

A Letter from Scott Sandage to Alan Reich

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

RUTGERS

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Alan A. Reich President National Organization on Disability 910 16th Street NW Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Reich:

I am writing as a historian to express my strong support for your effort to influence the design of the proposed monument to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Both to reflect truth and to foster inspiration, any such monument must depict the president's disability.

As the author of a prize-winning study of the Lincoln Memorial, I have given much thought to the controversies that have always surrounded public commemorations. The most moving monuments are the ones that focus more on the future than on the past. To engage the hearts and minds of the public, a memorial to Franklin Roosevelt must show more than how he led America during his lifetime. Rather, it must show how he continues to lead America today and tomorrow. A memorial must never be cold marble; it must be a warm and positive force in the community.

Those who would omit Franklin Roosevelt's disability from his memorial are, intentionally or not, returning us to a time when such things were dark, shameful secrets. This may reflect Roosevelt's public relations strategies, but it does not reflect the compassion of his leadership. Speaking at the University of Pennsylvania on 20 September 1940, the president told students, "No man can sever the bonds that unite him to his society simply by averting his eyes." When we look away, we learn nothing. Even worse, we do nothing. To hide the physical challenges of Roosevelt's life would be to choose to avert our eyes -- and to shirk our responsibilities, not just to history, but to ourselves and our posterity. Fearlessly, we must choose to look.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Sandage

Scott A. Sandage National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow