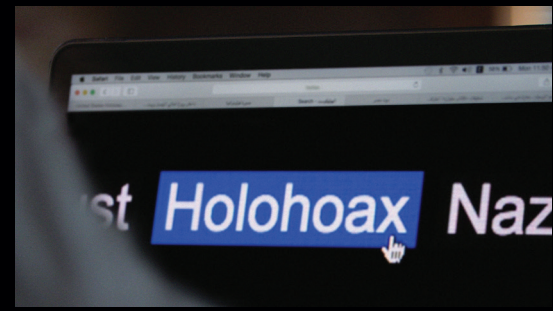


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HATE IS THE ENEMY. BUT SO IS TIME.

IN FIVE YEARS, less than 0.01% of World War II veterans will be alive and the youngest Holocaust survivor will be 79. Who do we want to tell their stories to the 1.9 billion young people across the globe who need to hear them?



HISTORY MATTERS



THE
CAMPAIGN
FOR THE
UNITED
STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

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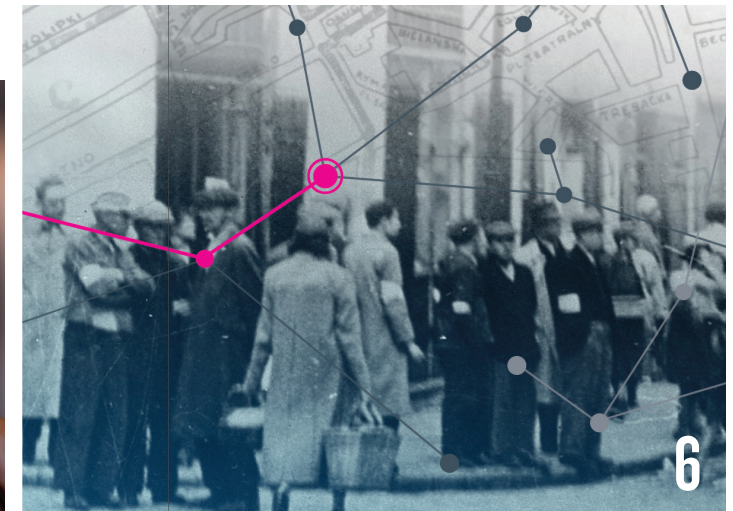
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COVER: Danzig civilians give Adolf Hitler an enthusiastic welcome on September 19, 1939, after the German invasion of Poland. *Courtesy of the Oster Visual Documentation Center at Beit Hatfutsot. Photographer unknown*

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



FIRST WORD

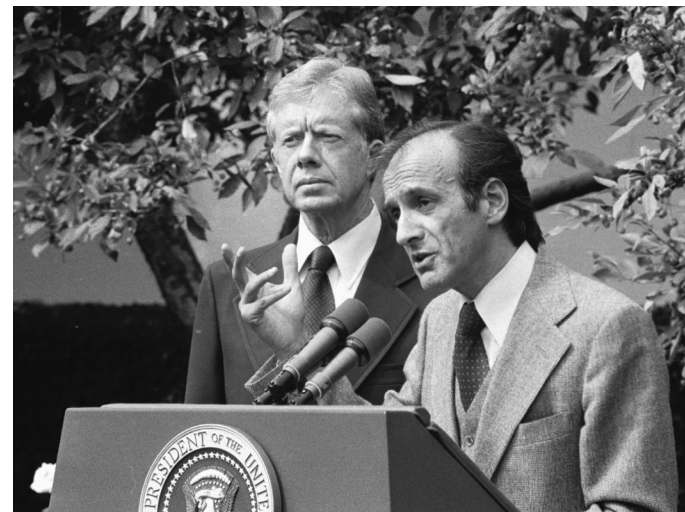
By Sara J. Bloomfield

A Vision from the 20th Century Challenges Us Today

We wish, through the work of this Commission, to reach and transform as many human beings as possible. We hope to share our conviction that when war and genocide unleash hatred against any one people or peoples, all are ultimately engulfed in the fire....

Elie Wiesel wrote these words in the report of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, which he presented to President Jimmy Carter on September 27, 1979. It recommended the creation of the Museum.

Elie Wiesel and President Jimmy Carter speak on September 27, 1979. Bettmann/Getty Images



THE ESSENTIAL PREMISE OF THE MUSEUM SINCE ITS FOUNDING IS that the Holocaust—the state-sponsored, systematic attempt to murder every Jew in Europe—was a watershed event that must always be remembered and will always remain relevant.

Forty years ago in the President's Commission report, Elie Wiesel stated that the Holocaust “was a unique crime in the annals of history,” and he went on to describe the importance of its lessons for the future, asserting that the Museum should present the particularity of the Holocaust

as well as its contemporary significance: “The universal implications of the Holocaust challenge Western civilization and modern, scientific culture. What threatened one people in the past could recur to threaten another people or, indeed, all humanity.”

Elie often said that no one's future should be like his own past. That is why he envisioned a “living memorial”—a museum that would memorialize the victims, teach the history and lessons of the Holocaust, and work to prevent future genocides. The Museum's role as a “living memorial” imposes a special responsibility for those charged as both stewards of memory and contributors to a better future. As America's national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, we assume that responsibility with rigor, determination, and humility.

Elie also said, “The Museum is not an answer. It is a question mark.” Indeed, the Holocaust raises many questions that scholars continue to probe and that educators strive to provoke in advancing critical thinking about how and why the Holocaust happened, and what made it possible.

The Museum's work to advance quality Holocaust education is designed to promote thoughtful reflection on the causes, events, and consequences of the Holocaust as well as the deeper issues at stake. It stimulates thinking about such issues as: the nature of antisemitism, hate, and extremist ideologies; the fragility of societies and democracy; the role of individuals

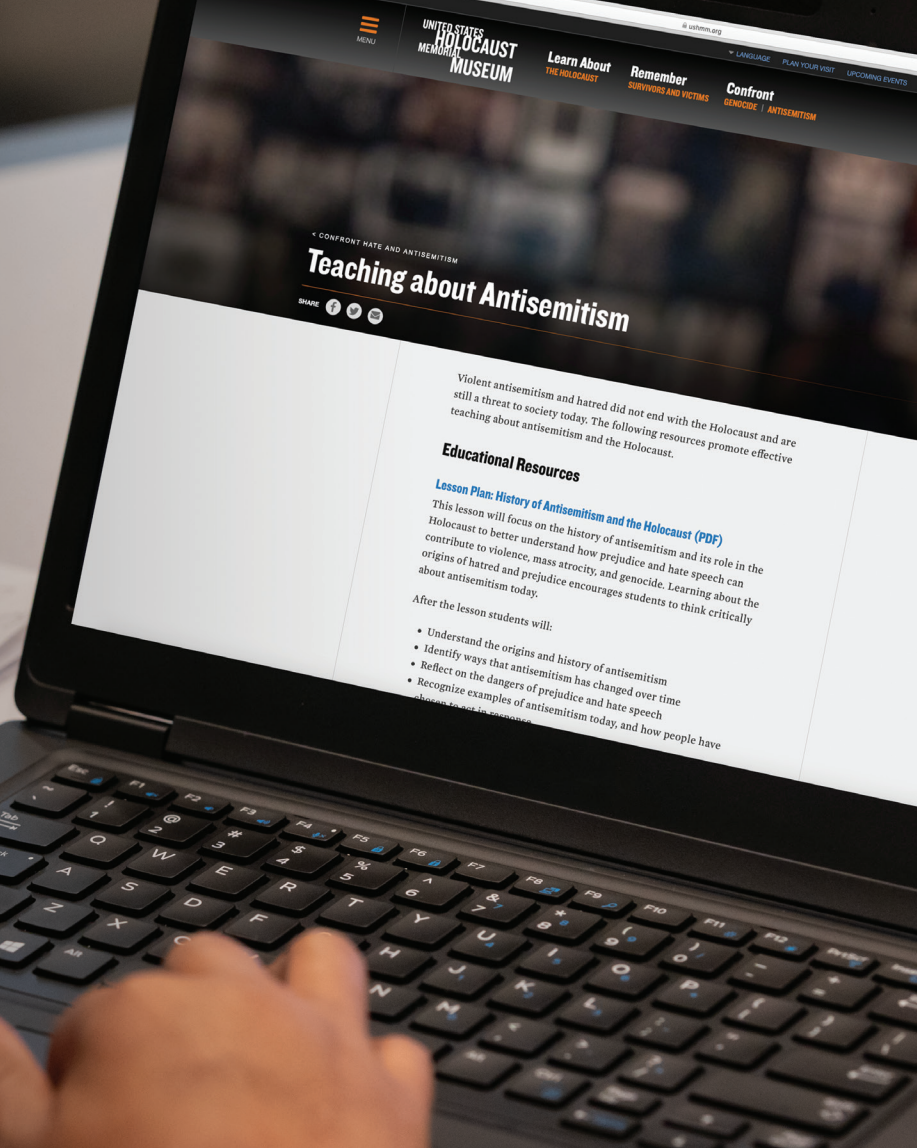
and institutions; the consequences of indifference and inaction; and a range of motivations that influence human behavior.

Education depends on scholarship, which has grown substantially in recent years and continues to mine fresh sources in order to generate important new knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust. The Museum has been actively building a collection of record on the Holocaust in order to support ongoing original research, the vital field of Holocaust studies, and our educational mission.

In addition to education and scholarship, Elie believed that one of the most meaningful ways to honor the victims was to do for the victims of genocide today what was not done for the Jews of Europe, who were totally abandoned by the world. That vision has become another pillar of the Museum—our work to advance global efforts to prevent and respond to contemporary genocide.

Our founders probably did not envision that the world we live in today would be so plagued by hate, antisemitism, and various forms of Holocaust denial as well as continued genocidal threats. They did envision the timeless importance and relevance of the Holocaust as an event to be memorialized with dignity, researched with rigor, and taught with care so that we can accurately remember the past and responsibly learn from it. That vision animates the Museum's work today and every day. ■

Countering anti-Jewish hatred has always been a Museum priority. Now, our efforts have taken on new urgency. Educators at last summer's Belfer conferences focused on new resources to inoculate their students from antisemitism.



With Antisemitism on the Rise Teachers Turn to the Museum for Help

IT KEEPS HAPPENING.

From swastikas scrawled on bathroom stalls to teens arranging their red cups in that unmistakable shape during a drinking game, there has been a disturbing rise in antisemitic incidents across America. And then in October 2018, an avowed antisemite and hater walked into the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and slaughtered 11 people just because they were Jewish.

“The lesson relates the content to the students’ world currently and allows them to see how it relates to things they are exposed to every day.” —AMY BRUNEAU, Teacher

Antisemitism has always been core to how we teach this history and a subject of the Museum’s long-running Arthur and Rochelle Belfer National Conferences for Educators. These new teachers of the Holocaust are prompted to consider the role antisemitism played—not the sole cause, but a necessary precursor to what happened. And they learn about the long history of antisemitism, in particular some of the stereotypes and myths that characterize it. The training prepares them to discuss the question students ask over and over again when they first learn about the Holocaust: Why the Jews?

But following the Pittsburgh attack, with antisemitic violence in the news, teachers were asking for help on the Museum’s online chat group for Holocaust educators. How were they going to discuss antisemitism with students hearing the term for the very first time?

After receiving those requests last October, the William Levine Family Institute for Holocaust Education quickly updated the “Teaching about Antisemitism” web page and created a new lesson plan tailored to today’s media environment. It helps teachers to respond in real time as students see news about antisemitic incidents they might not understand.

In addition to the lesson plan, the revised web page includes links to the Holocaust Encyclopedia articles on antisemitism. These have been viewed more than 358,000 times since Pittsburgh.

As Amy Bruneau, a middle school English teacher at Legacy Christian Academy in Andover, Minnesota, put it, “The lesson relates the content to the students’ world currently and allows them to see how it relates to things they are exposed to every day. It sets them up to be knowledgeable enough to identify acts of antisemitism and provides the confidence to make a difference.”

“Helping teachers feel comfortable talking about antisemitism is more important now—when students see hate online and on social media—than it might have been a decade ago,” said Kim Blevins-Rellea, program coordinator for the Museum’s educational initiatives.

Social media is an increasingly important part of our ability to reach a broad public and especially young people. In addition to the lesson plan, teachers attending the Belfer conferences—and the more in-depth Pines, Sarna, Statfeld Summer Institute for the Museum Teacher Fellowship Program—learned about the Museum’s new Instagram series on antisemitism, a new social media tool the Museum has developed to reach young people where they are.

“Young people are bombarded with information and they need to know how to process it and sort fact from fiction,” said Blevins-Rellea. Whether in the classroom or on social media, the Museum is giving them the tools to think critically about this history. ■



Social Media Specialist Hannah Meyer demonstrates for teachers how to use the Museum’s Instagram stories to talk with students about issues in the news. (In the background photo from October 1938, German women salute Hitler. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of William Gallagher*)

NEW CONNECTIONS TO HOLOCAUST HISTORY

Higher education is increasingly digital, hands-on, and interconnected. At a time when interest in the humanities is declining, the Museum is seizing on technological innovation as one way to ensure the relevance of Holocaust studies and attract young scholars, all while bolstering the visibility of those currently researching, writing, and teaching in the field.



MAPPING HISTORY

Museum Fellows Use Digital Tools to Study Vast Holocaust Archives

HISTORIAN MICHAL FRANKL HAD A PROBLEM: HE WANTED TO MAP THE PATHS TAKEN

by refugees fleeing the Holocaust, but the information was buried in 50 linear feet of documents—1,850 folders in more than 100 boxes covering a 30-year span. The volume of records to sort through was overwhelming.

Josh Zampetti, the Museum's associate fellow in the new practice of digital humanities, stepped in. Using technology to find records mentioning the names of specific refugee assistance organizations, he was able to significantly narrow the pool of documents for Frankl (a researcher at the Czech Academy of Sciences who also spent time at the Museum, as the Margit Meissner Fellow for the Study of the Holocaust in Czech Lands in 2015–16).

That's one example of digital humanities—applying digital tools to research. The Museum and other institutions have digitized millions of documents, but with materials in multiple languages and formats, how can scholars make sense of the data or even find what they're looking for?

By adopting new technologies that make it easier to search its collections, the Museum hopes to engage more scholars in Holocaust studies and enable all researchers—from those just beginning their careers to the most senior in their fields—to make new discoveries and deepen the understanding of this history.

“The digital humanities associate fellowship helps Museum staff better imagine new ways to research, understand, and tell the story of the Holocaust,” said Michael Haley Goldman, the Museum's future projects director. “The fellows bring skills to a project that are generally unavailable—and often unimaginable—to our historians, researchers, and educators.”

To make the most of these new tools, with many advances just in the last several years, the Museum created the digital humanities associate fellowship to lead the way in attracting and supporting cutting-edge scholarship. The fellowship was a joint creation of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced

Holocaust Studies and the William Levine Family Institute for Holocaust Education.

“We want to be in the forefront, we don't want to be just following,” said Robert M. Ehrenreich, director of the Mandel Center's National Academic Programs. “Digital humanities is not a field unto itself but is another tool in the disciplines within humanities that's helping us connect practitioners with specialists in interesting ways.”

Zampetti, who is certified in web development and pursuing his master's degree in public history from American University, says his primary interest is in historical research. But he began adding digital tools to his skill set because of the high demand for them, especially as more humanities scholars have embraced an integrated approach. “A support system like this fellowship allows you to explore digital methodologies in new ways and that's how you start creating more digital humanists,” he said.

One of Zampetti's other projects was creating a data visualization mapping American newspaper coverage of more than 30 pivotal Holocaust-era events gathered through the Museum's project *History Unfolded: US Newspapers and the Holocaust*. Citizen historians—educators, students, librarians, and members of the public—have submitted information about more than 22,000 newspaper articles from around the United States. The interactive map Zampetti created shows at a glance the scope of news coverage and editorial writing on Germany's annexation of Austria, Nazis forcing Jews to wear yellow stars, and other events, as well as the circulation size of each paper.

“This visualization immediately captures the extent to which reporting about Holocaust-related events appeared all over the country in communities, big and small,” said David Klevan, education outreach specialist in the Levine Institute.

While digital humanities does not replace the need for human critical analysis of text to interpret data and draw conclusions, its possibilities are endless.

“This fellowship is extraordinary and I will always be grateful for it,” Zampetti said. “I think people still are just kind of scraping the surface of what these capabilities are, and they're constantly changing and getting better.”

PREVIOUS PAGES: Computer tools help Holocaust researchers unearth meaning from a vast array of records and present findings visually. Photo illustration: Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. Courtesy of American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

LEFT: Josh Zampetti, who recently completed his digital humanities associate fellowship at the Museum, worked on several projects and demonstrated mapping techniques to Holocaust teachers at this year's Silberman Seminar for University Faculty, funded by the Curt C. and Elsa Silberman Foundation.

A FORWARD-THINKING HISTORY LAB

University of Michigan Students Partner with Museum



LAST SPRING, TEN DOCTORATE-LEVEL STUDENTS at the University of Michigan pored over photographs, newspaper articles, oral histories, diaries, and other materials from the Museum's collection and posed challenging questions to one another: What does each document teach us? Why include this image over another? How do you evaluate the quality of a source?

These debates were central to an innovative learning experience called HistoryLab, formed through a partnership with the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.

Under the guidance of Museum staff, the Michigan students—only two of whom had specializations in Holocaust history—were tasked with curating collections for the Museum's **Experiencing History: Holocaust Sources in Context**, a digital tool that contextualizes primary source material for the college classroom and is funded by the Alexander Grass Foundation.

"What primary sources do so powerfully is strip away the big stereotypes of this history," explained Leah Wolfson, Rosalyn Unger director of campus outreach programs in the Mandel Center. "Primary sources get students to a point of 'I never thought of it like that before.'"

For *Experiencing History*, the students chose 15–20 primary sources on two topics: "Nazi Ideals and American Society" and "Everyday Encounters with Fascism." One research team even found a relevant article from the *Dearborn Independent*, a newspaper published in Michigan and supported by prominent Michigan resident and antisemite Henry Ford.

"We were teaching the students to be better historians and researchers through the process of collaboration," said Rita Chin, associate dean for social sciences, Rackham Graduate School, and professor of history, University of Michigan.

Chin planned the course with Jeffrey Veidlinger, who is the Joseph Brodsky collegiate

professor of history and Judaic studies and director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan. Their aim was to develop their students' professional skills for the academic field and beyond, providing experience in researching in teams, presenting recommendations, and writing for the undergraduate audience.

As a member of the Museum's Academic Committee, Veidlinger had heard of the *Experiencing History* project and thought that contributing to it would not only help meet the course goals, but would make the students aware of the Museum's "tremendous research archive." Moreover, the students would be creating public-facing work that would aid college instructors across North America and the world.

Learning to work like a public historian by creating accessible educational materials and using digital tools is a beneficial way to expand

"This course helped me develop my collaborative research skills. I had no idea how the most fundamental aspects of research... could be advanced by working with other people."

—MICHAEL MARTIN, doctoral student, Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan

students' overall professional skill set, said Luke Ryder, content manager for digital learning tools at the Museum's William Levine Family Institute for Holocaust Education.

As part of the research process, the students spent time at the Museum with Ryder and his colleagues, exploring the archives, prototyping, testing, and presenting their work to Museum stakeholders for feedback.

Building this connection between scholars and the Museum is important, as it aids in keeping Holocaust studies "vibrant and vital," explained Emil Kerenji, applied research scholar in the Mandel Center. Even if these graduate students do not have specializations in Holocaust history, they will now have a connection to the Museum and can utilize its educational resources, collections, and archives.

With the new content collections from HistoryLab, *Experiencing History* includes 20 collections that feature more than 200 unique primary sources, the majority of which come from the Museum's collection. **They have been used in more than 700 courses in more than 35 disciplines around the globe.** Veidlinger and Chin plan to offer their course again in the future to help the Museum expand the offerings and their students' experience. "Too often graduate students and faculty are too narrowly focused on their own research topic," Veidlinger said. Participating in HistoryLab "broadened their boundaries." ■



WHAT WAR MADE POSSIBLE

German soldiers parade through Warsaw on October 5, 1939, to celebrate the conquest of Poland. *National Archives and Records Administration*

The persecution of Jews and other groups became government policy in Germany once the Nazis were in power in 1933. Following the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, war provided the opportunity and motivation for more extreme Nazi policies.

MOST OF THE PEOPLE WHOM THE NAZIS AND THEIR collaborators would eventually murder fell under Germany's control through military victories. Just 525,000 Jews lived in Germany when the Nazis came to power in 1933. In Poland, the prewar Jewish population was more than three million. Approximately 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe, comprising 1.7 percent of the

total European population. Solving “the Jewish question” was one of Nazism’s main goals. And with the outbreak of war, it became a war aim, even if the means were still not clear.

The Nazi occupiers forced Jews into crowded ghettos, deprived them of food and medicine, and used them for forced labor. Eventually, they settled on organized mass murder of every Jew

We had to take out all the Sefer Torah.... They took a Jewish man with a beard, with a tallis, and they put him in the middle of the pile and they set it on fire. —DAVID KEMPINSKI, Eyewitness

in Europe, a genocide the Nazis never could have implemented without war and their initial military successes. The conquest of Poland permitted Nazi planners to experiment with forced deportation of populations, new “solutions” to the “Jewish question,” and the creation of a “New Order” in Europe based on their racist ideology.

By the end of 1942, four million Jews had been killed. Five million had been killed by D-Day, June 6, 1944, the day of the Allied landings in occupied France. Even as they began to lose on the battlefield, the Nazis were still trying to kill as many Jews as possible. The Holocaust did not end until Allied soldiers defeated Nazi Germany.

A reform synagogue in Łódź, Poland, burns in November 1939. Courtesy of Beit Lobamei Hagbetaot



Millions of people in Europe and elsewhere marked the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II in September. In his 1987 oral testimony, Holocaust survivor DAVID KEMPINSKI described his experiences as an 18-year-old eyewitness to Germany’s invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and the days immediately following.

I was born July 27, 1921, in the town of Praszka, Poland, near the border with Germany. My parents had their business, a mill, about 12 miles northeast in the town of Wielun. When I was about seven years old, we moved to Wielun.

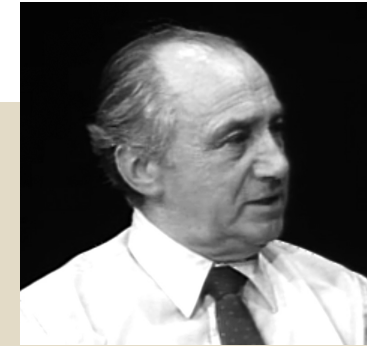
The war started at approximately 4:30 a.m. when all of a sudden German airplanes came. They leveled 95 percent of the town.

Our neighbor next door was the rabbi and we went there. They bombed and my parents and two brothers went down on the ground. The house was shaking as we saw our part leveled. I was screaming. We came out and climbed over the pile of bricks and everything. It was very dusty... people were afraid there was gas but it really was dust. We were in our pajamas, no clothes, no shoes, because we had jumped from our beds.

We started to go east. I went to school in Piotrków and I had some clothes there. It is about [50] miles away from Wielun and I was walking. The Polish Army had put mines on the bridges. People, cows, and horses got killed. I was walking day and night. I couldn’t get into Piotrków, so I continued to go east. I was lost. I was all alone.

We saw soldiers, civilians on the road, so many killed. We expected that the Germans were bad after November 9, 1938, or Kristallnacht. But I didn’t understand it; I couldn’t understand it.

Yom Kippur was on a Saturday. I had a friend from school in the town Belchatow. I stayed there, waiting until after Yom Kippur to go back to Wielun. On Yom Kippur in the morning we went



Survivor Testimony: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Gift of the Holocaust Resource Center at Kean University

to the attic, to prayer. All of a sudden a German with his bayonet in his hands found us and we had to come to the square. And I saw all the Jews they brought from all over.

They took me with a few other people to the synagogue. We had to take out all the Sefer Torah. They made us walk on the Sefer Torah. Then we had to take the sacred books to the square. It was hundreds, maybe thousands, of books in one place. They took a Jewish man with a beard, with a tallis, and they put him in the middle of the pile and they set it on fire. And there were [German] soldiers all around us with bayonets. They put us next to the fire and we were next to it all that day, Yom Kippur. Then they let us go.

The next day I went to the market where I saw a bus to Wielun, our town. The driver was Polish and I said, “Listen, take me home, I came from Wielun.” He said, “Will you pay me?” He wants two zlotys, I don’t have money. I say, “You know Kempinski from the mill?” “Oh, I know him from the mill, yes.” I say, “Okay, my father will pay you.”

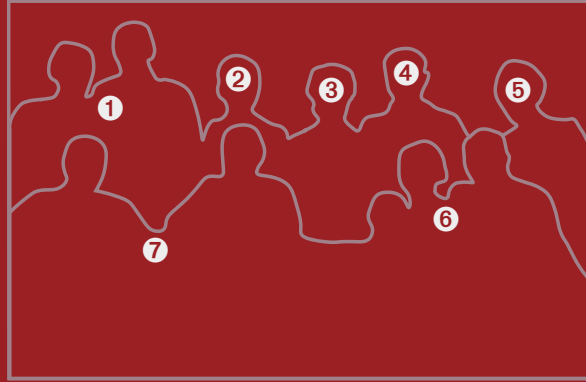
I got to Wielun and went to the mill, and there I saw my father. He didn’t even recognize me, I was so black from the fire.

In 1941, David Kempinski was sent for forced labor. He survived five concentration camps and multiple work sites. After the war ended, he lived in Displaced Persons camps until 1949. Then he moved to Switzerland and Israel before immigrating to the United States in 1957. His testimony has been edited for length and clarity. ■



**FOLLOWING IN THE
FOOTSTEPS OF THE UNWANTED**

AMERICA, AUSCHWITZ, AND A VILLAGE CAUGHT IN BETWEEN



THE VALFER FAMILY, April 1937

Courtesy of the Sonja Maier Geismar collection

- ❶ Karl is the oldest son, pictured here with his wife, Trude. He was arrested and sent to Dachau on Kristallnacht. In April 1939, Karl was able to move to Great Britain. He immigrated to the United States in 1940.
- ❷ Erich, the youngest brother, was still a high school student at the time of this photo. After graduating in 1938, he traveled to Italy, where his hopes of studying chemistry were dashed by a decree that foreign Jews would no longer be permitted to attend Italian universities. He then joined a group of more than 600 Jewish refugees who made a treacherous and illegal sea voyage to Palestine.
- ❸ Days after this photo was taken, youngest daughter Ruth left for the United States, telling her parents she could no longer stand the oppressive atmosphere. A distant relative in America sponsored her immigration.
- ❹ Hugo followed Ruth to the United States in 1938.
- ❺ Else, the middle daughter, wed in February 1938 in what turned out to be the last marriage performed in the Kippenheim synagogue. She was the last Valfer child to leave Germany, joining her husband in England in August 1939.
- ❻ Freya, the oldest daughter, sits with her husband, Ludwig Maier, and holds their two-year-old daughter, Sonja. They traveled on the MS ST. LOUIS to Cuba, where they were hoping to wait until they became eligible for US visas. The Cuban government did not let the Jewish refugees disembark and the ST. LOUIS was forced to return to Europe. Freya, Ludwig, and Sonja were admitted to Great Britain. It was a lucky break, as the majority of passengers were sent to Belgium, France, or the Netherlands—countries that soon were invaded by Nazi Germany.
- ❼ Max and Fanny Valfer lived a comfortable life in Kippenheim. Max had fought for Germany during World War I and had built a successful cigar distribution business. Fanny came from one of Kippenheim's oldest Jewish families, who could trace their German ancestry back to the 13th century. While on the waiting list for US visas, Max and Fanny were deported to France, where they were interned at Gurs. They were summoned for an interview at the American consulate in August 1942—not soon enough to save them from an August 12 transport to Drancy, and from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were killed.



On October 22, 1940, policemen knocked on the doors of Kippenheim's remaining Jews and gave them two hours to pack. Here, Fanny Valfer boards the police truck to an unknown destination. *Courtesy of Förderverein Ehemalige Synagoge Kippenheim e.V./Robert Kraus*

By Michael Dobbs

THE GRAINY BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS showed Jews being escorted to a truck by SS men and policemen in heavy leather boots. Their neighbors watch. In the background of one of the photos, a farmer can be seen leading a cow through the center of the village as the Jewish residents are rounded up.

As I examined the images of the deportation of Jews from the village of Kippenheim, Germany, I became intensely curious about the fate of the people in the photographs. Many of the deported Jews had spent years waiting for American visas. From Kippenheim, they were sent to an internment camp in southern France in October 1940, at a time when expulsion rather than extermination was still official Nazi policy.

Suddenly, I had the idea for my book, *The Unwanted: America, Auschwitz, and a Village Caught in Between*, published earlier this year by Knopf in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

ONLINE

Watch an interview with Kippenheim survivor Sonja Geismar at ushmm.org/magazine/unwanted.



“I still cannot grasp that we have become so poor and helpless. Often I cannot bear it. My eyes hurt from crying.”

—FANNY VALFER

I CAME ACROSS THE IMAGES WHILE HELPING TO research the Museum’s groundbreaking exhibition *Americans and the Holocaust*, which opened in 2018. Among other topics, the exhibition examines the impact of US immigration policies and practices on Jews seeking refuge from Nazi persecution. Staring at me from these decades-old photographs was a Holocaust story that was also an American story. According to the Nazis, these people were “unwanted” (*unerwünscht*) in Germany. But were they “wanted” anywhere else?

To answer that question, I had to explore the restrictive reshaping of US immigration policy in the early part of the 20th century in response to rising xenophobia and antisemitism. My goal was to connect the often-abstract political debate in Washington to the agonizing choices faced by a few Jewish families I—and, by extension, my readers—would come to know very well.

Researching and writing a nonfiction book can be compared to assembling a huge, multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. In the case of *The Unwanted*, the jumbled-up jigsaw pieces included long-forgotten photographs, oral histories, memoirs, official reports, and bundles of lovingly preserved letters. Before I could put

together the puzzle, I had to find the widely scattered pieces of evidence.

With the backing of the Museum, I embarked on a yearlong hunt for documents that took me to more than 20 different archival institutions in the United States, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. While individual US visa records for the period leading up to the Holocaust have largely been destroyed, I was able to reconstruct the odyssey of the Kippenheim deportees from family correspondence, French internment camp records, and the case files of the Jewish relief agency HIAS-HICEM (preserved, on microfilm, at the Center for Jewish History in New York).

The family of former Kippenheim residents Max and Fanny Valfer shared with me a heartbreaking letter the couple wrote from the mud-drenched French internment camp of Gurs shortly after their expulsion from Germany. “I still cannot grasp that we have become so poor and helpless,” Fanny told her children. “Often I cannot bear it. My eyes hurt from crying.”

I found other important documents in the voluminous Museum collections. These included a letter from one of the Valfer daughters, Freya, describing her abortive trip to Cuba on the MS *St. Louis* in May 1939. After the ship was turned away from Florida, Freya described her impressions of Miami Beach to her parents back home in Kippenheim. “We saw tall white buildings, hotels. Many ships and boats passed by us. We hardly believed that we could only sail by it all.”

For help in translating these letters from German, and making sense of the barely legible handwriting, I relied greatly on Cassandra LaPrade-Seuthe, a Museum curator. Other Museum staffers, including Rebecca Erbelding, a historian, and Ronald Coleman, an archivist, helped me locate vital documents. I was also assisted by Holocaust researchers in Germany who had done much of the necessary spadework in rescuing the history of Kippenheim Jews from decades of willful amnesia.



An elderly refugee makes her way through the French internment camp Gurs, notorious for its seemingly endless rain and mud. Courtesy of the Museum of Jewish Heritage/Troper Collection

The AMERICANS AND THE HOLOCAUST INITIATIVE was made possible by the generous support of lead sponsor Jeannie & Jonathan Lavine. Additional major funding was provided by the Bildners—Joan & Allen z”l, Elisa Spungen & Rob, Nancy & Jim and by Jane and Daniel Och. The Museum’s exhibitions are also supported by the Lester Robbins and Sheila Johnson Robbins Traveling and Special Exhibitions Fund, established in 1990.

ONLINE

Visit the AMERICANS AND THE HOLOCAUST online exhibition at ushmm.org/americans.



“This was the most precious document I ever possessed. Those stamps saved our lives.”

—KURT MAIER



“THIS IS NOT JUST JEWISH HISTORY, IT IS OUR history,” said historian Robert Kraus, explaining why he spent more than 20 years tracking down former Jewish residents of Kippenheim, even though he himself is not Jewish. Working together with survivor families, Kraus helped lead a campaign to restore the glorious 19th century Moorish synagogue in Kippenheim that was ravaged on Kristallnacht and turned into an agricultural warehouse after World War II.

their home. He can be seen clutching a briefcase in a photograph, between his grandfather Hermann (who died in Gurs) and his father Siegfried, as they are escorted to the police truck. Now almost 90, Maier still works as a cataloguer of German books at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, not far from the Museum. As we walked around Kippenheim, Maier pointed out his childhood home and the spot

Siegfried and Charlotte Maier, with their sons Heinz and Kurt, were deported from Kippenheim to Gurs in 1940. Each stamp and signature on this visa was obtained in the process of their struggle to immigrate to the United States, where they arrived on August 9, 1941. Kurt S. Maier collection, edited by John Robert Bauer/Kreisarchiv Offenburg

To better understand the trials and suffering of Kippenheim Jews, I followed in their footsteps. One journey led me to the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau outside Munich, where I learned about the tortures inflicted on thousands of Jewish men, including many from Kippenheim, in the weeks following Kristallnacht. On another trip, I retraced the route of Max and Fanny Valfer from Kippenheim to Gurs to Marseille. In the hills above Marseille, I visited the “emigration camp” for men at Les Milles, where Max Valfer spent more than a year waiting for American immigration visas that never came. A former brick factory, Les Milles has been preserved as a haunting memorial to French involvement in the Holocaust. In August 1942, the Valfers were sent to a transit camp near Paris, and from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were killed.

where he saw Adolf Hitler speeding through the village in a motorcade, on a military inspection tour, back in 1938. We stopped in front of the former Valfer house, now inhabited by a family of refugees from Syria. Embedded in the pavement outside the house are two memorial tablets known as *Stolpersteine* (meaning stumbling stones), recording the deportation of Max and Fanny Valfer to Gurs and later to Auschwitz. In contrast to the Valfers, the Maier family had the immense good fortune of receiving US immigration visas from the American consulate in Marseille. When he gives talks about his childhood experiences, Kurt always includes a photograph of his American travel papers, marked by rubber stamps from different offices. “This was the most precious document I ever possessed,” he tells his listeners. “Those stamps saved our lives.” ■

On one of my two visits to Kippenheim, I had the privilege of accompanying a survivor from one of the deportation photos. Kurt Maier was ten years old in October 1940 when his family was given two hours to get out of

Michael Dobbs, a researcher at the Museum, was a longtime reporter for the *Washington Post*, covering the collapse of communism as a foreign correspondent. His previous books include *One Minute to Midnight* on the Cuban missile crisis.

QUICK TAKE

AS THEY EXIT THE MUSEUM'S MAIN EXHIBITION, VISITORS now encounter photographs in a startling hue—the installation *One Thousand and Seventy-eight Blue Skies*.

The small-scale images show the sky above every known Nazi concentration camp and killing center. Belgian artist Anton Kusters consulted the Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945* to identify the locations, and then adjusted his route based on weather forecasts to make sure he would be able to see clear sky. He was not always able—clouds and even a butterfly make each frame distinct. Each picture is stamped with its GPS coordinates and the number of victims who entered the camp.

The installation also includes a quotation from Holocaust survivor Estelle Laughlin, who was deported from Warsaw to Majdanek and survived forced labor. Laughlin, a Museum volunteer, describes that time, when the blue sky defined the limits of normalcy. “It was impossible for us to imagine that only a few rabbit hops away from us people sailed on silver lakes and children sat around dinner tables with families as children should... We might as well have been on a different planet.”

The sites Kusters visited were among more than 42,000 places of detention controlled by the Nazis and their collaborators. Many remain unmarked today. The installation invites visitors to reflect on the expansiveness of the camp system and the experiences of individuals during the Holocaust. ■

“And all I remember was the patch of sky
that was my only connection to freedom, to life.”

—Estelle Laughlin, Holocaust Survivor



ONLINE

See interviews with
Estelle Laughlin and
Anton Kusters at
[ushmm.org/magazine/
blueskies](https://ushmm.org/magazine/blueskies).

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CAMPS AND GHETTOS, 1933–1945 is funded by the Helen Bader Foundation and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc.



NAMIBIA

Answering a Global Call for Holocaust Education

In a hyper-connected world where we are inundated with information, how do you ensure Holocaust history is taught and people understand its relevance today? How do you create a bulwark of truth against assaults on Holocaust memory?

Solving these questions is one of the driving forces behind the Museum's global outreach and investment in partnerships with leaders and institutions that can create sustainable impact.

One example that is generating important outcomes is the **International Conference on Education and the Holocaust (ICEH)**, a gathering for educational leaders the Museum developed in partnership with UNESCO. Convened in 2015 and 2017, it was an opportunity for 60 attendees from 17 countries to share the challenges and cultural roadblocks they face in teaching and learning about the Holocaust. Some obstacles are institutional, such as the prevalence of state-supported antisemitic propaganda. Others are more personal, such as working in isolation or, in some cases, coming to terms with mass atrocity in their own country's recent history.



PREVIOUS PAGE: Ndapewoshali Ashipala at the Museum during the 2017 International Conference on Education and the Holocaust.

In turn, Museum educators share successful curricula and specialized resources to help participants develop country-specific educational programs. “The participants know the challenges and opportunities in their own local contexts, so we give them the space to create their action plans based on what they know will resonate,” said Jennifer Ciardelli, director of the Initiative on the Holocaust and Professional Leadership at the William Levine Family Institute for Holocaust Education.

With the goal to create sustainable impact, the Museum pioneered a team-based approach to ensure each participant had a support system when they returned home and would implement projects with long-term sustainability, said Andrea Bertrand, project coordinator of the Initiative on Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism in the Levine Institute.

Touring Exhibitions in Namibia

This past spring and summer, students across Namibia were exposed to Holocaust history as the Museum’s exhibition, *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race*, was shown in two locations. Young people had the opportunity to study the Nazi myth of “racial purity,” and soon they will be learning—many for the first time—about their country’s own genocidal past through a new exhibition that will be traveling to the nation’s 14 regions.

The tour was developed by successive teams from Namibia at ICEH, which, along with Mexico, was the only country to be represented at both the 2015 and the 2017 conferences.

Ndapewoshali Ashipala, who works for the Museums Association of Namibia, attended the conference in 2017 with Dr. Memory Biwa, who lectures at the University of Namibia. For Ashipala, the experience expanded her

expertise on Holocaust history and made her “even more adamant to fight against prejudice so it is not allowed to fester, grow, and escalate.”

Ashipala and her partner built on the planning done by the 2015 Namibia team and were paired with a team from South Africa. The result was a first tour of *Deadly Medicine* throughout South Africa and two regions of Namibia, which was completed earlier this year. The next step is to continue the tour alongside a new exhibition called *The Ovaherero and Nama Genocide: Learning from the Past*.

This exhibition is the first of its kind to teach about what is considered the first genocide of the 20th century. The event happened between 1904 and 1907, when German colonial military forces killed indigenous people in present-day Namibia.

The exhibition about the atrocities will include educational guides for teachers, which have been developed with the support of Namibia’s Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation. “Because my academic background is not that of an educator, I was exposed to a completely new environment and way of thinking [at the ICEH conference],” explained Ashipala. “I was able to incorporate these new and different teaching methods into my work back home, especially when doing the design for the exhibition and the teacher’s handbook.”

The conference was motivated by the vision “that teaching and learning about the Holocaust can help countries deal with their own violent past, prevent genocide, and understand the dynamics of mass atrocity crimes,” said Ciardelli. The Namibian participants’ follow-through will help realize this vision—and feed into models of success for the conference’s next iteration.



MEXICO

Expanding Relationships in Latin America

In Mexico City, professor Yael Siman is committed to teaching Holocaust history—no matter the roadblocks.

“There is some prejudice about the Holocaust, even to this day, that it’s a Jewish event,” explained Siman, who is a professor at Anáhuac University in Mexico City. “Other people think they know already everything about the Holocaust because they’ve been impacted by popular culture, or students prefer to learn about contemporary issues.”

Despite these challenges, she has partnered with the Museum to build an international network committed to teaching Holocaust history across Latin America. In 2017, Siman represented Mexico at ICEH. During the following two years, her country team developed Spanish-language educational materials about the Holocaust and organized a series of conferences in Mexico City at public and private universities that attracted more than 270 attendees. The events included lectures by Holocaust scholars Peter Hayes and Christopher Browning.

Siman said she will never forget one of the lectures at a public university, which gave her encouragement about the future of the field in Mexico. “I thought the Holocaust would not be of much interest to the students, but [the lecture] was in a big hall, and it was packed. There were students sitting outside on the floor, just listening to the translation. There wasn’t even a screen where you could see the professor.”

Most recently, Siman collaborated again with the Museum to help host the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center’s first international faculty seminar, *The Holocaust, Genocide, and Mass Violence*. It was held in Mexico City last June and included junior- and senior-level doctoral students and professors from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico.

The seminar offered Museum staff the opportunity to support and further the work Siman’s team has been doing to institutionalize the study of the Holocaust and mass violence and to strengthen teaching by “pulling together networks of people who otherwise are not in the same set of conversations,” said Krista Hegburg, senior program officer for International Academic Programs at the Mandel Center.



ABOVE: Participants in a Mandel Center seminar in Mexico City hailed from around Latin America. *Guillermo Seija Camarena/Museo Memoria y Tolerancia*

NEXT PAGE: Mandel Center co-hosted a research workshop in Shanghai, China. *Li Jia*

Hegburg and her colleagues introduced attendees to the Museum's archival collections, exhibitions-related educational resources, and materials on atrocity prevention. They also learned that there is a need for more Spanish-language resources about the Holocaust, especially primary sources, which illustrates where the Museum can step in to help. Currently, on the Museum's website, which is translated into 18 languages, Spanish is the second-most used language after English, and the majority of those visitors come from Mexico.

The seminar also presented an opportunity for the Museum to support its collecting efforts, especially of archival material. Samanta Casareto, a Museum contractor who is based in Argentina, attended the seminar and stayed to meet with people across Mexico who have archives and collections in their

institutions or personal possession that could advance Holocaust scholarship.

"It was really great that Samanta was in the room and she was able to say, 'What do you have in your archives? What have you seen?' And was able to have a conversation with 20 people about what they've come across in their own research," explained Kierra Crago-Schneider, campus outreach program officer in the Mandel Center.

Outreach to International Scholars

Beyond Mexico, Hegburg also has coordinated recent events in Guatemala and Shanghai. In Guatemala, the Museum partnered with Yahad-In Unum and the Museo del Holocausto Guatemala to host

a conference on the role of the police in the Holocaust, which was held under the patronage of UNESCO.

In Shanghai, the Mandel Center partnered with New York University Shanghai and the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum to host a research workshop, *The Reception of Jews in China during World War II*. The program, which was the Museum's first in China, brought together researchers and academics across disciplines and helped forge relationships with the up-and-coming generation of Holocaust scholars at Chinese universities.

Wherever the event, Crago-Schneider stresses the importance of partnerships with leaders committed to teaching and learning about the Holocaust, such as Siman. "It just takes one advocate to say, 'This is for me,' and we really need to be well-connected internationally to get good participants around the table."

INDIA



Encountering Disbelief in Tiruchirapalli, India

DR. LAURA DELANO traveled from Tiruchirapalli, India, to Washington, DC, to attend the 2016 Silberman Seminar for University Faculty. Last year, Delano, an assistant professor of English and research supervisor, offered the first-ever course on the Holocaust at Bharathidasan University. She explained that where she is from, few people know about the Holocaust.

How did the Holocaust first enter your awareness and then your work?

In 2003, I stepped into a used book store and picked up *After Long Silence*, the memoir by Helen Fremont, whose parents were Holocaust survivors. I finished reading the book that very day and sat numbed by the realization of the Holocaust and its aftermath. Though I'd vaguely heard the term, I'd never known the details. Sometime later, I became a research supervisor. One of my scholars was interested in Holocaust studies and began studying the memoirs of Helen Fremont, Helen Epstein, and Eva Hoffman. I wanted to learn more in order to be a better advisor.

What did you get out of attending the Silberman Seminar?

The seminar's impact has been so huge that I cannot do it justice. Firstly, I had never met another academic working in Holocaust studies. When I started researching the Holocaust, I had to ask my sister who lives in Canada to bring me books when she visited. So I did not have a very systematic knowledge.

The Silberman seminar filled those gaps and gave me a topographical, historical, and contextual mapping of Holocaust studies. The first day was overwhelming in many ways, but I got the hang of it and absorbed every discussion and detail.

The talk by the Holocaust survivor Dr. Gideon Frieder impacted my heart more than my head. There was so much wisdom in that one-hour talk that I still often go back to. For a person like me so culturally and topographically remote from Europe and America, this talk rendered the raw reality of the Holocaust and its impact through time.

What has prompted your students' interest in the Holocaust and led them to register for your new course?

Curiosity. On the first day, none of this class of 11 had heard of or known anything about the Holocaust. One student said he loved history and so opted for this course, while others just wanted to know what it was. I introduced the Holocaust, the event, the history, and the number. There was a general disbelief that six million innocent people could have been killed just because they were Jews. But when they saw a small visual clip, there was not a single dry eye in the class. It took them a while to process the reality of Holocaust.

What questions did your students have when they first learned about the Holocaust?

They have still not gotten over the question "Why?" But as they learn more, the main question is, "How can someone's life be ended over an identity over which they have no choice?"

Do the lessons of the Holocaust resonate with young people in India today?

Our youth relate this history to the social inequalities they observe in our society. Can a person be born so low that they are fit enough to only serve others? Can any characteristic someone is born with form a moral or rational basis for termination, discrimination, and marginalization? These questions prompt a deep rethinking and commitment to treat every person with dignity.

Do you foresee Holocaust studies growing in your region? How could the Museum support that?

That will be a resounding "yes." Last October, one of my doctoral candidates was awarded a PhD for her dissertation, "A Study of Repositioning and Reconstructing Identities as a Dialogic Continuum in the Select Works of Second Generation Holocaust Life Writing." Currently three others are working on dissertations related to the Holocaust. As all of them are teachers in other institutions, they have in turn introduced this history to their students and colleagues. My graduate students also are eager to learn more. All of them use the Museum's extensive online resources, especially the primary sources. ■



CHINA

A NEW URGENCY

THE WILLIAM KONAR FAMILY RENEWS ITS COMMITMENT



“None of us could have foreseen ten or 15 years ago the disturbing rise of antisemitism globally. We don’t believe any other institution is better poised—with both the credibility and the resources—to combat this than the Museum.”

—HOWARD KONAR

LIKE MANY HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS, WILLIAM KONAR never ceased to be amazed that a Museum devoted to the story of his past would stand forever on America’s National Mall.

He was one of the Museum’s earliest leaders and most generous supporters, and there was little he wouldn’t do to advance the Museum’s mission. “My father was humble. He only agreed to do the interview for *Fortune* magazine because he thought it was an article about the Museum,” explained his son Howard Konar about a 1998 feature on five Museum founders. “He never really discussed his past with us, so when the article was published, it was the first time we learned the details of his survival.”

Born in Radom, Poland, William was only 12 years old when the Germans occupied the city. By the war’s end, he had lost most of his family, and in 1946, at age 16, he was in a group



of orphans brought to the United States. He was sent to Rochester, New York, and never left. From there, he raised his family, built two successful businesses, and became a national leader in business and philanthropy.

“It took tremendous will and intelligence to conquer all odds to rebuild a successful life like my father did,” Howard said.

In 2008, following in his father’s footsteps, Howard was appointed to the Museum’s governing council. Howard’s passion is education, and he sees education in everything the Museum does. That’s why in 2008 the family created the William Konar Fund to provide ongoing endowment and annual support for the Museum’s educational mission.

It’s especially important now—during what Sarah Ogilvie, deputy Museum director and chief program officer, defines as a pivotal moment for the Museum and Holocaust education.

“The tremendous change in how young people learn and how people consume information requires reimagining how you create and deliver accessible content,” explained Ogilvie. “It requires developing new models that maintain excellence in teaching while exponentially increasing our reach. We are fortunate to have in Howard and his family partners who understand the challenges and opportunities ahead.”

Howard, now a member of the Strategic Advancement Committee, continues to follow in the footsteps of his late father. With a \$6.2 million gift from the William & Sheila Konar Foundation, the Konar family is helping the Museum confront alarming trends of Holocaust denial and violent antisemitism where they are most prominent.



THE MUSEUM’S INITIATIVE on Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism

The Initiative on Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism focuses efforts on key areas: Western Europe, where there is a rise in deadly antisemitic violence and racist nationalism; Eastern Europe, where governments and political leaders of extremist parties are writing Nazi collaboration and complicity out of their national history; the Middle East and North Africa, where Holocaust distortion is prevalent in official, political, and intellectual circles; and Iran, where there are high levels of state-sponsored antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

The initiative targets young adults (aged 17–30) and community leaders. By partnering with individuals and organizations in these regions, we are reaching new audiences and achieving unprecedented credibility as part of our efforts to inform people about the dangers of antisemitism, extremism, and Holocaust distortion.

ABOVE: Museum partner Dr. Habib Kazdaghli presents the Museum’s exhibition *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* in Arabic, French, and English at universities, private secondary schools, and libraries throughout Tunisia. *Abdelkrim Gabousunisia*



FINAL WORD

VICTORIA BARNETT

THE MUSEUM'S PROGRAMS ON ETHICS, RELIGION, AND THE HOLOCAUST, LED until recently by Dr. Victoria Barnett, draw scholars and faith leaders from around the world to the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies. Shortly before her retirement, during which she will focus on her own scholarship, Barnett explained to **Memory & Action** why it is so important to widen the aperture of this work to bring thought leaders from different faiths into new conversations about the Holocaust.

What is the most uncomfortable truth that has emerged from this area of study?

BARNETT: The German churches largely either acquiesced or collapsed in the face of National Socialism. They didn't speak up for the Jews. With few exceptions they didn't rescue Jews. That's a failure that's not just historical; it's a moral failure. That aspect of this history has always

haunted people. Even today when people go through our exhibition they say, "I'm from this or that denomination; what did my church do?" The answer all too often is "They went along with it."

You are a renowned expert on the history of the Protestant church and the German theologian and resistance leader Dietrich Bonhoeffer. What was it like to be a scholar at the Museum?

BARNETT: The experience of working here has challenged and deepened my thinking. For example, the German resistance circle in which Bonhoeffer was involved is viewed more critically than it was 30 years ago. Bonhoeffer is seen by many people as a heroic figure for his role in the resistance movement. In many ways, he was—but there were different resistance circles in Germany, and Bonhoeffer ended up in a group of elite officials and diplomats that was arguably the most morally complicated, most compromised resistance group during that period. He was drawn in partly because he was trying to stay out of military service, which sheds a different and more complicated light on his role in the resistance.

What are some of your important takeaways from this history?

BARNETT: I always tell people that when you work for decades on the Holocaust it gives you a fairly bleak view of human nature. What we think of as human goodness can be very complicated. Another one of my takeaways is that ethnic violence and genocide and hate are not inevitable. Even in Nazi Germany during the 1930s, you find people who were trying to push back against it—they were trying to do the right thing, speak out against what was happening. But we don't tend to think of them because of the way this history ended. So I keep that in mind even as I look at the big picture. They still did the right thing and the importance of that is really crucial to convey. Through our work at the Museum, maybe we can help strengthen those ethics within people.

What were some of the benefits of broadening the focus of the Museum's work in this area?

BARNETT: For the past ten years, focusing on what I call "multi-religious" approaches to the Holocaust, I have intentionally brought together groups, scholars, and leaders from a variety of faiths, and even people of no faith, to talk about this history together. When you have people of very different backgrounds in one room, they bring different insights and it opens up new questions for everybody.

Ethnic violence and genocide and hate are not inevitable.

—VICTORIA BARNETT

Ethical questions are not necessarily driven by religion—they appeal to any citizen who thinks at a deeper level. In 1933 in Germany, there was a relatively short period of time during which people went from being law-abiding citizens in a republic to being members of the Nazi Party and embracing ideological principles that repudiate what we think of as basic ethical behavior and decency. Those deeper questions come up in my work.

Do you have any favorite memories from your time at the Museum?

BARNETT: My favorite part of the job has been seeing people come alive and say: "I never knew about this." Or even in some wonderful cases when people have said: "You changed what I'm going to study," or "I'm going to major in this because of what I've learned here in the Museum," or "I definitely want to teach the Holocaust now that I understand how important it is." Those moments in which you can see how someone's time at the Museum is actually going to impact their future are very special. We're bringing people into the field who didn't expect to find their purpose here, and I feel very fortunate to have been part of that. ■

Securing the Future

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WHAT DID AMERICANS KNOW?

WHAT MORE COULD HAVE BEEN DONE?

AMERICANS

AND THE HOLOCAUST

OPEN DAILY ON THE MUSEUM'S LOWER LEVEL
Online exhibition at ushmm.org/americans

This exhibition is a portrait of American society that shows how the Depression, isolationism, xenophobia, racism, and antisemitism shaped responses to Nazism and the Holocaust. It reveals how much information was available to Americans at the time and asks why rescuing Jews did not become a priority, except for a few individuals who took the risk to help.

This exhibition was made possible by the generous support of lead sponsor Jeannie & Jonathan Lavine. Additional major funding was provided by the Bildners—Joan & Allen z"l, Elisa Spungen & Rob, Nancy & Jim and by Jane and Daniel Och.

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UNITED STATES
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