

IKE SKELTON

4TH DISTRICT, MISSOURI

2227 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2504
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-2876

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2504

September 8, 1994

514-B NORTH SEVEN HIGHWAY
BLUE SPRINGS, MO 64014
(816) 228-4242

1616 INDUSTRIAL DRIVE
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65109
(314) 635-3499

219 NORTH ADAMS STREET
LEBANON, MO 65536
(417) 532-7964

319 SOUTH LAMINE
FEDERAL BUILDING
SEDALIA, MO 65301
(816) 826-2875

Mr. Martin Harwit, Director
National Air and Space Museum
Smithsonian Institution
Seventh Street and Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20560

Dear Mr. Harwit:

Next year, we will mark the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of World War II. I am outraged about the sympathetic manner in which Japanese imperialism is portrayed in the Enola Gay exhibit scheduled to open in May 1995.

The use of atom bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki shortened the war and saved military and civilian lives. As a result of the bomb, we avoided an invasion of Japan, which would have resulted in the deaths of more than a million Americans and a comparable number of Japanese.

Although you wrote in Air & Space magazine the exhibit is designed to show how the Enola Gay brought the war to a "sudden, merciful end", it focuses instead on the suffering of the Japanese. This does a disservice to the heroic Americans who fought Japanese aggression. From the 1937 massacre at Nanking to the Bataan death march; from the "unprovoked and dastardly" sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 to kamikaze attacks on Americans in the Pacific, Japanese expansionism and aggression were rife with brutality.

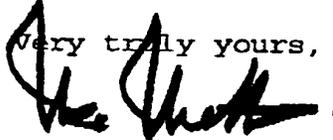
The Enola Gay exhibit should honor Americans who risked their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice. It should not attempt to put the American people on a guilt trip about an event that shortened the war and saved millions of lives. We cannot allow so-called political correctness to get in the way of an accurate and balanced portrayal of history.

I have heard from many residents of my district, including veterans of World War II and other wars, who share my outrage at the apparent bias of the exhibit. One of them wrote, "I certainly do not want my children and grandchildren to visit a museum in the United States that portrays us as the aggressors in World War II."

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We should never forget "the date which will live in infamy."
I strongly urge the Smithsonian to do a better job of reading and
understanding history, and make appropriate changes in its
presentation of the Enola Gay. It is a sad day when the
Smithsonian Institution must be urged to accurately reflect
American history. It is patently clear the Smithsonian is
attempting to rewrite history and hide the brutality of the
Japanese who started the war.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ike Skelton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "I".

IKE SKELTON
Member of Congress

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