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Thank you so much. It's-- I'm so deeply touched and honored to be here in this beautiful sanctuary with these wonderful words that one never really deserves. And as I was standing here and talking about architecture, I had a few thoughts in my mind.

Because architecture is usually and rightfully so, associated with material. It's associated with object. It's associated with stone, with wood, and with the physical that is present in the world. But in fact I think architecture is a spiritual mission. Because ultimately what distinguishes human beings and their spaces from the world, is a that architecture communicates something beyond the material. It is away from the cold.

It's transmitting in the dwelling some is worthy. And I think-- I've always really thought that architecture is more like a book, more like a-- like communicating through music or poetry. Not just about those things we know about, but the things we aspire to.

My road to architecture is a very strange one I have to say. I was born in post War Poland. My parents are Holocaust survivors. I grew up under very anti-Semitic circumstances in Poland. We were not integrated into that society. We are proud of being Jews. And we were fortunate when I was 11, 12 years old, to be able to leave via Israel and to come to this incredible country, to New York, when I was a teenager, about 13, 14 years old.

And that certainly shaped my life. It changed my view of what the world is about. And I didn't start, as we pointed, in architecture. I started as a musician. And I started on a very strange instrument, you'll notice in this biography. I started on the accordion. And often people you know think it's very funny, because they would expect something else.

I always wanted to play the piano. But my parents-- it's my destiny. We're too scared in Poland to bring the piano to the courtyard. So they said, "You know our neighbors won't appreciate us bringing the piano. We'll get you a piano that we can hide in a small suitcase." And then I became destined to play at an instrument.

And when I won the America Israel Cultural Foundation Prize, Issac Stern, who was the head of the jury, said to me, "You know Mr. Libeskind, it's-- that-- it's not the instrument for you. You should playing an instrument that can never be exhausted, the real big piano." Now in Israel, there are no small courtyards that you have to be ashamed of bringing the piano to. But that's not really just a story. It's not just an anecdote. It's almost an emblem of what life is really about. And when I came to New York, I was fortunate to go to the Bronx High School of Science. My interest changed from music and mathematics. And it was only too connected.

And in any case, I studied architecture. But I didn't go through the normal course of practice. Because I tried. And I worked with great architects for two or three minutes. And I realized, it was not the kind of work I was interested in. And I seemed to others to drift into other fields. And yet architecture is one of the liberal arts. We often forget that architecture is not a technical profession.

Of course it is. You have to know how to do these things. But ultimately it has always been one of the deepest concerns of culture. Because it is part of what it means, human. It is one of humanistic professions. And it's no wonder that in ancient times, it was considered something sacred, something divine. I often think of the biblical texts which discuss about it. And yet, at the end we can see that no image can be made of the things we read about. It's about the substance of the experience.

That's really thought today I was lucky in my first. It was an international competition. And I have to say, I was a late bloomer. I started my architecture in 1989 when we moved to Berlin when I won the competition. But I should say, winning the competition is not really a reliable thing in life. Because it's usually a ticket to oblivion.

And no one had an intention to build such a building. There was no money for such a building. It was not even called the Jewish Museum. And they did everything possible in that project to try to address the fundamental issues of architecture, which is that it brings memory. It brings something that only a civic space can create. It brings something that is worthy of remembrance and worthy of opening the future to a new horizon, a hope.

And to-- you know my wife and partner and our children, we moved to Berlin on a kind of decision that was made on the street, as we were crossing the street. And no one expected us to ever stay in Berlin. We didn't really know what it would take, whether such a museum would ever be built. But I again believe that it is faith, that it is really belief that creates buildings. And actually, this is true even if you make a garage addition. You have to believe in something that you want to do. Because it's a lot of work to get it done.

In any case, staying in Berlin, believing in the project and making it-- trying to speak to the greater public, also brings another awareness, that architecture is a civic and political act. Political in a sense that it's about the, about the city. It's about citizens. It's not about private dreams or fantasies of a fetish or just esthetic exercises of form. It is about creation of a space that goes to everyone's heart and can be shared. And I think this is what makes architecture such a civilization force. In fact when we remember things, we remember them through architecture. When we think of Jerusalem, we think of the spaces of Jerusalem. When we think of Paris, when we think of New York, when we think of ancient Rome, we always recreate it not to economic history, political history, not through the intellectual arts, but really through emotions.

In any case, the Jewish Museum was built. I took 12 years to build it. It's a museum which is based on a story. And I have always believed that architecture is a telling of a story. And it starts with a story in the old museum. One which goes nowhere, to a dead end, the abyss of the Holocaust. One which goes to the exile of cities, of people from themselves also. And one that goes through kind of-- torturous way through into the continuative history, across the indecipherable.

And then the building of course develops in its own way. It doesn't only tell the story of horrors, it tell the story of a community that was very successful, that was contributing to the well-being of Europe, of Germany, of Berlin. And it is a story through which you have to always remember that in the center of it is something worthy of remembrance. And what is it? It's those spiritual carriers... history that can not be represented in any physical objects which are there at the center of let's say less visible world, and yet a world that is always present.

And that is also architecture. Because we walk on the earth. And yet we don't see what is few inches below our feet. And we look at the sky and it's tall enough, but we don't see all of it. It's-- it goes beyond the visible range. While I was in Germany I was also lucky to build another museum, which is not dedicated to such a grand project as showing a history of 2000 years in a city that is now a capital hero.

But a project dedicated to a simple human being, Felix Nussbaum, a painter in Germany in a Catholic town, a successful painter, famous in his time, but almost successfully obliterated from history like millions of others. And I-- again, it was a competition. I saw a plaque of his hanging next to our apartment building in Berlin. And it said, "Felix Nussbaum lived in this building."

And I went to the Jewish encyclopedia of 1976. There was no entry under Felix Nussbaum. He was a per-- an unknown. And yet when I got to know him, and I was successful in winning the competition to build a museum, very small one, tiny one, the Museum Without An Exit. The museum that you have to sort of enter that history. 'Cause there's no exit out of the history. You have to embody it and understand it.

Building made out of three different parts of his life. A wooden building made of oak, which is dedicated to his paintings that he created, that Northern German landscape ... very successful famous painter. Then the blank wall, the Nussbaum..., the Nussbaum wall. A break in his life. While he was at the height of his career, he was not able to of course return to Germany. He was hounded by the Gestapo. He escaped from prison camps. He continued to paint. Wound up in Belgium, in Brussels with his wife, ... Plotika, a Jewish Polish painter.

Continued to document his world as it was coming apart. And he had believed in the goodness of human beings. Anyway, he didn't make it. He was deported on the r--

transport to Auschwitz. But I created also a bridge across that old wooden building, through the concrete space that is as narrow as the space that he occupied in Brussels he couldn't get away from-- you know in an attic.

And I didn't want to just make a space that you can enjoy the painting. And the paintings are extremely good. But I wanted to see the paintings as he saw them, as documents. Not only art works, but documents of human spirit that is indomitable, and in face of even catastrophe is able to communicate as he said, something like a bottle of history thrown into the ocean of despair.

And he said if anybody ever finds such a bottle, make it available to people so they can learn something about it. So that was my second project in Germany. But the irony of time and of history and of dates is that the Jewish Museum, after 12 years of working on it, opened. Fully to the public on September 11, 2001. A strange coincidence. The museum opened and it closed, almost immediately.

In Berlin it was about 2:30 in the afternoon when the museum closed, because there was uncertainty about what that event meant. And I thought about it. And as I watched those horrifying images of what happened in Europe, I was determined. And I turned to Nina. And I said, "You know whatever happens, we have to do something. We have to respond to this."

And you will remember that New Yorkers were quite divided in the beginning. Half of New Yorkers said, "You should build nothing on this site because it represents death. And it's a cemetery. You can not do anything." And the other half said, "You can't just do nothing. You have to assert even higher buildings, because we can not bow our heads in face of such terror."

And I thought about, "What can an architect do? What can architecture do?" It's-- I thought, "Well, there will be political responses. There will be military responses. But architecture can only respond culturally." It's a cultural response. And it's a response that has to gather the memory of that date and those who perished there. And they are heroes, because they represented everyone. In fact, citizens of 96 different countries were killed in that attack.

At the same time I thought, "The memorial has to be extended beyond just the space of sadness to assert the foundations for life that Manhattan as a capital of emotions, a capital of the world, is a light to the world." And I founded my project on a very simple and very personal experience. It wasn't very abstract. It wasn't very intellectual. It was just my own memory of arriving by boat, late August, 'cause I was 14 years old, 13 years old, with my sister and my mother on the boat across the Statue of Liberty to Manhattan.

And I recalled that feeling, that feeling which never leaves you. It's a feeling that

millions of Americans have had, and I've had, of seeing the Statue of Liberty not as a symbol, not even as an icon, not as some trinket or something dispensable, but essential figure welcoming the strangers to a country who's skyline, and that's lower Manhattan, is unfathomable. Even with all the pictures that I've had and postcards and films that I saw, nothing could have prepared me for the power of the skyline of Manhattan. And the power of that skyline, I have to tell you personally, is not its just height and the impossibility that human beings could build vertically in such a density anywhere in the world.

But I think it's what it stands for. And that skyline stands for the dreams you have as an immigrant. To be able to practice your religion, to be able to talk freely, to be able to be educated, and to be able to see that the essence of the city is a spiritual liberty, freedom, things that stone can only communicate but life makes clear. And of course that's what the project is about. The spiraling buildings which surround the memorial site are themselves a torch of reality, a torch of liberty, which reasserts once again as it rises to the Freedom Tower, the tower that is 1776 feet high-- not just the tallest building in the world, but I thought it should be a building whose numerical and quantitative finitude is founded on something which is unsurpassable, ever.

Because the Declaration of Independence is a document of biblical proportions which carries that spirit and says that all human beings are equal. And what document has ever said that? And that's really what I was inspired with. It was not about projects. It wasn't-- not about getting a job. It was not about building buildings. It was about what such a site has in itself, right down to its depths.

And at its depths, I have to say in a very personal way as I asked the Port Authority to take me down to the bedrock. And they said, "Why do you want to go to the bedrock? You can just look at it from here. Just stand here. It's raining. You don't need to go." I don't know what drove me to try to ask them to take me all the way down. And I have to tell you, it's only when you go down to the bedrock, 75 feet down, and I touched that wall, that wall with the technical name, story wall, that foundation that was revealed in the attack and yet continues to support a whole site.

I realized that that's what it was about. It was about the eloquence of the walls which continue to stand, support the site, reveal tragedy and yet continue to speak to us as affirmative-- an affirmative of life. And like ruins of old cities, the ruins that have become just nostalgic. This wall speaks of the power of itself, holding the waters of the Hudson River and speaking eloquently about the fact that tragedy and future are intertwined, and that life at the end is what wins out.

That's what architecture's about. It is the optimist's profession. I have to tell you, you want a really optimistic profession, it's probably not economics, history, studies, medicine, high-tech. It's architecture. Because it's the one profession that always has a

heart beat beyond what is being done now into the faith in the future. And that's what I love about architecture. It's about construction. It's about the creative possibility amidst the destructions of reality, to construct something which with worthy, which doesn't underestimate human beings, but reasserts the spirit and the soul that is really the essence of tomorrow. Thank you.