



HATE IS THE ENEMY. BUT SO IS TIME.

IN A DECADE, less than 1% of World War II veterans will be alive and the youngest Holocaust survivor will be 82. Who do we want to tell these stories to the 1.9 billion young people across the globe who need to hear them?

**NEVER
AGAIN**
WHAT YOU DO MATTERS

THE
CAMPAIGN
FOR THE
UNITED
STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

USHMM.ORG/CAMPAIGN

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

NATIONAL CO-CHAIRS

Tom A. Bernstein, NY
Lester Crown, IL
Howard L. Ganek, FL
William S. Levine, AZ
Howard M. Lorber, NY
Cindy Simon Skjodt, IN
Jay Stein, FL
Howard Unger, NY
Amy Cohn, AZ
Annual Fund Chair

REGIONAL CO-CHAIRS

Elisa Spungen Bildner, NJ
Amy R. Friedkin, CA
Howard Friend, IL
Joseph D. Gutman, IL
J. David Heller, OH
Allan M. Holt, DC
Howard Konar, NY

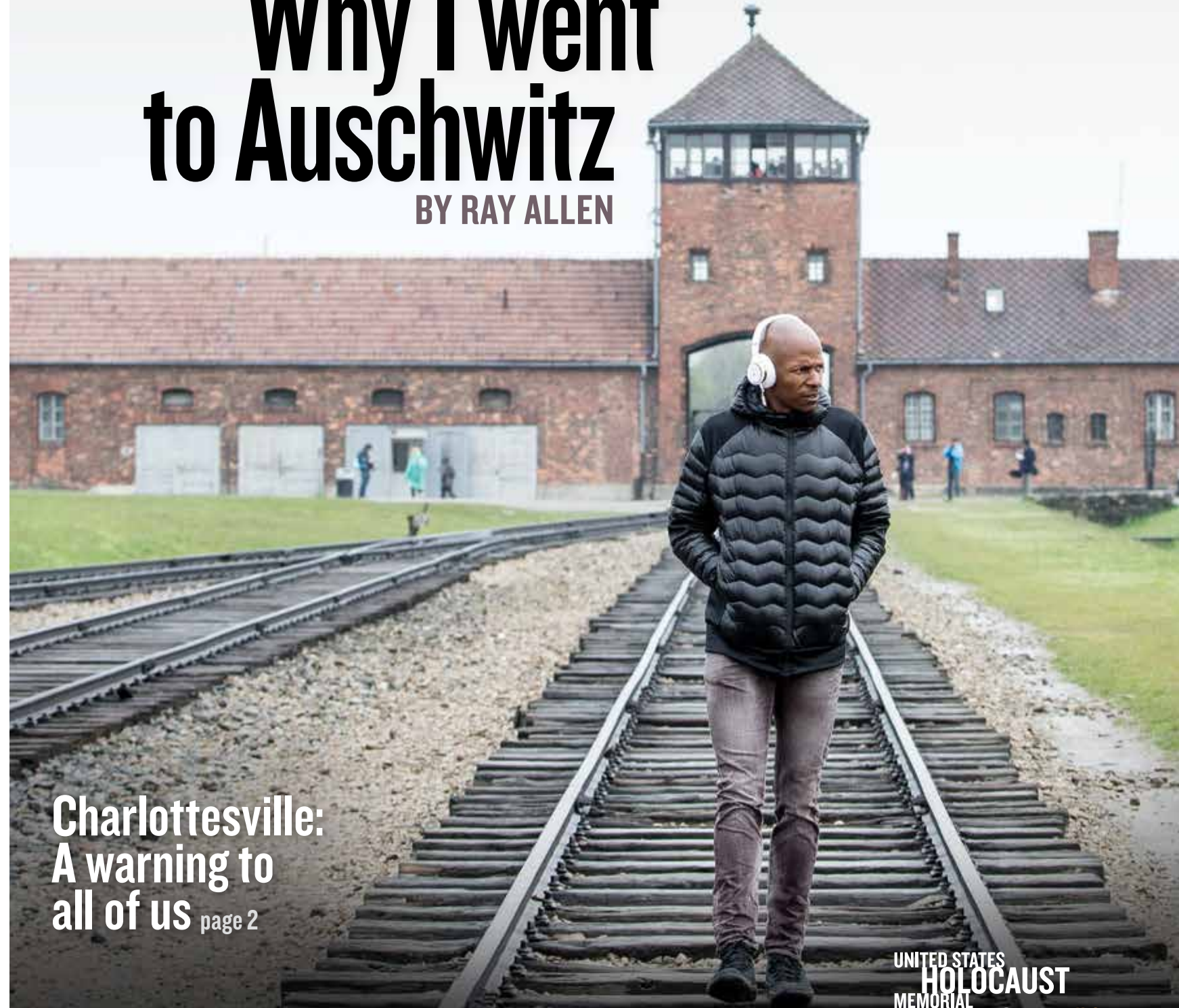
Douglas R. Korn, NY
Alan B. Lazowski, CT
Susan E. Lowenberg, CA
Richard S. Price, IL
Bradley D. Wine, DC

MEMORY & ACTION

FALL 2017

Why I went to Auschwitz

BY RAY ALLEN



Charlottesville:
A warning to
all of us page 2

| INSIDE | Americans in 1933 | Evidence from Syria | Air Force Col. Adam Oler |

THIS ISSUE

Fall 2017

2 FIRST WORD

Museum Director Sara J. Bloomfield reacts to the Nazi symbols on display in Charlottesville.

4 WHY I WENT TO AUSCHWITZ

Ray Allen, a retired NBA all-star, finds universal lessons in Holocaust history.

8 STUDYING THE EVIDENCE UP CLOSE

The new Shapell Center comes alive with its first academic workshop.

10 AN ACT OF FAITH?

A priest examines Boston's prewar Nazi movement.

12 1933: HOW DID AMERICANS REACT?

For a brief time, they were paying close attention to events in Europe.

20 SYRIA: THREE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

A mother's plea, a shred of evidence, and a prosecutor's commitment.

28 QUICK TAKE

30 THE MUSEUM'S CAMPAIGN

34 FINAL WORD

Air Force Colonel Adam Oler teaches future military and government leaders Holocaust history.

COVER: Walter Ray Allen, Jr., a retired NBA all-star and member of the Museum's Council, listens to an audio tour while visiting Auschwitz. *Elan Kawesch*

All photographs US Holocaust Memorial Museum unless otherwise noted.

Look for this symbol to explore even more about these stories online. 





FIRST WORD

Sara J. Bloomfield

**History speaks to us for a reason.
But we can only heed its
warning if we are listening.**

IN AN ERA WHEN EMOJI, MEMES, AND LOGOS

CAN DRIVE A NATIONAL CONVERSATION, symbols are more powerful than ever. Americans are grappling with the tragic loss of life and eruption of neo-Nazism in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August. What does it say about our society that neo-Nazi and white-supremacist symbols and slogans were deployed in the streets of 21st-century America? What is striking is how much of what was on display was taken directly from Nazi Germany and Holocaust-era fascist parties.

Longtime Holocaust denier and Ku Klux Klan member David Duke, Matthew Heimbach, and their like-minded followers who brought those symbols into public view that day know their resonance and use them deliberately. Many of these words and images were once hidden away in dark corners of the Internet, a coded language spoken by white-nationalist believers. Now they are being brought into the open, and it is incumbent upon all Americans to understand their origins, what they represent, and the dangers they pose.

The swastika is the most recognizable symbol of Nazi propaganda. Despite its ancient history, by the early 20th century it was adopted by a number of far-right nationalist movements and became associated with the idea of a racially “pure” state. Adolf Hitler personally designed the Nazi flag with a black swastika positioned at the center of a white disk on a red background.

However, other, lesser-known Nazi references were evident throughout the rally, including chants of “blood and soil.” The concept of “blood and soil” (in German, *Blut und Boden*) was foundational to Nazi ideology. “Blood” referred to the goal of a “racially pure” Aryan people. “Soil” invoked a vision of territorial expansion and was used to justify land seizures in eastern Europe and the forced expulsion of local populations in favor of ethnic Germans. The term was a rallying cry during the 1920s and early 1930s, when the Nazis and other far-right political parties opposed the fledgling Weimar German democracy. This concept

played on resentment about German territories lost under the terms of the post-World War I Treaty of Versailles.

In Charlottesville, Heimbach wore a T-shirt emblazoned with the image of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. While few Americans could identify Codreanu, white nationalists know him as a violent antisemite and the leader of the main Romanian fascist organization formed in the 1920s, the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Iron Guard. Codreanu was killed in 1938, but his ideology continued to animate Romanian fascism. The Romanians were directly responsible for the second-largest number of Holocaust victims after the Germans.

To understand the history of Nazi symbols, visit ushmm.org/end-hate.

Duke and Heimbach and their ilk are not Hitler, but they are inspired by the same worldview—that history is ultimately a racial struggle and that pluralism and the dignity of all individuals, ideals that most Americans espouse, are weaknesses that must be overcome if the “Aryan race” is to survive.

The Nazis eventually launched a world war and imposed this racial worldview across occupied Europe. Six million Jews and millions of others were murdered and persecuted because they were deemed “inferior.” The Holocaust teaches us the dangers of unchecked hatred and that while it may start with the targeting of one group, it always spreads.

Elie Wiesel, the Museum’s founding chairman, envisioned it as a living memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, serving as a cautionary tale and an urgent message—about human nature, our capacity for evil, and the fragility of societies.

History speaks to us for a reason. But we can only heed its warning if we are listening. ■

This article was originally published in the *Washington Post* on August 22, 2017. **OPPOSITE:** Neo-Nazis and segregationists march through the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville, August 11, 2017. *Edu Bayer for the New York Times*

Walter Ray Allen, Jr. is a retired NBA all-star and a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. This article is republished with permission from **The Players' Tribune**.

Photography by
Elan Kawesch



Ray Allen

Why I Went to Auschwitz

There was a small hole in the kitchen floor that led to a secret crawl space.

That image is burned into my memory. The space was maybe five feet long by five feet wide.

The owner of the house said, "They used to fit six people inside there. When the Nazis would come."

His name was Tadeusz Skoczylas, and the house we were in had belonged to his family during World War II. It was a small brick house in the town of Ciepielów, Poland. It had a red roof that had seen better days. The front door was just a few steps off the street. In the backyard were a few barns and other small shacks.

I had been in Poland for a few days already, and the horror of the history I had experienced was overwhelming. But this was something different. This was so personal.

I'm looking at this tiny space. And I'm imagining six people down there, hiding from death. Six real people. Crawling through that little hole right in front of me. Not that long ago. It wasn't a history book. It wasn't a museum. It was right there.

Tadeusz explained that one day in 1942, Nazi soldiers visited the house on a tip. Someone in the village had told them that the family had been harboring Jewish people. There were supposed to be ten Skoczylases living in the house. On this particular day, the youngest boy in the family was not home when the soldiers came by. The Nazis grew suspicious and began tearing the house apart. They found the hole and the crawl space, but the Jewish people the family had been hiding were not there. They had already moved on.

Without saying a word, the Nazis went next door to a neighboring family and took their young son. The punishment for hiding Jews was death for the entire family, and they had a quota to fill.

The soldiers took all ten people out back and executed them right in front of those barns and shacks that are still standing there today.

When the little Skoczylas boy returned home, he found his entire family dead.

That little boy was Tadeusz's grandfather. The house stayed in the Skoczylas family, and his grandfather lived in it. Now Tadeusz and his mother live in it.

I couldn't believe it. And as I walked through the rest of the house, this feeling sort of took over me. There was all this history right in front of me. And it was real. I could reach out and touch it. I could feel it between my fingers and smell it in the air. It was a tangible thing.

I took that trip just a few months ago. It was my first time in Poland. I went there to learn more about something that had fascinated me since I was a teenager: the Holocaust. I'd read so many books and articles about it, but reading words on a page is not the same thing as seeing things up close.

Then I visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, for the first time. It was 1998, and I was playing for the Milwaukee Bucks. I was in DC meeting our owner, Herb Kohl, over the summer. We had some free time on my last day in the city, and Mr. Kohl suggested we go to

Ray Allen also visited the exhibition **Kraków under Nazi Occupation 1939–1945** located in the former administrative building of Oskar Schindler's factory in Kraków.



the Museum. I'll never forget how I felt after those two hours in there—I could have spent two days. My immediate feeling was that everyone needs to go there.

There was one room in particular, though, that I think about often. It's filled with photos of Jews from one town. The pictures line the walls and extend up toward the sky, where light floods in from a window. Almost 90 percent of the people in the images were sent to their death. Before they were taken to concentration camps or executed, they would leave their prized possessions behind with friends or family.

The people of these Jewish communities were pushed to the absolute limit of their human instincts. They just wanted to survive. And from that, the tales of brotherhood and camaraderie are so awe-inspiring. It was a reminder of what the human spirit is capable of—both for good and for evil.

Honestly...it made me feel sort of irrelevant. Which was a strange thought to have as a young NBA player who was supposed to be on top of the world. I was realizing that there were things outside of my bubble that mattered so much more. I wanted my teammates to feel that as well. So every team I played on after that, whenever we were in DC playing the Wizards, I would ask our coach if we had time to go through the Museum. Every visit was different, but each guy came out thanking me for taking us there. I could see in their eyes that they had a different perspective on life after that experience.

I thought I knew what the Holocaust was, and what it meant. I went to Poland with a few close friends to learn more. But I wasn't prepared for how deeply the visit would affect me. I had seen so many documentaries and other films on Auschwitz, but nothing really prepares you for being there. The first thing

I felt when I walked through those iron gates was...heavy. The air around me felt heavy. I stood on the train tracks where the prisoners of the camp would arrive, and I felt like I could hear the trains coming to a halt. I had to take a breath to center myself. It was so immediate. So overwhelming.

We walked through the barracks and gas chambers, and what I remember most is what I heard: nothing. I've never experienced silence like that. Apart from footsteps, the complete lack of sound was almost jarring. It's eerie and sobering. You're standing in these rooms where so much death has taken place and your mind is trying to come to terms with all that's happened in this space. One question keeps repeating over and over and over in your mind:

How can human beings do this to one another?

How does somebody process that? You can't.

This is not history. This is humanity. This is now. This is a living lesson for us as a people.

After Tadeusz Skoczylas took us through his family's home, I stood outside for a while by myself, thinking about everything I had experienced.

Why do we learn about the Holocaust? Is it just so we can make sure nothing like this ever happens again? Is it because six million people died? Yes, but there's a bigger reason, I think.

The Holocaust was about how human beings—real, normal people like you and me—treat each other.

When the Skoczylas family was risking their own lives to hide people they barely knew, they weren't doing it because they practiced the same religion or were the same race. They did it because they were decent, courageous human beings. They were the same as those people crouched in a hole. And they knew that those people didn't deserve what was being done to them.

I asked myself a really tough question:

Would I have done the same? Really, would I have done the same?

When I returned home to America, I got some very disheartening messages directed toward me on social media regarding my trip. Some people didn't like the fact that I was going to Poland to raise awareness for the issues that happened there and not using that time or energy to support people in the black community.

I was told my ancestors would be ashamed of me.

I know there are trolls online and I shouldn't even pay attention, but that one sort of got to me. Because I understood where they were coming from. I understand that there are plenty of issues in our own country right now, but they were looking at my trip the wrong way. I didn't go to Poland as a black person, a white person, a Christian person, or a Jewish person—I went as a human being.

It's easy to say, "I went to make sure these things don't happen again." But I went to learn about the true reality of what happened during the Holocaust, and what we can take from that. The people who believe that I am not spending my time the right way...well, they're missing the entire point. We shouldn't label people as this thing or that thing. Because by doing so, you create these preconceived notions, which is how we get into these horrible situations in the first place.

We have to do a better job breaking through ignorance and the close-mindedness and the divisions that are plaguing our society in 2017.

I remember being a kid in elementary school, and we all used to have a couple pen pals from around the world. I was so excited to hear back from people in different countries. I wanted to know about how they lived. I was curious about their lives. And I feel like we've lost that a little bit. It seems like now, we only see us. We only want to look out for us. Whatever us even means. I think about the Skoczylas family.

Who did they define as us?

They saw us as every human being, regardless of what they looked like, or what they believed. They thought everyone was worth protecting. And they were willing to die for it.

That is something worth remembering, always. ■

Studying the Evidence Up Close

THE GROUP OF SCHOLARS GATHERED AROUND THE STARK WHITE LAB TABLE. The yellowed pages before them held Holocaust-era photographs—and the opportunity to study them in a new way.

In their original album, the photographs demonstrate how a German family recorded its participation in war and the Holocaust. The scholars exclaimed over one of a man in a reserve police uniform among others showing happy moments in daily life—we now know he later served guard duty at the Lodz ghetto as part of Battalion 101. The photographs were small, far smaller than their digitized versions would appear on a computer screen—giving scholars a better idea of what people would have seen at the time they were made.

“It’s one thing to see something on a screen on your computer at home,” said Professor Valerie Hébert, “but to see the thing in person and see the care with which it’s looked after at the Museum is quite moving.”

Hébert, a professor at Canada’s Lakehead University, led the first academic

workshop at the David and Fela Shapell Family Collections, Conservation and Research Center, which was dedicated in April. Participants in *Regarding Atrocity: Photography, Memory, and Representation* spent two weeks discussing each other’s research and meeting with Museum scholars. The day they spent at the Shapell Center was a window into the future of the Museum’s Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.

“We imagine new directions in research will emerge out of collaboration between scholars, curators, and conservators,” said Suzanne Brown-Fleming, director of visiting scholar programs. The Shapell Center will house workstations and meeting areas for scholars. It will bring the time it takes to view a collection down from seven days to two hours.

“Photographs can raise a lot of questions,” said Hébert, who will use them to anchor a new undergraduate course on international conflict and human rights. She wants to give her students the tools to interpret their “flooded” media

environment. “How do we read images in a way that is critical and think about ethics?”

Her current photography research centers on a mass shooting on the eastern front. The images of civilians lined up to be killed stop her in her tracks, she said. “When it comes down to that moment, how do you pull a trigger and shoot a child?”

It’s one of the fundamental questions prompted by Holocaust history—questions that nag in the presence of the evidence. The opening of the Shapell Center and the collection itself to scholars will help ensure that people keep asking them for generations to come. ■

Participants in the Mandel Center summer research workshop *Regarding Atrocity: Photography, Memory, and Representation* view photographs at the Shapell Center on June 20, 2017.



An Act of Faith?

IT COULD BE THE PLOT OF A JAMES BOND MOVIE: An SS officer in charge of setting up spy rings, a British intelligence agent running a counterespionage effort, and a militant Catholic group peddling Nazi propaganda.

But it's a true story that unfolded in New York and Boston from 1939 to 1945, lasting long after the United States entered World War II.



Father Charles Gallagher in Boston's Copley Square. *Shane Godfrey*

"There are heroes and villains, shades of darkness and light, and people whose actions demonstrate the goodness that is in all of us," said Charles Gallagher about his research on the Christian Front, a group that sought to foment antisemitism and pro-Nazi sentiment in the Irish-Catholic community. Gallagher is a Jesuit priest, an associate professor of history at Boston College, and, at the Museum, the William J. Lowenberg Memorial Fellow on America, the Holocaust, and the Jews.

The response of religious communities in the United States to the Nazi threat is as multifaceted as the faith traditions they represent. Methodists, Unitarians, Quakers, Mennonites, and many others played active roles in rescue and relief efforts for Jews. But the more complete picture is far less rosy, and much more nuanced.

The Christian Front, for example, took its cue from the antisemitic rhetoric Father Charles Coughlin spewed in his weekly national radio broadcast. The group's leader in Boston, Francis Moran, had prepared to become a Catholic priest but left seminary before being ordained. The German consul general in Boston, an SS officer named Herbert Scholz, recruited Moran to disseminate Nazi propaganda throughout New England and to convince his fellow Catholics that Jews, not Nazis, were the threat to American ideals.

"The Nazis' persecution of Jews and other minorities is inconsistent with the Christian commandment to love one's neighbor," said Gallagher. "And yet radical church leaders like Father Coughlin were able to sway vast numbers of Catholics toward antisemitism." How did people of faith reconcile their beliefs with a political ideology of hatred?

During his fellowship at the Museum's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, Gallagher had access to "second-to-none" resources, ranging from the diplomatic archives of the Vatican, to UN war crimes documents, to oral histories of people reflecting on antisemitism in Boston in the 1930s. He is currently working on a book tentatively titled *The Nazis of Copley Square: A History of the Christian Front*, which traces the rise and fall of the Christian Front and the arrest of several of its members, who were charged with sedition.

Visit ushmm.org/magazine/gallagher to hear Gallagher talk about the Christian Front and why it's important today to reflect on American responses to Nazism—the subject of a special exhibition opening at the Museum in spring 2018. ■

A Nazi flag flies outside the German consulate's house in Boston's Beacon Hill, May 1940.

Andrew J. Lloyd Company, courtesy of the Bostonian Society

How did people of faith reconcile their beliefs with a political ideology of hatred?

ONLINE

Hear Father Gallagher discuss his research at ushmm.org/magazine/gallagher.



1933

HOW DID AMERICANS REACT?

By **Rebecca Erbelding**

WHEN I TELL PEOPLE I AM A HISTORIAN OF AMERICAN RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST, I HEAR LOTS OF OPINIONS. These beliefs usually fall into one of two categories: (1) that Americans knew nothing and did nothing about the Nazi persecution of Jews, or (2) that they knew everything about the persecution, and still did nothing.



THESE BELIEFS SEEM TO BE ROOTED IN THE UNDERSTANDABLE QUESTION OF “WHY.” Millions of Jews and others were murdered, so it is our responsibility to ask how and when the catastrophe could have been mitigated, or prevented altogether. We wish that the United States could have prevented or halted the Holocaust. We would like to think that if Americans had known about the persecution of Jews, or had acted on what they knew, the Holocaust would not have happened. So why

didn't Americans do more? I wish the answers to that question were easy.

In his recent book, *Why: Explaining the Holocaust*, historian Peter Hayes quotes a German aphorism: “Beware the beginnings.” While the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and the first mass killings in 1941 were important “beginnings” in the history of the Holocaust, I want to step back and look at 1933. What did Americans do when the Nazis took power and began the persecutions that ultimately led to mass murder?

FEARS AT HOME

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in as president of the United States, just five weeks after Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Once in power, the Nazi party moved quickly to restrict Jewish life, while in the United States, Roosevelt rallied Americans, promising to rebuild a devastated economy.

Americans in 1933 were deeply afraid. They were afraid of being dragged into international conflicts: In the 1930s, Congress passed



neutrality laws with overwhelming bipartisan support, proclaiming that the United States would remain isolated.

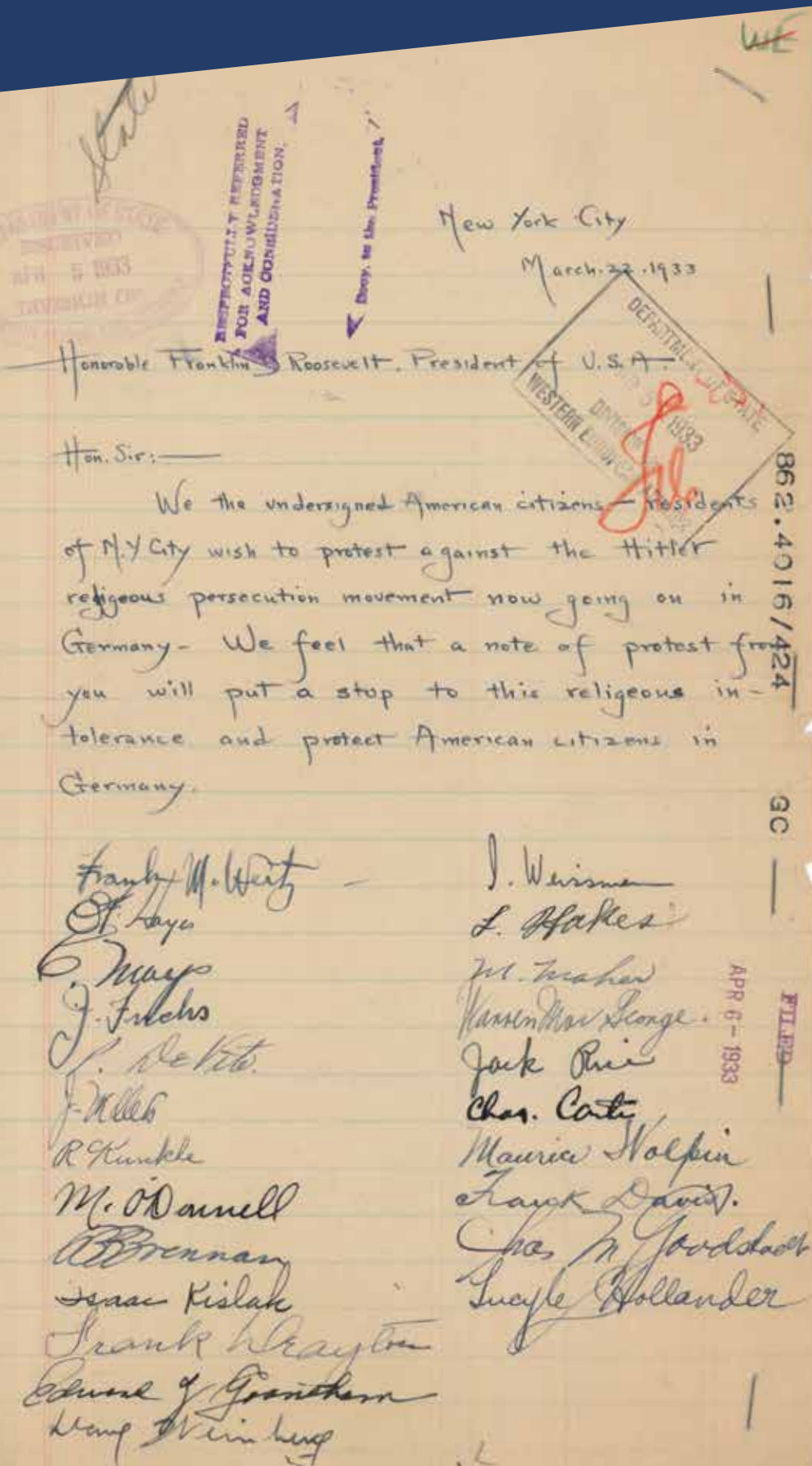
Twenty-five percent of American workers were unemployed. The Great Depression closed banks and wiped out savings. Americans starved on the streets. The land, beset by drought and dust storms, failed farmers. It's hard for Americans today to grasp the pervasive economic insecurity and fear during the Great Depression.

Many Americans also were afraid of anyone they perceived as being different or foreign, and many considered nonwhites as inferior. Throughout the 1930s, Congress could not pass an anti-lynching bill; Jim Crow laws (and customs) reigned in many parts of the country; and Mexican immigrants and Mexican-American citizens were forcibly deported from California. Antisemitism rose throughout the decade, and many hotels, colleges, and private clubs restricted or prohibited Jews from visiting, attending, or becoming members.

PREVIOUS PAGE: An estimated 100,000 people gather outside of Madison Square Garden in New York City to participate in a May 10, 1933, march protesting the Nazi persecution of German Jews. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of American Jewish Congress*

LEFT: Mrs. Charles Benning sweeps the steps of a “Shantytown” shack in Spencer, Iowa, in 1936. *Russell Lee/Library of Congress*

ABOVE: A boy pauses at a drinking fountain on the lawn of the Halifax, North Carolina, courthouse in 1938. *Library of Congress*



VOICES RAISED

In the spring of 1933, next to articles on Roosevelt’s first hundred days, the New Deal legislation, and the repeal of prohibition, Americans could read front-page stories about Jews being kicked out of their jobs and beaten on the streets in Germany. Dozens of American newspapers had correspondents based in Germany who sent back vivid descriptions of what they were witnessing under the new Nazi leadership.

Americans read these articles, and despite all of their own problems, many grew concerned. Thousands of Americans attended anti-Nazi marches and rallies throughout the United States, protesting early persecutions, the boycott of Jewish stores, and Nazi book burnings. An American movement to boycott German-made goods and the stores that sold them began and lasted for nearly a decade, mainly in large cities on the east coast. And between March and May 1933, tens of thousands of people—from 29 states and Washington, DC—signed petitions calling on the new Roosevelt administration to protest Nazi persecution of the Jews.

LEFT: One of the many petitions archived at the National Archives and Records Administration.

RIGHT: American protest stamps. (Top stamp, gift of Forrest James Robinson, Jr.)

Thousands of Americans attended anti-Nazi marches and rallies throughout the United States.

The petitioners included:

- **The International Catholic Truth Society**, which wrote that Nazi attacks against “thousands of native born German Jews should arouse the righteous indignation of every lover of humanity and of every believer in the brotherhood of man throughout the world.”
- **The citizens of Macon, Georgia**, who wrote they “deplore the anti-Semitic atrocities and protest against the whole anti-Semitic movement in Germany” and, by petitioning, wanted to express “at least in a small way the Christian sentiment of the peoples of this community.”
- **Residents of Douglas, Arizona**, who handwrote their names and addresses on petition sheets, asking their senator to “raise your voice in Congress to protest against the barbarities of the Hitler regime upon the Jews in Germany. Your active intercession may save the lives and the livelihood of thousands of innocent people.”
- **Members of the Orange Merchants Association of Orange, New Jersey**, who wrote they “deplore the reported acts of aggression, injustice, and violence towards Jews in Germany.”

But we know what the authors do not: that the US government ultimately would not formally protest Nazi Germany in 1933—except to protect American citizens, dozens of whom were beaten on German streets, many because they were perceived to be Jewish. Within a few months, news of Nazi persecutions would move from the front page to the inside of newspapers. Most Americans outside of Jewish communities, even many of those who had signed petitions and joined marches, would stop paying close attention. Their worries, over finding jobs and feeding their families, took precedence over concerns about persecution across the sea.



I find these petitions, and the hundreds of others I’ve read, incredibly moving. I wish for the authors’ sake, and for the people they were trying to help, that their pleas had been successful. I wish the beginning had also been the end.

What could Americans have done differently, and would it have changed anything?

THE QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

Historians agree on factual explanations why most American protests against Nazism in 1933 died down within a few months, which I've partly given above. Isolationism, economic concerns, racism, and antisemitism all led most Americans to focus on domestic problems rather than international ones. Reflecting the mood and situation of the country, State Department officers interpreted America's restrictive immigration laws even more stringently, leaving the quotas far from filled. Nazi Germany owed American banks billions of dollars, and the Roosevelt administration was unwilling to issue a protest, in part because of the risk that Hitler would cancel his country's debts. Nazi Germany was a sovereign nation, and most Americans did not consider intervention in Germany's treatment of its own citizens the role of the United States.

Yet these historical explanations don't answer the emotional "Why" in the hearts of so many Holocaust survivors and descendants of those who were murdered. What could Americans have done differently, and would it have changed anything?

As the Museum often says: What they did mattered. At least for a brief period of time in 1933, Americans were paying attention and were outraged by the Nazi attacks. Even if we can't point to a direct result from the petitions, the tens of thousands of Americans who wrote, signed, and sent these documents to Washington remind us that the American people did have information about the persecution of the Jews in 1933. They saw the early warning signs—the authoritarian ruler who spread an exclusionary and violent racist ideology—factors we now, with the benefit of hindsight, identify as precursors to genocide. To protest, Americans showed up at rallies and boycotted stores. Hitler, who paid close attention to American press coverage, might have gone further, faster, had he not read about the American people's disapproval. Fewer Jews might have gotten out, and America might have been less prepared to respond militarily.

These petitions, rallies, and boycotts might have mattered a great deal—we'll just never know. And the networks of like-minded Americans that formed during this period would later lead some Americans to raise their voices even louder and take great risks as the Nazi persecution of Jews worsened in Europe. Sadly, too few followed their lead. ■

Rebecca Erbelding, PhD, has been a lead researcher for the Museum's upcoming special exhibition, *Americans and the Nazi Threat*, opening in the spring.



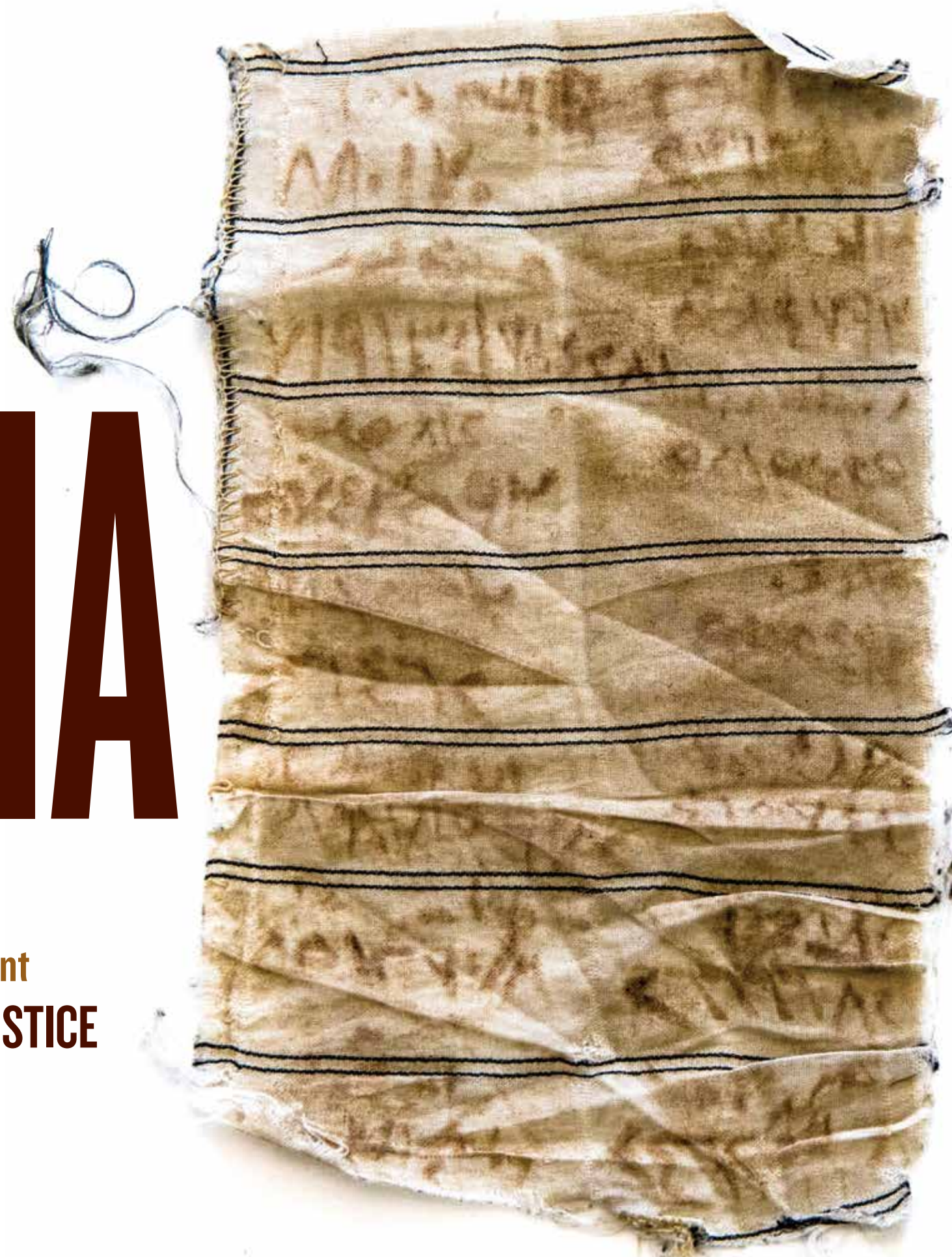
ONLINE

The Museum's exhibition *Americans and the Nazi Threat* will open in spring 2018. To learn more about the five years of research and planning by historian Rebecca Erbelding and her colleagues, attend an event in your area (ushmm.org/events). Discover how the US media covered pivotal events in 1933 at newspapers.ushmm.org.

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise addresses marchers protesting the Nazi mistreatment of German Jews on May 10, 1933, in New York City. *Bettmann/Getty Images*

SYRIA

**A Mother's Plea
A Shred of Evidence
A Prosecutor's Commitment
ALL IN PURSUIT OF JUSTICE**



SINCE 2011, THE ASSAD REGIME, SUPPORTED BY RUSSIA AND IRAN, has waged a war against its own citizens, killing as many as half a million and forcing more than five million to flee the country. Half of the country's population, more than ten million people, has been displaced or killed. As part of our efforts to do for victims of mass atrocities today what was not done for the Jews of Europe, the Museum has worked to raise awareness of the Syrian tragedy, the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Holocaust. While the international community has thus far failed to prevent or mitigate the killings, we hope there will be opportunities in the future for Syrians and others to pursue justice on behalf of the victims.

Syrian prisoners recorded the names of their fellow detainees on this and other scraps of fabric in hopes that one of them would be able to smuggle it out. That person was Mansour Omari, who has loaned this evidence to the Museum for preservation and display.



A Mother's Plea

MARIAM HALLAQ, whose son died in Syrian regime detention, sent a message to be read at the Museum's screening of **SYRIA'S DISAPPEARED: THE CASE AGAINST ASSAD** in May 2017. Her brother, **Taufik Hallaq**, read it on her behalf. **The letter has been condensed for publication.**

My participation in this film is a message from every Syrian mother who lost her son in prison, and was not able to get his body, and was not able to bury him, or to visit his grave. But those women cannot talk about this subject because of their fear of the Syrian regime. In a year and a half, I saw hundreds of women like me who were just seeking to see the body of their sons—they just wanted to know if their sons are dead or not.

After my son—Ayham—was killed, we had his funeral. Most of our family and relatives did not come, nor did our friends. Coming to his service would have been like sacrificing their lives. In our village, usually what happens is that someone would go up to the minaret of the mosque to announce that a person originally from that village has died. But the man who announced that my son died did not have the courage to say he died as a martyr. He just said that he died.



Most of the people in our village wouldn't even talk with the man who went to the minaret and announced it, all because they were afraid of being detained, of being tortured, of being killed by the government.

I can never return to Syria, because I'm wanted by the security service. But I decided to use every moment left in my life to defend those left in Assad's prisons. I thank everyone who worked on the film, because they were able to deliver my voice and the voices of the other mothers and the voices of those detained. And I ask that every one of you who can deliver our voices to international platforms do so. What happened to Ayham didn't only happen to him—it happened to every one of you and to all humans on earth.

LEFT: During peace talks in Geneva in February 2017, Syrians hold images of loved ones disappeared by Syrian government forces over the course of the six-year war. *Dylan Collins* ABOVE: Mariam Hallaq, whose son died in Syrian regime detention, tells her story in the documentary *Syria's Disappeared: The Case Against Assad*, which had its US premiere at the Museum. *Afsbar Films*

ONLINE

Find out more about the Museum's work at ushmm.org/syria.



We decided to start documenting the names. We sat in circles, like three or four people, giving each other our phone numbers and names. —MANSOUR OMARI

A Shred of Evidence

MANSOUR OMARI kept the scraps of fabric carefully pressed in the pages of a notebook. He and some fellow prisoners recorded on them—in ink made from blood and rust—the names of their cellmates. These prisoners are considered “disappeared”—taken without warning, their families given no information about their whereabouts or any charges against them.

Omari and his colleagues at the Syrian Center for Media and Expression were seized in 2012. He was kept in a secret prison for more than a year. When he was released, he wore a shirt with the scraps of fabric sewn into the cuffs and collar. He escaped to Europe, where he is haunted by the desire to help those who remained behind. The Museum has preserved and is displaying the fabric pieces containing the names of the 82 other men detained with him in prison—documentation that could someday be used to hold members of the Syrian regime accountable for their crimes.

LEFT: A satellite image shows Syria's Saydnaya prison north of Damascus, where as many as 13,000 people have been held in secret since 2011, according to Amnesty International. *DigitalGlobe* RIGHT: Mansour Omari holds one of the fabric scraps he secreted out of a Syrian prison. He has entrusted them to the Museum for conservation and display.



During his visit to the Museum, Omari recounted how the scraps of cloth came to be and what they represent for him and those detained with him:

The cell was like three floors underground. It was, I think, eight by eight meters, and we were like 60 people. Later there was more than that. We couldn't lay down and sleep because of the space.



I wanted to do something just to make time pass. Before I was detained, I used to teach English so I said to myself, ok let me teach those people English if they agree. So I started teaching people, first with a small group, my close group. Later many people wanted that, so at some point I was teaching 30 detainees each day.

We decided to start documenting the names. We sat in circles, like three or four people, giving each other our phone numbers and names.

If one in this group is released, he can contact the family. But this depends on your memory. When I left there were 82 people, so you cannot memorize them, with their phone numbers, and where they are from. So I thought of trying to find some way to document all the names without the possibility they would be forgotten.

We needed first the tools. We already had these shirt pieces we used for teaching English. But we needed some ink, some kind of ink. We tried first the soup. Sometimes there was eggplant—it was a little blue but it didn't hold.

But one day, one of our group said, "I have an idea." He asked for a plastic bag and he went to the bathroom area and came back carrying the plastic bag with something red in it and we knew. He told us that he squeezed his gum and spit the blood inside this. Our gums were bleeding, I think because of the very bad conditions.

When we were writing them, it was a matter of just recording names. But when I was released and took the list with me, my relationship with it changed. It wasn't just words or letters—in my mind, those are pieces of their souls. I know people who are confirmed dead. And others, we don't know if they are dead or alive.

[When I was released], one of them said to me, "Please don't forget us." They had this hope that when I got out I could help them. And I've been working on that—trying to convince people, organizations, and governments to do anything for them since I was released in 2013. And not one has been released.

ABOVE: Mansour Omari kept the scraps of fabric that record the names of his fellow prisoners pressed between the pages of a notebook for safekeeping.



A Prosecutor's Commitment



ONLINE

To learn more about the Ferencz Initiative's work and international law, visit ushmm.org/justice.

At age 27, **BENJAMIN B. FERENCZ** led the prosecution of the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) trial at Nuremberg—which opened 70 years ago on September 29.

"The killing of defenseless civilians during a war may be a war crime, but the same killings are part of another crime, a graver one, if you will—genocide, or a crime against humanity," said Ferencz in his opening statement. It was the first instance of the term "genocide" being used in a court, though it had no legal meaning at the time. Ferencz defined such crimes as "systematic violations of fundamental human rights committed at any time against the nationals of any nation."

The Einsatzgruppen trial resulted in the world's first convictions for crimes against humanity. Ferencz has spent the seven decades since trying to enshrine the punishment of perpetrators in international law. To secure this legacy, he has created the Ferencz International Justice Initiative at the Museum. Through the Planethood Foundation Ferencz established

to promote international law as an alternative to war and crimes against humanity, he will donate \$1 million on an annually renewable basis to the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide.

The Ferencz Initiative advances the principle established at Nuremberg that accountability is key to preventing future atrocities. Victims and their communities will be central to its efforts, which will focus on connecting those seeking justice with local, regional, national, and international institutions. "By empowering the communities that are most affected by mass atrocities to relentlessly pursue justice over time, we will create sustainable prevention efforts," said the initiative's director, Anna Cave. In November, the first Ferencz Initiative convening will bring together victims' representatives with those who pursue justice on the international stage. ■

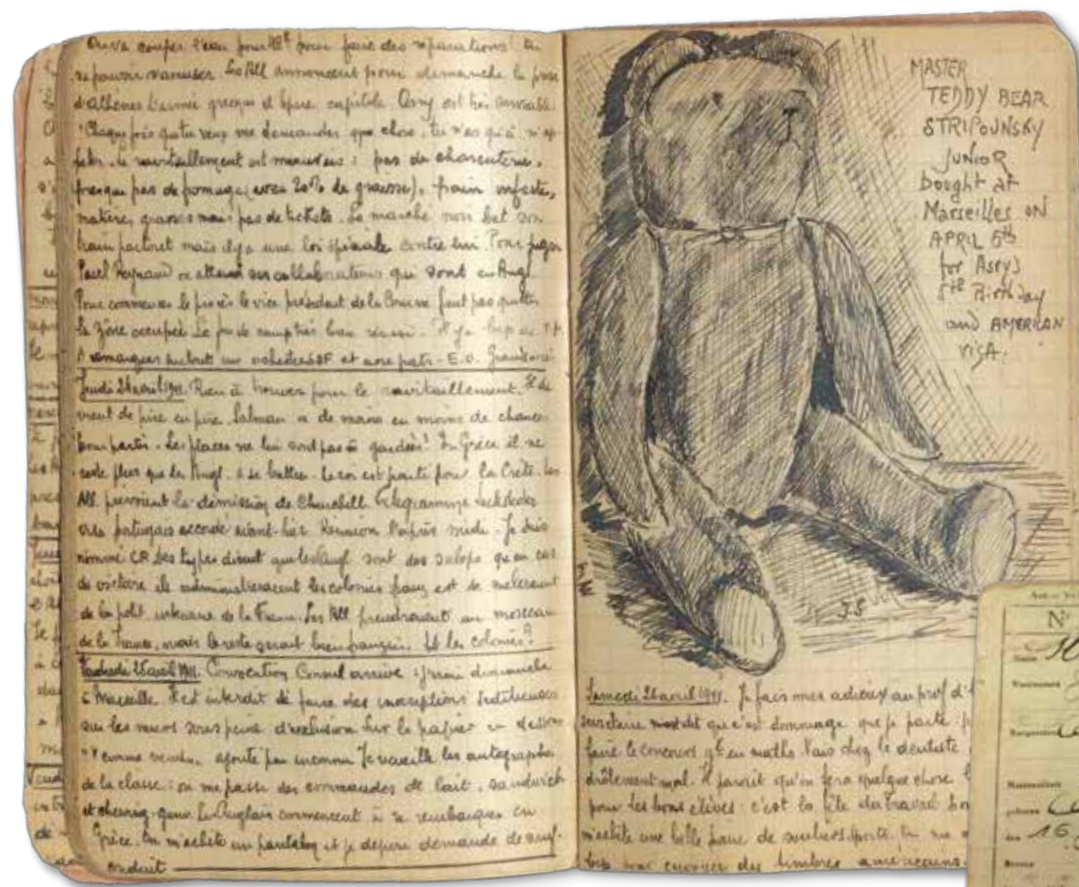
TOP: Chief prosecutor Benjamin Ferencz presents documents as evidence at the Einsatzgruppen trial. Courtesy of Benjamin Ferencz LEFT: Benjamin Ferencz in 2017.

QUICK TAKE

AS PART OF THE MUSEUM'S BRINGING THE LESSONS HOME (BTLH) program, high school "ambassadors" interview Holocaust survivors. Together, they work to depict the survivor's story visually using acrylic on canvas. In this photograph by Museum intern and BTLH ambassador Winston Dunkley II, Joshua Hewitt laughs with Harry Markowicz as they work together to convey Markowicz's testimony. A Museum volunteer, Markowicz was born in Berlin in 1937 and survived the Holocaust hidden with a family in Belgium. A second-year BTLH ambassador, Hewitt is a high school junior from southern Maryland. The annual Art and Memory Project takes place in an art classroom of School Without Walls at Francis Stevens in Washington, DC. Each year, a new class of ambassadors works with the Holocaust survivors, then takes the lessons they've learned and the survivor's testimony back to their unique communities. There are now 775 BTLH alumni living throughout the country. ■



The Race to Secure TRUTH



A NEW WAY OF FUNDRAISING Public Unites to SAVE HOLOCAUST DIARIES

After Germany invaded Belgium, teenager Joseph Stripounsky fled with his parents and younger brother, leaving almost everything they owned behind. He carried a textbook and two math notebooks, one of which became his diary. Over the grid-lined pages, Joseph kept a detailed record of his family's harrowing escape to safety. This diary, one of many first-person accounts that the Museum has collected since



it opened almost 25 years ago, was central to an innovative online campaign launched this past summer on Kickstarter, a crowdfunding site.

Save Their Stories: The Undiscovered Diaries of the Holocaust asked the public to pledge any amount they could to help the Museum raise \$250,000 to catalog and publish online more than 200 diaries and translate three of them into English.

In the month-long campaign, over 5,600 donors gave more than \$380,000, enabling the Museum to translate a dozen diaries.

“Especially now, as Holocaust denial and antisemitism are on the rise, we must bring these stories to light,” said Kyra Schuster, the Museum curator who helped lead the project. “The diaries can help people understand the diversity of victims’ experiences, the complexity of this history, and its relevance to the world today.”

The diary and passport of Joseph Stripounsky, who later shortened his surname to Strip. US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of the family of Joseph Strip

The Museum’s greatest responsibility is keeping Holocaust history relevant in a complex and changing world.

BUILDING THE COLLECTION OF RECORD—AND ENSURING ITS GLOBAL ACCESSIBILITY—is the foundation for everything we do. Despite the millions of objects, documents, and other items we’ve collected, the majority of materials are still out there. That’s why the Museum is accelerating its race to collect the evidence while we still can, in an effort spanning 50 countries on six continents. This requires intensifying our investments in experts to preserve fragile, deteriorating objects, to catalog the collections so they are searchable, and to digitize them for preservation, research, and accessibility. We don’t secure truth by locking it in a vault; this enormous challenge requires many partners who share our vision to secure truth by sharing it with the world.

Reaching New Supporters

- More than **5,600 people** from all **50 states** and from **26 countries** on **six continents** came together to bring these stories to the public
- **Over half** had never before participated in a Kickstarter campaign
- **4,800** were new donors to the Museum

I’m so glad to see this project funded...
The preservation of these stories is so important, and I am glad that I could be a part of it.

—KICKSTARTER SUPPORTER DANIELLE M.



THE RACE TO SECURE THE TRUTH ABOUT UKRAINE

ONE MAN'S PERSONAL MISSION



FROM TOP: Bullets recovered at a killing site in Belarus. More than two million Jews in the former Soviet Union were murdered one by one in the Holocaust by bullets. Some 1.5 million of the victims were Ukrainian Jews. *Nicholas Tkachouk/Yabad-In Unum*
Students participate in a Museum course in Kyiv. *Alex Berk/Ukrainian Association for Jewish Studies*

Ukraine once was home to one of the largest and most culturally rich Jewish communities of Europe. But the experience of those Ukrainian Jews during the Holocaust remained essentially buried until the fall of the Soviet Union. Even then, the effort to uncover the truth of where more than 1.5 million Jews were killed in what is called “the Holocaust by bullets” was incremental. Today that longstanding injustice is being addressed

by Michael P. Polsky, a Ukrainian-born American technology entrepreneur.

Through the **Piotr and Basheva Polsky Memorial Initiative for the Study of Ukrainian Jewry**, a transformative project established in 2013, the Museum is dramatically expanding its efforts to bring to light this vitally important part of Holocaust history.

The first phase of the Polsky Memorial Initiative supported the hiring of a dedicated professional who has fostered partnerships and piloted research and educational programs in and about Ukraine specifically.

With a second generous gift from Michael and Tanya Polsky, the Museum has launched the next phase of the initiative to tackle its strategic goal of long-term impact on the way scholars study, write, and teach about Ukraine—focusing on the Holocaust as a generational history spanning the early 20th century to the present. “The Polsky gift will support our research and collections work on the whole sweep of Ukrainian Jewish life,” explained Elana Jakel, the initiative’s manager. “Their investment in digital resources also will help get these materials into classrooms.”

As eastern Europe continues to be politically unstable, the Museum’s efforts to secure this lesser-known part of Holocaust history is vitally important in confronting historical amnesia, as well as both denial and politicization of the Holocaust.

A Conversation with Michael Polsky

What is your personal connection to this history?

Polsky: I was born in the former Soviet Union five years after the end of World War II. As a little boy, I remember seeing the destroyed buildings and devastated families that I knew. Later, when I went to school, people talked about the devastation of the Soviet population but didn’t talk specifically about Jews, even though we knew that Jews were the prime targets of Nazis. Growing up in a neighborhood where there were not a lot of Jews, I was bullied as a Jewish boy—a firsthand experience of antisemitism in Ukraine.

What motivated you to partner with the Museum?

Polsky: A few years ago, I heard that someone had endowed a Center for Romanian Jews based on his background and I started thinking how important it was to apply that same intensity and focus on Ukrainian Jews. A significant number of American Jews have ancestors from what is now Ukraine and I saw how little they knew about what happened to Ukrainian Jews during the Holocaust. The Museum’s resources and reputation set it apart from other organizations. So I called the Museum, introduced myself, and that’s how it started.

Why is it so crucial to increase efforts in this part of the world?

Polsky: It’s very important that the Museum documents this history now. A lot of historical material is disappearing, and quickly. Unless something is done, this part of Jewish history might be lost forever. I myself have been a witness to the distortion of this history to satisfy particular political desires of the moment.



How do you feel seeing the resurgence of anti-semitism around the world, including manifestations in your adoptive country?

Polsky: I’m very disturbed with this. When I lived in the Soviet Union, maybe I was a little bit too naïve thinking that antisemitism is a Soviet thing, or possibly Ukrainian thing. But now I understand that human nature really does not change much. And I can see how some things that we may not see for years, or decades, or centuries may suddenly flare up.

Young people must understand that this is not just theoretical “stone-age” history. This happened, and it can happen again unless and until people stand up and fight it.

—MICHAEL POLSKY

What impact do you hope to achieve through this initiative?

Polsky: In addition to preserving the truth, my hope is deepening understanding for Jews and non-Jews. In particular, young people must understand that this is not just theoretical “stone-age” history. They need to understand it happened in a time and place not that different from their own. This happened, and it can happen again unless and until people stand up and really fight it.

FINAL
WORD



COL. ADAM OLER

Air Force Colonel Adam Oler, a judge advocate for more than two decades, serves in the Department of Security Studies at the National Defense University in Washington, DC. As an assistant professor, he teaches an elective called “War Crimes and Strategy,” which incorporates Holocaust history. The views expressed in this interview are his own.

How do you relate the Holocaust to strategy needed by today’s military and government leaders?

OLER: The Holocaust is a case study that shows how the Germans between 1933 and 1945 exploited the instruments of power—the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of power—to evil effect. We would like to think these instruments are used for good, but they can also be harnessed for evil in a way the students aren’t usually anticipating.

Can you tell us about your students?

OLER: There are about 210 of them, who come for our ten-month program from across the US military, the State Department, the intelligence community, and other government agencies. We also have a number of international fellows. Our mission is to train them to be strategists. A large number of our graduates rise to the military’s senior leadership and serve at the highest levels of government. It’s a high-powered student body.

As part of the course, you bring your students to the Museum. Why?

OLER: When they begin studying the Holocaust, my students ask the same question that I think we all do, which is, “How could this happen? How was this possible?” Walking through the Museum demonstrates the specific steps that were pursued with all due deliberation, all due intent, and at no expense spared, on the part of the Germans and others. There was a pattern that they followed. And so I challenge the students by asking, “Do you see this pattern elsewhere, either in history or today?” The patterns show up again and again: You have somebody demonized as “the other,” you have a war going on, there’s a dictator of some sort who’s controlling all the narratives. There’s some sort of historical grievance, real or perceived, that gets exploited in order to make it happen. We saw those patterns in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda in 1994, and other countries around the world. For the students who are going to be senior leaders, it’s important for them to understand those patterns.

Does that knowledge empower them?

OLER: I think for the students to be armed with this knowledge allows them to advocate for atrocity prevention. When they’re sitting on senior staffs or are themselves senior leaders, they can say, “we have seen the demonization of a minority in this country,” or “we have seen the threat of civil war erupting,” or “we have seen low-level clashes between private parties that are being harnessed by the government for exploitation for political purposes.” All these things are indicators of a potential genocide.

What practical experiences from your own career have reinforced the importance of knowing this history?

OLER: I have seen that in the absence of education bad things happen. For instance, we know that it’s important not to tolerate people scapegoating other people—you don’t belittle another people because of their ethnicity or where they’re from, but I think we sometimes forget why. There’s the moral reason, of course, but there’s also a very practical reason: When you start calling somebody by a pejorative name it makes it easier to turn that person into “the other”—which I strongly believe is a ladder that leads to horrible stuff. But if you can stop the escalation early on, that can be the key to atrocity prevention.

This knowledge allows them to advocate for atrocity prevention.

—COL. ADAM OLER

A more personal question: How did you first learn about the Holocaust?

OLER: On my father’s side of the family, everybody born before the war except for my father was born in Poland. The situation was pretty bad for Jews and they left Poland in 1929. I was the first generation after my family had been devastated in the Holocaust. My father would tell me about receiving a message from the Red Cross in 1947 that not one member of the family who stayed on the continent had survived the war.

My father and I went to Poland in 1987, and we visited Auschwitz-Birkenau. The camp had been left as the Red Army had found it. That was chilling to see—the scale, the industrial nature of it, the dehumanization that enabled human beings to carry this out. I still don’t understand it, but I do think that places like the Museum do an important job of explaining how it happened.

Before that visit, I had thought that I was going to go into the military but hadn’t committed. I came back certain that it was my calling to serve in the US military. ■

ONLINE

Watch highlights from Col. Oler’s interview with the Museum at ushmm.org/magazine/oler. Find resources for military instructors at ushmm.org/military.

FOR 25 YEARS WE'VE BEEN ASKING **WHY**

FOR THEM AND FOR US,
WE'LL NEVER STOP



Twins Ines and Renate Spanier peer out a porthole of the MS *St. Louis* as the ship docks in Antwerp on June 17, 1939. US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris

MKT01528MAG

JOIN US IN MARKING THE MUSEUM'S 25th Anniversary at the National Days of Remembrance, April 8–10, 2018, as we honor Holocaust survivors for their resilience and courage to never stop asking why and challenging us to do the same.

**BE THE FIRST TO SEE OUR NEW EXHIBITION
AMERICANS AND THE NAZI THREAT**

April 8, 5:30 p.m.

Presenting a holistic portrait of America in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s and the latest example of our 25-year legacy of examining how and why the Holocaust happened.

▶ WATCH LIVE ushmm.org/watch

**DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY
IN THE US CAPITOL**

April 9, 11 a.m. ET

Reaffirming our commitment to remember the victims of the Holocaust and honor the survivors.

**Never Stop Asking Why
GLOBAL ISSUES FORUM: A CONVERSATION
ABOUT HUMAN NATURE**

April 9, 1 p.m. ET

Engaging with thought leaders in a dynamic exploration of the difficult questions Holocaust history raises about human nature, particularly our susceptibility to hatred and extremism.

NATIONAL TRIBUTE DINNER

April 9, 7 p.m. ET

Honoring all Holocaust survivors with the 2018 Elie Wiesel Award.

For information on attending the events above, contact Maureen Merluzzi at mmerluzzi@ushmm.org.

2018 25