

Holocaust: monuments, memorials, and public demonstrations



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In the same way that a film or picture can evoke countless feelings and emotions from its audience, monuments, memorials, and public demonstrations have the same ability. The events of the Holocaust have created an everlasting impact on not only those affected and the future generations, but even cities and countries that were not directly affected. The Holocaust Memorial located in Marion Square in Charleston, South Carolina attracts hundreds of residents of the city and tourists from all across the globe among the duration of the day.

Almost hidden in plain sight among the trees stands a memorial that provides purpose and displays a moving message that an unaware passerby may not understand if never visited before.

Constructed in 1999 by architect and Jonathon Levi, the monument was built to commemorate the 19 Holocaust survivors who relocated to South Carolina. Levi's design features three separate components to transcend even the terrible events of the mid-twentieth century; the place of assembly, a place meant to gather, and the place of remembrance (Boughton). The place of assembly features concrete steps facing the grass where gatherers come to commemorate the annual Yom Ha Shoah Ceremony (waymarking.com) The second component of the memorial is the sanctuary, where passerby's can reflect and can take a moment to think of the horrific events that revolutionized the twentieth century. It features a rectangular iron screen that sits seventeen feet high, sixty feet long, and twenty-five feet wide. Inside the screening lies a twelve-foot long tallit or Jewish shall that is worn during prayer or during burial. The abandoned tallit stands for those

who have died as the screening represents a prison, synagogue, or concentration camp (e. g. see fig. 1).

The final component, the place of remembrance is where plaques are displayed on a large concrete wall honoring originally twenty-four Holocaust victims, but since 2015, survivors and the

(Fig 1.) The Holocaust Memorial located in Charleston, South Carolina features the iron fence and tallit. twenty-four concentration camp locations have been added to the list as well (Greuber). One of the plaques features a brief message describing the purpose of a tallit. It explains, The tallit is a four cornered garment worn by many Jews at prayer. It is customary for Jews to use the tallit as a burial shroud with one of its four fringes removed as a symbol of death and mourning. This is highly symbolic since it is traditional to be buried with this religious prayer shawl primarily for men, but women too who prayed with this garment. The abandoned shawl strategically placed in the memorial represents the fallen synagogues in Europe whose services were dismantled and striped away from its community.

Although its physical size is overwhelming and its symbolic representation is as just, it can easily be overlooked if not consciously looking for it. Passing by the memorial on my runs, I was unaware of it ever existing until recently. Its unassuming and simple concrete walls which feature names of survivors and concentration camps locations prove that despite the under-bearing design, its symbolic meaning is greater than the physical aspect of it. The plaques are set in concrete, making it discreet enough for people walking along the

street not to notice, but when the sunlight hits the area, illuminating the Holocaust victims' names honored in the memorial (e. g. see fig. 2).

After researching the purpose of the memorial,

(Fig. 2) Two of the nineteen last names of the Holocaust survivors residing in South Carolina displayed at the Holocaust Memorial in Charleston, South Carolina. each component became more compelling and intriguing and is evidence of the saying, Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others. (Jonathon Swift). Without visiting the memorial, it would've remained in my memory as an unsuspecting, random architectural design located in Charleston, known for its art scene. After my experience, I have a newfound appreciation for the subtle but loud message of the pain and suffering of those who have been mistreated without having to witness the physicality of it. Our generation cannot empathize with these victims as we have not been through the same atrocities they have endured, but we can sympathize and make sure an act such as the Holocaust never occurs again.

The survivor's name are inscribed in the memorial which gives the audience a personal connection to those being honored. The article, Making the Memorial written by Maya Lin discusses the making of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as she was the designer for it and how she was criticized for being impersonal about the incidents that occurred. She explains, I think as well the listing of names reflected a response by these designers to the horrors of World War I, to the immense loss of lifeThey [memorials] captured emotionally what I felt memorials should be: honest about the reality of war, about the loss of life in war, and about remembering those who served and

especially those who died (Lin). Not only does this evoke emotions from any audience of a memorial, but with the Holocaust Memorial in Charleston, it seems to promote a sense of optimism listing survivors, instead of the millions of victims.

A quote is placed above the names of the countries which reads, On that day, one who has escaped will come to you to let you hear it with your own ears. Ezekiel 24: 26 (e. g. see fig. 3).

(Fig. 3) A quote from Ezekiel 24: 26 inscribed into a plaque located on a portion of the Holocaust Memorial located in Charleston, South Carolina.

The living survivors are the only ones who can recount the experiences of concentration camps, even as they pass on, the stories they tell will be the tales that continue to impact the generations to come. In 2015, when a ceremony was held for the rededication of the memorial, Holocaust survivor Joe Engel spoke, Never again! That's why we are all here, to remind ourselves, never again (Boughton). It seems as our duty as a society is to consistently remember the torture the survivors endured and the bravery and courage of all the survivors and those who have perished.

One of the plaques explains that we must alert ourselves to the dangers of prejudice, to express our outrage at the scourge of racism, and to warn the world that racism can lead to genocide. The creator of this memorial purposely displayed plaques that are thought-provoking and sorrowful, but also to let us not forget that the exigence of prejudice and racism remains in our society today. Despite being constructed nearly two decades ago, the message is prevalent and fitting to the conflicts in the United States in 2018 <https://assignbuster.com/holocaust-monuments-memorials-and-public-demonstrations/>

with constant talk about police brutality among Blacks and prejudice against Muslims.

In the piece *The Effects of Public Memorials on Social Memory and Urban Identity* constructed by Ebru Erbas Gurler and Basak Ozer, the writer's discuss the impact of an audience and the location of a memorial. It states, Moreover, these memorials help tourists to carry this frame of mind back to their own countries and inspire them to establish a bond with similar crimes and problems today, whether faced in different societies or in different contexts (Gurler et al). The audience of the memorial isn't limited to the citizens of Charleston, but tourists and people of all ages and races visiting the city from all over the world. The message and purpose of the memorial can be taught to children of any gender, adults of any race, elders with any ailments. Prejudice is not accepted and it is irresponsible to be ignorant or forgetful of the crimes that happened on humanity during World War II.

Not only does *The Effects of Public Memorials on Social Memory and Urban Identity* discuss the significance of an audience and the location of a memorial, the writers discuss an essential point that correlates to the message of the Holocaust memorial. Public memorials, which remember the events and the pain they caused to the public through (civil) war, terrorism, genocide, etc. In our day, they are actually reflecting the psychological and sociological requirements of the societies on the landscape (Gurler et al). As discussed in their writing, it is implied that through the takeaway after visiting the Holocaust Memorial in Marion Square, it is our society's duty to be the voice of the previous generation who suffered and can no longer share their story. We have to reflect upon the psychological and sociological

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requirements of Charleston's society to bring constant awareness and to never forget the events that coincided.

The article written by James E. Young titled *Memory and Counter-Memory* compares different design approaches to Holocaust memorials and highlights its distinct differences. Both a monument and its significance are constructed in particular times and places, contingent on the political, historical, and aesthetic realities of the moment (Young). The Holocaust is a memory that is individual to each visitor who views the memorial in Marion Square. It reflects the time period during which the memorial was built.

The events of the Holocaust are discouraging and haunting, the millions of those who have lost their lives from brutality have been encapsulated in memorials, photographs, and monuments constructed by architects, designers, and artists who have deemed it crucial to display their message to society. The symbolism of this memorial celebrates and honors the large population of Jewish faith still residing in Charleston, South Carolina. The Holocaust Memorial in Marion Square sheds light on the survivors and urges visitors to eternal recall the monstrosities conducted on human life.