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## **SACRED GROUND**

**PBS Airdate: Tuesday, September 7, at 9 P.M., 60 minutes**

Within days of the September 11 attacks, the questions began: What should be built on the site of Ground Zero? Who should build it? And should anything be built there at all?

In “Sacred Ground,” airing Tuesday, September 7, at 9 P.M. on PBS (check local listings), FRONTLINE tells the inside story of the first stormy year in the rebuilding effort on the site of the World Trade Center. With exclusive access to architect Daniel Libeskind, the one-hour documentary follows the preparations to build Libeskind’s proposed Freedom Tower and reveals how the desire to create the world’s most meaningful architectural tribute descended into a billion-dollar battle for the soul of Ground Zero.

“The central battle involves relative newcomer Libeskind—who won a competition to design the site’s master plan—and David Childs, the architect handpicked by the site’s developer, Larry Silverstein, to actually build the buildings,” says producer Nick Rosen. “Thanks to the unprecedented access we received, ‘Sacred Ground’ shows the real politics and the raw human emotion going on backstage as plans take shape to rebuild at Ground Zero.”

In the documentary, Libeskind discusses his original conception for the site, which involved a 1,776-foot Freedom Tower designed to echo the Statue of Liberty. Chief in his mind when developing his plan, he says, was the tremendous symbolic and psychological significance people have attached to the site of the former World Trade Center.

“This is not just any site in New York,” Libeskind says. “It is the site of 9/11, it is the site where people perished. It is the site of both the tragedy and the resurrection of New York and democracy. And that’s why every [architectural] gesture, every line has been thought about.”

But Libeskind’s winning design didn’t give him full authority over the rebuilding process. To bring the project to fruition, Libeskind learned he would be collaborating with well-known architect Childs, who was independently selected by Silverstein to redevelop the property.

Silverstein claims that Libeskind understood from the very beginning that his only charge was to develop a master plan for the site that would then be turned over to other architects to interpret and develop.

“When Dan and I first discussed the Freedom Tower, I told him that clearly my responsibility was such that I would need to go with a designer who had spent his life designing high-rise office buildings,” Silverstein says. “And a person like David Childs fit that bill spectacularly well.”

“Sacred Ground” offers a unique glimpse inside the architectural process. Both Silverstein and Childs, for example, say the resulting collaborative process went well. Libeskind tells a different story.

“When you have a collaboration, you need to have a will on both sides to do it, and that’s been tough going,” he says. Libeskind claims his input was all but shut out from the eventual design process, which has produced a tower that Libeskind says “doesn’t work” with his initial Statue of Liberty concept.

Childs, for his part, sees his changes to Libeskind’s original design as merely improving upon the original plan. “What we’ve come up with is actually a good example of how you can take a master plan and make it stronger,” he says. “It’s not as literal stylistically as [Libeskind] wanted to make it. We’re the architects, we’re painting the picture.”

“Sacred Ground” also examines what many believe is the central issue fueling much of the battle over the fate of Ground Zero: Should the site be viewed first and foremost as a memorial to the attacks or as a real estate development deal that stands to pump millions of dollars into the New York City economy?

For Libeskind, the answer is clear. “We are building this in an effort to understand the site,” he says. “To bring back the memory and at the same time restore the confidence of what the city really means.”

Silverstein, meanwhile, points out that his \$120-million-a-year lease on the property is costing him \$300,000 a day—“including Saturdays and Sundays”—until the project gets built. And he is anxious to see it move forward swiftly.

“Private enterprise has a habit of moving very quickly, because time is money,” he says. “We have to move this process.”

Childs echoes his client’s sentiments. “I have a strong belief that this [tower] has a role to fill economically downtown,” he says. “If this building is an economic failure, forget all these other buildings. They may never happen.”

“Sacred Ground” is a FRONTLINE co-production with October Films in association with Vivum Intelligent Media. The director is Kevin Sim. The producer is Nick Rosen. Tom Roberts is executive producer for October Films. Michael Sullivan is executive producer, special projects, for FRONTLINE.

FRONTLINE is produced by WGBH Boston and is broadcast nationwide on PBS.

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FRONTLINE is closed-captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers.

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