

18 February 1992

Mr. Robert G. Stanton
Regional Director
National Capital Region
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

Refer to NCPC File No. 2663

Dear Mr. Stanton:

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project's (VWMP) Board of Directors met in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, February 8, 1992, to consider the National Capital Planning Commission's (NCPC) staff suggestions on the proposed Vietnam Women's Memorial conveyed to you on February 7, 1992 by Mr. Griffith by narrative and sketched illustrations. We agree that the kneeling woman must maintain the "feeling of isolated despair" and that minor refinements sometimes improve an artist's initial work.

Both the Board of Directors and the artist, Glenna Goodacre, believe that NCPC's suggestion to move the helmet held by the kneeling woman to her left hand will contribute to the composition by creating an upward diagonal axis from the helmet to the kneeling woman's head, then up through the arm, shoulder and head of the standing woman. The diagonal axis creates more tension, focus and compositional unity.

However, in our judgement, lifting the kneeling woman's head and straightening her back would completely alter the feelings of anguish and introspection in this figure. This suggestion is a major modification of the sculptural composition, making the sculpture a depiction of a singular event and not a composition of uniquely integrated emotional and physical experiences and sacrifices exhibited throughout the Vietnam war era. Therefore, we strongly believe that the angle of the kneeling woman's head and back must remain to preserve these emotions.

The standing woman and the figure caring for the wounded soldier portray the actions and consequences of war. The kneeling woman embodies the totality of the dramatic experiences of war -- the intensity, fatigue, anguish and isolation. Her despair speaks to the pain of war and need for solace. It is her anguish which represents so much of the story of all those who served in Vietnam, and as such, she ties the sculpture together. There is an inseparable bond in their circle yet uniqueness and purpose to each figure. Each of the three women portrays military service with strength, dignity and compassion. Future generations who view this memorial will see not only women serving humanity during the trials of war but will also contemplate the emotions of those who served as so beautifully and poignantly represented by the kneeling woman.

We hope that this matter can be resolved without the need for another hearing before the NCPC. We look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

Diane Carlson Evans

Diane Carlson Evans
Chair and Founder