

**THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DIED FOR OUR FREEDOM
DESERVES THE DEFENSE FROM THE LIVING
FIGHT OVER THE KATYN MEMORIAL IN JERSEY CITY CONTINUES**



Katyn Monument in Jersey City, NJ in January 2019

The Katyn Monument in Exchange Place Plaza in Jersey City, commissioned in 1986, and installed in 1991, is by far the most important Polish American Memorial and the most potent symbol in the United States of the Polish WWII genocide. Regretfully, the Memorial is subjected to an unending barrage of assaults by the Exchange Place Alliance District Management Corporation, a public/private entity led by luxury developers with holdings on or near Exchange Place Plaza. In 2018, Jersey City mayor Steven Fulop and the Exchange Place Alliance president Michael DeMarco colluded trying to evict the Katyn Memorial from where it had stood for 22 years. Receiving international condemnation, the mayor and Mr. DeMarco then attempted to move the Memorial one block south to York Street, a narrow, dark street sitting on top of a toxic, rancid, combined sewer/outflow exchange. With the financial support of Polish Americans throughout the United States, the pro-Monument groups collected over 6,000 signatures from Jersey City residents and forced a city-wide referendum on the matter. The Katyn Memorial stands in Exchange Place to this date because of the referendum and the combined efforts of many.

Today, the same forces that failed in 2018 to remove/relocate the Monument are engaged in a new assault on the Katyn Memorial. Under the guise of a plaza “renovation,” the Exchange Place Alliance will heedlessly attempt to convert forty percent of the Plaza’s public space into a private roadway servicing buildings owned by corporations of the board members of the Alliance itself. Further, the new Plaza designs reveal an aggressive attack on the Katyn Memorial yet again. Because Jersey City’s 2018 referendum brought about an ordinance guaranteeing that the Katyn

Memorial will remain in Exchange Place Plaza in perpetuity, a new tactic is employed: it aims to obscure, scar, confine, deny access, degrade, and conceal the Memorial from view.

The Exchange Place Alliance has led this "Monument wrecking crew" since its president, Michael DeMarco, the arch-foe of the Katyn Memorial and a Polonophobe, publicly declared the Monument to be "gruesome" and demanded its removal from Exchange Place Plaza. His collaborator Mayor Steven Fulop – another Polonophobe - added insult to injury, causing international scandal and outrage in 2018 when he called Stanislaw Karczewski, Speaker of Poland's Senate, who protested the scandalous plans to remove the Monument "a joke, anti-Semite, white nationalist, and Holocaust denier."

The Exchange Place Alliance's actions and the unlawful process in which the approval of the Exchange Place Plaza renovation was obtained caused significant and understandable opposition within the community. Left with no options - due to the intransigence of the Exchange Place Alliance District Management Corporation and its unwillingness to open access to the Monument – the Polish American Strategic Initiative (PASI), Polish American Strategic Initiative Educational Organization (PASI EDU), and Jeanne Daly, a local Jersey City resident, filed in June 2022 a court action against the Jersey City Planning Board and Exchange Place Alliance. Simultaneously, fundraising was initiated - as was done in 2018 - to support the legal challenge.

The plaintiffs argue that the approval of the Plaza renovation issued by the Jersey City Planning Board was unlawful, and the case should be remanded back to the Planning Board for reconsideration to allow for previously banned public input. The plaintiffs want to keep the surroundings of the Monument open, access to the Monument unimpeded on all sides, and the iconic views of the Memorial with the panorama of Manhattan in the background preserved. The lawsuit rejects the Alliance's attempts to hide the Monument, minimize its visual impact, and ultimately degrade its importance. As we remember, the Jersey City Planning Board initially rejected the Exchange Place Alliance District Management Corporation's renovation plans; the decision was unlawfully reversed two weeks later when the Jersey City Planning Board succumbed to political pressures exerted - as it is alleged - by Steven Fulop, mayor of Jersey City and another Katyn Monument foe. Did Mr. DeMarco's Mack-Cali past political donation of \$250K to the mayor's election fund have anything to do with the reversal? Any answers? We are curious.

Regrettably, the PASI litigation and fundraising have been attacked and criticized extensively in social media by Wojciech Mazur, vice president of a group known as the Committee for the Conservation of the Katyn Memorial and other Historic Objects, also known as CCKHMO. The group has aligned itself with the views of the Exchange Place Alliance District Management Corporation. The CCKHMO supports and defends the actions of the Exchange Place Alliance, even though they clash with, and are rejected by, the majority of the Polish American community. The Exchange Place Alliance has used and exploited the public support of CCKHMO to erroneously claim that the Polish American community supports the reconstruction of the Plaza in the form proposed by the Alliance.

Marek Bober's interview with Wojciech Mazur, published in Gwiazda Polarna, and reprinted by Waldemar Biniecki in Kuryer Polski, sadly fails to provide truthful and factual information about the Katyn Monument developments and neglects to fact-check Mr. Mazur's assertions. These

include erroneous statements regarding PASI and Ms. Krystyna Piórkowska, one of the most active, engaged, and best-informed defenders of the Monument. Many statements made by Mr. Mazur do not align with reality and are utterly self-serving. They seriously misrepresent and exaggerate his role, attack and mischaracterize the roles played by others, especially by Ms. Piórkowska, to finally segue to an absurd claim that the PASI litigation somehow contributed to the disappointing outcomes of the U.S. elections. Furthermore, PASI is blamed for ruining the CCKHMO's relationship with the Exchange Place Alliance. According to Mr. Mazur, the PASI litigation forced CCKHMO to sign an official statement confirming its loyalty to the Exchange Place Alliance District Management Corporation. A truly bizarre and revealing admission!

THE FACTS: The Exchange Place renovation project removes approximately forty percent of the Plaza, a public property, from public use and converts it into a private roadway benefiting only private interests. The project unacceptably congests the space surrounding the Monument, restricts frontal and side access to it, and unreasonably constrains the area around it, drastically limiting the number of participants in future Katyn commemorations. The only access to the Monument left relatively unimpeded remains in the back of the Monument. The plans amount to a land grab and a calculated insult to the memory of the victims and the living.

If allowed, the changes being implemented to Exchange Place by the Alliance will seriously impact the Katyn Monument. As a result, the Katyn Memorial will stand close to the newly established private roadway and be confined to a small oval area separated from the Plaza, making it barely visible. The approach to the Monument would be obstructed on two sides with long benches with absurd, almost six-foot-tall reclining backs and serving no purpose other than obstruction of access. A twenty-one-foot-long and over-five-foot-high masonry wall will be installed directly in front of the Monument. This wall and the high-backed benches are gratuitous and only serve to confine and separate the Monument from the Plaza, restrict access to it, obstruct the view of the Memorial, and arbitrarily limit the size of commemorations taking place at the Memorial. Fifteen trees planted around the Monument and growing bigger every year will ensure further restriction of its view. An approximately eleven-foot distance between the base of the Monument and the benches, created as an effect of the planned changes, will constraint access to, and movement around the Monument: it will result in a "suffocatingly" small, cordoned off, isolated area, which intentionally separates the Monument from the open space of the Plaza, of which it should continue to be an integral part, and enjoy an unimpeded access from all sides.

Furthermore, the redesign of the Plaza with its walls, bushes, and trees obstructs views not only of the Monument but also of Manhattan across the Hudson River, which violates the New Jersey Public Trust Doctrine, a state law enacted to guard and preserve the unspoiled views of New Jersey shorelines and waterfronts.

Considering all the above, one must sadly conclude that there is no other reasonable explanation for limiting access to and obstructing the view of the Katyn Memorial than the Polonophobic biases of the decision-makers. The CCKMHO's and Mr. Mazur's willingness to betray the Memorial of the Polish WWII genocide for a few handshakes and a photo op with Jersey City Polonophobes intent on degrading the Memorial is undignified and truly regrettable.

The innocent victims of the Katyn genocide, who were shot with hands tied behind their backs, could not fight for their lives. But we can and should defend their memory, honor, and dignity. Please join our legal challenge and contribute to the Katyn Monument legal defense. Please make a check out to "PASI Educational Organization" or wire your donation directly, bank to bank. Please write "Katyn Monument Litigation" in the memo section. The PASI Educational Organization is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible. Your contribution is greatly appreciated, and we thank you for your support.

Mail your check to:
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c/o Gene Sokolowski, Ph.D.
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Account Number: 4407889687

To see the court documentation and the report in support of the litigation written by a licensed New Jersey city planner, please visit the PASI website at www.joinpasi.org.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you might have.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. W. Jesman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Edward Wojciech Jeśman, President
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