INTERPRETING THE UNIMAGINABLE:

MEMORIALIZATION IN THE SOONER STATE

By

CAMILLE EVANS

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Oklahoma State University

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Thesis Approved:

Dr. Bill Bryans

Thesis Adviser

Dr. Tonia Sharlach

Dr. Lowell Caneday

Name: CAMILLE EVANS

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Abstract: This thesis examines and analyzes interpretations of tragedy in a memorial setting in Oklahoma. By comparing memorials of varying events, I reveal a common theme in Oklahoma interpretations of hope, the variations in background and funding like the time lapse from event to creation of memorial, and the various ways the untold stories are given a voice at these memorials. The three locations included in this thesis are the Kaiser Holocaust exhibit at the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, and the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. Images have been compiled from each site to provide a basis for analysis in the thesis. The background information and history has been researched to compare the creation of each memorial. The data collected for the research is from the memorial sites, newspapers, published reports, and books. The thesis argues that the three sites are places of hope, understanding, and education. Each location presents a different way in which the United States, the State of Oklahoma in particular, interprets a tragic event.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"*The silence and neglect of science can let truth utterly disappear or even be unconsciously distorted.*"

W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Folk Then and Now.*[1]

The Holocaust, Oklahoma City bombing, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 were tragic events that took many innocent lives. The senseless killing of women, children, and men occurred in these tragedies and many struggle with why. Survivors and others affected by these incidents did not want the events to be forgotten and as a result, there are museums and exhibits today that interpret the history of the events. This paper provides an analytical critique of the interpretation of tragic events at three different locations. The inspiration for this topic came from a graduate reading seminar course over the Holocaust. The course's required paper led to an analysis of a Holocaust exhibit in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Within that paper, a comparison of the Oklahoma City bombing was

[1] W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Folk Then and Now vii* (Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1975).

included to contrast two ways tragedy was interpreted. Oklahoma was not directly affected by the Holocaust, but the state had its own unique tragedy with the Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995. This attack on the city's federal building was the largest domestic act of terrorism in American history at the time. Citizens, donors, the state and federal government together created a memorial and museum to "remember" this event. The Memorial Museum lends itself to comparison with the Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition because of how they both conceived history in their setting, how they interpreted the large event within the local narrative, and their use of replication and simulation to engage their visitors.[2] The Holocaust exhibit in Tulsa mentions racial issues at the beginning of the exhibit, in order to give context and examples of the history of hatred toward one particular group. One example given addresses the racial issues between African Americans and white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma. This example led to the incorporation of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 into the research. The event is considered by many to be the worst and deadliest race riot in twentieth-century America.[3] Even with the size of the event, the interpretation of the tragedy did not fully take place until almost a hundred years after the event and is the most recently-established exhibit of the three in this study. The three locations chosen represent the varied ways Oklahoma interprets tragedy. Each location represents a tragedy committed by man, not a natural disaster. The Holocaust exhibit shows an international tragedy, the Oklahoma City National Museum presents a national tragedy that the community and

[2] J. John Lennon. "Interpretation of the Unimaginable: The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., and 'Dark Tourism,'" *Journal of Travel Research* (Aug 1, 1999, Vol. 38), 46.

[3] Alfred L. Brophy. *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921: Race Reparations, and Reconciliation.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), xvii.

state addressed quickly. Finally, the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park is an example of a local tragedy that many in the community chose to overlook and was a battle site for the creation of a site of memorialization.

Kenneth E. Foote's book *Shadowed Ground: American's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* provides a starting point for this study. Foote's book became a guide and many of his main arguments, like the collective memory of an event or tragedy and how these sites offer insight into how people deal with the meaning of tragedy. These arguments are interwoven in the chapters, particularly his stance that the "stories of these sites offer insight into how people grapple with the meaning of tragedy."[4] Each of the three memorials reveal a unique way in which the people of Oklahoma have dealt with a tragedy and their interpretation reveals how the event has shaped the community.

There has been extensive research done on Holocaust representation in museums and memorials. This is due in part to the sheer size and impact of the Holocaust and the passage of time, seventy-five years, since the event took place. Omer Bartov's book, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation*, is an important work on past and current portrayal of the Holocaust in museums and films. Bartov offers a critical analysis of the representations of the Holocaust, particularly at Yad Vashem and at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). Peter Novick and Tim Cole have also questioned representations of the Holocaust, particularly in Western cultures and how it has become "commercialized."[5] K. Hannah

[4] Kenneth E. Foote. *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 7.

[5] K. Hannah Holtschneider. *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews: History and Identity in the Museum* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 17.

Holtschneider's book, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews: History and Identity in the Museum*, is a more recent study and concentrates solely on museum exhibits of the Holocaust. Her work emphasizes who owns the past and the negative aspects of reimagining this event in a museum setting. Holtschneider asserts that these exhibitions on tragedy can either "elevate" or "obliterate" the subject based on their interpretation.[6] In contrast, the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum has thus received less research because it is a smaller-scale event, occurred less than twenty years ago, and the museum and memorial were only recently created. Edward T. Linenthal is one of the foremost historians on the subject of memorialization and has written multiple articles and the book, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory.* Linenthal produces a comprehensive look at the creation of the memorial and of the various issues that plagued the planners when implementing their interpretation. In contrast, because of how new the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park is, there is not much research on the actual memorial. There has been informative research done on the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 with considerations of both sides, not just the white side, of the riot. Alfred L. Brophy's *Deconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* is one of the most recent contributions to the field and offers a thorough view on the event and previous research. This analysis will incorporate Bartov, Foote, and Linenthal's research, as well as that of a few others, to offer an examination of the exhibits that includes their similarities and differences.

Each location interprets a tragic event in history and with that comes personal memories and pain for those affected or somehow involved. This becomes even more

[6]Ibid 145.

complicated when dissecting public memory, which, is composed of popular memory and the official memory from government officials.[7] There have been arguments that the public representation of these events, beyond merely memorializing the victims, opens "old wounds."[8] However, as prominent historian Edward T. Linenthal stated, it is the "responsibility" of the current generation to "preserve and present" the interpretations for the coming generations. According to Linenthal, it is far worse to allow the events to be forgotten and for those affected by the tragedies to suffer without any public place of memorialization or reconciliation.

An observation by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel encompasses the issue with presenting tragedies: how could one ever attempt to present any of the three events, yet how could one allow them to be forgotten?

[7]John R. Gillis. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, "Between Memory and Oblivion: Concentration Camps in Germany Memory by Claudia Koonz" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 261.

[8] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory.* "Epilogue: Reflections by Edward T. Linenthal." (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press: 2006), 224.

CHAPTER II

THE HOLOCAUST: AN AMERICAN INTEPRETATION

"How is one to speak of it? How is one not to speak of it?"

Elie Wiesel, 1968[9]

The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma hosts a permanent exhibit titled *The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition.* This exhibit was created by the Jewish community in Tulsa as way to remember the six million Jews murdered in the "*Shoah*."[10] This exhibit shares many aspects that a majority of other American Holocaust exhibits have such as relating the Holocaust to the United States, promoting the message of tolerance, and focusing on visual and technological material.

The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art is located on the Zarrow Campus in the heart of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Even though the Zarrow Campus is in a prominent place in Tulsa, most individuals in the community are not familiar with the campus or the

[9] Elie Wiesel. *Legends of Our Fire (*New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1968).

[10] The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art. *The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition Brochure*. Tulsa, Oklahoma.

museum. The museum began in 1965 when part of a New York collection was sent to the museum. The collection was compiled into the Gershon and Rebecca Fenster Gallery of Jewish Art in 1966.[11] The museum was renamed the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art in honor of the first curator, Sherwin Miller.[12] The museum sits in the center of several institutions of the Tulsa Jewish community. On the same campus, there is the Tulsa Jewish Retirement and Health Center and the Jewish Community Center. This makes the Holocaust exhibit unique compared to the other sites in this study because the museum and exhibit were solely funded by the local Jewish community with aid and gifts from other Jewish museums and communities throughout the United States. The presentation of the Holocaust in Oklahoma may have not happened if the exhibit had needed state funding because the Holocaust was a European event that many in Oklahoma may have deemed unnecessary to elicit building a permanent exhibit. Those at the Sherwin Miller Museum, the Jewish community of Tulsa, however deemed the creation of a Holocaust exhibit worthy because even though the tragic event occurred in Europe, its effects reached those in every Jewish community. Also, the presentation and interpretation of the tragedy allows the visitors to see the evil that has been done, based on the hatred of another group based on religion, ethnicity, and skin color. This enables the museum to connect personally with people of the community, as is examined at the beginning of the exhibit.

[11] The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, About, Our History, http://jewishmuseum.net. Accessed November 19, 2013.

[12] Ibid

When approaching the Sherwin Miller Museum, the modern façade is the first thing that greets the visitor. The clean lines along with the grey tones present an industrial impression. The main foyer to the museum is a large open space. Three towering stained glass panes reflect beautiful colors on the floor and throughout the room. To the left of the main desk are two tall menorahs flanking an entryway.[13] As you walk through it, the visitor is met with a sculpture by Chaim Hendin that resembles the smokestacks of a crematorium.[14] This unique artwork has six stacks that also represent the six million Jews that perished during the Holocaust.[15] The experience entering the museum is of a clean space with prominent symbols throughout.

The museum offers a brochure that shows the intended route to follow viewing the Holocaust exhibit.[16] This path is not evident without the use of the brochure, which is detrimental for those who do not pick up or utilize the map. The exhibit starts on the left, which will seem odd for many visitors. A study was done to document the tendency of museum visitors and 75 percent of them turn right when entering an exhibit or gallery.[17] Because this exhibit does not progress in a single path, signs are needed to direct the visitor throughout their experience. A hindrance to this arrangement is that a visitor has

[13] See Figure 1.

[14] *The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition Brochure.*

[15] See Figure 2.

[16]See Figure 3.

[17] John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking. *The Museum Experience (*Washington D.C.: Whalesback Books, 1992), 56.

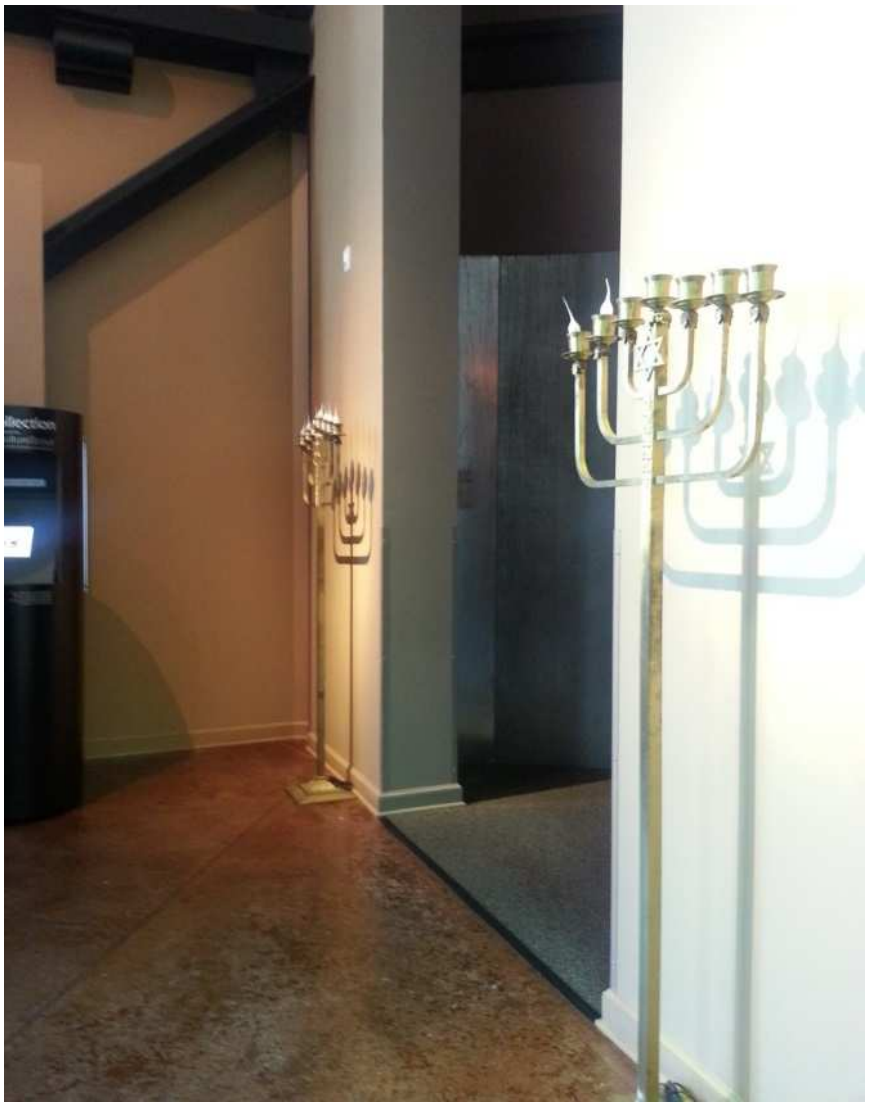
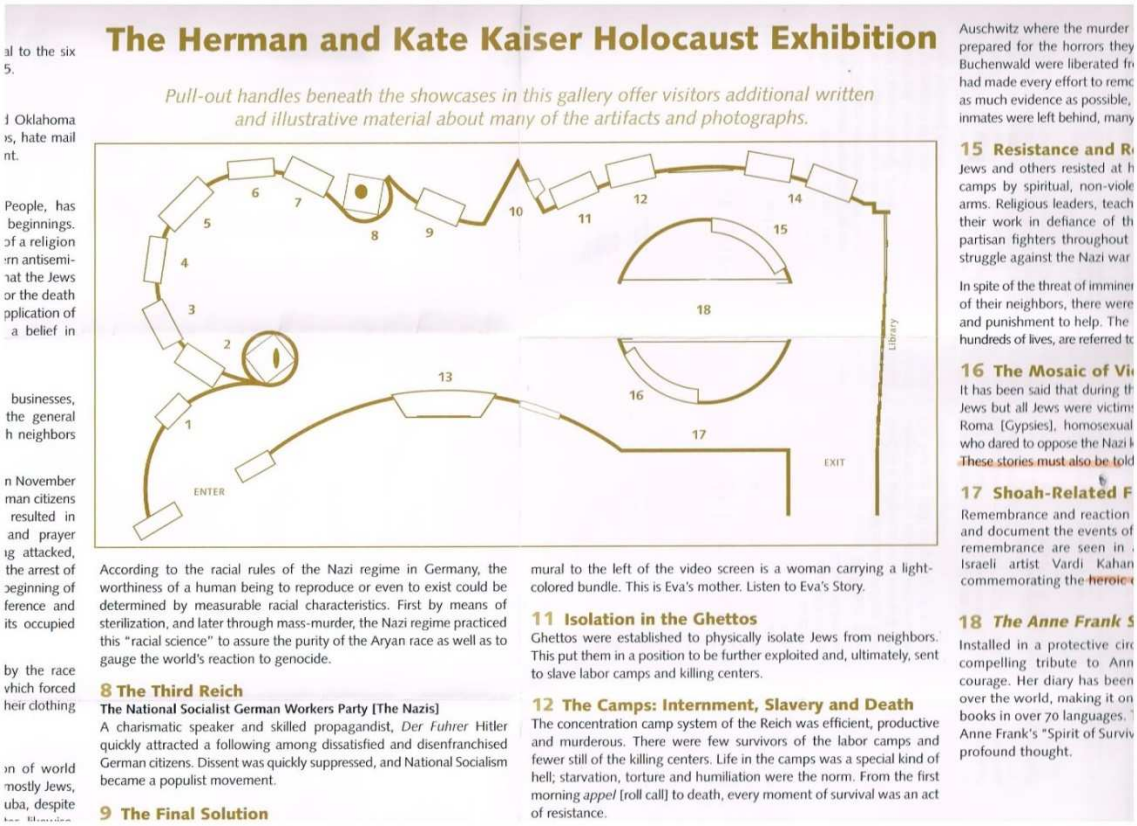


Figure 1: Menorahs flanking the entrance to The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibit. November 26, 2013.

Figure 2: Chaim Hendin's sculpture, *Yizkor*. November 26, 2013.



The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition

Pull-out handles beneath the showcases in this gallery offer visitors additional written and illustrative material about many of the artifacts and photographs.

According to the racial rules of the Nazi regime in Germany, the worthiness of a human being to reproduce or even to exist could be determined by measurable racial characteristics. First by means of sterilization, and later through mass-murder, the Nazi regime practiced this "racial science" to assure the purity of the Aryan race as well as to gauge the world's reaction to genocide.

8 The Third Reich

The National Socialist German Workers Party [The Nazis]

A charismatic speaker and skilled propagandist, *Der Fuhrer* Hitler quickly attracted a following among dissatisfied and disenfranchised German citizens. Dissent was quickly suppressed, and National Socialism became a populist movement.

9 The Final Solution

mural to the left of the video screen is a woman carrying a light-colored bundle. This is Eva's mother. Listen to Eva's Story.

11 Isolation in the Ghettos

Ghettos were established to physically isolate Jews from neighbors. This put them in a position to be further exploited and, ultimately, sent to slave labor camps and killing centers.

12 The Camps: Internment, Slavery and Death

The concentration camp system of the Reich was efficient, productive and murderous. There were few survivors of the labor camps and fewer still of the killing centers. Life in the camps was a special kind of hell; starvation, torture and humiliation were the norm. From the first morning *appel* [roll call] to death, every moment of survival was an act of resistance.

Auschwitz where the murder
prepared for the horrors they
Buchenwald were liberated fr
had made every effort to remc
as much evidence as possible,
inmates were left behind, many

15 Resistance and R

Jews and others resisted at h
camps by spiritual, non-viole
arms. Religious leaders, teach
their work in defiance of th
partisan fighters throughout
struggle against the Nazi war

In spite of the threat of imminer
of their neighbors, there were
and punishment to help. The
hundreds of lives, are referred tc

16 The Mosaic of Vi

It has been said that during th
Jews but all Jews were victim
Roma [Gypsies], homosexual
who dared to oppose the Nazi k
These stories must also be told

17 Shoah-Related F

Remembrance and reaction
and document the events of
remembrance are seen in
Israeli artist Vardi Kahan
commemorating the heroic

18 *The Anne Frank S*

Installed in a protective circ
compelling tribute to Ann
courage. Her diary has been
over the world, making it on
books in over 70 languages.
Anne Frank's "Spirit of Surviv
profound thought.

Figure 3: Map of The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition Brochure.

to backtrack throughout the exhibit to experience it the way the curators intended. This may be due to the limited space that the museum has, as well as the magnitude of the event that the exhibit is interpreting. This inefficiency is most noticeable when the visitor has to go through the last portion detailing the life of Anne Frank before then having to backtrack to the exit. Around the border of the map, each section of the exhibit is identified and text offers a short explanation on what that section contributes to the overall exhibition. The intended path leads the visitor chronologically through the events and the exhibit ends with a sense of liberation and a message of hope.

The first six sections of the exhibit are located in a semi-circular section.[18] This small area of space covers a large amount of information including topics like racism, Anti-Semitism, discrimination and segregation, the *M.S. St. Louis*, the world reaction to the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany, and the rising tide. Academics will be pleased with the abundance of information that is presented, especially the extra background information that is found in the drawer pullouts throughout each section of the museum.[19] For the average museum visitor, there is probably too much text. Studies reveal that many visitors lose interest if the text is more than a few sentences and lacking visual images.[20] One study revealed that more than 90 percent of visitors at an exhibit skipped reading

[18] See Figure 4.

[19] See Figure 5.

[20] Beverly Serrell. *Making Exhibit Labels: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 74.

Figure 4: First six Sections of the Exhibition. November 26, 2013.

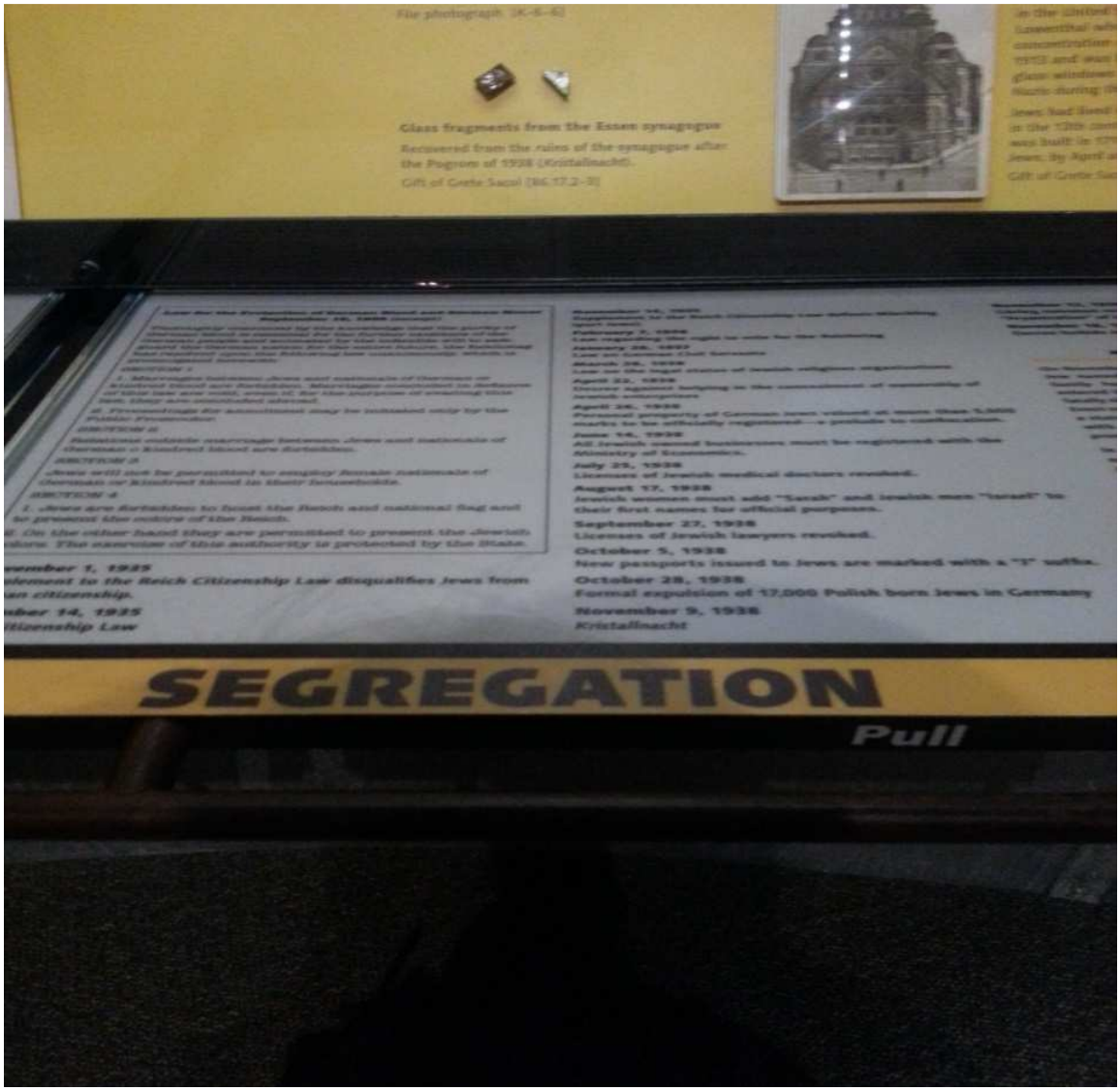


Figure 5: Example of the pullouts throughout the exhibition. November 26, 2013.

the labels altogether.[21] A few of the pullouts are covered with small text that may prove too difficult to read for the visually impaired. The pullouts pose another problem because by the time visitors reach the end of the exhibit they might be "fatigued" by the amount of information.[22]

Before addressing each individual section of the exhibit, it would be appropriate to analyze the design. The overall design of the exhibit mimics that of the concentration camps where many victims of the Holocaust died. The metal-like siding on the tall walls is reminiscent of the metal fences and gates that surrounded the camps.[23] The exposed framework on the walls and ceilings complement the overall feeling of the camp and the open space of the high ceiling still conveys the feeling of being trapped by the walls.[24] The entire exhibit is brightly lit with simple lights hanging overhead. There is a large open space in the middle that has small wooden seats. These seats are strategically placed in front of the screen that plays the testimonies of survivors. This space mimics the large area in the concentration camps where the Jews and others in the camp had to line up daily. The design does not seem to replicate the camps but attempts to radiate the general sense of the camp. The replication of Holocaust settings or objects has been highly criticized by historians like Omer Bartov. Bartov argues that reproducing objects like the

[21] Falk and Dierking, *The Museum Experience*, 71.

[22] Larry Beck and Ted T. Cable, *The Gifts of Interpretations: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture* (Urbana, Illinois: Sagamore Publishing, 2011), 93.

[23] See Figure 6.

[24] See Figure 7.

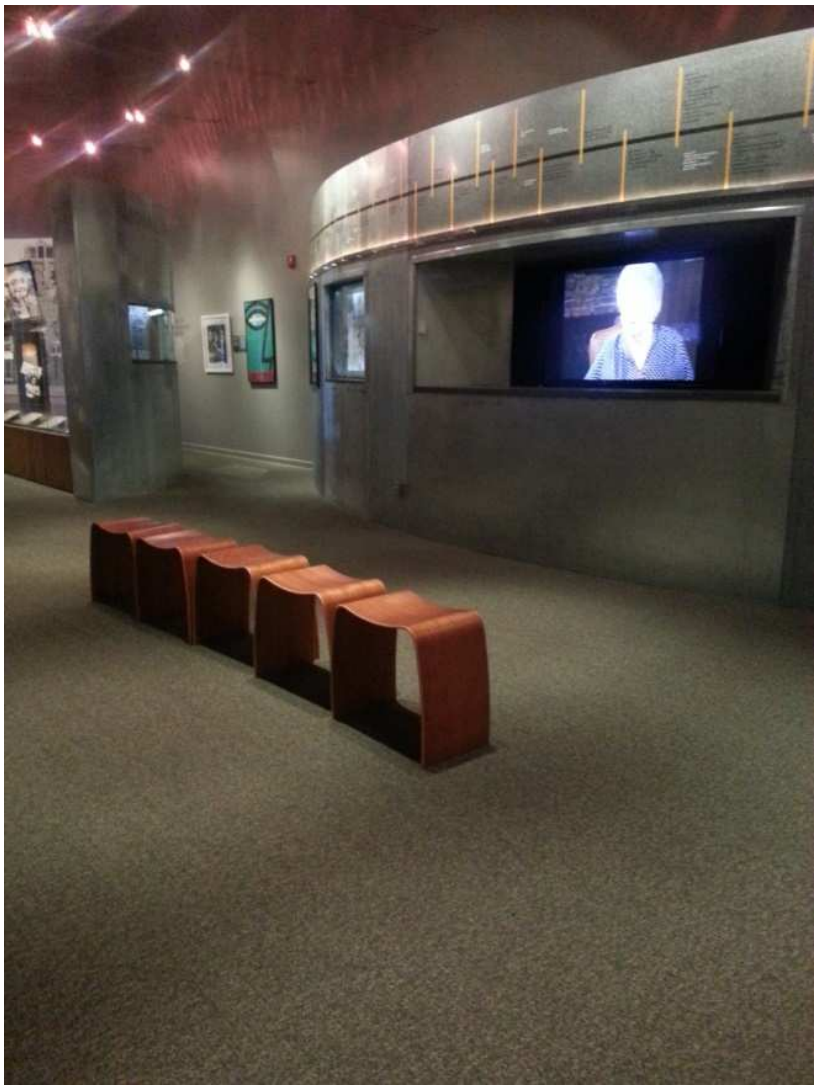


Figure 6: The walls of the exhibit with the survivors' testimonies. November 26, 2013.

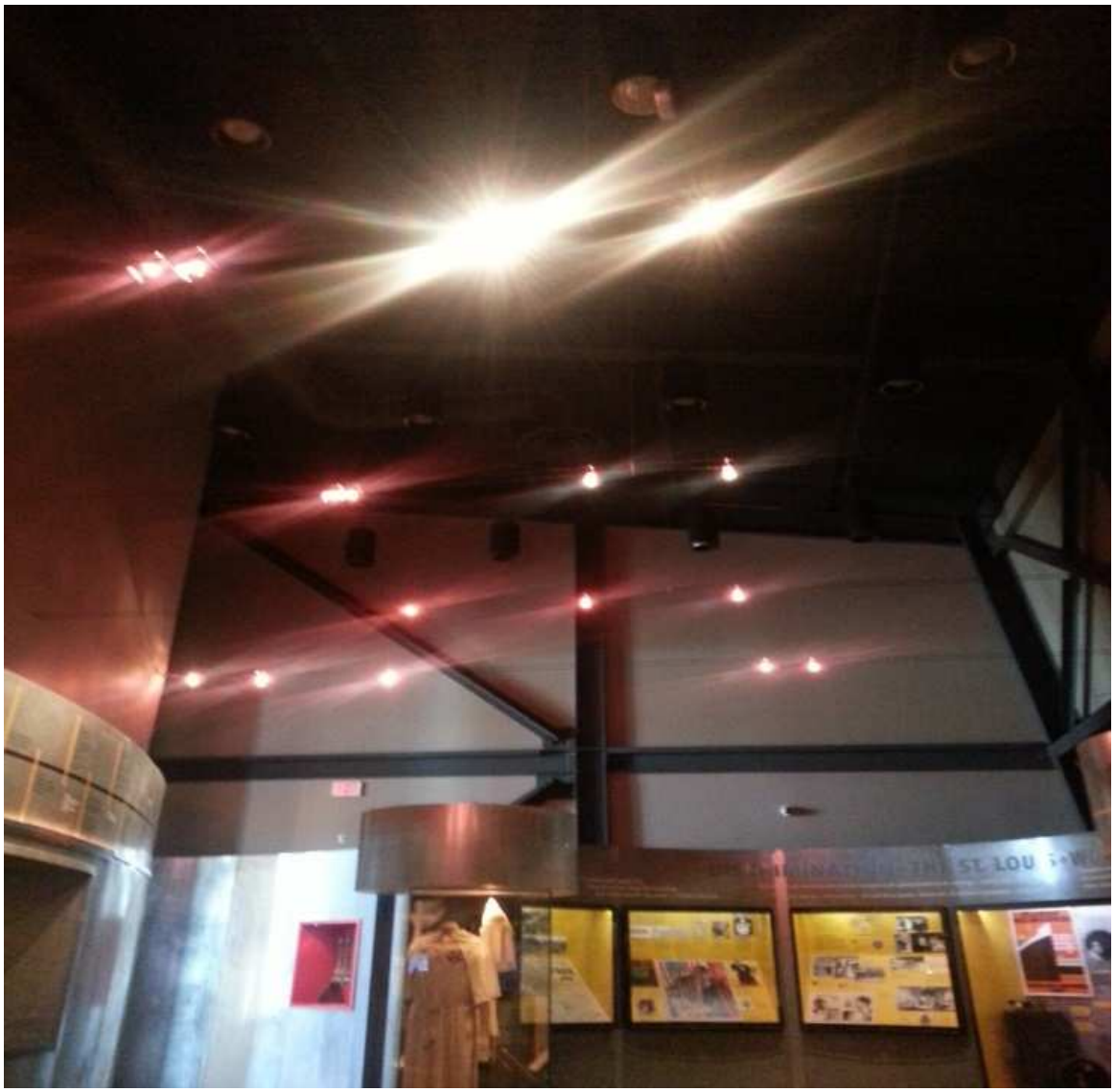


Figure 7: Exposed frames on walls and bright lights. November 26, 2013.

wooden bunks of the camps will cause the visitors to "empathize" with the reproduction and not the "actual thing itself."[25] By not attempting to recreate an actual concentration camp, it appears that the curators have still succeeded in giving the visitors a small sense of how it felt in the camps.

Some negative features of the design deal with font and color choice. Around the top portion of the metal-like walls, text states the theme for that particular section. The main text is a dark grey that is easy to read, but below that, the supporting text is painted in a light grey. The overhanging lights cause a glare on the text and make it nearly impossible to decipher. Another issue deals with the background color choice in the exhibit alcoves. The designers chose a striking yellow as the backdrop for the pictures, objects, and text that are placed in each section.[26] The yellow may have been chosen because of the yellow Star of David patches that the Jews were required to wear in the camps. This yellow is in stark contrast to the grey color of the walls around the exhibit. This draws this visitor's gaze, but over time this color may make it difficult to read the labels placed on yellow. The fatigue that many of the visitors may experience can correlate to the amount of words on labels and the bright color would strain the eyes further.

Regarding the content of the exhibit, the first portion deals with racism. This segment acknowledges racism's universality and relates it to American society,

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[25] Bartov, Omer. *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 173.

[26]See Figure 8.

Figure 8: Example of yellow backdrop, pullouts, and use of exhibit space. November 26, 2013.

Figure 9: Hate Crimes Map in America. November 26, 2013.

particularly in Tulsa and Oklahoma.[27] This section contains a Ku Klux Klan outfit along with a map showing all of the hate groups in the United States.[28] By depicting hate crimes in Oklahoma, the exhibit makes racism and prejudice relevant to the visitor because it is not portrayed as an isolated event taking place in Europe, but rather these mindsets permeate their own community. According to Holtschneider, a good Holocaust exhibit features context that is relevant to the visitors' lives while also providing a narration of the Holocaust.[29] This section mentions the Tulsa Race Riots, which are a blemish in the history of Tulsa and a good way of relating violent culminations of racism. Visitors understand the world around them based on their shared values and outlooks that they receive in their communities.[30] Thus, those in the community of Tulsa already have a perspective on the Tulsa Race Riots and they will, hopefully, look through a certain lens of understanding while viewing the exhibit. This section will be further examined in the chapter over the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park.

The next two sections of the exhibition address Anti-Semitism, discrimination, and segregation. These are informative pieces, which give the background information for the rise of modern anti-Semitism, including the attribution of Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus and Darwin's evolutionary theory. The information does not get too technical with the scientific jargon of Darwinism, but it offers a basic level explanation that the majority of visitors can understand. One of the pullouts provides a chronological

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[27] *The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition Brochure.*

[28] See Figure 9.

[29] Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews*, 11.

[30] Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 172.

timeline of the discrimination and segregation of Jews in Nazi Germany. Keeping the long list of dates on a pullout allows the exhibit to have a clean look and not be overcrowded with dates.

The fifth and sixth sections over the *M.S. St. Louis* and the world's reaction bring the Holocaust into the American narrative again. In one segment, the story of the Jewish passengers aboard the ship, *St. Louis*, is explained. The ship was carrying Jewish refugees seeking asylum in the US from Nazi Germany. The United States Government cited the Immigration Act of 1924, which restricted the immigration of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, as the reason for turning the ship away. The American decision to turn the ship away highlights the country's own discrimination against the Jews. The curator's decision to include this story over a more European-centric one once again enables the visitor, experiencing this exhibit from Oklahoma, to relate. The world's reaction shows the "indifference" of many countries, including America, to the discrimination and treatment of the Jews.[31] Even with the inclusion of the *M.S. St. Louis* event, it would be easy for the visitor to overlook America's indifference to the plight of the Jews because of the quick switch of the exhibit narrative to the Nazi's planning and implementation of the Final Solution. This section of the exhibit includes a backdrop that creates the illusion of being on the ship and there are portholes with faces of the Jewish passengers.

Sections seven, eight, and nine signal turning points within the exhibit. They are strategically placed at the end of the semi-circular area and the beginning of a new space.

[31] *The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition Brochure.*

This portion of the exhibit examines the rise of the Third Reich and the creation of the Final Solution. These sections then lead away from the background information into the implementation of the Holocaust. A positive aspect of these sections is the use of artifacts. There are two Nazi daggers placed in the portion over the Final Solution. These give a sense of the violent and brutal tendencies of the Nazi soldiers. The daggers are juxtaposed with a photograph of a soldier shooting a mother and child. This particular portion includes a brilliant use of exhibition space. Instead of the yellow color, the backdrop is a panorama of a Nazi rally. In front of the image, there is a Nazi flag, army helmet, and officer hat.[32] This staged scene captures the enthusiasm for the Nazi party with mere objects and images.

The next three sections of the exhibit focus on the survivor accounts and their experiences in the ghettos and camps. This section has typical Holocaust exhibit objects, such as a shoe, barbed wire, and a cup.[33] These are not replicas but actual artifacts from the camps. These objects bring up Bartov's argument presented earlier on the empathy tied to the object instead of what actually happened with the object. Researchers frequently mention that empathy is important when understanding victims and tragedies.[34] Hence, the hope in using authentic artifacts and replicas is to generate

[32]See Figure 10.

[33]See Figure 11.

[34]Francesca Haig, "Introduction: Holocaust Representations since 1975," *Modernism/Modernity* (January 2013, Volume 20, Number 1), 4.

Figure 10: The Third Reich. November 26, 2013.

Figure 11: Objects found in concentration camps. November 26, 2013.

feelings of empathy from the visitor so they can connect with the victims and survivors. This sense of empathy is more easily derived from testimonies rather than with inanimate objects. Are the visitors supposed to feel horror when seeing objects like the whip or are they supposed to look beyond their uses and examine what they represent, the extermination of a people based on hate?[35] A visitor can leave with both or either sentiment; there is no way of controlling how the guest reacts. Any exhibit's elicited reactions are just a product of interpretation – the end result lies within the visitor.

This particular exhibit has a large number of objects such as the shoe and barbed wire. In fact, it could be called "artefactual," meaning the narrative is mostly explained through these objects, a common strategy for many Holocaust exhibits and museums.[36] However, this exhibit also utilizes a bit of technology and media. One such area is a video of a survivor testimony located in the center of the exhibit and extending towards the end of the intended path.[37] The testimony is on loop and the seats allow the visitor a comfortable place at which to listen. For many museum patrons, these technological pieces of exhibits are highly appreciated. In studies, many visitors sought out these digital forms of information first and spent the longest amount of time there.[38] A possible reason for the placement of the video testimony so far into the exhibit is to enable the visitor to

[35] Fred R. Myers. "Exhibit review essays—The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History, *American Anthropologist* (Jun. 1995, Vol. 97, 2), 351.

[36]Anna Reading, "Digital Interactivity in public memory institutions: the uses of new technologies in Holocaust museums, *Media, Culture & Society* (2003, Vol. 25), 71.

[37] See Figure 6.

[38]Reading, "Digital Interactivity," 78.

see those who lived and thus leave with a sense of "hope."[39] Even though the use of videotaped testimony is popular in museums and helps to record the Holocaust experience for future generations, there are some drawbacks. The main issue is with historical accuracy. When many of these testimonies were taped, the survivors were older and with age can come loss of memory.[40] This does not discount the survivor or their sincere testimony, but it is important to remember that they are human as well and that the human memory is not always accurate. These testimonies are also limited because each represents an individual and personal story that cannot cover the greater historical context.[41] An individual in Auschwitz could not cover the accounts of those in hiding. The survivor's account is, and always will be, limited, but is still valuable for its impact on visitors.

The section on the liberators brings the American narrative back into play. Within this section, there are accounts of Jewish-American troops liberating camps and their personal experiences surrounding the horrors they witnessed. These stories of Jewish liberators challenge the argument that Jews went like "sheep to the slaughter" and did not resist. A common view after the discovery of the concentration camps, is that the Jews willingly went to their deaths and did not fight their captors. This also shows Jews as not only Europeans but also as American citizens and a part of the community in Oklahoma. One of the pullouts lists every American military unit that took part in the liberation of

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[39]Beck and Cable, *The Gifts of Interpretation*, 74.

[40]Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 185.

[41]Roy Rosenzweig & David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University, 1998), 126.

Figure 12: American military units during liberation. November 26, 2013.

the concentration camps.[42] On a recent visit, this pullout attracted the most visitors. The American fascination with war and military units is prevalent today and is a way to relate the Holocaust to the average American. However, there may be a price to pay with interpreting the American soldiers as heroes. This may become the focus for many reading on the Holocaust, with the victims pushed in the "gap."[43] The Holocaust is a European event and in many exhibits, this one included, the Americans are viewed solely as heroes and rescuers. The Nazis are the ones that committed crimes against humanity. This allows the visitor to believe that Americans are not capable of such acts. The previous sections that showed American hate groups like the KKK and the turning away of the ship the *M.S. St. Louis* are overshadowed by this larger section highlighting the American rescue.

The last few sections in the exhibit deal with aspects of the Holocaust using smaller spaces. The wall presenting resistance and rescue includes a smaller curio space for the information. The presentation on resistance is meager and the only major portion is on the Bielski Brigade, a Jewish partisan group in Nazi-occupied Poland that sought to save Jews from extermination. The focus then shifts away from resistance and onto those non-Jews who aided Jews during the war.[44] These "righteous among nations" convey a positive image to the Holocaust, that there were some willing to die to help Jews. The

[42] See Figure 12.

[43]Lennon, "Interpretation of the Unimaginable," 49.

[44] See Figure 13.

Figure 13: Those who aided in the rescue of Jews. November 26, 2013.

small size of this exhibit portion seems to match the small number of those who chose to help.

An interesting concept the curator chose to interpret involves the "mosaic of victims," or the non-Jewish victims of the Nazis. When representing the Holocaust, the non-Jewish victims of the Nazis are not normally represented in any fashion or in a larger section of an exhibit. During the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, there was serious contention between Elie Wiesel and the Carter Administration over who should be involved as victims.[45] The fear of the Holocaust becoming a faded memory after the inclusion of other victims of the Nazis became a real issue for many exhibitions. Thus, it is interesting and refreshing to see a blend of the Jewish and non-Jewish victims. The section not only covers the handicapped but also the homosexuals who were targeted during World War II. A graph explains all the types of prisoners in the camps and each type of badge they wore.

The last portion of the exhibit is a series on Anne Frank. As mentioned earlier, this section of the exhibit design requires the visitor to backtrack. The museum purposely put this in the middle of all of the other sections of the Holocaust exhibit because it symbolizes Anne Frank hiding during the Holocaust. In the "protective circle," there are prints created by the artist Michael Knigin explaining the place of Anne Frank within the Holocaust narrative.[46] This portion stands out in comparison to the other parts of the exhibit because of the background. Similar to the Nazi rise to power depicted earlier in

[45] Edward T. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 196.

[46] *The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition Brochure.*

the exhibit, this section uses photographs as the backdrop. The images of a European city create a world separate from the rest of exhibition, just as Frank was hidden from the rest of the Holocaust for a time. For Americans, Anne Frank is one of the most important individuals in the Holocaust. Her diary became a bestseller and helped many Americans to empathize with an event that was distant and foreign.[47] Frank has become a "socially inherited memory" for the American people with respect to the Holocaust.[48]

Children are a demographic that proves difficult at times for museums that deal with such a tragic event like the Holocaust. The Kaiser exhibit would be difficult for children under the age of 12 to understand because of the lengthy amount of information provided and the higher reading level of the text. The one section that would be applicable to children, and the one they would more than likely gain the most from, is the Anne Frank exhibit. As previously stated, many Americans have read the diary of Frank, and it has become a permanent staple on various school reading lists. Within the exhibit on Frank, there is a children's project called the kinder-stone project. This project asks local schoolchildren to write the name of a Jewish child that perished in the Holocaust and to decorate that rock. This allows the child to begin to grasp the loss of life without the graphic nature of the exhibit. The attention span of children is short and they are easily distracted. So, the kinder rock series may hold their attention for a few minutes with the bright colors and the abnormal use of rocks as a writing template, if they happened to be at the exhibit with their parents.[49]

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[47]Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 17.

[48] Reading, "Digital Interactivity," 79.

[49] Beck and Cable, *The Gifts of Interpretation*, 59.

There are two contested interpretations in the historiography of the Holocaust. The adherents of the two interpretations are called intentionalists and functionalists. The first group argues that the Holocaust was planned, clearly defined, and pushed into existence by Hitler. The second group sees the Holocaust as a complex set of events and opportunistic decisions that led to the implementation of the tragedy.[50] Most exhibitions and museums will include a portion on one side or even both. The Kaiser exhibit is clearly in favor of intentionalists based on at least one of the labels within the exhibit.[51] This label states that the Holocaust was a "carefully controlled evolutionary" event, which also connects with the functionalists' point that the Holocaust is comprised of a complex system of decisions. However, the text also states that Hitler had to "codify his intentions" to convince the government and people to go along with his plan for the Holocaust. The possessive "his" clearly points to an intentionalist perspective being presented. This is the one place where the argument stands out; the remainder of the exhibit focuses on presenting a more general narrative. The curators may have chosen an intentionalist leaning because the functionalist interpretation is relatively new, complex, and would require a great deal of context for the visitor to understand.

According to the brochure, the purpose of the exhibit is for the visitors to "leave with a better understanding of human behavior to assure future generations' protection from another Holocaust."[52] This message of tolerance is one of two messages left by

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[50] Haig, *Holocaust Representations since 1975,* 8.

[51]See Figure 14.

[52] *The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition Brochure.*

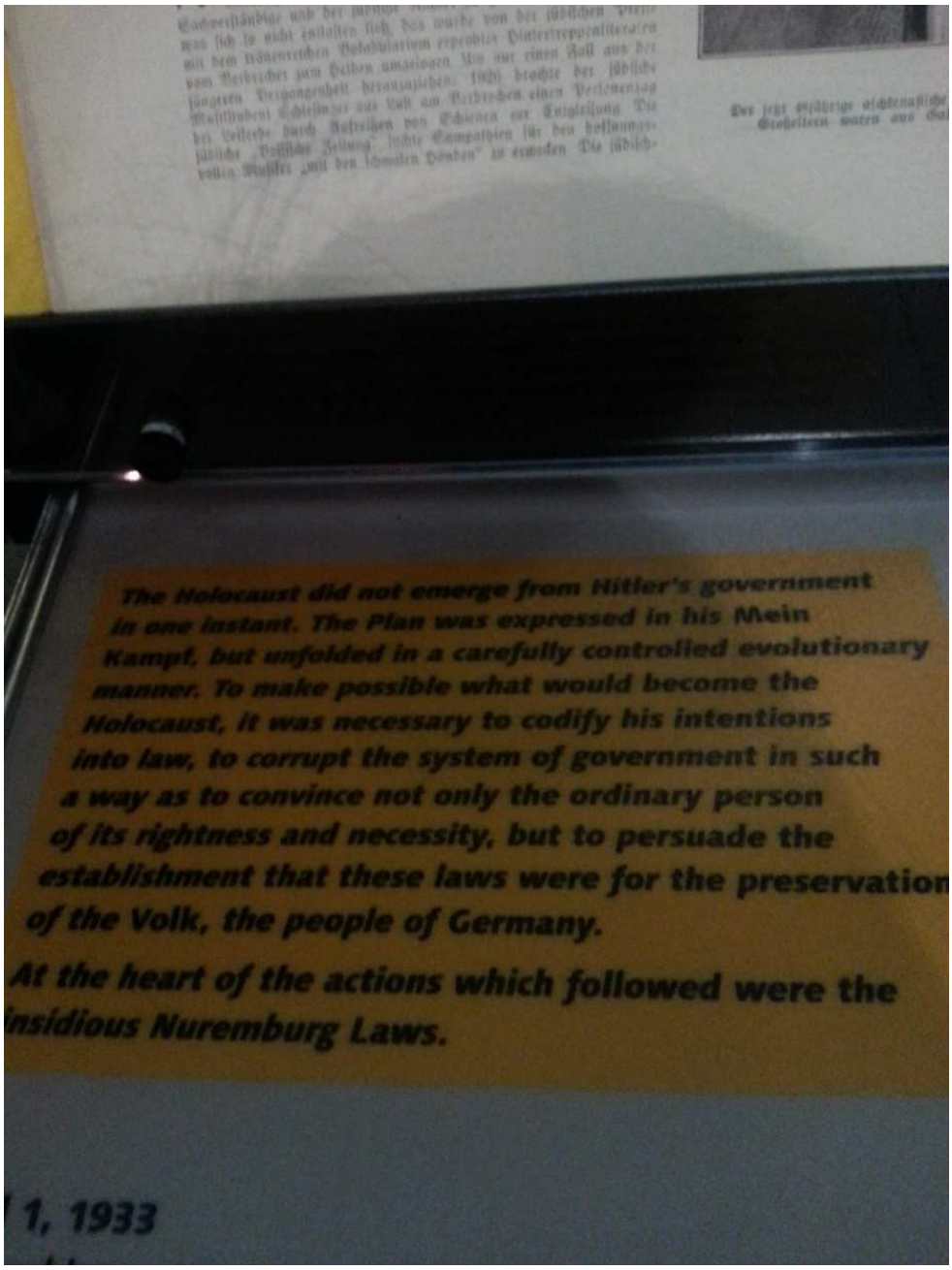

Figure 14: Argument for Intentionality. November 26, 2013.

most Holocaust exhibits. The other message is centered on Israel as the future for the Jewish people and for preserving the memory of the Holocaust.[53] This message of tolerance is the last text in the exhibit and focuses on education as the way to ensure there is no more genocide.[54] Evoking education when dealing with tolerance is a primary focus for many working on interpretations in national museums and parks. The best education on tolerance is presented with examples that show what to avoid, like the hate groups, and what to strive towards.[55] The exhibit also ends with one last connection to the American visitor by emphasizing the fact that genocide could occur in "their community" and only with tolerance will there be a possibility of the hate being stopped.

[53] Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst,* 179.

[54]See Figure 15.

[55] Beck and Cable, *The Gifts of Interpretation,* 75.

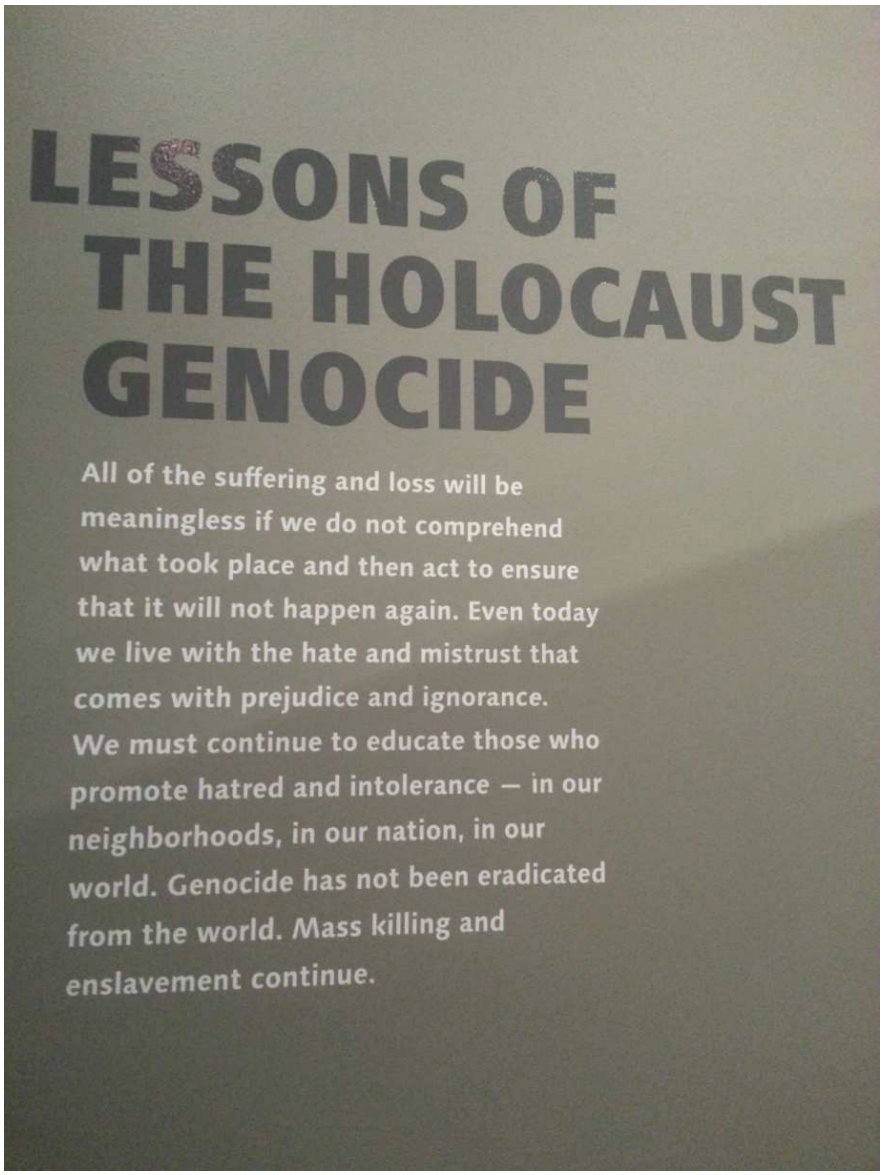

Figure 15: Exit Message. November 26, 2013.

CHAPTER III

THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

"We come here to remember those who were killed,
those who survived and those changed forever.
May all who leave here know the impact of violence.
May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity."

Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, Memorial Mission Statement[56]

When discussing tragedy in Oklahoma, the Oklahoma City bombing is the one event that comes to many people's minds. This act of terrorism occurred via a bomb placed in a van outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. The bomb went off at 9:02a.m. destroying the federal building, and damaging or destroying another twenty-five buildings. The explosion claimed 168 lives and wounded an additional 674 people. It is to be noted that of the murdered, 19 were children.[57] This was an event of domestic terrorism by individuals involved in hate organizations; Americans committed this crime against fellow Americans.

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[56] *Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, Memorial Mission Statement,* Murrah Federal Building Memorial, Inc. 1996. http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org

[57] James David Ballard. *Terrorism, Media, and Public Policy: The Oklahoma City Bombing* (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 2005), 36.

This event provides an instructive comparison to the Holocaust, not only because it is a local event, but because the Jewish community in Oklahoma was also affected by it. Some Jews connected the "murderous hatred" found in the Oklahoma City bombing with that associated with the Holocaust.[58] Shortly after the bombing, many individuals within the community wanted to memorialize the victims and wanted the creation of a memorial and museum. This museum will be the primary memorialization this study compares to the Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition. The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial in Oklahoma City will be used in comparison with the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. The Oklahoma City bombing also provides a comparative perspective on memorialization with the Tulsa Race Riot because both events included Americans taking other Americans' lives; neither was a tragedy on foreign soil. A thorough analysis of every aspect of the Memorial Museum is impossible in this study because of the sheer magnitude of the museum. The museum is much larger than the other two locations and could have an entire thesis or dissertation created on its analysis of the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum. Instead, the comparison of certain, select aspects will be used in this paper. The Oklahoma City bombing is also unique because it is both a national and local tragedy; the Murrah building represents the United States Government and those working in the building were not only Oklahoma citizens but federal employees.

The creation of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is a unique story. The site on which the memorial now stands is one associated with the mass murder of innocent individuals, carried out by a seemingly normal American. Such an event

[58] Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, 55.

would normally need many years for the community to come to terms with. In the case of the Holocaust, it took many years for the communities in Germany to create memorials at the sites where the concentration camps stood. Historian, Kenneth E. Foote, originally omitted the Oklahoma City Bombing from a large portion of his book *Shadowed Ground* because he thought it would take years, maybe even decades, for Oklahoma to memorialize the event.[59] The outdoor memorial was created and opened by the fifth year anniversary of the bombing on April 19, 2000. The museum opened the following year. Ideas for memorials came to Oklahoma City less than twenty-four hours after the bombing and spontaneous memorialization actually took place at the site during this time period with "offerings" of stuffed animals, cards, and flowers at chain link fence surrounding the site.[60] This series of events shows that the community of Oklahoma City had already begun the process of memorializing the tragic event almost immediately, even though there still needed to be a development of interpretation.

A 350-person Memorial Task Force was created by the mayor of Oklahoma City to manage the development of the memorial.[61] The Task Force defined what it wanted visitors to "feel, experience, and encounter" at the memorial. They wanted to go beyond

[59] Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 337-38.

[60] Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, 119.

[61] Shari R. Veil, Timothy L. Sellnow, & Megan Heald. "Memorializing Crisis: The Oklahoma City National Memorial as Renewal Discourse, *Journal of Applied Communication Research* (May 2011, Vol. 39, No. 2), 171.

Figure 16: Map of the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial and Museum Grounds. *9:02a.m. April 19, 1995: The Official Record of the Oklahoma City Bombing*, "The Memorial by Mike Brake," 139.

Figure 17: *Survivor Tree.* Harris, Dianne Suzette. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. http://library.artstor.org. (Accessed December, 2013).

Figure 18: *Gate of Time* and *Reflection Pool.* Harris, Dianne Suzette. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. http://library.artstor.org. (Accessed December, 2013).

merely preserving the space where the tragedy occurred. The memorial team wanted there to be a well-developed mission statement for future generations. The scope of those involved in the memorial is similar to the Kaiser exhibit because both include a national dimension. The Kaiser exhibit is a compilation of items and interpretations from multiple Jewish communities in the United States. The bombing memorial had participation from the federal government when establishing funding. President Bill Clinton signed the Oklahoma City National Memorial Act in 1997, officially establishing the memorial as a unit of the National Park Service.[62]

The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial is the first portion of the entire location that will be analyzed because it was built first and it is the section that for many individuals comes to mind when discussing the Oklahoma City bombing; this may be due to the fact that the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial's admission is free. There are various sections of the memorial and a map illuminates how the parts are sectioned off.[63] There are six main areas in the outdoor memorial. One of the most prominent features is the Survivor Tree.[64] The tree once stood in the parking lot across from the Murrah Building and was heavily damaged by the bomb. The survival of the tree from the blast represents "hope" for those that view it. Even though such an evil event occurred, life still persevered. The tree can

[62] Veil, Sellnow, & Heald. "Memorializing Crisis: The Oklahoma City National Memorial as Renewal Discourse, *Journal of Applied Communication Research,* 172.

[63]See Figure 16.

[64] See Figure 17.

also be interpreted as "regrowth" for the community; people rebuilding after the physical and emotional trauma from the bombing.[65]

Another prominent feature of the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial is the Reflecting Pool and the Gates of Time on either end of the pool.[66] The water feature spans the entire width of the memorial. The water is calm and is placed in the memorial to evoke a calm and soothing reaction as the visitor walks through the outdoor memorial. The memorial intends the water to "show the reflection of someone forever changed by their visit to the memorial."[67] The pool also serves as the passage of time from the first gate that marks "9:01a.m." to the second gate that ends with "9:03a.m." This first symbolizes the minute before the bombing and the minute directly following the bombing. This means that the area within the memorial represents the "frozen" time of the bombing.[68] To freeze a moment in time is similar to the Kaiser exhibit, attempt to leave the visitor with the feeling of a concentration camp. The emphasis on frozen time is repeated in the memorial museum exhibits. It should be noted that after the creation of this memorial, the focus on punctilious time in memorialization became popular.[69]

The next section of the memorial for analysis represents those who lost their lives in the bombing, the section that many visitors consider to be the most important aspect of

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[65] Veil, Sellnow, & Heald. "Memorializing Crisis: The Oklahoma City National Memorial as Renewal Discourse, *Journal of Applied Communication Research,* 174.

[66]See Figure 18.

[67] Veil, Sellnow, & Heald. "Memorializing Crisis: The Oklahoma City National Memorial as Renewal Discourse, *Journal of Applied Communication Research,* 174.

[68] Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing,* 217.

[69]David Simpson. *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 81.

the memorial. The area is designated as the Field of Empty Chairs. The design of the memorial devotes sections for each group that was affected by the bombing such as survivors, victims, and those who aided in the rescue. The designers of the memorial chose an interesting way of memorializing the victims, with the use of empty, bronze chairs.[70] The chairs are arranged to mimic the floor plan of the Murrah Building and there is even a section to the side for those killed outside of the building. The choice of empty chairs commemorating the dead is simple but poignant. It seems more personal than a name etched on a wall. Rather each victim has their own separate, marker. The chairs illuminate at night for those that visit after the sun sets. Designer, Hans Butzer, stated that "like an empty chair at a dinner table, we are always aware of the presence of a loved one's absence."[71]

The final area to be considered marks the survivors. The Survivor Tree is a large symbol of hope, but the Survivor Wall is also a representation of those who lived. The wall is comprised of the only two portions of the Murrah building that were left standing after the bomb went off.[72] By utilizing the portions of the building that withstood the blast, it represents how the survivors also persevered beyond the bombing. It can also be a sign of how the immense hatred behind the bombing wounded the city and state, but it

[70]See Figure 19.

[71] Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, 218.

[72]See Figure 20.

Figure 19: *Victim Chairs*. Harris, Dianne Suzette. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. http://library.artstor.org. (Accessed December, 2013).

Figure 20: *Survivor's Wall*. Harris, Dianne Suzette. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. http://library.artstor.org. (Accessed December, 2013).

could not break the community's spirit. The designers of the memorial continued to bring the past to the present with the use of granite from the Federal Building. The granite is affixed to the wall and lists the names of all the survivors from the bombing. In this segment, the designers did not have to recreate what formerly existed because they had an actual piece of the building still intact. At the Kaiser exhibit, they did not have pieces from the concentration camps, so they focused on imitating the feeling. Another similarity between the Holocaust and the Oklahoma City bombing memorialization process is the question of what constitutes a "survivor." For many years after the Holocaust, an argument arose that stated that only those who went through concentration camps could be considered survivors. This argument would then be expanded as the years went on to include individuals targeted that were non-Jewish like Gypsies and Homosexuals. In the aftermath of the Oklahoma City Bombing, the question of who was a "survivor" included those physically affected by the bombing and then those emotionally affected by the bombing.

President George W. Bush dedicated the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum on February 20, 2001. The museum cost an additional seven million on top of the previously expected fifteen million dollars for completion of the memorial. Comparable to the Kaiser exhibit, the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum is arranged chronologically. The chosen format helps to present the "story" of how the bombing and its aftermath occurred. The chronological approach to exhibits allows the visitor to walk through time and witness how the event unfolded. The rooms in the museum are designed to "evoke the chaos of the explosion, the panicked hustle of rescue workers, and the

resolve to find meaning from the wreckage."[73] This "progressive narrative" conveys to the visitor the "perceived goodness of Americans" through the response, rebuilding, and hope that is depicted as the visitor walks through the museum.[74] This technique worked in the Kaiser exhibit, due in part to the introductory materials presented at the beginning on racism and anti-Semitism. The opening gallery at the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum provides introductory information, in a limited fashion. Unlike the Kaiser exhibit, the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum has a clearly marked path for its guests without the use of brochures, although brochures are made available to those who want a larger visualization.[75] The museum has a flow to it, as the walls keep the visitors going in one direction. There is no backtracking like in the Kaiser exhibit, which, may be due to the larger space available in the Memorial Museum. The emphasis in the Memorial Museum is on the day of the event and then particularly the immediate years following, focusing on the healing process.[76] In contrast, the Kaiser exhibit relates an event that went on for many years, so the exhibit must have a large section detailing the before and during. Also, the Kaiser exhibit includes substantial history on the origins of racism.

One major way in which the two exhibits differ concerns object replication. In the Kaiser exhibit, there are some original objects and a few replicated ones. These are placed in the exhibit to complement the narrative found on the labels and in the pullouts. The overall design of the Kaiser exhibit gives the sense of a concentration camp, but

[73] Frank Bruni. "Bush Dedicates Museum at Site of Oklahoma City Bombing," *New York Times*, February 20, 2001.

[74] Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, 53.

[75] See Figure 21.

[76] http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org, accessed November 9, 2013.

there was no exact replication of the camps or the mass killings. In contrast, the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum has a whole room set aside to set the scene of the day the bombing took place. This room, titled *Chaos*, marks the time directly after the bomb went off. On display are destroyed office supplies, chairs, computers, cups, and many other miscellaneous objects that came from the rubble.[77] This room reflects the direct aftermath of the bombing. It is a powerful room, but it also raises an issue that comes with replicating a tragedy. There is no accurate way of portraying exactly what happened. Lives were lost and the magnitude of this bombing cannot be simply replicated by sound and visual imagery. As mentioned in the analysis of the Kaiser exhibit, a hindrance with exhibiting an object from the event is that the visitor will only empathize with what they can perceive. A coffee cup placed in this room could have been a victim's but there is no way of replicating the story of that cup. A positive aspect of the replication and use of actual artifacts is that many visitors go to museums because they want to see objects and things that they normally would not see. This room presents something an average individual would not witness outside of such a setting.[78]

The mission statement of the memorial focuses more on the remembrance of the victims and peace within the community. The Kaiser Holocaust exhibit presents tolerance and hope at the end but also provides a brief but thorough background of the why and

[77]See Figure 22.

[78] Falk and Dierking, *The Museum Experience*, 146.

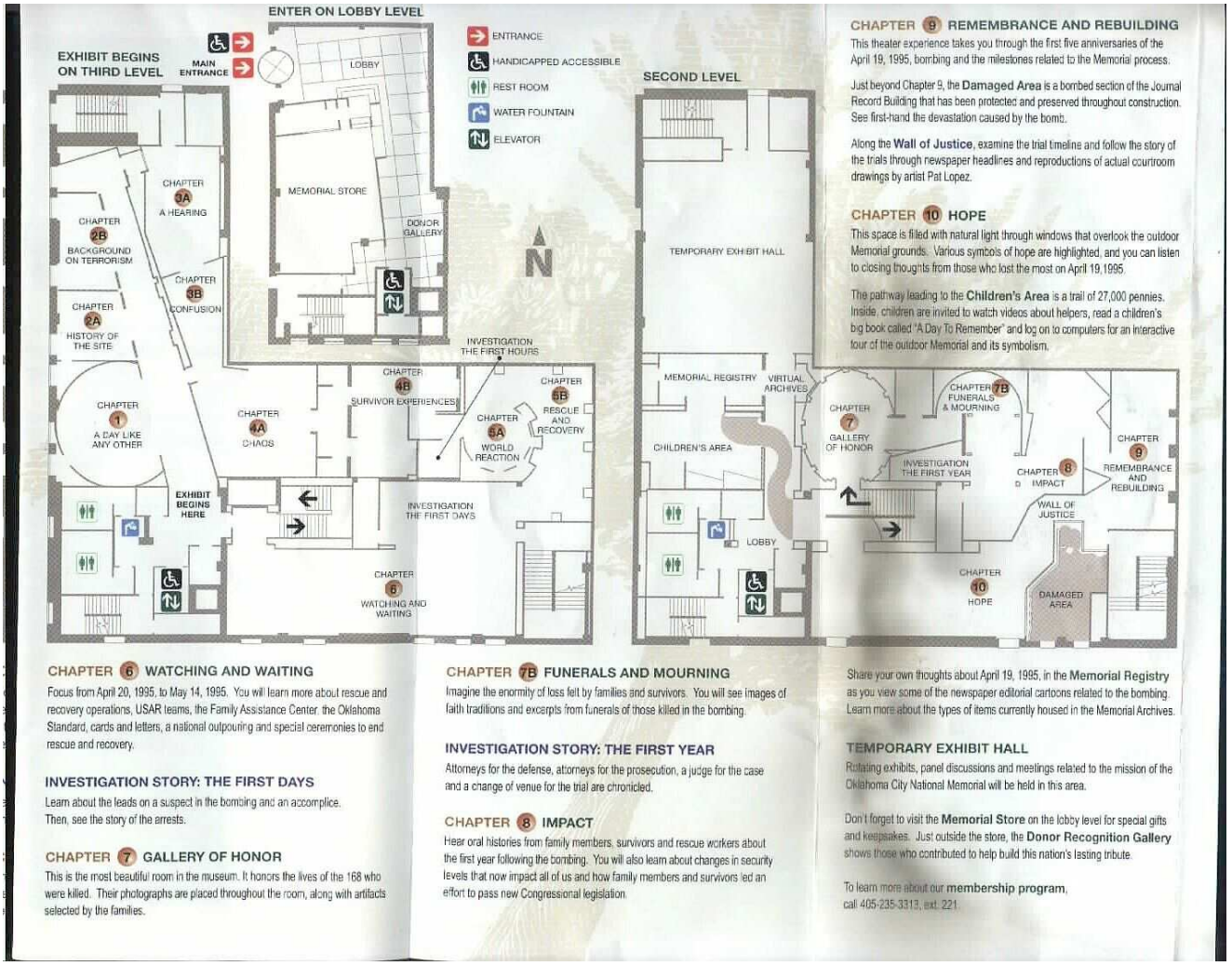

Figure 21: OKC Memorial Museum Exhibit Layout and Intended Path. OKC Memorial Exhibit Brochure.

Figure 22: The *Chaos* room in the OKC Memorial Museum. http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/. (Accessed November, 2013).

how. A huge piece that is missing from the Memorial Museum is the information on why the Oklahoma City Bombing happened. The lack of material on the terrorists, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, and their anti-government extremism through hate organizations is a huge distinction between the two exhibits. There is a small, interactive area at the beginning of the exhibit on the background of terrorism in general. There also has been a travelling exhibit at the Memorial Museum that examines "reporting terrorism" from a journalistic point of view.[79] This is a highly interactive display that allows the visitor to feel a part of the news as it broke on the bombing. A drawback, however, is that it is again about the general history of terrorism and does not focus on the specifics of the bombing terrorists.

The focus on rebuilding and healing is prevalent in the last exhibit rooms within the museum. These include the Gallery of Honor, remembrance and rebuilding, and the final room of hope. Those involved with creating the museum and interpreting the bombing's story, strove to "personalize the past" with those in Oklahoma and to promote healing for those directly and indirectly affected.[80] The origami cranes placed at the end of the exhibition, created by the local community, represent the healing and optimism in Oklahoma. The emphasis on hope and "renewal" in these exhibits might focus on healing and rebuilding in order to help many make sense of the crisis and tragedy.[81] It also distracts from dealing with the unpleasant issue that the terrorists involved in the attack were Americans, not foreign individuals. This intense concentration on healing seems to

[79] http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org, "Reporting Terrorism." accessed November 9, 2013.

[80] Beck and Cable, *The Gifts of Interpretation,* 74.

[81] Veil, Sellnow, & Heald. "Memorializing Crisis: The Oklahoma City National Memorial as Renewal Discourse, *Journal of Applied Communication Research,* 170.

be due in part to the short lapse in time from the bombing and the creation of the Memorial Museum. The museum was completed in 2001, which is an unusually short amount of time between the event and its memorialization of this scale. The Kaiser exhibition uses the survivor accounts and the sculpture at the beginning to symbolize those who had perished. However, overall, the Kaiser exhibit focused on detailing the historical event of the Holocaust.

Both events are placed in an American historical narrative. The Kaiser Holocaust exhibit uses the racism in Tulsa to demonstrate that prejudice occurs everywhere. Also, the placement of American liberation troops into the narrative allows the visitors to see the effect the Holocaust had on many American troops. The Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum also places the bombing within a larger, American narrative. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center is used as a comparison to the bombing. In many writings on the Oklahoma City Memorial, a focus emerges on distinctions between the two events. On commenting on how the "community" of Oklahoma came together and were "generous."[82] This diminishes the interpretation being placed in a larger American narrative because it concentrates on the differences. The comparison on the similarities in terrorism was found in the travelling exhibition on journalism. The museum opened in February 2001, so it did not originally include an interpretive piece on the World Trade Center Attack. However, the journalistic exhibit provides a good base of interpretation on the event. The temporary exhibit allows the visitor to see how reporting on terrorism has changed since the Oklahoma City bombing

[82] Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing,* 48.

and how reports on terrorism continue to affect the entire country.[83] The Memorial Museum lacks a permanent exhibit that interprets the bombing within the larger context of terrorism and within America as a whole. The museum has long since celebrated its ten-year anniversary and it may be time to update portions of the exhibition. The staff at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum also seem to think it is time for a look at different interpretations. They have created *The 9:03 Fund* from which part of the funding will go to "advancing the story now told in the Memorial Museum with enhanced methods of teaching and Lessons Learned through never-before-seen artifacts and personal stories."[84] Just as the historiography of the Holocaust has transformed over time, the interpretation and understanding of the Oklahoma City bombing has also changed, and will continue to evolve throughout time.

[83] http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org. "On Exhibit: *Reporting Terrorism."*

[84] Ibid. "*The 9:03 Fund Online Donations."*

CHAPTER IV

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN RECONCILIATION PARK: WHAT ALMOST WASN'T

"We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others."

Will Rogers, 1924

The last location to be examined in this study is the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. The title is a mouthful and at first glance, most would not know what the park is for based on the title. The park is named after a prominent African American Historian whose family was directly affected by the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. The life of Franklin will be expanded on during the analysis of the park. A quote by "Oklahoma's Favorite Son," Will Rogers, is only fitting when starting the last chapter on interpretations of tragedy in Oklahoma. He died tragically. His name is known throughout the state while the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, along with its park, remain in in the background of Oklahoma history compared to the leagues of iconic characters such as Will Rogers. In a recent Gallup national survey, most white Americans stated that they

believed "racial discrimination and isolation were no longer barriers to achievement."[85] The results reveal the unrealistic assumptions of racism today on many levels and in particular the unwillingness to address the racism of the past. The survey illustrates that many in the United States see racism as an issue of the past. This view has allowed for events like the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 to be overlooked. An excellent quote by Ralph Ellison, a prominent African-American Oklahoma novelist, states, "That which we do is what we are. That which we remember is, more than not, that which we would have liked to have been; or that which we hope to be. Thus our memory and our identity are ever at odds." This powerful quote surmises the battle for respect the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park.

The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 is an event in Oklahoman and American history that, until the 1990s, was largely overlooked and minimized by government authorities and those within the Tulsa community. Unlike the Holocaust exhibit and Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial, the reconciliation park was not as easily funded. Even today, issues remain over reparations for the survivors and the uneasy legacy for descendants of those involved from the state government. To understand the difficult process of creating the park, one must discuss the actual event.

In 1921, the African American community of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma was a prosperous area with over 8,000 residents, mostly African-American. The commercial district of Greenwood was known nationally as the "Negro Wall Street."[86]

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[85] Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory,* "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable Dialogue.", 35.

[86] United States Congress. House. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on the Constitution, C. Rights. *Tulsa-Greenwood Race Riot Claims Accountability Act of 2007: hearing before the Subcommittee*

The community boasted many businesses and was a thriving area of Tulsa. The Race Riot was triggered by a singular and highly contested incident. On May 30, 1921, a young African American male, Dick Rowland, rode an elevator operated by a young white girl named Sarah Page. The majority of individuals in Tulsa came to believe that Dick Rowland attacked Sarah Page in the elevator and then ran away. Even to this day, no one knows exactly what happened. Rowland was arrested the next day for the incident. The event would likely have been a small episode in the news that year had it not been for the Tulsa *Tribune.* The newspaper ran an article, all evidence which of has since been destroyed, that stirred the masses into a hysterical mob that would seek to lynch Dick Rowland. The article has been interpreted as a way for the newspaper to gain notoriety and increase their profits.[87]

The threat of a lynching reached Greenwood, and many in the community were worried that Dick Rowland would be hanged without trial. This had not been the first incident of mob lynching in Tulsa's history. The community had watched while two other African Americans had been lynched without police intervention in the previous year.[88] The Tulsa sheriff further acted to protect Rowland with extra guards. As Rowland sat in jail, men in Greenwood sought to aid those in the courthouse with protecting Rowland. These armed African Americans were deemed a threat by white individuals in the

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on the Constitution, Civil Rights and civil Liberties of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, first session, on H.R. 1995, April 24, 2007. Washington U.S. G.P.O. (2007), 3.

[87] Scott Ellsworth. *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982), 48.

[88] Alfred L. Brophy. *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 26.

community. The movement of the African- American citizens towards the courthouse set off a spark that would create an uprising in Greenwood. A day later, on May 31, 1921, a white mob attacked the Greenwood community. Sheriff Willard McCullough was quoted saying, "the race war was on and I was powerless to stop it."[89] At the end of the riot on June 1, almost every building in a 42-square block area had been destroyed from arson, looted and thousands in the community were left homeless. The riot barely lasted twenty-four hours and at the end of it, over six thousand African Americans were imprisoned, the majority of Tulsa's black citizens.[90] Just as many of the details on the beginning of the riot are varied, the total number of people who died has never been agreed upon by the masses. The estimates range from as low as 27 to as high as 300. Many victims of the race riot were buried in unmarked graves, which makes the exact accounting of those who perished impossible.[91] Many local black historians prefer to call the riot a "disaster" because the outcome was heavily one-sided and there are many details that are still unclear.[92] Overall, the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 was a devastating loss for the Greenwood community, and those within the area were never able to recuperate fully from the attack.

In the years following the riot white citizens in Tulsa attempted to shift the blame away from themselves and onto the African American community. The State of Oklahoma followed suit and placed the blame solely on the African American community. No convictions were secured for the murders or the arson that was

[89] Ellsworth. *Death in a Promised Land.* 52.

[90] *Ibid,* 63.

[91] United States Congress. House. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on the Constitution, C. Rights. *Tulsa-Greenwood Race Riot Claims Accountability Act of 2007.* 3.

[92]John Stancavage. "Franklin park reflects on hope for better future," *Tulsa World,* February 20, 2011.

committed during the riot. Those within the district of Greenwood who attempted to gain damages for the loss of their businesses and homes failed, with the insurance companies turning all of the individuals away.[93] The lack of financial support forced many of the Greenwood citizens to leave the area because they could not support rebuilding what they lost. Many decades after the riot, most of historic Greenwood was rezoned for different projects in Tulsa and a major highway was even built in the middle of the remaining buildings. The fight for reparations persists today and one of the latest cases was in 2001. The Oklahoma government agreed that the riot was a "staggering cost" but the government voted against giving direct payments to the survivors.

This 2001 case is also important because it created a committee to design a memorial.[94] Even though the State of Oklahoma created the committee, the government did not originally agree to fund the memorial. The committee would not only bring about the eventual memorial, but it would also be responsible for a commission that would bring about the restoration of the Greenwood community. With the help of the Oklahoma Historical Society, the committee recreated Greenwood at the time of the riot through maps, oral histories of survivors, and photographs.[95] This work has been one-step in bringing Greenwood back to life in Tulsa.

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[93]United States Congress. House. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on the Constitution, C. Rights. *Tulsa-Greenwood Race Riot Claims Accountability Act of 2007*, 4.

[94] Brophy. *Reconstructing the Dreamland.* 117.

[95]Horton. *Slavery and Public History.* "Epilogue by Edward T. Linenthal." 217.

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission stated in 2001 that Tulsa still functioned as two cities, separated by race.[96] The creation of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation came from this commission and the Center's first task was the design and building of a Reconciliation Park. The original idea was to create a museum dedicated to remembering the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, but the project evolved into a park that would also honor John Hope Franklin, a Tulsa native who became one of the most recognized scholars on the role of race in American history. The commission originated with the committee created by the state government in 2001, but adequate funding for its activities was not raised until 2008. In October of 2008, the City of Tulsa appropriated $500,000 to the park's creation, adding to the $400,000 from private contributions. The state of Oklahoma had also appropriated $3.7 million for the project.[97] The groundbreaking of the park began in November 2008. Even with the adequate funding, the park did not open until January 2011, and even then, with limited hours due to budget issues.[98] The eventual plan for the park is to build a mixed-use center that will hold artifacts from the race riot, host research, and be a place for discussion for those who visit the park. The funds for all this have yet to be secured, but once the funds have been raised the entire park may look very different in the next decade. The funding issues of the park marks a stark contrast to that of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. The memorial was able to gain funding, both private and governmental, state and federal, within a few years of the event.

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[96] Jason Ashley Wright, "People & Places: Dinner of Reconciliation shares spirit of harmony: Fundraiser honors John Hope Franklin's legacy," *Tulsa World,* November 17, 2013.

[97] Randy Krehbiel. "Council eyes funding for John Hope Franklin Park," *Tulsa World*, October 10, 2008.

[98]Ibid. "John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park opens to the public," *Tulsa World,* January 6, 2011.

One of the main proponents and the architectural engineer of the park, Julius Pegues, stated that the hope for the park is that "people of all ages come here to reflect, to learn, and to cast their eyes to a more hopeful future."[99] This focus on the future is repeated by Pegues and others involved in the project. One of the issues that arose with the creation of the park is that many in Tulsa worried that focusing on the Tulsa Race Riot would increase the racial tensions in Tulsa or even make those in the community look "evil."[100] Just like at the Oklahoma City bombing memorial, there is a clear theme of hope for future generations throughout the memorialization process.

Just like the Holocaust and the Oklahoma City bombing are painful historic events, the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 is also a painful event but one that some in the community are uneasy to commemorate because of the underlying tensions that are still unresolved from the Race Riot Case. Historian Kenneth E. Foote remarks that many in the Tulsa community were compelled by "shame" to avoid having a place of remembrance for the riot.[101] As the years have passed, and the civil rights movement has progressed and with it the growth of rights for African Americans, the need for memorials and monuments that marked their struggle emerged.[102] The shame of the event certainly would be one of the reasons that a memorial would take so long to become a reality. The need by many in the African American community to have a historical marker for the event would be one of the reasons it would be pushed into creation. The

[99] Ibid, *Tulsa World,* January 6, 2011.

[100]Ibid. "Second Race Riot sculpture to be installed: The 27-foot bronze pillar is one of two works that will grace John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park," *Tulsa World,* May 13, 2010.

[101]Foote. *Shadowed Ground.*174.

[102]Ibid. 31.

apparent "invisibility" of the Tulsa Race Riot was not an accident; those within the community still harbored conflicting memories of the event and what it meant for Tulsa.[103] Yale historian Robin Winks states that "education is best done with examples" and these must "include that which we regret, that which is to be avoided, as well as that for which we strive."[104] Interpreting this shameful piece of Oklahoma history, allows education to take place through the interpretation at the Reconciliation Park. The word choice of "reconciliation" is important and relates to the theme of hope and healing. Author Edward Bell describes reconciliation as "not about being nice. It's not about pretending that things were other than they actually were….Reconciliation is about being able to look the tragedy of American history in the eye….and coming to terms with the violence and suffering, chaos and anger and fear in our heritage."[105] Many countries and communities have struggled with confronting legacies of genocide and racism without being forced to do so. Germany was forced to confront the Holocaust because of its defeat in World War II.[106] Those within the Tulsa community were able to forestall dealing with the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 because of the continued racism in the United States and the Oklahoma government's actions in disregarding the pleas of those involved from Greenwood.

The actual park encompasses three acres in downtown Tulsa, and the majority of it currently is green space. The area chosen is historic Greenwood, though not much is

[103]Ibid. 293.

[104]Beck & Cable. *The Gifts of Interpretation.* 75.

[105] Horton. *Slavery and Public History.* "Epilogue by Edward T. Linenthal." 224.

[106]Foote. *Shadowed Ground.* 325.

left from the original community. The area receives many visitors because of the continual rebranding of the downtown area of Tulsa, the proximity of Oklahoma State University's Tulsa campus, along with its close proximity of the new ONEOK Field where minor league baseball games occur.[107] As stated previously, a portion of the available space will one day hold a museum. With the museum addition, the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park will be more similar to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum both having an inside educational portion and an outdoor area of reflection. The park is open and free to the public daily from 8:00a.m.-8:00p.m. One of the original plans was to have trained docents at the park to help with the interpretation, but the docents seem to be a part of the funding issue alongside with the future museum.[108]

The park has two primary art features created by Ed Dwight, a prominent African American artist. The first is the Hope Plaza; it contains a 16-foot granite structure with three larger-than-life bronze statues. The statues represent actual pictures from the race riot in 1921. By basing the statues on actual photographs of the event, the artist is able to present an interpretation of the event without the need for a long explanation or detailed label. Simplicity is sometimes the best, especially when the images used speak louder than words. The first titled "hostility" is a white man fully armed for assault. The second "humiliation" is an African American male with his hands raised in surrender. The last

[107] John Stancavage, "Franklin park reflects hope for better future," *Tulsa World,* February 20, 2011.

[108] Randy Krhebiel, *Tulsa World,* January 6, 2011.

statue is of a white individual from the Red Cross holding an African American baby titled "hope."[109]

When a visitor first walks into the park, there is a plaque on the wall that gives a brief history of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921.[110] This overview allows the visitor, who may not be familiar with the event, to understand the reason for a park and gives context before entering. The text is concise but provides adequate historical context. An issue, as seen at the Holocaust exhibit, is that many visitors struggle with reading a long label or sign. The fast-paced world causes many visitors to want shorter and pithier explanations, which is not always possible, because some information is too important to be condensed. The intimidating granite piece is the first thing that greets the visitor after the plaque. The statue facing the visitor is the one of a fully armed white man. By placing the "hostility" statue in the forefront, it transports the visitor to the time of the race riot and what greeted the African Americans of the Greenwood community.[111] The next statue in the order is "humiliation" and the figure with his arms stretched above his head in absolute surrender.[112] The comparison between the first two statues is important. The first figure

[109]John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation. "Reconciliation Park." www.jhfcenter.org/reconciliation-park/.

[110] See Figure 23.

[111] See Figure 24.

[112] See Figure 25.

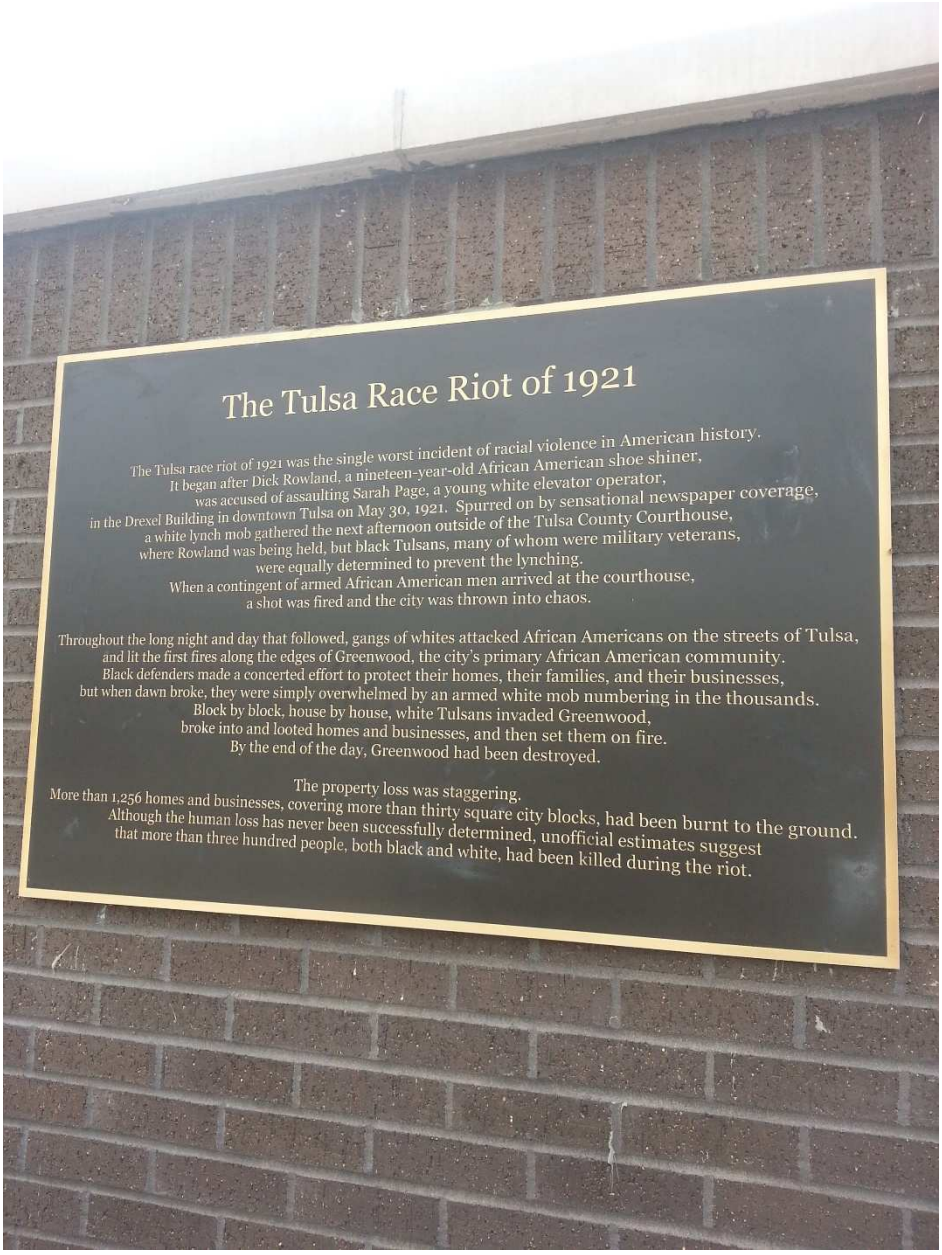

Figure 23: Entrance plaque to John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. April 7, 2013.

has three guns and a surly expression while the second figure has nothing but a hat in hand with a look of resignation. The final statue depicts Maurice Willows who was the white director of the Tulsa chapter of the American Red Cross in 1921.[113] The inclusion of this statue was obviously a cognizant choice of those in charge because it would show the multiracial theme of the park.[114] The park not only depicts the crimes committed by white Tulsans on the black community of Greenwood, but it also shows that there is "hope." Hope can be the child that was saved and who can overcome the hatred of the past or the hope can also be the white Tulsan stepping forward and rendering aid to his fellow citizen. If a visitor was not familiar with the story or the images on which the statues are based, it would be difficult to discern the race of the persons being depicted. This seems to have been another conscious decision by the artist and the park committee, to see beyond the color of a person's skin and to break past the racial divisions within Tulsa still today. These statues that present the past are needed today because they "give a sense of who we are" today.[115]

Directly to the right of the three statues is a simplistic water feature that runs along a wall. The slow moving waterfall is a calming aspect in contrast to the bustle of downtown. The water also is in stark contrast to the riot, an event that burned the entire Greenwood community to the ground. The addition of the water element could also symbolize the washing away of the past hatred and discrimination; the movement away

[113] John Stancavage, *Tulsa World,* February 20, 2011.

[114] See Figure 26.

[115] Beck and Cable. *The Gifts of Interpretation.* 76.

Figure 24: *Hostility*, bronze statue by Edward Dwight. April 7, 2013.

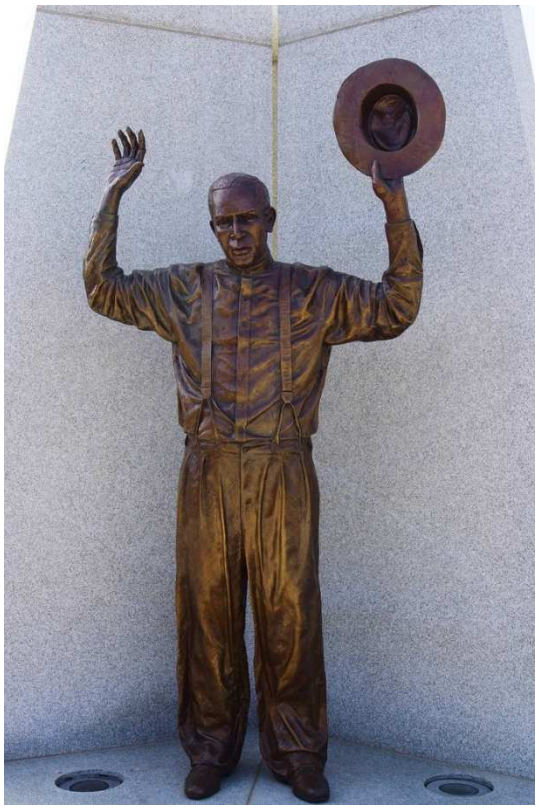

Figure 25: *Humiliation*, bronze statue by Edward Dwight. April 7, 2013.

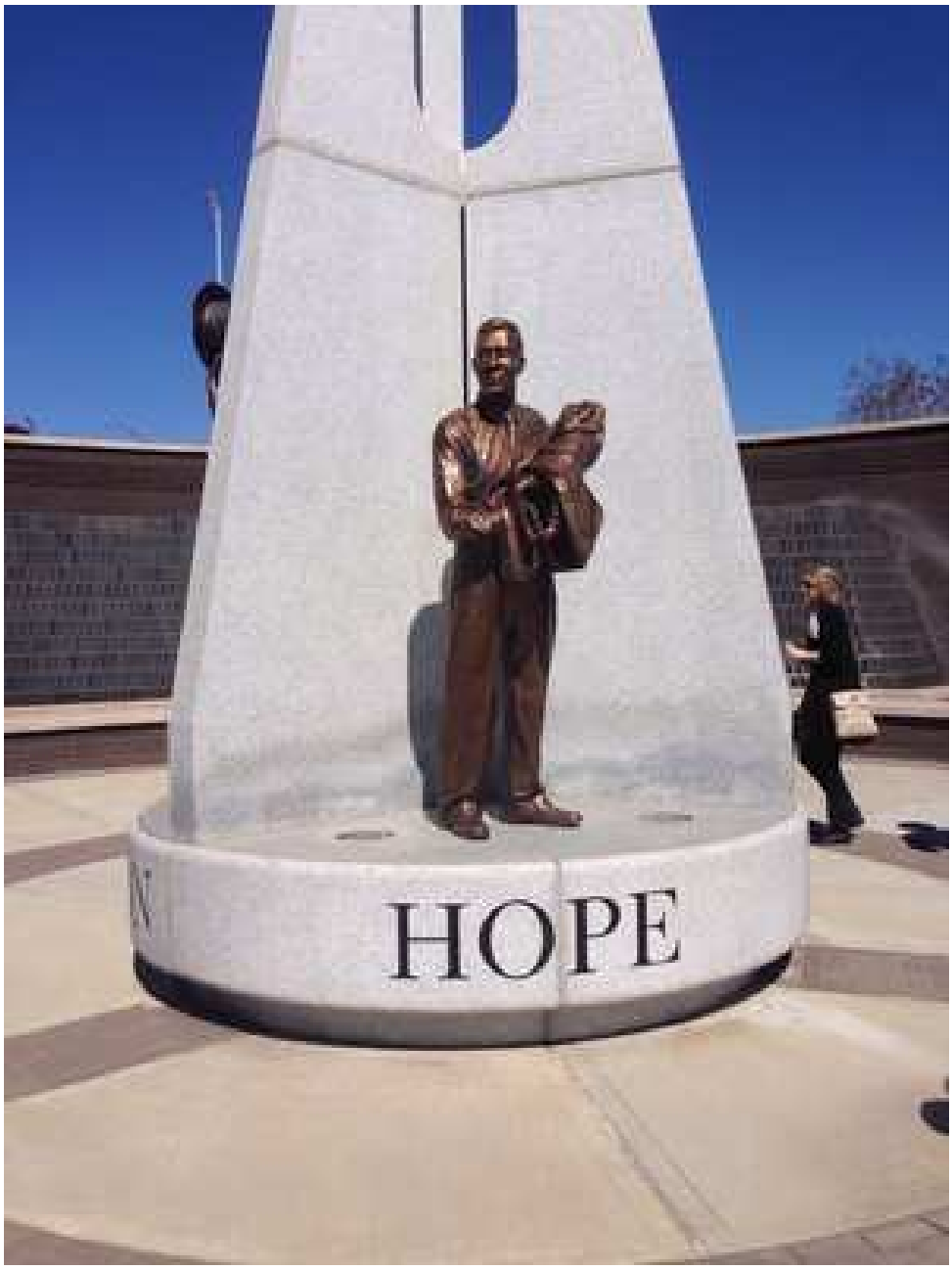

Figure 26: *Hope,* bronze statue by Edward Dwight. April 7, 2013.

from the fires of hate. Water is also a normal addition to many parks and memorials, as seen at the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

The second and most prominent portion of the park is the Tower of Reconciliation.[116] The 25-foot-tall tower depicts the history of African Americans in Oklahoma. It is reminiscent of the ancient Roman triumphal columns, conveying a narrative around a column. For example, the Tower of Trajan depicts the triumph of the Romans and their conquest through a period of time.[117] The tower also represents the eventual triumph of the African American community in Tulsa. The tower at the Reconciliation Park is intricately designed and a visitor can miss many details if they do not walk around the tower. The element is laced with mostly visual images but there are inclusions of text that help to interpret what is being presented. At the bottom, the story begins with the transportation of Africans to America as slaves. The placement of the slaves at the bottom could also symbolize how they helped build the United States. Another water feature is under the tower and this could represent the ocean that the slaves came across to America.

The Trail of Tears is the next important event displayed. The forced movement of Native American tribes into Oklahoma Territory, or Indian Territory, is a story most Oklahoma children learn in history classes. The tower, however, shows that many African Americans were involved in the removal as well. The stories on the tower show a condensed history of Oklahoma including the land run and the eventual statehood. African Americans were present at each event. The tower in all these ways presents a

[116] See Figure 27.

[117] See Figure 28.

shared collective memory of Oklahoma. There is no white or black history, only a shared public memory of the state.

One of the most important components of the tower is its detailing of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 along with the reconciliation at the top of the tower. The images of confrontation between the citizens of Tulsa and the inclusion of a headline from a Tulsa newspaper from the time help present the event. [118] As the tower continues upwards, the destruction of Greenwood is presented, followed by rebuilding, with the final piece showing the reconciliation among the citizens of Tulsa. After reconciliation, the citizens are helping one another up the tower, which represents overcoming the bounds that came from overcoming the past. The only issue with the tower is that because of its size, particularly the height, it may prove difficult for those with poor eyesight to completely understand what is being presented. However, there are plaques around the Tower of Reconciliation that help to interpret what cannot be easily seen.

The park would not be complete without plaques that helped to present the information of the mission. Without a museum currently on site, the park relies on the plaques, and eventually docents, to help with interpreting the information of the park beyond that of the visual, artistic statues and tower. The introductory plaque is a critical part of the visitor's experience to the park. However, the rest of the plaques offer information on the name of the park and insight into the Tower of Reconciliation. A plaque is placed on a large stone before the entrance to the main circle stating the name

[118] See Figure 29.

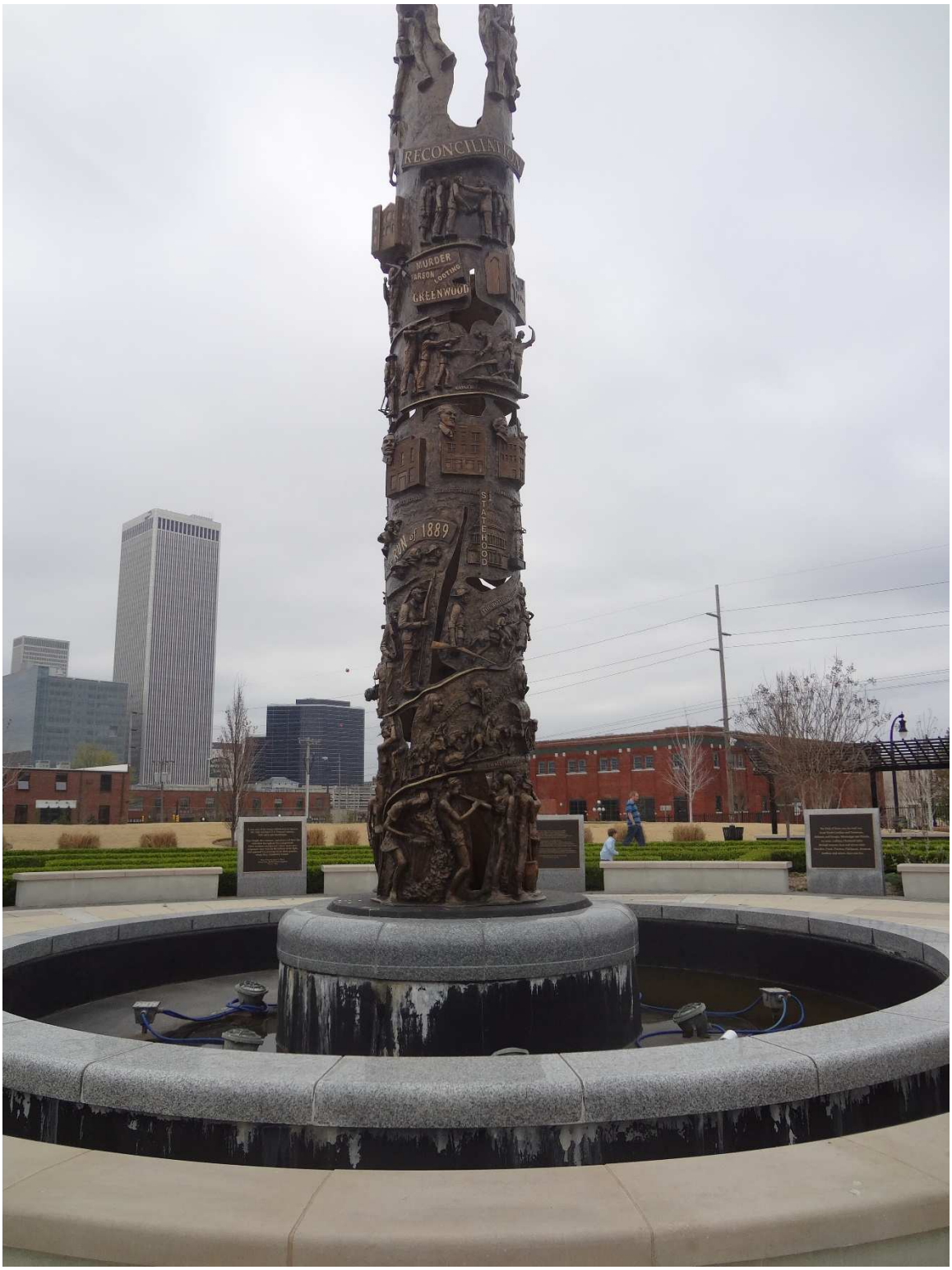

Figure 27: *Tower of Reconciliation* by Edward Dwight. April 7, 2013.

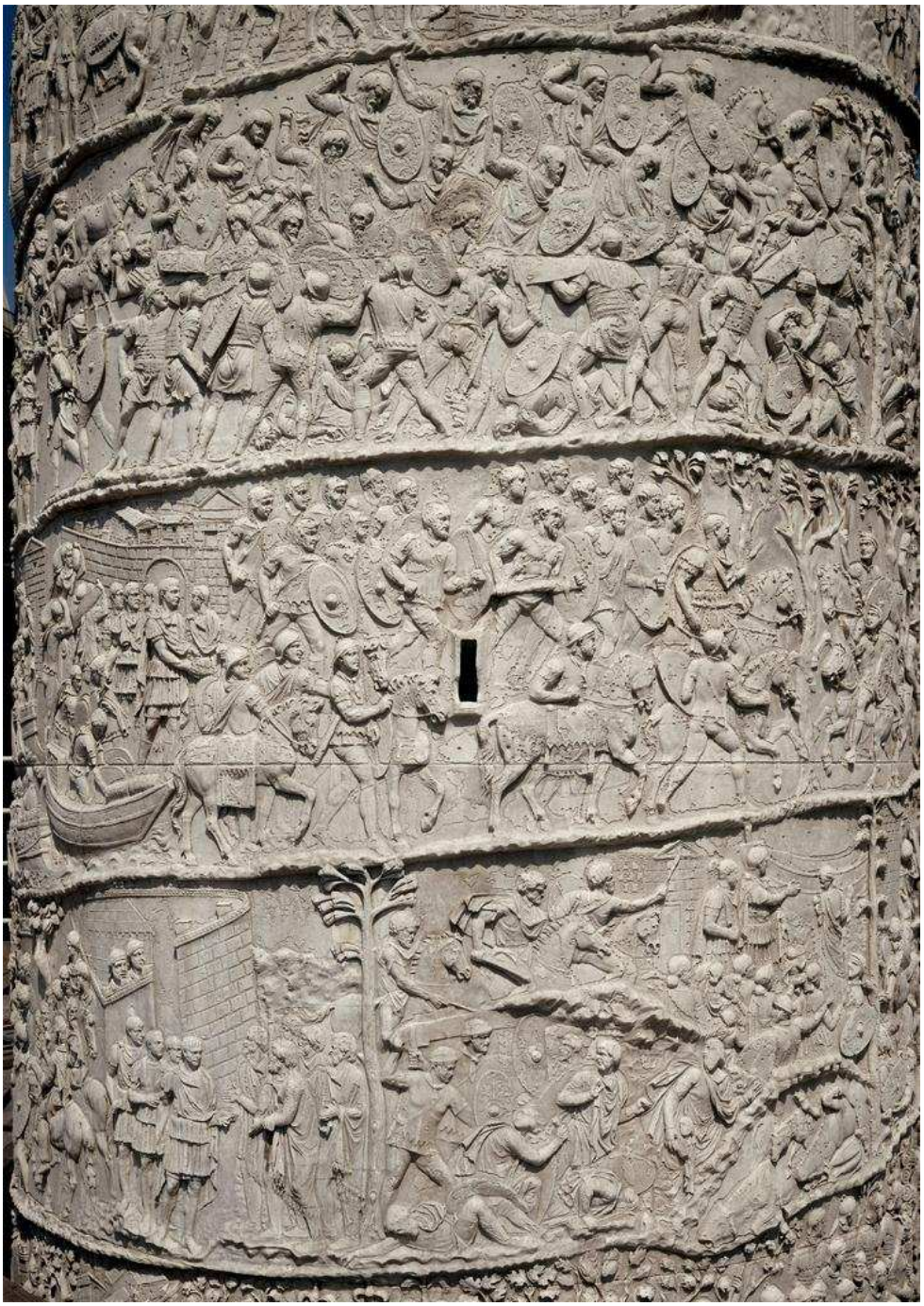

Figure 28: *Column of Trajan*, relief, 113CE. http://library.artstor.org. (Accessed March, 2014).

Figure 29: Tulsa Race Riot relief on *Tower of Reconciliation.* April 7, 2013.

of the tower, the artist, and what is being depicted, "Oklahoma – 1541-Present."[119] This information allows the visitor to understand what is being portrayed on the tower, at least in its simplest terms. A few of the stones around the tower have firsthand accounts of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921.[120] These are lengthy but are needed since no other form of written or oral interpretations exist in the park. One of the most poignant plaques helps to elaborate on the meaning of the top portion of the tower. It states that as the African Americans of Tulsa have climbed so have the rest of its citizens. "Now we must all climb together."[121] That statement encompasses what is visually occurring at the top of the tower, the citizens of Tulsa climbing together towards a joined future.

A small but necessary plaque explains the name of the park.[122] The signage relates the importance of John Hope Franklin and his legacy. The information is short and allows the visitor to understand how he is connected to the Tulsa Race Riot, through his family and his tenacity for history.

One final and focal part of the park is the Healing Walkway.[123] This narrow walkway circles the entire park, specifically the center area of the Tower of Reconciliation. Within the walkway, particularly in the spring months, there are blossoming flowers and plentiful bushes. The beauty of nature allows for "pure esthetic

[119] See Figure 30.

[120] See Figure 31.

[121] See Figure 32.

[122] See Figure 33.

[123] See Figure 34.

Figure 30: *Tower of Reconciliation* plaque. April 7, 2013.

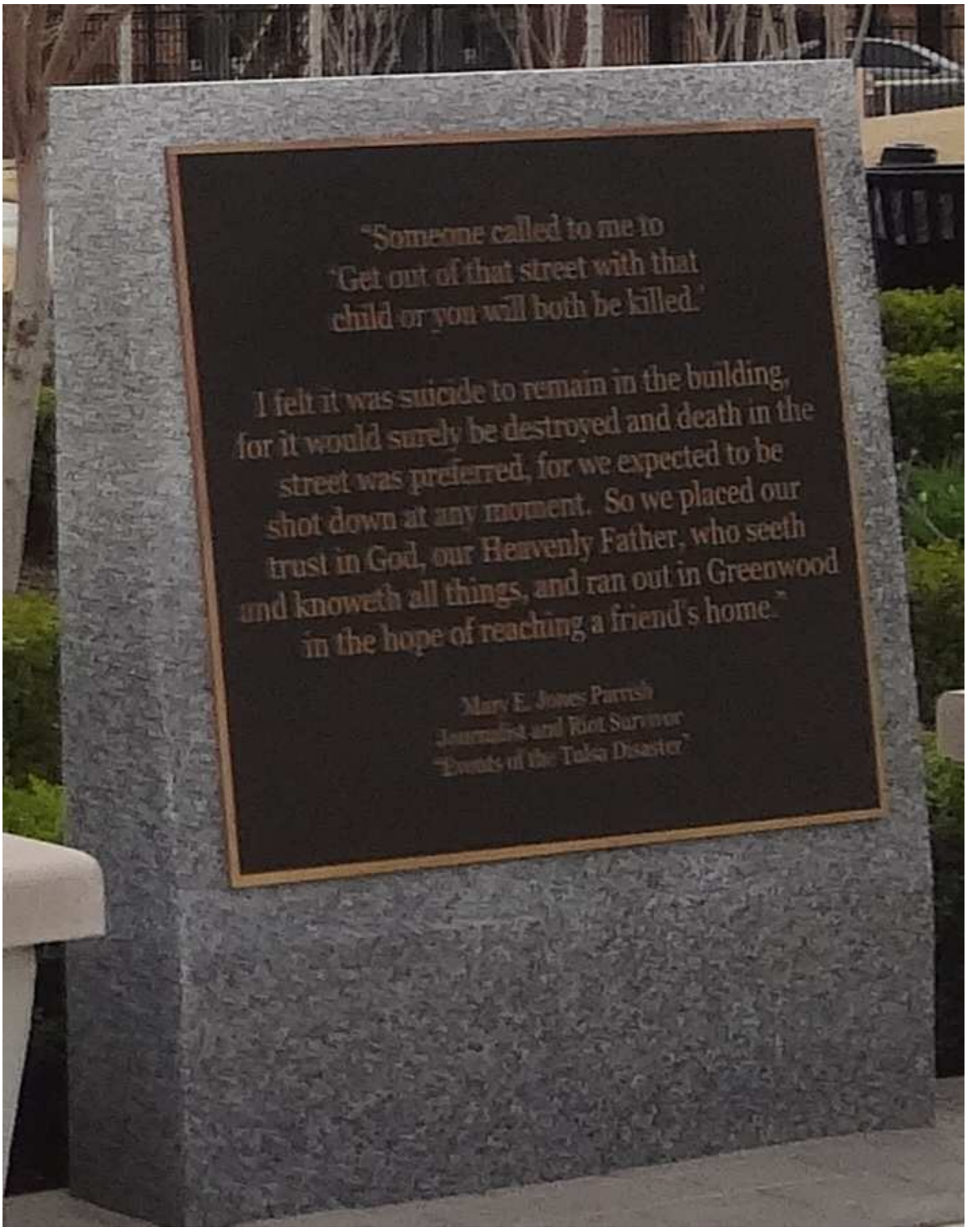

Figure 31: First-hand account of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. April 7, 2013.

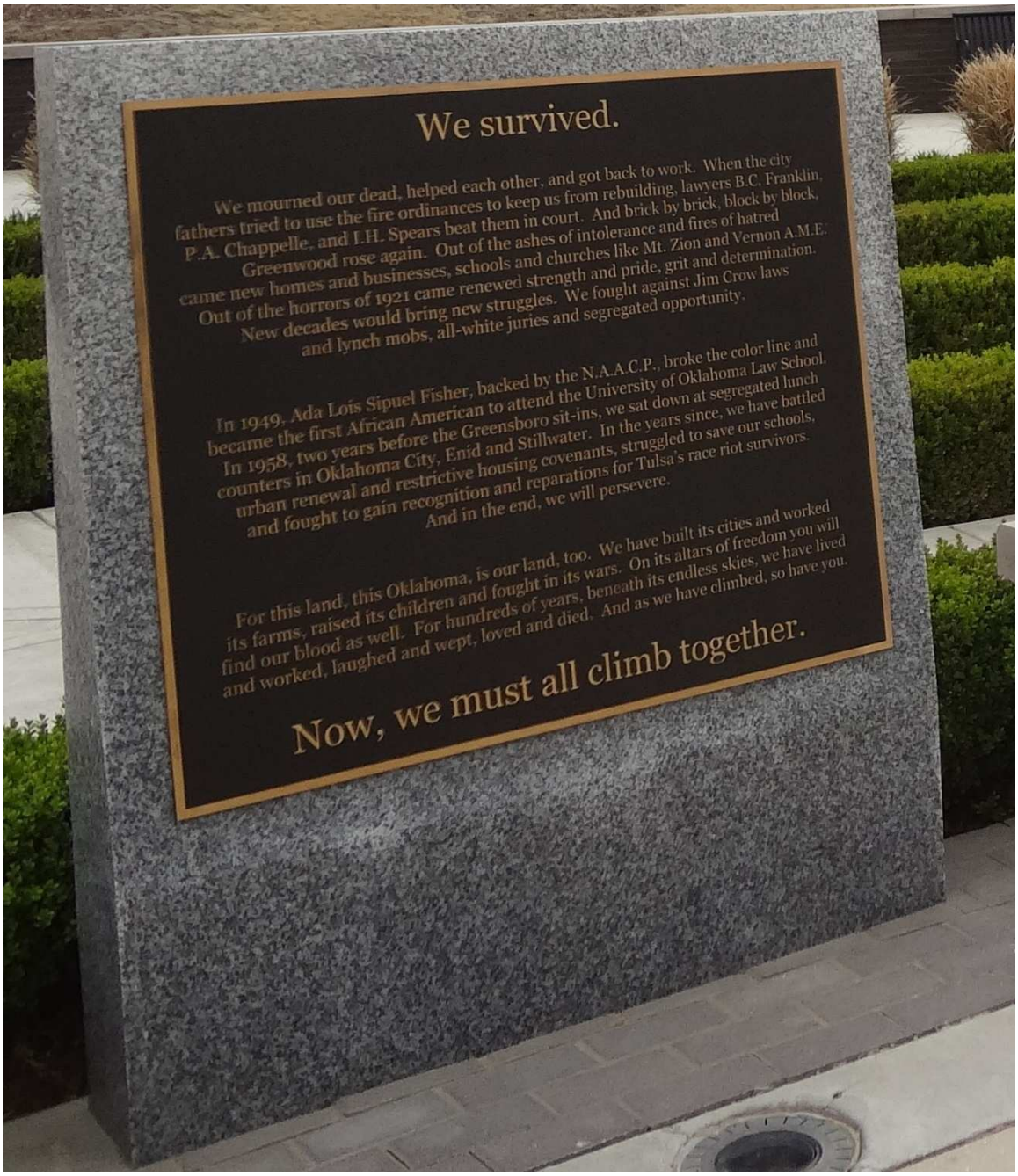

Figure 32: Plaque explaining the “climb.” April 7, 2013.

enjoyment."[124] Even though nature is not the principal focus of the park, the appealing aspect of its natural elements promotes enjoyment of the park. The walkway can also signify the upward climb for those in the community. Walking the path allows the visitor to have a unique view of the tower. As one circles the park, the visitor actually travels through time with the events on the tower. The name of the walkway suggests that as a visitor comes to understand and accept the past, that healing can then take place for those in the community. As the engineer Pegues stated, "it is about recognizing events in the past….and that there is hope, no matter the tragedy."[125] The intentionality of those who created the park was to create a "joyful flow" so that the visitors' attention is on understanding the purpose of the path.[126]

A pivotal difference that separates John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park from the other two locations in this study is the park does not attempt to recreate the actual race riot. The images on the Tower of Reconciliation do not depict the attack, merely the movement of people and burning of buildings. At the Kaiser Holocaust exhibit, the metal walls, lighting, and overall flow intentionally imitate the concentration camps. At the Oklahoma City National Museum, there is an entire section that has walls with images and actual debris in exhibits that transport the visitor to the time directly after the bombing. The park does not attempt to recreate the riot because of a number of factors.

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[124]Beck and Cable. *The Gifts of Interpretation.* 137.

[125] Randy Krehbiel. "Second Race Riot sculpture to be installed: The 27-foot bronze pillar is one of two works that will grace John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park," *Tulsa World,* May 13, 2010.

[126] Cable and Beck. *The Gifts of Interpretation.* 147.

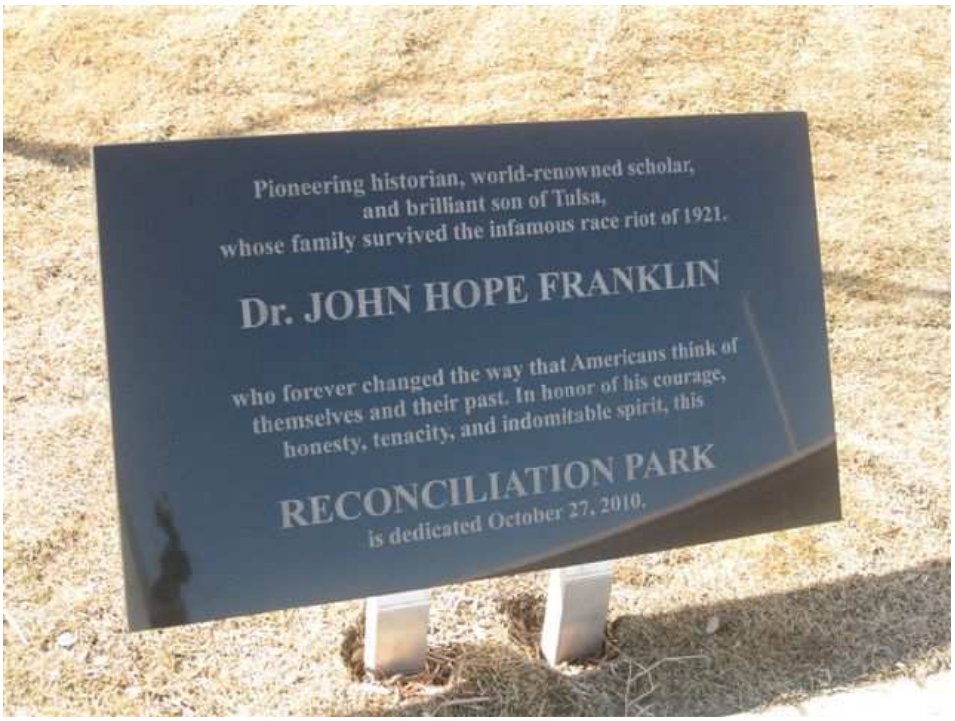

Figure 33: John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park Dedication Plaque. April 7, 2013.

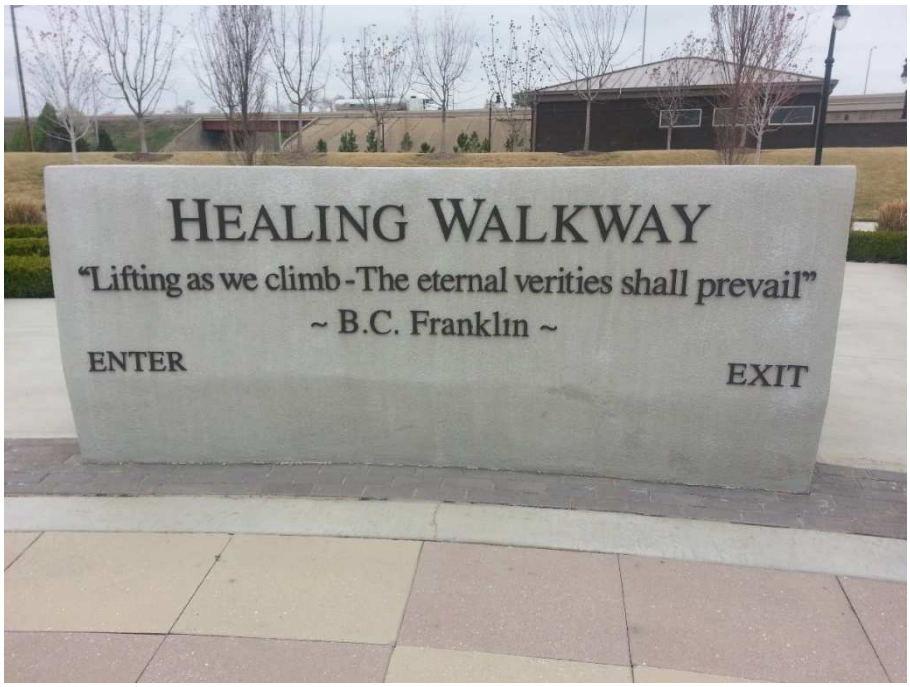

Figure 34: The *Healing Walkway.* April 7, 2013.

One is that the park's mission is focused on healing and looking toward the future; if the park had large images of white Tulsans attacking black Tulsans, this would prove detrimental to the process. The park acknowledges that the riot happened with the bronze statues and the images on the Tower of Reconciliation. The images do not have to be graphic or plentiful to strike a chord with the visitor. Less is sometimes the best option when there is limited space, and as mentioned earlier, the average visitor's attention span is not long. If a graphic image of the riot were presented, the visitor may not read a label or plaque explaining it and the interpretation would be lost.

As Will Rogers observed, the recognition of the rights of others must happen for there to be a true civilization. The John Hope Franklin Park interprets a difficult event in America's history at a time in which the rights of some were still viewed as less. This park offers hope and reconciliation through moments of learning and reflection. The park is similar to the Kaiser exhibit in that it interprets a difficult moment in time where mankind committed atrocities against their fellow man. The similarities to the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial are based on the use of water elements, outside features to commemorate those lost, and a focus on healing and hope.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

"Perhaps the first thing we need to do as a nation and as individuals is confront our past and see it for what it is."

John Hope Franklin, *The Color Line*

At the 2014 annual meeting of the National Council on Public History, a session dealt with interpreting Guantanamo Bay, the prison and base, within American history. A group of historians, universities, students, and the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience came together to form the Guantanamo Public Memory Project. The project and this session are relevant to this study because there remains events and atrocities within American history that have yet to have their interpretations presented to the public. This relates directly to the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 because both the riot and the American involvement at Guantanamo Bay are events that the general public attempted to forget and that required a group of dedicated individuals to bring to the forefront. It is also similar to the presentation of tragedy in general because through interpretation healing can occur,

particularly those who were imprisoned within Guantanamo Bay Prison. However, it goes beyond healing, creating a public memory project allows the combined collective memories of all those involved, even those who lived on the military base, to be brought together as a shared public memory.

Each of the three memorials in this study reveal a unique way in which the people of Oklahoma have dealt with tragedy, and their interpretations reveal how the events have shaped the community. The Holocaust is a European tragedy that is interpreted in Oklahoma with a message of "never again." The Kaiser exhibit attempts to educate its visitors with the hope that it will prevent further genocide. The Holocaust does not directly impact the majority of Oklahomans but it still has many visitors from the community. The Oklahoma City Bombing is a local tragedy that had a national impact. Those within the community of Oklahoma sought for the immediate memorialization of the event. Even though the bombing was an act of domestic terrorism, the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum seeks to leave a message of hope and is a place to memorialize the victims from the tragedy. And finally, the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 is an event that occurred almost 100 years ago but it only recently, in the last five years, has had a memorial created. Those within the community of Tulsa chose to bury the event and those within the African American community were without a voice in regards to this tragic event. The Reconciliation Park also has a message of hope, just like the other two sites. But unlike the other sites, Tulsa is still struggling with the legacy of the Race Riot and the divide that is still present in the community. The park's title of reconciliation not only refers to the Race Riot but of reconciliation within the Tulsa community. Edward T. Linenthal states it is the "responsibility" of the current generation to "preserve and

present" the interpretations for the coming generations. It is far worse to allow the events to be forgotten, and for those affected by the tragedies to suffer without any public place of memorial or reconciliation.

The decision to include each of the sites was intentional and based on the link between the progressions of memorialization of the three events. The Holocaust exhibit represents an event that had many years over which to be evaluated and interpreted. As discussed, the need for interpretation was thrust upon the Germans after they lost World War II. The Oklahoma City bombing is still a relatively recent event, coming upon twenty years since the terrorist attack. The need for a memorial and understanding was underway the day after the bombing. Interpretation, and finally reconciliation, for the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 did not occur for almost one hundred years after the event. The intent of this study is to portray the ways in which memorials have developed in Oklahoma. The Holocaust exhibit provides an example of an atrocity that has had many years for a meaning to be construed from it. The Oklahoma City bombing is a local tragedy that the community decided quickly to memorialize. The study finally led to the Tulsa Race Riot, which occurred before the Holocaust but did not have a proper memorial interpretation until nearly ten years after the creation of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.

The Holocaust, Oklahoma City bombing, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 were tragic events that affected large groups of people and communities. The senseless killing of women, children, and men occurred in these tragedies and many struggle with why. The result of how to interpret each tragedy can be seen in the creation of exhibitions. The Herman and Kate Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition in Tulsa, Oklahoma interprets this

European event in a way that is relatable to those in Tulsa and places the event within the national narrative of America. The exhibition had an overarching message of tolerance and a focus on firsthand accounts. The Oklahoma City bombing was a domestic act of terrorism that took the lives of almost 200 individuals. The Memorial Museum was created as a way to remember and rebuild for the community. The John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park was built almost one hundred years after the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. The park represents the collective public memory and the healing process of the community of Tulsa. This study provides an analytical critique of the interpretation in the Kaiser exhibit, Oklahoma City National Memorial and sections of its museum, and the Reconciliation Park; along with a detailed analysis of the design and presentation of the exhibitions. The Memorial Museum was a good comparison for the Kaiser Holocaust Exhibition because of how they both conceived history in their setting, how they interpreted the large event within the local and national narratives, and their use of replication and simulation to engage their visitors.[127] The quote by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel encompasses this issue with presenting tragedies, how could one ever attempt to present either event but it is a far worse crime to forget.

This study can also fit into the larger national context of memorialization as presented in the afterword of Kenneth E. Foote's *Shadowed Ground.* It seems that within the United States, there is a movement towards "greater openness in discussing" violence and tragedy.[128] This openness relates directly to Wiesel's quote of never forgetting, even forgetting the portions of history that are painful like the Holocaust. One of these painful

[127] Lennon. "Interpretation of the Unimaginable, 46.

[128] Foote, *Shadowed Ground,* 345.

events was examined in this study, the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. The wounds remained fresh from this event, but with the creation of the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park there is hope for positive development within the Tulsa community.[129] The Reconciliation Park also represents the national trend towards a more inclusive and realistic American past. This past includes events that are controversial and painful. Wounds are still fresh in Oklahoma City and in Europe with the Holocaust. The creation of the *9:03 Fund* by the Oklahoma City National Memorial staff shows a continual discussion over the bombing, the victims, and the anti-government groups that led to the tragedy. Foote notes that trying to create "closure" too quickly is merely an illusion and not all grief can be solved from a memorial.[130]

The Guantanamo Bay Project revealed that interpreting tragedy, notorious events, and shameful events of American history is still a topic of discussion today. There will always be incidents in the history of America that many would prefer to move past. For American to have a full and complete history, there must be interpretation of these events. Those involved in the Guantanamo Project are following the words of John Hope Franklin by "confronting the past," all of it, not just the portions that are achievements or moments that paint America in glory and fame. Foote notes that acknowledging many more events could be a step towards "a more encompassing view of the roles played by violence and tragedy in American society."[131] Only with open and sincere interpretation, can the country continue to grow

[129]Ibid, 353.

[130] Ibid, 345.
[131] Foote, *Shadowed Past*, 345.

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VITA

Camille Evans

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: INTERPRETING THE UNIMAGINABLE: MEMORIALIZATION IN THE SOONER STATE

Major Field: Public History

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma /United States of America in 2011.

Experience: Registrar Intern at the Thomas Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, May-July 2013.

Professional Memberships: National Council on Public History (NCPH), Oklahoma Museums Association (OMA), Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS).