Arts & Humanities

# The Worst Moment of His Life Became a Work of Art

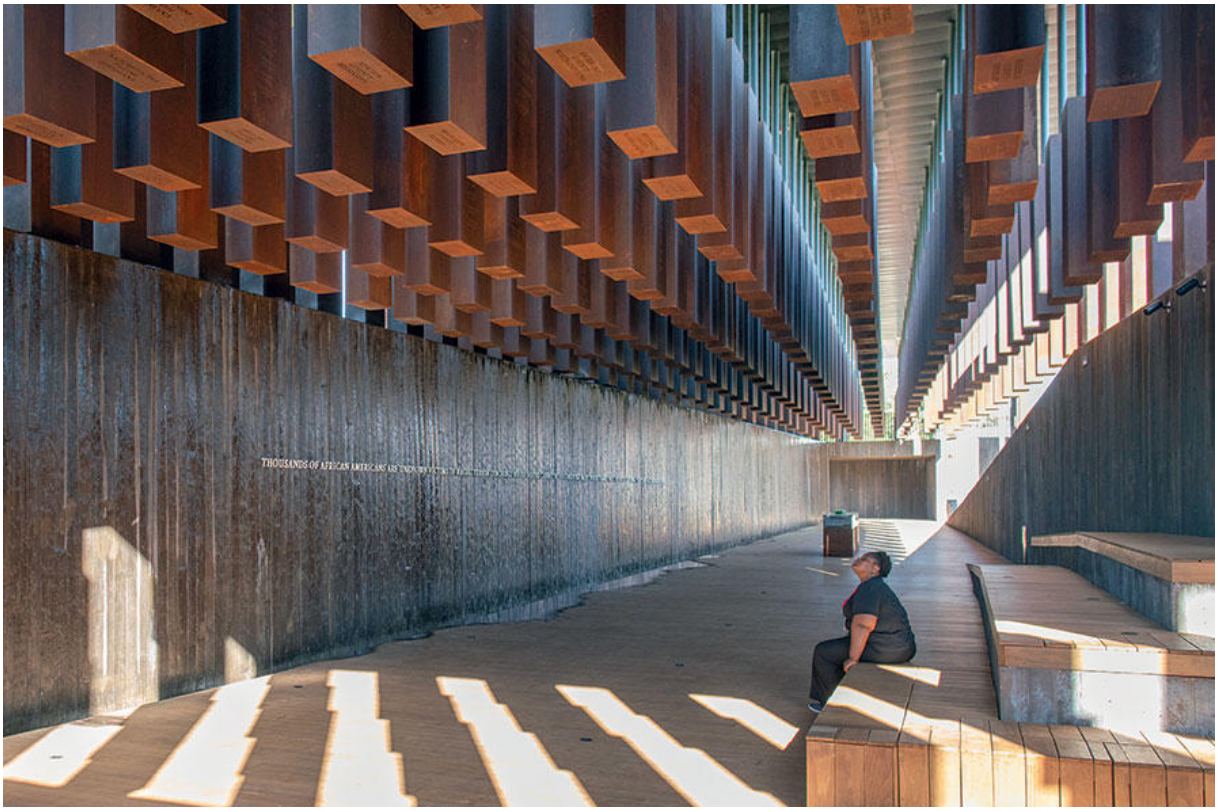
By
Rebecca Shapiro
|
Winter 2020-21



Left: Author Spencer Bailey being carried to safety after a 1989 plane crash (Gary Anderson/Sioux City Journal/ Zumapress.com). Right: A bronze statue based on the same photograph, Sioux City, Iowa (Spencer Bailey).

**When Spencer Bailey ’10JRN** was three years old, in 1989, he was in a plane crash that killed his mother and 111 other people. The next day, a photograph of a National Guard officer carrying the young Bailey to safety appeared in newspapers and on televisions across the country. Four years later, that image was further

immortalized — in the form of a six-foot-tall bronze statue outside of Sioux City, Iowa, the site of the crash.



National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, Alabama. (© Alan Ricks/MASS Design Group)

Now a journalist who writes about architecture, art, and design, Bailey lends a unique perspective to the purpose and power of contemporary memorials in his new book *In Memory Of*. He shares striking images of iconic monuments, from Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial to the much newer National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, and writes thoughtfully about our "physical acts of memory," acknowledging that each structure has personal grief, loss, and hope attached to it.

"Seeing myself in a statue remains a strange, out-of-body feeling," he writes, "despite my being able to look at — and think about — that memorial and every memorial within a much larger context."

*This article appears in the Winter 2020-21 print issue of* Columbia Magazine *with the title* "*The Memory Makers.*"

*Read more from* ***Rebecca Shapiro***



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >
*Read more from* ***Rebecca Shapiro***