



Opinion by Surina Burlington

Patriotic *or* Problematic?

Designed by Olivia Harruff

Museums around the country are being targeted for displaying anti-American exhibits.

On the iconic D.C. trip in eighth grade, I vividly remember going to museums and learning about the history of our nation, especially at the Holocaust Museum. My classmates and I were handed pamphlets of a real person alive during the Holocaust.

As we walked through the museum, we learned their story. We saw a massive pile of shoes that once belonged to Holocaust victims and saw photos of people living inhumanely at concentration camps. We learned about our role in the war and what more we could have done to help the suffering.

The museum serves as a reminder for everyone of the tragedies people lived through during the Holocaust. It educates and shares stories through photographs, videos, interactive elements and impactful displays. However, one current exhibit stands out. It is the only one which is temporarily closed: “Americans and the Holocaust.”

One morning in June 2025, museum staffers received an email vaguely stating that the “Americans and the Holocaust” exhibit would be temporarily closed for “upgrading.” The reason for this decision was by no means one made by the museum but because of a federal government executive order. According to ABC News, federal agencies were instructed to get rid of any content in museums that seem “divisive” and “anti-American.”

An exhibit focused on America being remodeled and “upgraded” because it is “anti-American?” The exhibit examines how Americans could have done more to help Jewish people in concentration camps and how racism and antisemitism were prevalent during the war.

This ideological shift taking place about what it means to be anti-American is extremely concerning.

Unfortunately, this situation of censorship is not unique to the Holocaust Museum. According to the Guardian the National Portrait gallery is anti-American for explaining how racist immigration laws contradicted the Statue of Liberty’s welcoming message. The African Art Museum is anti-American for featuring a film about George Floyd, a victim of police brutality. The Natural Museum for American History is anti-American for discussing the colonization and stealing of land in Mexico.

America has an extensive and complicated history, not all of which is achievements and greatness. Erasing our past and glossing over our downfalls is not patriotic, it is censorship. Even if it paints us in a negative light, that history is ours.

That day at the museum my classmates and I understood the gravity of the knowledge and experience shared with us. We were privileged to learn about our nation’s history in such an up-front and truthful way. At no point did I ever think we should not have seen what we saw. There was absolutely nothing anti-American about the museum.

As Americans, one of the fundamental ideals of our country is to uphold the truth. We have a responsibility to tell our story from all angles and perspectives, no matter how it impacts our reputation. It is integral to our democracy and integrity as a nation.

When it becomes anti-American to share our full and truthful history, we have strayed dangerously far from the founding ideals that built our nation. There is nothing more anti-American than a diluted history that does not belong to us at all.

Artist’s Statement - Olivia Harruff

For this piece I thought about the article and its contents, and the concept of being “anti-american.” Immediately I thought of arguably one of the most American symbols, the Statue of Liberty, and the image of her walking out on her country followed soon after. I used the program Ibis paint to create this piece, and it took me around 4 hours to complete. The biggest challenge I had with making this was adjusting the lighting to match that of a darkened New York City, especially since I normally work with bright colors.



Cartoon by Olivia Harruff