



## Santa Fe Reporter TALK: Statutory

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### Interview with Alex Pattakos Plans for the Statue of Responsibility



Photo by Larry Kohr

**SFR: Your involvement in the Statue of Responsibility started because of your friendship with Viktor Frankl, right?**

**AP:** Yes. Do you know anything about him?

**Enlighten me.**

Viktor Frankl was a Viennese physician/neurologist/psychiatrist who studied with Sigmund Freud. He was a head of psychiatry and a professor and so forth and in World War II—because he was Jewish—he was incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps. He lost all but one member of his family in the camps. He survived.

**And his book...**

One of the most famous books probably in the history of English writing is his *Man's Search for Meaning*. The Library of Congress has already rated it as one of the 10 most influential books of the 20th century. Half of the book is about his experience in the camps and half of it is his philosophy about how meaning is so important to people's survival and their ability to live a purposeful life. It's affected a lot of people like Sen. John McCain who said in the first page of his autobiography that what helped him survive being a prisoner of war in Vietnam was *Man's Search For Meaning*.

**So how did the idea for the Statue of Responsibility begin?**

The idea originally started with Dr. Frankl around 1960. He said, 'treasure freedom, but freedom is not just about liberty...I would suggest that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast.' It was a very provocative statement. And just before his death [in September 1997] there was a group of people that came to Dr. Frankl and said they'd like to take that idea and actually bring it to life.

**What is your primary focus as a member of the SOR advisory council?**

My main purpose is to ensure that the integrity of the idea—which came from my mentor Viktor Frankl—is maintained. There are two aspects. One is that the Statue of Responsibility assures Viktor Frankl's legacy becomes a reality and the other is the deeper meaning behind that statue.

**Have you narrowed down the site?**

It's going to be on the West Coast. We have three in California [San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco] and then Seattle. Right now there's an evaluation of where the best site would be. The idea is to have the site identified by the end of this year and have it erected by 2010.

**Tell me about the prototype design.**

It's basically one hand representing personal responsibility and the other hand representing us reaching out to whatever 'to' is, humanity, some higher power, the world, nation to nation, people to people.

**So it's not purely an American project?**

It's not just the US. In 1886, France gave us the Statue of Liberty. This statue is going to be Americans giving it to Americans and the world giving it to the world. Besides a visitor's center at the base, there's actually going to be a park where every country that wants to can contribute a smaller version of what they think responsibility and liberty and freedom is all about.

**The title of your Santa Fe practice—The Center for Personal Meaning—is a tad ambiguous; what exactly does the Center do?**

We're actually changing the name to the Center for Meaning. We took out the 'Personal' because a lot of the work we're doing is not just for personal meaning, it's also working with public officials for meaningful public policies. Doing the kind of existential digging that you would do on your personal life but instead thinking of how to help a community. In Santa Fe, we don't just want economic development, we want meaningful economic development so that it helps people have a higher quality of life and it shows that we respect each other as a community and that we maintain our community identity, our community spirit. No matter how much we complain about Santa Fe, we still have a spirit here. I could take you to a lot of communities in this country where it's like *The Sixth Sense*—'I see dead people'—you can walk into one of those places and see a dead community.

**What makes Santa Fe different?**

This is a very spiritual place. Santa Fe is the City Different for a lot of different reasons and that's one of 'em. Like I said, you gotta go to higher ground to reach common ground and this is a great place for that.

**How have American perceptions of themselves and their role in the world changed over the past few decades?**

When I look at my generation, when we were going through the anti-war movement, there was a sense of social activism that was certainly pleasure-driven but there was also a higher purpose. It wasn't just John Lennon's songs and lyrics, I think people really believed it. And then we kind of went through a period where we were a lot more affluent and anesthetized to a lot of things that were going on. We went into auto-pilot. Now is the time to move forward and rebuild our country, our families, our communities and whatever else. You gotta wake up, you gotta do it. We're all responsible for that, whether you're Oprah, Martha Stewart or the two of us.