

liberty stands

still

by Emily LeDuc



She stands at the gateway to freedom, the Statue of Liberty, an epic symbol of our most fundamental rights and values. A gift from the French in 1886, the statue has welcomed countless immigrants into the United States with open arms and the promise of freedom. Up until its closing in 1954, Ellis Island received and processed millions of immigrants traveling by steamship. In 1990, it was restored and reopened as a museum, and is a popular tourist attraction and national treasure.

But after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Liberty was closed to visitors due to the risk of terrorist attacks and much needed upgrades to secure the immigration museum and the statue itself. A private effort to raise funds for the required security upgrades is underway, but the question of re-opening the crown still remains unresolved.

The climb up the narrow staircase to the crown of our most recognizable symbol of freedom has been a long time tradition. Although the French artist Felix Bartholdi, who designed the statue, intended for the monument to be viewed from the outside, access to the inside was required to service the torch lighthouse. The staircase soon became a popular tourist activity and has remained an enduring tradition for visitors to the statue – until now.

Because the area around the crown is so confined, it leaves few options for safe evacuation in the event of an emergency, creates a great number of unknowns, and allows for unsupervised activity.

Although there is some debate as to whether or not a trip to the crown is really essential to experiencing the statue, many feel leaving it closed represents a loss of freedom motivated by the fear of terrorism, and by giving that up, we are allowing fear to dictate our movements.

Although officials are reluctant to reveal details regarding the security risks and planned upgrades for the monument, the privately funded effort to raise money for the repairs promises the re-opening of the immigration museum and pedestal. The fate of Liberty's crown remains unknown.

To learn more about Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and her history and legacy, you can visit the following National Park Service websites:

www.nps.gov/elis/
www.libertyellisplan.org/

To find out more about the effort to re-open Lady Liberty, visit www.statueofliberty.org

Sources for Liberty Stands Still:

usatoday.com “Lady Liberty’s stairwells may never be full again.”
statueofliberty.org
National Park Service

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