a choice to call this place both a memorial and a museum?

Zeidman:

Correct, it is a memorial. It's a memorial to the six million, but because it has such a Jewish influence it's a memorial to the seventeen million. One of the things that used to fascinate me was watching the kids that were on their sixth and seventh grade tours come dancing into the museum in the morning, and then to watch them come out of the museum two or three hours later and just see the impact this has had on them and the tragedy of what can happen overnight. The thing that has been the most impactful in the museum, of course, has been the shoes. But to me, the thing that is the most impactful are the three levels photographs. In the first picture, everyone is having picnics, going to the bank, riding bicycles, and the kids are playing in the park; they're doing everything that we do today. You go down to the next floor, and this is one year later, and they're now in a ghetto. You go down one more level here, in the third level, and you're looking at pictures and they're all dead. What this is teaching all of us is how quickly this can happen if we're not vigilant, so it's vitally important that we have a memorial. It's vitally important that the world knows that the United States of America is aware of this every day, that the President of the United States can see the U.S. Holocaust Museum from the Oval Office. So to have that memorial right there and to see it viewed by over two million people a year, and they're not all Jewish, is incredible. There are six million Jews in America, and the museum gets two million visitors a year. If every Jewish American had come to the Museum just once, they could have done it in three years. So the fact that about 35 to 40 million people have been through the museum is going to show you how we resonate, and that's the lesson that has to be taught, that's the lesson that this world needs to know, and that's the lesson that we continue to try and promulgate. And by the way, all the networks have their cameras on top of the Chamber of Commerce building, and when you watch CNN the camera is on top of the Chamber of Commerce building. So they show, every day, the United States Holocaust Museum. And to me, that's resonating for everyone in this country and the world.

Gross:

This museum is on American soil, and I wonder if you can speak to the opportunities that it has to be a Holocaust museum in the United States, but also if there are difficulties with being a Holocaust museum on American soil, rather than European soil, where the atrocities happened.

Zeidman:

First of all, I think that is a phenomenal question and it speaks to what we have talked about. The Holocaust Museum was conceived under President Carter, and they spent the next fifteen years trying to put it together. But I think if you look back historically, until they announced that the United States was going to build a Holocaust memorial and a Holocaust museum, no one was addressing or recognizing the atrocities of the Holocaust, until the United States announced that we are going to memorialize it and that we're going to build a museum. And now there is a tremendous growth in the number of museums, like the one here, and all over the country. It was this recognition of the Holocaust that caused this to happen. Great Britain was not going to do it, and there was complicity everywhere. None of the perpetrators were being arrested or chased anywhere in Western Europe at all until the United States did what it did and put this museum on that ball. It said, 'we're going to do this, we need to do this.' And, slowly but surely, there's now a museum in Poland, a museum in Berlin, a museum in London, and there's now an acknowledgement in Germany. Germany is not hiding their camps anymore, they're building memorials in their camps. None of this would have happened if the United States had not taken the lead in showing the world that we need to deal with this and to make sure it won't happen again. It was tremendously important that we do that, and of course when they conceived of this they gave the Jewish leadership in this country that piece of land. When I got to D.C. I said my main goal was to buy the Yates building so we could take it over to go all the way out to the Mall. The President of the United States could not get the Agriculture Department to give up that building, so that Yates building is still there today. And I said I was a total failure because I never got the Yates building, I figured I could do that, but literally everybody up to and including President Bush said, 'we got to have that building,' and they said 'we're not giving it to you.' That was my biggest failure, I never got that building. So we're still not quite on the Mall. They had to raise the money privately, raise a hundred fifty million dollars privately, and there were a bunch of rules, which is really interesting. They wanted no corporate money because they didn't want to have the name of corporate donors inside the museum. They refused to take money from anybody that was involved with Germany, so some of the major corporations, such as Mercedes Benz, were refused. There was no federal funding in the creation of the museum; the way the system works is that the federal government gave us enough money for what they considered the opening and closing of the museum. When I got there the budget was \$32 million dollars a year, and remember there's no ticket sales, plus the security cost. The museum is considered the third most likely target, behind the White House and the U.S. Capitol, because if a terrorist wants to do something, go do it where the Jews are, and we did have one killing at the museum. All of the research, all of the archive of work, all of the programming that we had to do, had to be funded privately. When I got there, the budget was \$55 million dollars, and when I left the budget was \$75 million dollars, and we had to raise the rest. And then we got to the period of time, of course, when the budgets were frozen. They would never cut the U.S. Holocaust Museum, but we didn't get any increases, so the rest of that money had to be raised privately. I think today they're still getting right at \$32-33 million dollars, plus the security cost. The day of the shooting just so

happened—and, by the way, the guy that got shot was the most phenomenal guy in the world, he used to give me a really tough time about baseball—to be when we were up on Capitol Hill testifying. Someone tapped by shoulder and said, “come quick, there’s been an incident at the museum.” We got in the car and my cell phone rang, and people in Dallas were calling me to check in. We turned on Independence Avenue, and I saw helicopters everywhere, half of the United States Congress was there, and every major network in the world was there. It was a tragedy, and it was an old guy who was mad at President Obama for cutting his benefits, so he decided to kill himself and to kill as many Jews as he could. He didn't get inside the door, but he shot the African-American who was at the front door. It was a tragedy, but interesting enough, it's the only incident that has ever happened in that museum, which is amazing when you consider that we're considered to be the third highest target.

Gross:

It's terrifying, and tragic, and also such a relief that that's the only incident there.

Zeidman:

We were just afraid every day.

Gross:

I absolutely believe it.

Zeidman:

Do you remember the point when a bunch of Russian missiles had been stolen and that they'd been sold in the United States, where they were going to be aimed at the U.S. Holocaust Museum? That's the kind of thing that kept us up at night.

Gross:

There's a lot of talk of rising anti-Semitism in Europe, which I'm sure keeps up the current Director and current Chairman of the Board. And I wonder if, given the attack on the Kosher supermarket in Paris in January, following the attack on Charlie Abdou, and of course in Missouri we are still talking about the death of State Auditor Tom Schweich, the Memorial Museum faces a particular role at this moment?

Zeidman:

Well, I think this is probably the most difficult decision. One of the reasons I am so fascinated by the Danforth Center and why I'm so proud to have made what I hope is a fairly significant contribution to the Center, is that you're dealing with these issues. This goes back to the original question, are you a Jewish museum or are you not? You have to address that you're not a Jewish museum, but a museum of the Holocaust and genocide. We have to show what happens if you don't do something. I think the museum is not actively engaged in many issues.

We use federal dollars, which have to be used to promote all ethnic minorities. You didn't see the museum stepping out at any of the human rights abuses in other countries, you haven't seen the museum actively involved in any of the issues that are really pertinent, like the issues here in Missouri, not only the suicide, but also some of the issues that have affected other ethnic minorities. We have also seen police shootings daily now, that arguably could be race based. And so, those are all real issues. What is the role of the Holocaust Museum in this? If you are a

Jewish museum, you have to get actively involved in some of these issues of anti-Semitism. If you're not, you have to make people aware if you tolerate these things and allow them to continue. Hitler was one of the most brilliant marketers that I have ever seen. Talk about a guy who knew how to use focus groups; he didn't start just mass killing, he market tested to see how the world would react to it. That's the same thing that's going on now; the bad guys are trying to see what the world is willing to tolerate, and that's what the museum has to speak out against. I think, particularly just speaking out on the Abdou issue, there is no question about the attack on the supermarket in France. We are having these same issues in Brazil and Central America, you are starting to see many more instances of anti-Semitism here in this country. This is my perspective, and I think the Executive Director feels the same way, we have to let the world know what can happen if we let this go. If you look at what the FBI Director said last week, I will tell you that the entire Plebe class in the Naval Academy comes to the museum and the Washington D.C. Police Department comes to the museum. Everyone comes to the museum to see what happens if you let this thing get away from you, if you listen to orders that are not right, or if you don't pay attention to these instances and let them go. The program we started with the police department sent officers to St. Louis. That's the job we have to do, and those are the programs that need to happen.

Gross:

Absolutely. I think you were telling us at lunch that you reached out to the FBI and suggested that they come to the Holocaust Museum?

Zeidman:

I think the FBI were the first ones there. That started under Sessions, but I don't know when they started those programs. The police department program started when I was there, but I think the FBI program may have started before I was there.

Gross:

That's very important and impressive programming. To that end, and in line with some of what you have told us about the relationship between the federal government and the Memorial Museum, I wonder if I can ask what you see as the connections between the U.S. government and the museum? But also, do you see the museum fulfilling a particular American mission?

Zeidman:

Well, the basic answer to that is if you believe in American Exceptionalism, that we are there to reinforce that America is the leader in the world and that we were the first to openly acknowledge and recognize the need to deal with this issue to make sure it doesn't happen again. The fact that it's federally funded means that every American has the ability to come into that museum and not be constrained by having to pay for a ticket. I remember when the sniper was around D.C. and no one was coming to Washington and Sara Bloomfield—whom, by the way, is the most marvelous Executive Director—asked “what are we going to do?” I said, “we can't have a sale, we don't charge for tickets.” We just had to live through this, and we know that people are coming to the museum in increasing numbers. Again, if the United States had not made this available, the way they're making it available, I don't know where we'd be. I don't know where worldwide recognition of the Holocaust would be. I'd like to think other countries are following our lead, and again, to me, it's a perfect example of American Exceptionalism.

Gross:

That's fantastic, thank you. Maybe I'll ask you one more question, and then we'll open it up to questions from the audience. Looking back now, you're several years out from this role and have had time to reflect, what was either the most challenging or the most rewarding part of your role as the head of the board?

Zeidman:

That's a great question. The biggest challenge, I think, was facing this transition from the mission of the museum when it was built in the first ten years—the migration from this survivor generation to the post survivor generation, and how do we make the museum real? How do we portray this legacy to teach America, and to keep it live, to keep it real? Our job is to make sure that no one ever forgets and we couldn't do that unless we kept it alive with the digitization and all those other things. Convincing the survivors that we were going to do this and that they had to let us do this because it was in their best interest, to me, was probably the biggest challenge. The biggest reward, without question, was seeing the smiles on the faces of the survivors as we continued their legacy. We couldn't have done it without Sara and the most phenomenal staff you could ever imagine. I used to take the Sunday night flight in every Sunday, and I never wanted to look at the museum because all the lights would still be on. No one has ever been more devoted than the staff that Sara put together there. They were 200% behind what I wanted to accomplish when I got there. I said to President Bush, "it's time for a non-survivor to take this over and we have to take it to the next generation, or we're going to end up like these other museums." So, to me, that was the challenge. And the reward is looking at the books on my shelf and seeing, "thank you for what you did for us." I think we truly effected that transition, and I told Sara, "I'm just the lucky recipient of you and your phenomenal management team," so while we didn't have the backing of the community, we had the backing of the management team that knew where this had to go. Putting into place the folks we had and the cooperation we had with the White House, and putting in a board that was supportive of that effort, was all the reward I ever needed.

Gross:

It seems like the management team and all those who have benefitted from the museum have a lot to thank you for, so thank you.

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