

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

Robert Lawrence?

MR. LAWRENCE: Mr. Chairman, members of the Fine Arts Commission, my name is Robert N. Lawrence, and I am President of the American Institute of Architects, and am representing this Nation's group of architects, in addition, I am also representing a number of Veterans who have written in to me, expressing their concerns about the addition and compromise to the memorial.

Also, many of the Veterans' parents who lost persons in the conflict have written.

I have been impressed this afternoon by the compassionate elements of those men and women who have spoken in support of the compromise design. They have spoken sincerely and movingly, and it is precisely that the AIA support our Vietnam Veterans, that we are here before you today, to ask that you preserve what we are convinced is a unique, moving tribute to all of the men and women who have served their country.

From inception, the AIA has been supportive of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. We have made a contribution very early in the Fund, we have a display at the AIA Building

to honor the finalists in the design competition.

I have to admit, and I am somewhat surprised to even be here today, because i feel we are starting over, when in fact we should be concluding the process to construct the memorial, in fitting tribute to those who served in the Vietnam War.

On November 10, 1981, this Commission approved a final design that had been selected through an open competition process.

On March 26, 1982, a groundbreaking was held, and construction was begun, looking forward to the dedication in November, on Veterans Day. And in fact, there should be a dedication, because the original winning design is near completion. This design was the result of a legitimate, tested, open competition process, a process clearly in the public interest.

The Commission is now being asked to approve a new design, a design whose origins are confused, and closed to public scrutiny.

In 1910, Congress recognized that the city needed a coordinated body to look after the appearance of our Capital. The city needed some expert advice on art and design questions, so there would be a planned, cohesive and public

appearance befitting the dignity of our Nation's Capital.

To the Commission's credit, this is a beautiful city of monuments, museums, parks and memorials, all belonging to our citizens.

Once again, this Commission is challenged, and has the opportunity to act on behalf of the best interest of the American public by supporting a unique design which was won in open competition, with rules agreed on by all participants, judged by our professional jury, and acclaimed by its sponsors.

A brief chronology seems in order to set the record straight as just what the issues are in this matter. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund chose to utilize an open competition to select a design for the memorial. In doing so, the Fund accepted a long tradition for public landmarks that began in 1792 with the design of the United States Capitol.

By the time registration for the design closed on December 29, 1980, there were 2,573 registrants, of which one-third were teams, averaging three designers each. Thus, approximately 3,800 designers from around the country dredged through in this competition.

On March 31, 1981, the entries for the memorial

design closed, 1,421 designs were submitted, an American record for such a competition, and a record for international competition as well.

On May 1st, the jury reported to the Vietnam Veterans Fund with unanimous recommendation that Maya Lin's design be built on the proposed site.

On May 6, the Fund announced the winning entry. Its President, James C. Scruggs, founder of the Fund, was quoted in the press release as saying, "Maya's design best projects our thoughts about the memorial, which is to honor those Americans who had served in the Vietnam War."

And I certainly concur in his remarks. For the remainder of the year, the necessary approvals were obtained from the Department of the Interior, the National Planning Commission and this Commission as well, as stipulated by the legislation authorizing the memorial.

However, sometime in early 1982, a concerted effort was launched by a few individuals unhappy with the design, to overturn the decision recommended by the jury. Accepted by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, applauded by almost unanimous press, and approved by various public agencies involved.

At some point, and through some unknown process,

the original design was to be embellished through the dedication of a sculpture and a flag pole. The Secretary of the Interior's decision to accept these decisions then required another round of approval from your Commission and the National Planning Commission. Let us be considering a matter already decided by you.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund decided it when they accepted it. The competition jury and critical opinions have already accepted the design that is nearly constructed. The question of whether this memorial should have a statue or flag pole, in my opinion, has already been laid to rest.

The Fine Arts Commission has before it, not a compromise, but two different design solutions, commemorating the Vietnam Veterans. It also has before us two processes by which the designs were brought forward.

The original design, striking in its simplicity and power, is being used against a new design which uses the original design as a background for a statue and a flag pole. The new design is not a modification or an addition to the original winning design.

As I mentioned it is a design altogether. The original designer was a product of national open competition. The competition process itself is a nationalized worldwide as a

method to seek excellence in design for significant projects that have symbolic value, such as monuments and major public buildings. Design competitions have been the subject of interest to members of the American Institute of Architects since its founding.

In 1870 the AIA issued its Schedule of Terms, regulating architectural competition. Over the years, a series of documents were developed to promote fair conduct for competition. Our commitment to fair, open competition is a matter of longstanding.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund wisely decided to use the national competition process, whose rules are recommended not only by the AIA, but also by the Union of International Architects. Proper competition is based on strict rules. A competent advisor, a program establishing the philosophical and practical considerations for the design is approved by the sponsor. A high, qualified jury of experts judges the entries, and then the competitors are openly requested, and the best design is then submitted to the sponsors for adaptation, or its recommendation.

Let us compare how the so-called compromise design was arrived at. The new design, which is before you today, was not produced by recognized public process. There was no

program that was given to the public, no qualified jury that was appointed from the public, no openness to qualified designers.

What served us so well over the centuries of design solutions for landmark structures was subverted. Narrow political pressures produced a totally new design.

Let me make it clear that before you today is not an embellishment of the winning design, it is, as I mentioned before, a new scheme altogether, in which the statue does become the axiom and the wall a backdrop. The statue would be the biggest memorial, seemingly anxious to make a statement about the war, but uncertain about what that statement should be.

This is precisely the kind of thing that the competition program sought to avoid, in what the winning design, in its quietpower and dignity totally avoided. Like the proverbial camel, this compromised memorial was designed by a committee, a committee that did not consult the designer, which would not only have been courtesy, but also accepted standard of professional practice, a committee willing to delay the dedication of this national memorial to those who served in the Vietnam War.

One of the criteria was a design that best honored

memory of those Americans who died by serving our country in Vietnam, the memory of those who were wounded, and the memory of those who served.

We believe that a memorial to honor those individuals who died, who were wounded, and who served, should be the best we as a Nation are capable of planning. When the Congress, in the name of the American people, set aside land for this monument, it certainly was not its intent to sanction compromise.

Congress surely expected design excellence. The American people surely demanded excellence, and our Veterans surely deserve design excellence. This was the objective of the original competition process, and this was the objective achieved by that process.

As I mentioned earlier, I have heard from Veterans who are affronted by the original design. We have also heard, just as forcefully, from participants in the competition, as well as relatives of Veterans killed in the war.

I would just like to give you a sense of the comments that we have been receiving. From Tennessee: I participated in the design competition, and feel the jury selected the best design. I lost my brother in Vietnam, and feel that the award winning design is an appropriate memorial.



From California: we feel the changes to a well conceived and properly run public design competition would set a dangerous precedent.

From Delaware: The simple walls of Ms. Lin's design pointing to the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial will include the name of our older son. He was born three days before the Hiroshima bomb went off, and 23 years later he was dead. Please let the names stand for the prayers of the living who visit that spot of a hallowed grave.

From California: as an infantryman veteran of the Vietnam War, I was appalled to read last week that Ms. Lin's sensitive memorial to all Americans who died there is being compromised. I fully support your efforts to block this compromise.

Again, from California: in the final analysis, if the proposed modification is allowed to be executed, Maya Lin no longer wins, and we all lose.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, we do all lose. The AIA is not against statues, flag poles or the American flag. We are for the integrity of the original design. The integrity of the process that has created that design, and the integrity of the public interest which the design serves. We are for the completion of this monument now as originally scheduled.

The Fine Arts Commission must insure the public interest is protected, and the design excellence in the Federal City is preserved. Including the integrity of the Mall. This is the challenge you face, as we look to each of you for leadership. Expedience should not allow compromise of a process built on integrity and consensus among participants from beginning to end. We should not allow a patched up modified compromise memorial to be built.

The best design was selected, that is the design that should be commissioned. Our Vietnam Veterans fought, and many died for our democratic process. This same democratic process led to design excellence in the selection of the original design. Our Veterans deserve nothing less than excellence, and the public trust demands nothing more.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

The next speaker will be Paul Spreiregen, Professional Advisor for the Original Competition.

MR. SPREIREGEN: My name is Paul Spreiregen. I am an architect here in Washington. I was also the Professional Advisor to the Nationwide Competition which resulted in the original design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the work of Maya Ying Lin.