

# This was the wrong Holocaust Memorial, in the wrong place

**T**he Holocaust Memorial planned for Victoria Tower Gardens may not receive planning permission from Westminster Council, and this is right, even if every living prime minister supports it. I suppose they have to say they want a Holocaust Memorial in the shadow of Parliament, even if there was no Holocaust of British Jews. To say the opposite would be too complicated. It might – considering Labour's wretched anti-Semitism crisis – be taken the wrong way. Or it might be considered opportunism.

Even so, it is the wrong memorial in the wrong place. It looks like a large toast-rack; the other designs were no better. They were too monumental in scale, too grandiose. They reminded me more of Nazism – did Nazis like toast? – than pre-war Jewish life, which is what they are supposed to commemorate, aren't they? I can't see anything Jewish in toast racks and ornamental shapes. They are generic and

unimaginative; monuments to mass murder designed by rote, pulled from a file. In Berlin and Vienna they are largely ignored. I do not think they commemorate catastrophe. They inure you to it.

I am a British Jew and I don't want the Holocaust to become the universal symbol of human wickedness, against which all others are measured. It is offensive to the Jew to be made a paradigm – particularly here, where none died, except those from the Channel Islands – and offensive to the sufferings of others unmourned. I should like,

for instance, to see a memorial to the victims of slavery.

You could make the whole of London a Holocaust memorial – or have a Holocaust memorial in every town from Penzance to Aberdeen – and it would do nothing to stave off the rise of anti-Semitism, and racism more generally. The Nazis themselves proved that you cannot educate people out of murderous racism; if you could, why was it the most cultured nation in Europe that butchered its Jews? Anti-Semitism is a warning that society is fracturing; that people are afraid. You cannot stop that by building ugly statuary in the West End and compelling schoolchildren to look at it. There is already a Holocaust memorial in London. It is in Hyde Park. It is a simple stone engraved with words from Lamentations: "For these I weep / Streams of tears flow from my eyes / Because of the destruction of my people." What else needs to be said?



**David Adjaye's design for the proposed Holocaust Memorial in Westminster resembles a toast rack**