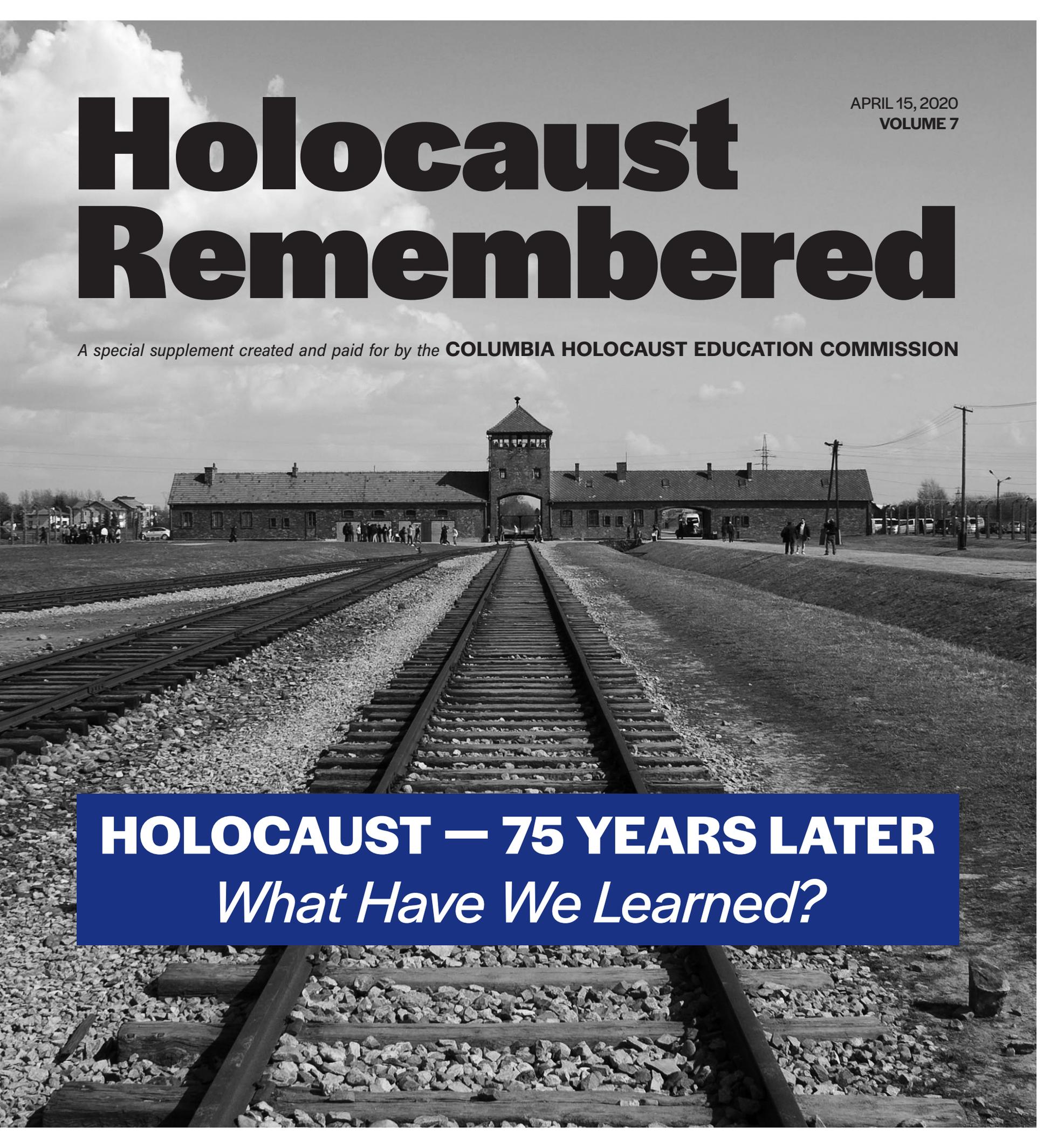


# Holocaust Remembered

APRIL 15, 2020  
VOLUME 7

*A special supplement created and paid for by the* **COLUMBIA HOLOCAUST EDUCATION COMMISSION**



**HOLOCAUST — 75 YEARS LATER**  
*What Have We Learned?*

# South Carolina Civic Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz

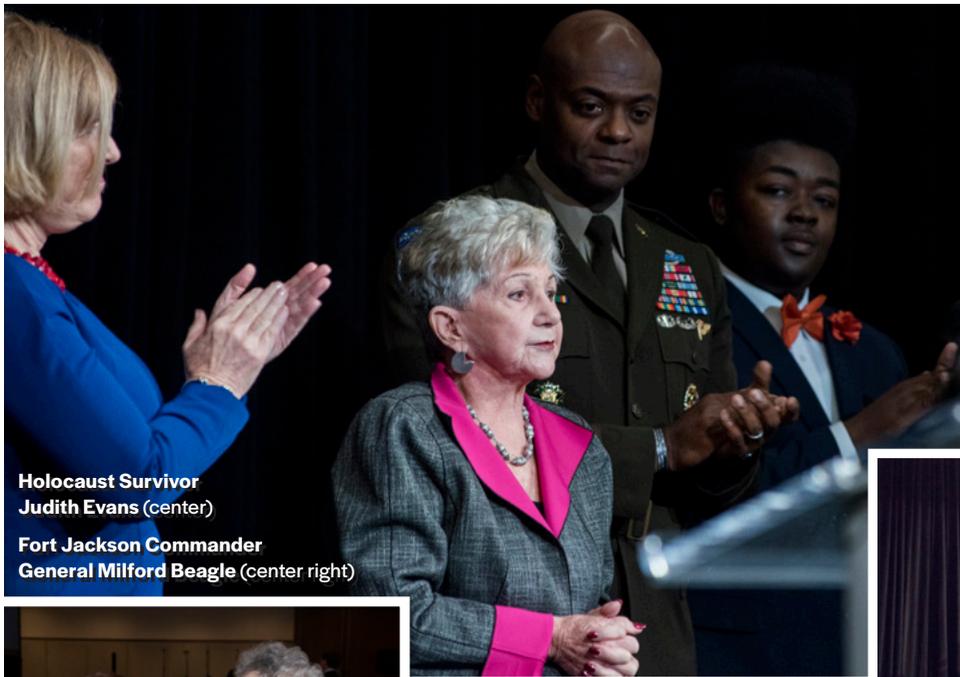
University of South Carolina Alumni Hall, Columbia

The SC Civic Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Liberation of Auschwitz, sponsored by the SC Council on the Holocaust was held Tuesday morning, January 28, 2020 in Columbia, SC. This historic event was remembered all over the world and over 500 people attended the commemoration in Columbia. The award-winning Clover High School chorus performed and the Fort Jackson Concert Band and Color Guard participated. It was live-streamed throughout the state by SC ETV and can still be viewed at [scetv.org/auschwitz](http://scetv.org/auschwitz). Remarks were heard from Gov. Henry McMaster and Lt. Governor Pamela Evette, Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin, Fort Jackson Commander General Milford Beagle, Holocaust Survivor Judith Evans, USC President Robert Caslen, State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman, student Benjamin Gadsden, Mother Emmanuel Rev. Eric Manning, Rabbis Michael Davies and Jonathan Case, SC Executive Director Christine Beresniva, Keynote Speaker Elisha Wiesel and event organizer Lilly Filler, Chair of the SC Council on the Holocaust.

*Photos courtesy of University of South Carolina and SC ETV*



Keynote Speaker Elisha Wiesel



Holocaust Survivor Judith Evans (center)

Fort Jackson Commander General Milford Beagle (center right)



Clover High School Chorus

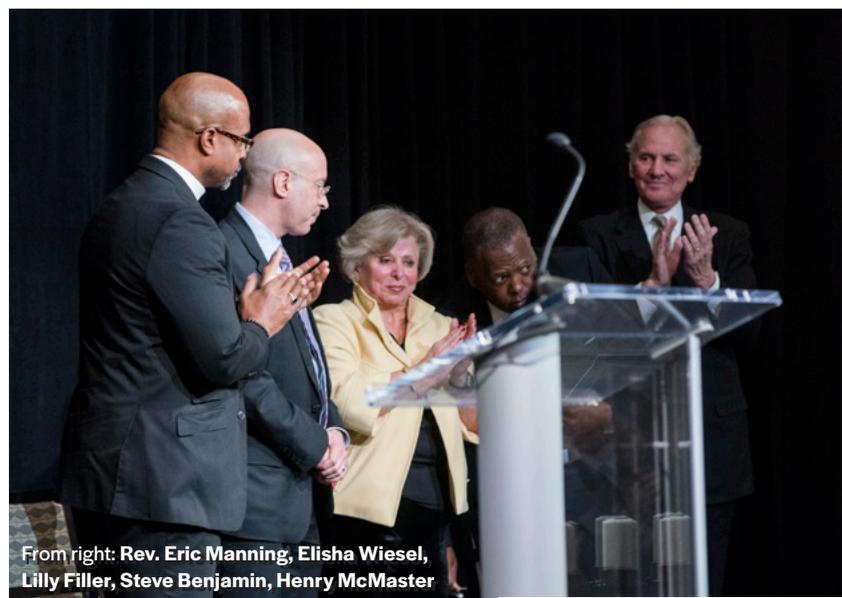


Fort Jackson Color Guard



Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin (at podium)





From right: Rev. Eric Manning, Elisha Wiesel, Lilly Filler, Steve Benjamin, Henry McMaster



SC Executive Director Christine Beresniva



USC President Robert Caslen



Fort Jackson Concert Band



Rabbi Jonathan Case



Student Benjamin Gadsden



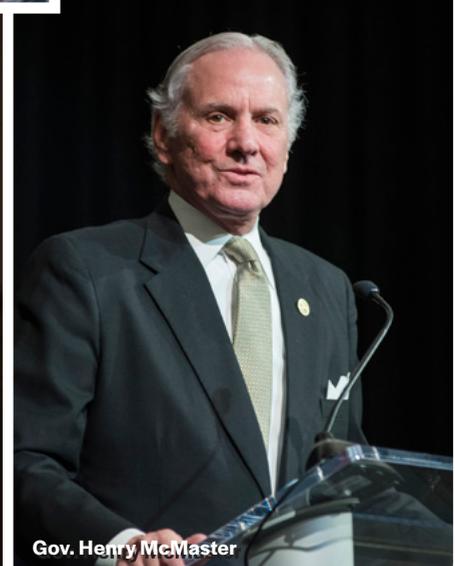
State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman



Lt. Governor Pamela Evette (center)



Rabbi Michael Davies



Gov. Henry McMaster

# What is the Holocaust?

As defined in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter's Commission on the Holocaust:

**“T**he Holocaust was the systematic bureaucratic annihilation of 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War. It was a crime unique in the annals of human history, different not only in the quantity of violence—the sheer numbers killed—but in its manner and purpose as a mass criminal enterprise organized by the state against defenseless civilian populations. The decision to kill every Jew everywhere in Europe: the definition of Jew as target for death transcended all boundaries ...

The concept of annihilation of an entire people, as distinguished from their subjugation, was unprecedented; never before in human history had genocide been an all-pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral or religious constraints ...

The Holocaust was not simply a throwback to medieval torture or archaic barbarism, but a thoroughly modern expression of bureaucratic organization, industrial management, scientific achievement, and technological sophistication. The entire apparatus of the German bureaucracy was marshalled in the service of the extermination process ...

The Holocaust stands as a tragedy for Europe, for Western Civilization, and for all the world. We must remember the facts of the Holocaust, and work to understand these facts.”



South Carolina Civic Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz

## The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

**A**s we commemorated the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz on January 28, 2020, I was filled with many complex emotions: conviction because we were remembering in a public manner the horrors and the lessons of the Holocaust, pride because the SC community had come together to say “Never Forget” but sadness because the times today are reminiscent of the 1930’s. We continue to see hatred with the rise of antisemitism sweeping the country and the world. First we hear the rhetoric, then we see the actions around the world and in our own community. Even this commemoration in Israel was marred by the refusal of Poland President Duda to attend the event, since he was not invited to speak and Russian President Putin making comments to ‘embellish’ the Soviet role as on the right side of history.



LILLY FILLER

The sentiment of the day was embodied by a quote from French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

So, when antisemitism reared its ugly head in Charlottesville in August, 2017, and in Pittsburgh in October, 2018, and in Poway, California in April, 2019 and when reports of Jewish cemetery desecration and rises in White Supremacy hate crimes became more common, I knew that we needed to speak louder and more clearly and we need to continue to work to stop these actions.

At the well-attended 75th Civic Commemoration in Columbia (see previous two pages), the keynote speaker was Elisha Wiesel, the only child of Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Laureate, poet, writer, humanitarian and Holocaust survivor. Like his father, who had spoken in Columbia twice in the past, Mr. Wiesel was soft spoken initially, but had powerful words to impart. He spoke of what mattered to him and what mattered to his father: values, love, history, and facts. He expressed disappointment and concern about the lack of these attributes, personally and nationally. All political parties

The Columbia Holocaust Education Commission (CHEC) [columbiaholocausteducation.org](http://columbiaholocausteducation.org) is committed to providing safe and factual information to the community, to teachers, and to students. We have an active speaker’s bureau, an exhibit, and this annual Holocaust Remembered supplement which is printed and distributed by Free Times, a subsidiary of the Post and Courier. It is also distributed in all SC McClatchy markets. Supporting CHEC is the SC Council on the Holocaust [scholocaustcouncil.org](http://scholocaustcouncil.org) who sponsored the previously mentioned 75th Civic Commemoration.

This is the seventh edition of Holocaust Remembered. The previous six editions can be viewed on line at [free-times.com/holocaust](http://free-times.com/holocaust). We welcome your comments and your suggestions on future topics. Any contribution is appreciated and can be sent to Selden K Smith Holocaust Education Foundation. [holocausteducationfoundation.org](http://holocausteducationfoundation.org).

were lacking in understanding and empathy of their neighbors. “...While Jews are being killed by those on the extreme right because of our history of embracing immigrants and empowering communities of color, we are demonized on the extreme left as being the oppressors of the very people that White Nationalists hate us of helping. If hatred from the right feels vicious and cruel, hatred from the left feels like a betrayal.”

As we grapple with the complex and horrific history of WWII and specifically the Holocaust, one must ask “What have we learned from the Holocaust, 75 years ago?” Are we better today than we were then, do we know how to combat racism, antisemitism, xenophobia, etc? The articles that follow try to show examples of where we are today and I will leave it to the reader to decide the answer to the above question. Thank you to the contributors who have spent hours researching their material.

It should be noted at this time, our world is experiencing a pandemic of the coronavirus (Covid-19). The anxiety, stress, and fear felt and exhibited by all citizens of the world is palpable. In order to follow the governmental and health guidelines, all gatherings, including the commemoration of Yom Hashoah has been cancelled. The cancellation only heightens the need to remember the Days of Remembrance in our hearts and minds. Please seek out virtual commemorations, i.e., [togetherweremember.org](http://togetherweremember.org). To all living beings, I pray for a safe resolution of this terrible outbreak. ■

**ON THE COVER:** The gate house at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland. Photo by Diego Delso.

### INDEX

Photos: SC Civic Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz	2-3
What is the Holocaust?	4
What did Americans know about the Holocaust in real time?	5
Never Be Silent	6
Looking Through the Rearview Mirror	7

Creating National Memory – Finally	8-9
The End of the Holocaust: Looking on from far away	10
The ABCs of Anne Frank	11
First Jewish Service at Dachau Concentration Camp: May 6, 1945	12-13
Teaching and learning about the Holocaust	14
How to speak to children about antisemitism	15

Take Off Your Yarmulke	16
Jews of Shanghai	18
You are Good People	19
Importance of Remembrance	20
The Story of My Father	21
My Personal Charleston Hero	22
Rutka’s Notebook	23
Holocaust Education Resources	24

# What did Americans know about the Holocaust in real time?

In November 1938, when the nation's eyes were focused on two major events — the Democratic majority's loss of 79 seats in the midterm Congressional elections, and the 20th anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I — The Greenville News's front page alerted its readers to a new crisis overseas.

Under a headline trumpeting that the new Republicans in Congress intended to "Block Leftward Course," the second headline — in font nearly as large as first — blared "Jewish Stores Looted, Synagogues Burned in Reich Riots.

Multiple subheadings and adjacent articles informed readers of the November 9-10, 1938, Kristallnacht attacks. Throughout Nazi Germany, which included recently annexed Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia, Jewish shops had been destroyed, synagogues scorched, homes looted. Thirty thousand Jewish men and boys were rounded up and sent to concentration camps, told they'd only be released when they promised to immigrate elsewhere. Few countries, however, welcomed Jewish refugees.

The noose was tightening. And although South Carolina residents could not have imagined that the Nazi regime and its collaborators would turn to mass murder within three years, it was clear then that Europe's Jews were in serious danger.

Seventy-five years after the Allied defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of the Holocaust, many Americans have strong feelings about the role the country played in World War II. While the victory of democracy over fascism and the liberation of Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners is rightfully celebrated, one question is still debated: What did Americans know about the Holocaust, and what more could have been done to rescue the victims?

In April 2018, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, opened a new exhibition, *Americans and the Holocaust*, which examines the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, and the breadth of American responses to Nazism,

World War II, and the Nazi-sponsored genocide of European Jews.

A major part of the new exhibition concerns news itself: As the *Kristallnacht* coverage in *The Greenville News* indicates, *Americans and the Holocaust* corrects the common misconception that Americans did not know or were indifferent to the threats Nazism posed to German Jews, and to world peace.

Museum historians did not find evidence of nationwide coverage on our own. Three years ago, in preparation for the exhibition, the Museum launched a crowd-sourcing project, "History Unfolded." Museum staff asked students, teachers, librarians and history buffs across the country to research their local newspapers and determine what kind of information their community could have read or heard about Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. The Museum built an extensive online archive of American newspaper coverage of key Holocaust events, including 23,000 submitted articles — and more than 75 from every US state.

Some of the information reaching the people of South Carolina about events unfolding in Europe was prophetic. On April 2, 1933, only two months after Adolf Hitler became Germany's chancellor, *Columbia's The State* newspaper bore the headline "Boycott Paralyzes Commerce of Jews." The article, placed next to features about the New Deal and the beginning of beer sales after the end of Prohibition, described the boycott of Jewish stores throughout Germany as "the



REBECCA  
ERBELING



Passengers aboard the MS St. Louis, May 13-June 17, 1939

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Dr. Liane Reif-Lehrer

On May 13, 1939, the German transatlantic liner *St. Louis* sailed from Hamburg, Germany, for Havana, Cuba, carrying 937 passengers, the majority of whom were Jewish. When the *St. Louis* arrived in Havana, the passengers learned that the landing certificates they had purchased were invalid. After Cuba refused to allow the passengers to land and the United States (and other Western Hemisphere nations) did not offer to take the passengers, the ship returned to Europe. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee worked with the State Department, ultimately persuading four countries—Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium—to admit the passengers.

greatest organized anti-Semitic movement of modern times." "Jews want to continue the fight until the destruction of the German people," a representative of the Nazi Women's Federation is quoted as saying. "We will continue it until Jewry has been destroyed."

The small Jewish community in South Carolina — only about 6,000 members — did what they could. They raised money to aid Jewish refugees attempting to flee Europe, with an ongoing tally of donations reported in the *Greenwood, SC, Index-Journal*.

And yet the majority of Americans did not support allowing more immigration to the United States. College students surveyed in late 1938 — after the *Kristallnacht* attacks — were sympathetic to the "oppressed German minorities," but 69% of them did not think that the United States should offer haven to Jewish refugees. The University of South Carolina's *The Gamecock* speculated that the percentage would have been lower, except that "American Jewish students" raised the 'yes' answer."

**Left: Portrait of Jan Karski during his mission to the United States to inform government leaders about Nazi policy in Poland, July 1943.**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Jan Karski

Jan Karski, a lieutenant in the Polish underground fighting the German occupation, was smuggled into both the Warsaw ghetto and prisoner transit camp to witness the horrors suffered by Jews. Nine months later, Karski arrived in Washington, D.C., to tell American government officials what he had seen. Karski met President Roosevelt at the White House on July 28, 1943.

Visit Americans and the Holocaust online at [ushmm.org/Americans](https://ushmm.org/Americans)

The *Americans and the Holocaust* exhibition reveals that the 1938 poll of college students was not an exception in America at the time. Although many Americans knew about the threats of Nazism and there was sympathy for the plight of the victims, there was not a groundswell of national action. Concerns about the Great Depression, immigration, national security, and war—as well as a culture of antisemitism, racism, xenophobia, and isolationism — limited Americans' willingness to make the rescue of Jews a priority.

There are still many more stories to uncover. The Museum's "History Unfolded" project will continue to collect newspaper articles until at least 2022. Interested students and citizen historians should visit [www.ushmm.org](https://www.ushmm.org) to learn how to participate. The *Americans and the Holocaust* online exhibition can be visited at [ushmm.org/Americans](https://ushmm.org/Americans) and a traveling version of the exhibition will tour public libraries nationwide beginning in March 2020, with a stop at the Richland County library in the summer of 2021. ■

*Rebecca Erbeling is a historian, curator, and archivist at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and served as the lead historian on the Museum's special exhibition, *Americans and the Holocaust*, on display 2018-2021.*

# Never Be Silent

When Columbia was chartered as America's first planned capital city more than 200 years ago, Senator John Gervais advocated for "the oppressed of all lands to find refuge under the wings of Columbia." I am sure that at those critical early days of our republic Senator Gervais could not have fully understood how precise this quote was.

Gervais could not have imagined that in the year 2020 our citizens and residents would hail from each of the 194 sovereign nations of the world, speak 90 different language and practice dozens of religions. He could not imagine that this city would become an inclusive and dynamic city of the New South built by his peers AND an amazingly diverse group of Columbians including freed Africans, Irish indentured servants and incredibly resilient and faithful Jewish immigrants.

I have had the honor of serving Columbia — the city that I love, as Mayor for nearly a decade and have come to truly value our rich Jewish history. Since our founding in the late 18th century Jewish citizens have led in the areas of the arts, science,



**STEVE BENJAMIN**

religion, education, business, government and law. Dr. Mordecai Hendricks De Leon and Henry Lyons even served as Mayors of Columbia before the Civil War.

As a public servant and student of history, I've made it a priority to understand and learn from our collective past. I soon realized that it is impossible to truly understand human history without a full and comprehensive knowledge of the Shoah.

Adolph Hitler and his Nazi Germany's attempt to eradicate an entire race and successfully murder over 6 million Jews in the 20th century should serve as a reminder to the dangers that we face when we allow antisemitism, racism, xenophobia and all forms of hate to march forward unchecked.

My 2019 visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau put the horrors faced by over 1 million Jewish families, thousands of Poles, Roma and prisoners of war on full display. As adult men, we wept when I, as President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, led a delegation of our leaders through the Gate of Death and witnessed empty canisters of Zyklon-B used to poison innocents. We viewed thousands of shoes and suitcases stolen from men, women and children fleeing their homes desperate for sanctuary. Hair was shorn from proud women and men were attempting to degrade them, violating their faith and dignity and then used the hair for industrial purposes.



Entrance of Auschwitz concentration camp



determined that we could and should be doing so much more.

Still today, we are struggling as a nation to handle many issues that we thought we had put to bed decades ago. Angry protesters wave flags & swastikas that brave young men had stormed the battlefield at Gettysburg and beaches of Normandy to defeat.

There are actually ongoing debates about the morality of human chattel slavery. Divisive ethnic, racial and religious rhetoric can be heard. Not only hate speech but deadly violence often co-signed from the highest levels of the republic.

This endless barrage of bitterness we watch on the news every night, the hate and vitriol flowing from what should be the world's first and greatest temple of democracy ... that is not the America we know and love and I refuse to believe that this is a dark reflection of who we actually are.

Those cold days in Poland, I learned first-hand not only the evils of the Holocaust but a renewed motivation to, in the words of the great Elie Wiesel (obm) "... I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides."

I determined that in Columbia we will love each other, that we will lead to build a world not focused only on tolerance but respect, compassion, inclusion and action. ■

*Steve Benjamin, Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina.*

**Still today, we are struggling as a nation to handle many issues that we thought we had put to bed decades ago.**

I had the incredibly difficult experience of feeling that I was standing in both hell and on hallowed ground.

I'd had the opportunity to visit Yad Vashem twice over the past decade but I was completely unprepared emotionally to stand in a gas chamber and a crematorium that stole millions of futures. I was simply not as emotionally mature as I thought a middle-aged man should be. As a group, we wept and we became angrier by the moment. We reflected on the world that we live in, that the lost would never see, and



Twins used in medical experimentation



Room of shoes in Auschwitz concentration camp



Left: Beds in a concentration camp. Right: Crematorium oven at Majdanek concentration camp



## Looking Through the Rearview Mirror

I was privileged this summer to travel to Poland and Amsterdam with the South Carolina Holocaust Council. I honestly thought I understood and had a grasp of the Holocaust but I was so wrong. I spent six days learning things I can't even in my worst nightmares imagine happened to other people, people just like me, people just like my parents, grandparents. It could very well have been my children or grandchildren if I had lived in Poland in 1939. The only difference was ethnic hatred for primarily one group of people. The Jewish families were stripped of their property and forced



**KATRINA SHEALY**

to live in areas known as Ghettos which were highly restricted and guarded by the Germans and when you left there your next step was most likely a concentration or extermination camp. Over six million Jews were murdered in concentration and extermination camps in Poland. We say it and it crosses our lips so easily, like yes, I know about the Holocaust but when you are there and you see the shoes, the personal property, the suit cases, the prayer shawls, even the hair shaved from the heads of the women as they were led to their unknowing death, reality sinks in and suddenly you really don't know about the Holocaust. When you actually see the building where the women and children were crowded in, or hundreds of men walked in to be gassed, you don't know about the Holocaust. When you walk pass the huge dome of ashes you really didn't understand as much as you thought you

did. When you climb the stairs into the small room in Amsterdam to see where Anne Frank spent some of her last days and where she wrote her dairy before being taken to a concentration camp, things are a little more real. There is nothing in history to compare to what happened from 1941 to 1945, nothing. We must not let this part of history, as horrible as it is, ever be forgotten because of the lessons learned. What we learned is, we cannot tolerate any form of anti-Semitism, racism or discrimination. ■

*South Carolina State Senator Katrina Frye Shealy is Chair of Family and Veteran Services, Lexington South Carolina.*

**There is nothing in history to compare to what happened from 1941-1945, nothing. ... What we learned is, we cannot tolerate any form of antisemitism, racism, or discrimination.**



Majdanek concentration and extermination camp in Lublin, Poland

### HOLOCAUST EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS

#### South Carolina Council on the Holocaust

[scholocaustcouncil.org](http://scholocaustcouncil.org)

Lilly S Filler, MD, Chairwoman  
 Scott Auspelmeyer  
 Leah Chase  
 Eileen Chepenik  
 Brian Day  
 Denise Deveaux  
 Melinda Menzer, PhD  
 Marla Palmer  
 Jesse Scott, PhD  
 Donald Sloan, PhD  
 Joe Wachter  
 Margaret Walden

#### Columbia Holocaust Education Commission

[columbiaholocausteducation.org](http://columbiaholocausteducation.org)

Dr. Lilly S Filler, Co-Chairwoman  
 Lyssa Harvey, Co-Chairwoman  
 Barry Ables  
 Rachel Barnett  
 Mary Burkett  
 Dr. Federica Clementi Schoeman  
 Ester Greenberg  
 Justin Heinenman  
 Dawn Miller Heinenman  
 Donna Magera  
 Minda Miller  
 Cheryl Nail  
 Marlene Roth  
 Patty Tucker



The National Holocaust Museum in Amsterdam is scheduled to be completed in 2022.

## Creating National Memory— Finally

Seventy-five years after the Nazi regime was finally brought to its knees, countless memorials and museums have appeared to commemorate the tragedies that befell European Jewry and

other minority populations, such as Roma and Sinti, the mentally and physically handicapped, and gay and lesbian citizens.

For example, in the heart of Berlin, nearly adjacent to the German Reichstag, a national Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe attracts over half a million of visitors each year. A permanent exhibition below-ground educates the public about the atrocities committed in the name of the *Arische Volksgemeinschaft*. It is not an easy task to permanently memorialize shame



**SASKIA COENEN SNYDER**

into one's own national landscape, but the German state has made a concerted and genuine effort to come to terms with its complicated past. In Poland, too, where Nazi architects designed and built six death camps aimed to systematically annihilate Europe's Jewish population, victims of Nazi crimes are commemorated. Granted, its attempts to remember have revealed Poland's own problematic history during and after the war, not the least of which is its continued reluctance to acknowledge well-documented instances of collaboration and brutality. Auschwitz is the number one tourist attraction in the country and while this is not exactly something to brag about, it's *there*, confronting visitors with man's inhumanity to man. There are many places in Poland, France, Belgium, Germany, and Israel where Jews and non-Jews can contemplate the immense loss of life, culture, and community. Even across the Atlantic Ocean, in the United States, Holocaust memorials and museums have

emerged in the last few decades. Some, like in Columbia, South Carolina, are modest while others, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., have become well-known urban landmarks, situated on the National Mall — a tribute to and recognition of Jewish lives in Europe and America alike.

It is curious, then, that in the Netherlands, where seventy-five percent of the Jewish population was murdered — the highest percentage in western Europe — no national museum exists. Over 100,000 Dutch Jews were deported by train, first from Amsterdam to Westerbork (a transit camp located in the northeastern part of the country), then to Auschwitz and Sobibor. A quick Wikipedia search of "Nationaal Holocaust Museum" generates an entry only four sentences long, informing readers that "the museum is under construction" and asking for donations. Coming to terms with a black chapter in its history — one marked by foreign occupation, rapid accommoda-

tion to a new regime, occasional resistance, and ultimately the deportation of its Jewish neighbors — has proven difficult for a country that has long taken pride in traditions of tolerance and diversity.

Holland has an annual *Dodenherdenking* (Remembrance of the Dead) on May 4, the day before Liberation Day on May 5, when members of the royal family and the Prime Minister, in highly formalized fashion, pay homage to (all) WWII casualties, laying wreaths on the *Dam Square* in the Dutch capital. Amsterdam also has a Jewish History museum, the Anne Frank House, a Resistance Museum, an Auschwitz Monument, a memorial to gay and lesbian victims of Nazism, and the old Dutch Theater (*Hollandsche Schouwburg*) from where Jews were taken to the Central Station for deportation to the East. But a National Holocaust Museum, funded by the state, to honor the memories of Jewish men, women, and children, to tell the story accurately, and to alert citizens to the dangers of fascism is still incomplete— materially as well as mentally. Creating such a museum includes coming to terms psychologically with one's stance and conduct during a time of genocidal violence. Seventy-five years after the Holocaust, Holland is still struggling with its past, with its own self-reflection.

Emile Schrijver, Professor of Jewish History at the University of Amsterdam and Director of the Jewish Cultural Quarter, confirmed recently that Holland has been comparatively late in its attempt to anchor Jewish persecution into the Dutch memorial landscape. "We are, indeed, ridiculously late," he reported in the press. While research indicates that public interest in the Holocaust is increasing, historical knowledge of WWII, Nazism, and the Holocaust are on the decline, making the creation of a historically accurate narrative in the Dutch context even more essential. Schrijver has been put in charge of curating the museum, to be housed across the street from the Dutch Theater, in the former Jewish child care center (*crèche*). In collaboration with the Dutch Resistance, over 500 Jewish children were smuggled out of the *crèche* and taken to non-Jewish families across the country— all of them survived the war.

How to explain Dutch reluctance and tardiness? The answer is multifold. The lack of political will has certainly been a factor. Contrary to, say, Belgium, where Prime Minister Patrick Dewael made a strong case in the late 1990s for a Memorial, Museum and Documentation Center on Holocaust and Human Rights, the focus of Holland's political leaders lay elsewhere.

**The main obstacle, however, concerns the difficulty of having to fully acknowledge the human tragedy that unfolded in Europe — one that many Dutch citizens at the time witnessed in their own neighborhoods, on the streets, on the tram, all in broad daylight.**



The museum is being curated in the former Hervormde Kweekschool.



Photo by Karel Bönnekamp, Resistance Museum Amsterdam

When *Kazerne Dossin*, located next to the former Mechelen transit camp, from where Belgian Jews and Romani were sent to camps in Poland, opened its doors in 2012, Dutch political leaders barely noticed. But politicians weren't the only ones to remain docile. The Jewish Historical Museum and other Amsterdam Jewish institutions hesitated as well. Emile Schrijver contends that over the years curators continued to favor Jewish museums that depicted "a living Jewish community" as opposed to a

victimized one, avoiding an emphasis on the darkest chapters in its long history. For centuries Holland had been good to the Jews, from the earliest settlements in the late 1500s Amsterdam until disaster struck in 1940, when Nazi troops invaded the country. This inclination to accentuate life over death further impaired any organized effort to initiate the building of a national Holocaust museum. What we have instead is a beautiful Amsterdam Jewish Museum, housed in the former Ashkenazi synagogue

of 1670— a Golden Age relic that celebrates Dutch-Jewish history but that also subtly communicates the sorrow of an empty building that could no longer serve its original purpose. The population had been decimated under Nazi rule.

The main obstacle, however, concerns the difficulty of having to fully acknowledge the human tragedy that unfolded in Europe — one that many Dutch citizens at the time witnessed in their own neighborhoods, on the streets, on the tram, all in broad daylight. The murder of millions didn't start in 1942, when Amsterdam Jews were first put on transport to Nazi camps in Poland. The prelude to genocide, namely exclusion, public harassment, isolation, and hostility had begun long before. Even though there were admirable instances of resistance — the February 1941 Strike by dock workers protesting anti-Jewish measures is well-known — these were eclipsed by much more common responses of accommodation to the Nazi occupation. Most Dutch bureaucrats, train personnel, tram drivers, police officers, and the wider public did what they were told, following orders out of fear, obedience, or resignation. Adolf Eichmann, one of the central architects of the Holocaust in charge of organizing deportations, stated in a postwar interview that in Holland "the transports ran so smoothly that it was a pleasure to witness." Incorporating that degree of disgrace, the immea-

asurable failing to save over 100,000 Jewish neighbors from annihilation, has proven sufficiently difficult that it has taken over seventy-five years to initiate the creation of a National Holocaust Museum.

But late is better than never. The project is finally underway and scheduled to be completed in 2022. On January 13 of this year, the German government pledged a four million euro contribution— a somewhat surprisingly modest token but one that's been welcomed nonetheless. In addition to the Holocaust Museum, a "Monument of Names," designed by Daniel Libeskind, will flank the sidewalks of the Weesperstraat, through which Tramline 8 took Jews from the Dutch Theater's deportation center to the Central Station. Together, the Holocaust Museum and the Monument of Names will remind Dutch locals that the principles of democracy, diversity, and tolerance are fragile and require collective courage to be upheld. Neglecting this perpetual task will guarantee more names to be engraved on public monuments. Seventy-five years after the Holocaust, at a time when political democracies are again under siege and antisemitism is escalating — including in Holland — we need to see and hear that message much more clearly. ■

*Saskia Coenen Snyder is Associate Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of South Carolina.*

# The End of the Holocaust: Looking on from far away

**P**acking for a rather special voyage, Ilan Ramon, the very first Israeli astronaut, took with him into space in 2003 a small drawing fittingly entitled Moon Landscape.

The drawing was completed around 1942 in Theresienstadt by a Czech Jewish boy called Petr Ginz, who was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944 at the age of 16. Ramon's mother and grandmother had also been interned in the Auschwitz death camp during the war and

had survived it. Once propelled into space, where infinity meets eternity and, as poets would say better than I, one is met by the unresponsive silence of an awesome (to some, miraculous) cosmos, it must have struck Ramon as a meaningful gesture to carry with him a piece of earthly artifact as a reminder—a historical imprint—of who he was and where he came from.

Petr's drawing shows Planet Earth in the background as seen from a mountainous, lifeless lunar landscape in the foreground. Petr drew the mountain peaks on the moon as if they were curious onlookers admiring our gorgeous, colorful globe in the distance. A planet on which innocent blood was running at that moment and war was decimating everything in its tracks. Is it a metaphor for a universal judgment on humanity? Or, perhaps, was the 14-year-old artist in the internment camp easing the torments of fear and privation by imagining safety on a dif-



**F.K. SCHOEMAN**

**Petr drew the mountain peaks on the moon as if they were curious onlookers admiring our gorgeous, colorful globe in the distance. A planet on which innocent blood was running at that moment and war was decimating everything in its tracks.**

ferent planet, or by putting his situation into a metaphysical perspective? How small and insignificant we must look from outer space, perhaps this drawing signifies. Or maybe, as Ilan Ramon seems to have suggested with his decision to bring Moon Landscape on the Columbia space shuttle, which crashed on reentering killing him and all crew members, we carry who we are with us—no

escape is possible—even if a great destiny leads us to interstellar voyages. Years after the Holocaust, the Holocaust was still with this astronaut, and despite Hitler's plan to annihilate all Jews on Earth, Ramon was a Jew, born in Israel, and contributing with his research and bravery to the enhancement of human civilization. Who knows what contributions to art or science could Petr Ginz have scored, had his young life not been taken away so brutally and senselessly?

Seventy-five years later, the Holocaust has not been forgotten. It is not understudied, and its survivors did not remain silent. Yet there remains a quenchless void at the heart of this story that seems to never be filled sufficiently. We keep looking and exploring, asking and probing, squinting our mind's eye as if something we missed all along will suddenly appear, reveal itself to us and make us finally understand. Understand what?

The answer we are still missing concerns an elusive truth far beyond the nitty-gritty details of how a genocide is implemented. Behind the question "How can we prevent such a disaster from happening again?" there lies the frightful query: How could it happen in the first place? What turns next-door neighbors into mortal enemies? What makes an otherwise excellent family father go to work in the morning to a death factory where children of his own children's age are packed into gas chambers?

As Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi indicated, the Holocaust did not only exterminate humans, it brutalized human justice.

Since WWII, we have certainly found an effective political answer to the perennial

existential threats against the Jews. While antisemitism still exists and indeed thrives today, the situation of the Jews is no longer that of a century ago thanks to the existence of the State of Israel, a nation to call one's own for all Jews.

But Israel or the Holocaust notwithstanding, neither laws, information nor education have succeeded in defeating an-



**"Moon Landscape" by Petr Ginz, Yad Vashem, Israel. Petr drew this landscape while interned in Terezin, before he was transported to Auschwitz where he was murdered at the age of 16.**

tisemitism in the world. As French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre said, "laws have never embarrassed and will never embarrass the anti-Semite, who conceives of himself as belonging to a mythical society outside the bounds of legality." So how to change this state of affairs? Perhaps, as Petr's painting may prefigure, we ought to change our perspective.

We are not going to convert directly the anti-Semites, the haters, the racists: but we could transform the system within which they function, thus inexorably transforming them too. It is a utopian dream, yet one worth fighting for: if we are serious about banishing antisemitism, racism and their ancillary offshoots (misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, etc.), we must strive for a world lynch-pinned on social solidarity.

Once we establish solidarity as our ethical priority—across racial, economic, ethnic, political, gender, and even species lines—we will create a society in which the otherness of the Other ceases to be treated

as a threat. Solidarity makes a White man get off a bus if a Black woman is kicked off it in the segregated South. Solidarity makes a heterosexual woman march in protest with LGBTQIA+ people to demand equal rights for them. Solidarity is more than simply coalition or association, and the justice it achieves is not merely an end but a constant duty. Solidarity means acting on someone else's behalf and, most important, on their terms.

Seventy-five years after the Holocaust, we can be proud that our academic, legislative and informational job has largely been accomplished. Now, with its indelible imprint in our hearts, it is time we change the world. ■

*F.K. Schoeman is Associate Professor of English and Jewish Studies and director of the Jewish Studies program at the University of South Carolina. She is the author of Holocaust Mothers and Daughters: Family, History and Trauma.*

# The ABCs of Anne Frank

## How the Anne Frank House came to South Carolina

**A**msterdam, Berlin, Buenos Aires ... Columbia? Since 2012, the University of South Carolina has built a special relationship with the Anne Frank House. As a result, Columbia is poised to join some of the great cities of the world as home to a permanent exhibition and educational lab dedicated to the life and times of Anne Frank and their meaning for us today. This is the first major partnership the Anne Frank House has established with a university anywhere in the world. How was the University of South Carolina chosen for this great honor?

The answer stems in part from the wishes of Anne's father, Otto. Of the eight people in hiding, only Otto survived the Holocaust. He was one of about 7,500 people liberated from Auschwitz, out of more than one million who had been sent there. His daughters Margot and Annelies were among the 6 million Jewish people and 1.5 million children murdered by the Nazis. He had lost everything, but received an unexpected gift: Miep Gies, one of the helpers who kept eight people fed and hidden for more than two years, had managed to save Anne's Diary when her family and companions were arrested.

Otto observed that although he and Anna were very close, he was nevertheless "very much surprised ... it was quite a different Anna [than] I had known as my daughter. She never really showed this kind of inner feeling." Most parents don't really know their children, he concluded, and felt that by reading the Diary, "parents and teachers will learn a lot." "To build up a future, you have to know the past." But it is not enough to have just history lessons; we must learn the



**DOYLE STEVICK**

lessons of history. Otto agreed to have the Diary published, but it was difficult: publishers could scarcely imagine selling the diary entries of a young Jewish girl. And yet, when they did, it became one of the most translated and popular books in human history, becoming a standard text in many schools. It was propelled forward by popular film and theater adaptations.

The success of the Diary allowed the hiding place itself to be saved from demolition: when the building was about to be torn down in 1957, Otto and supporters managed to preserve the hiding place as an institution dedicated "to get people to understand each other. If they are black or white or yellow, if they're Catholic or Protestants or Jews or Muslims, we have to live in one world. The more people we get here in contact with each other, the more they try to understand each other, and to understand that we are different but that we could get along very nicely."

Just as Anne's Diary spread around the world, so did Otto's vision. Recognizing that visitors to the Secret Annex had a powerful experience, Otto lamented that "It's only a little part of people we can get here." The House developed a traveling exhibition program; now 140 copies are circulating in dozens of languages, and they have visited 90 countries, with three permanently based in South Carolina alone. The program relies on peer education—not just traditional history lessons—to help students learn to discuss difficult and contentious issues, to hear diverse perspectives, and to understand the importance of freedom and democracy for ensuring the rights and security of Jewish communities and minority groups.

These lessons have taken hold in South Carolina. Since 2013, the University of South



**Anne Frank as she was often pictured: at a desk with a smile, a book, or a diary. From the Jewish Lyceum (after Jews were forced out of public schools), 1941.**



**The colorful exhibit Reading and Writing with Anne Frank features the books she loved; developed for 4th-7th grade, students get to appreciate Anne on her own terms, and not just as a victim.**



**Anne Frank House Master Trainer Aaron Peterer prepares students at Westwood High School to become peer guides.**

Carolina has worked with these exhibits in the ABCs of South Carolina: not just to Columbia and Charleston, but to Allendale, Beaufort, Chester, Dillon, Elgin, Fairfield, and Greenville through Orangeburg, Pelion, Saluda, Sumter, Travelers Rest and Walterboro. In 2017, more than 2000 students from across South Carolina filled the Koger Center to hear Anne Frank's step-sister, Eva Schloss, share her experiences of surviving the Holocaust. They gave her three standing ovations, and the Jerry and Anita Zucker Family Foundation gave a copy of Eva's autobiography to every student in attendance. Sixty years from now, in 2080, they will be able to tell their children and great-grandchildren that they heard a survivor of

the Holocaust speak, someone who knew Anne Frank personally.

It has been the response of South Carolina to the traveling exhibits and the history of the Holocaust that lead the Anne Frank House to choose the University of South Carolina for this unique partnership. This summer, it will be possible for school groups, the campus community and the general public to schedule a visit to the exhibition for a personal tour of this exhibit by one of our guides. ■

**Doyle Stevick is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of South Carolina and Director of the UofSC partnership with the Anne Frank House.**

# First Jewish Service at Dachau Concentration Camp — May 6, 1945

**DACHAU**, the first Nazi Concentration Camp, opened in 1933, shortly after Adolph Hitler became chancellor of Germany. It is located in Southern Germany, just outside the medieval town of Dachau, near Munich. The camp initially housed political prisoners; however, it devolved into a death camp where thousands of Jews died from malnutrition, disease, overwork, and execution. In addition to Jews, the camp's prisoners included members of other groups Hitler considered unfit for Nazi Germany: artists; intellectuals; people who were physically and/or mentally handicapped; and, homosexuals. During World War II, some able-bodied prisoners at the camp were used as slave labor to manufacture weapons for the German Army and some prisoners were subjected to brutal medical experiments by the Nazis. The camp was liberated by the U.S. Army on April 29, 1945 — and a week later the first Jewish religious service was conducted there. What follows is some information about the Rabbi Army Chaplain who witnessed the atrocities at Dachau — and who conducted religious services there on May 6, 1945.



David Max Eichhorn was born in 1906, in Columbia, Pennsylvania, the son of Joseph and Anna Eichhorn. He was ordained in 1931 at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. On December 8, 1941 — one day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor — Rabbi David Max Eichhorn enlisted in the U.S. Army to serve as a chaplain during World War II. He was accepted for active duty on July 3, 1942, and was sent to the Army Chaplain School at Harvard University. He reported for active duty to Camp Croft, an infantry training facility near Spartanburg, SC. While stationed at Camp Croft, 1,500 to 2,000 Jews were in basic training at any given time. While serving at Camp Croft, he

worked with the local Jewish congregation, Temple B'Nai Israel, and its Rabbi Samuel Wrubel. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, he and seven other Jewish chaplains were sent overseas to serve as chaplains on the battlefield in Europe. After they arrived in England, they crossed the English Channel and landed on Omaha Beach on July 10, 1944 - and began serving as chaplains during combat at the Battle of St. Lo on July 25, 1944. During the



**On Sunday, May 6, 1945, Army Chaplain David Max Eichhorn conducted a religious service for the Jewish inmates (called “displaced persons”) at the Dachau Concentration Camp in Germany. The camp had been liberated a week earlier, on April 29, 1945, by the U.S. Army. At the service he conducted, and as shown in the photo (bottom), Rabbi Eichhorn received a bouquet of**



## My Jewish Brethren at Dachau:

*In the portion which we read yesterday in our holy Torah, we found these words: “Ukrawsem d’ror baw-awretz l’chawl yoshvehaw; yovel hee ti’ye lawchem; v’shavtem ish el achuzawso v’ish el mishpachto tawshuvu” which mean “Proclaim freedom through the world to all the inhabitants thereof; a day of celebration shall this be for you, a day when every man shall return to his family and to his rightful place in society.” In the United States of America, in the city of Philadelphia, upon the exact spot where 169 years ago a group of brave Americans met and decided to fight for American independence, there stands a marker upon which is written these very same words: “Proclaim freedom throughout the world to all the inhabitant thereof.” From the beginning of their existence as a liberty-loving and independent people, the citizens of America understood that not until all the peoples of the world were free would they be truly free, that not until tyranny and oppression had been erased from the hearts of all men and all nations would there be a lasting peace and happiness for themselves. Thus it has been that, throughout our entire history, whenever and wherever men have been enslaved, Americans have fought to set them free, whenever and wherever dictators have endeavored to destroy democracy and justice and truth, Americans have not rested content until these despots have been overthrown.*

*Today I come to you in a dual capacity — as a soldier in the American Army and as a representative of the Jewish community of America. As an American soldier, I say to you that we are proud, very proud, to be here, to know that we have had a share in the destruction of the most cruel tyranny of all time. As an American soldier, I say to you that we are proud, very proud, to be with you as comrades-in-arms, to greet you and salute you as the bravest of the brave. We know your tragedy. We know your sorrows. We know that upon you was centered the venomous*

**flowers from a young women that was presented to him on behalf of the Jews at Dachau. As part of that service, Chaplain Eichhorn delivered the following speech to those who were in attendance (from pages 188-190 of The GI’s Rabbi — World War II Letters of David Max Eichhorn):**

*hatred of power-crazed madmen, that your annihilation was decreed and planned systematically and ruthlessly. We know, too, that you refused to be destroyed, that you fought back with every weapon at your command, that you fought with your bodies, your minds and your spirit. Your faith and our faith in God and in humanity have been sustained. Our enemies lie prostrate before us. The way of life which together we have defended still lives and it will live so that all men everywhere may have freedom and happiness and peace.*

*I speak to you also as a Jew, as a rabbi in Israel, as a teacher of that religious philosophy which is dearer to all of us than life itself. What message of comfort and strength can I bring to you from your fellow Jews? What can I say that will compare in depth or in intensity to that which you have suffered and overcome? Full well do I know and humbly do I confess the emptiness of mere words in this hour of mingled sadness and joy. Words will not bring the dead back to life nor right the wrongs of the past ten years. This is not the time for words, you will say, and rightfully so. This is a time for deeds, deeds of justice, deeds of love... Justice will be done. We have seen with our own eyes and we have heard with our own ears and we shall not forget. As long as there are Jews in the world, “Dachau” will be a term of horror and shame. Those who labored here for their evil master must be hunted down and destroyed as systematically and as ruthlessly as they sought your destruction .... And there will be deeds of love. It is the recognized duty of all truly religious people to bestir themselves immediately to assist you to regain health, comfort and some measure of happiness as speedily as is humanly possible. This must be done. This can be done. This will be done. You are not and you will not be forgotten men, my brothers. In every country where the lamps of religion and decency and kindness still burn, Jews and non-Jews alike will expend as much time and energy and money as is needful to make good the pledge which is written in our holy Torah and inscribed on that marker in Philadelphia, the city of Brotherly Love.*

*We know that abstractions embodied in proclamations and celebrations must be followed by more concrete, more helpful fulfillments. We do not intend to brush aside the second part of the Divine promise: “V’shavtem ish el achuzawso v’ish el mishpachto tawshuvu.” Every man who has been oppressed must and will be restored to his family and to his rightful place in society. This is a promise and a pledge which I bring to you from your American comrades-in-arms and your Jewish brethren across the seas.*

*You shall go out with joy, and be led forth in peace;  
The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing;  
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.  
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress,  
And instead of brambles myrtles shall spring forth;  
And God’s name will be glorified;  
This will be remembered forever,  
This will never be forgotten. [Isaiah 55:12, 13]*

Amen.



months that followed, Chaplain Eichhorn conducted religious services, at times in the heat of battle. He also officiated at funerals and ministered to the needs of Jewish and non-Jewish soldiers on the battlefield as the U.S. Army marched through France in 1944 and into Germany in 1945. For his bravery and conduct while serving as a chaplain during combat, he was awarded a Bronze Star.

On April 30, 1945, one day after the Dachau Concentration Camp was liberated by the U.S.

Army, Rabbi Eichhorn and Rabbi Eli Bohnen were the first Jewish chaplains to enter Dachau. When they entered the camp, they saw horror wherever they turned: boxcars loaded with Jewish dead in the Dachau railway yard — car-

loads of shriveled mummies that had literally been starved to death; gas chambers and crematoria filled with charred bones and ashes; and, naked bodies lying outside barracks waiting to be carted away. Eichhorn later wrote his wife Zelda, that the horrors he saw at Dachau caused not only him — but combat-hardened soldiers (gentiles and Jews alike — both black and white) - to cry not only tears of sorrow — but tears of hate. He noted that U.S. soldiers often stood aside and watched the prisoners at the camp hunt and kill their former captors and guards, noting that human nature sometimes sinks to such depths in the presence of human depravity.

## PHOTOS

**Above: Prisoners at Dachau greet their liberators**  
**Top left: Chaplain David Max Eichhorn**  
**Bottom left: Dachau Concentration Camp memorial**  
**Center: Chaplain David Max Eichhorn receives a bouquet of flowers after performing the service**

*Photos taken from video of Chaplain David Max Eichhorn at Dachau Concentration Camp, May 1945. Courtesy of Critical Past, LLC.*



**JOE WACHTER**

For the next several days, Chaplain Eichhorn attempted to assist the prisoners, all of whom were malnourished and many of whom were in poor physical and/or mental condition. He also did what he could to bring comfort and cheer to the Jewish inmates at the camp. He supervised the gathering of a list of names and addresses of all the Jews — not only at Dachau, but at one of its sub-camps, in the town of Allach. He served as a liaison between the Jews, the camp’s international prisoner’s committee and American military authorities. A week later, On May 6, 1945, Chaplain Eichhorn conducted the first religious service at the liberated concentration camp. The service was attended by approximately 2,000 prisoners and was filmed in color by Hollywood producer and director, US Army Colonel George Stevens, the official videographer for General Dwight D. Eisenhower. The service is described as follows on pages 186-187 of a book edited by Greg Palmer and Eichhorn’s Grandson, Mark S. Zaid, *The GI’s Rabbi — World War II Letters of David Max Eichhorn.* ■

*Joe Wachter is an attorney practicing in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.*

# Teaching and learning about the Holocaust 75 years later

German Philosopher Theodor Adorno famously wrote in the 1960s that the fundamental goal of education after Auschwitz is to prevent such atrocities from happening again. Sixty years after Adorno's proclamation, Holocaust educators still embrace the idea that teaching can prevent future genocides. However, antisemitism, prejudice, and atrocities still occur, even in countries where the Holocaust is taught. Presently, the U.S. is experiencing an increase in violent antisemitism, although it was one of the first countries to introduce formal Holocaust education in its classrooms.



**CHRISTINE BERESNIOVA**

So, what are we to make of Holocaust education 75 years after Auschwitz if we have not been successful in creating an antidote to antisemitism nor a preventative measure against hatred? That continues to be a critical question in American Holocaust education. But we can begin to understand the complexities by examining the development of American Holocaust education over the last sixty years.

In the immediate aftermath of WWII, there was no teaching about the Holocaust. It was viewed as a tragic symptom of German wartime aggression rather than an important event. It was only in the late 1950s and early 1960s that the study of the Holocaust became a distinct subject in academia and theology. Around the same time, the children of survivors were looking for information to make sense of their parents' silent pain. The Adolph Eichmann trial in the 1960s, significant as the first Holocaust trial to be broadcast, famously included survivor testimonies as part of its historical

record. Before this, survivor testimony was considered unreliable and possibly prone to exaggeration. It took a long time for the general public to value survivor testimony about the Holocaust.

The 1960s and 1970s, saw Holocaust education appear intermittently in U.S. schools as teachers sought out more information. It was finally in 1978 that the miniseries *The Holocaust* brought awareness about the Holocaust into U.S. homes. Movies about WWII and the Holocaust existed before this time, but the place of Holocaust history on individual television screens was a turning point as more and more Americans watched T.V. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter convened the President's Commission on the Holocaust, which led to the creation of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. The Museum did not open until 1994 due to political and cultural challenges. The date of its opening was the same year as the landmark Holocaust film by Steven Spielberg, *Schindler's List*, a highly regarded film by The American Film Institute, *Time Magazine*, and even *The Vatican*.

By the mid-1990s, U.S. educators had access to an abundance of educational and pop culture resources about the Holocaust, including professional training programs. Several states in the U.S. formed their own Holocaust commissions/councils to promote teaching about it in their schools, as was the case of South Carolina in 1989.

Then the Soviet Union collapsed. The end of the USSR was the beginning of an entirely new wave of research and documentation about the Holocaust. With the end of communism came the opening of Soviet historical archives never before accessed by Western scholars. The publications that ensued gave the world a new understanding of the intimate nature of the Holocaust before the creation of the Nazi



A scene from *Schindler's List*, featuring Ben Kingsley as Itzhak Stern (center)

concentration camp and killing center systems. The opening of the Moscow Archives and other Eastern European historical archives renewed interest in scholarship about the role of ordinary citizens. These experiences documented what is now called "the Holocaust by bullets," an early form of mass killing in which Nazi officers and their collaborators exterminated Jewish men, women, and children face-to-face in bloody pits. This information shed new light and drastically reshaped our historical understanding of the degrees to which people

and finally exterminate the Jews from the very beginning of Hitler's rise. This research forces the American public to reckon with the fact that ordinary Americans had information about what was going on in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust from the very beginning and, still, we did little to intercede.

The more that academics research the Holocaust, the more teachers have to talk about in their classrooms. This historical breadth can be a boon and a curse. In addition to a large amount of available historical documentation about the Holocaust, there

**While historians always knew that ordinary citizens "just doing their jobs" contributed to the Holocaust, this research showed the callous depths of ordinary bystanders and participants in towns and villages.**

on the ground knew and even participated in the killings. While historians always knew that ordinary citizens "just doing their jobs" contributed to the Holocaust, this research showed the callous depths of ordinary bystanders and participants in towns and villages.

The 2000s saw a new focus on how different groups of individuals experienced, witnessed, and collaborated in the Holocaust, such as the role that women played as Nazi nurses and teachers. Research also examined how Europeans in different geographical, class, and professional circumstances responded to the Holocaust, which led scholars and organizations in the US to do the same. New research increasingly shows that American newspapers published unvarnished information about the Nazi's plans to ostracize, marginalize,

are hundreds of novels and movies dramatizing it—all of which are of varying quality and accuracy. In short, Holocaust education demands that educators have a critical eye for geography, psychology, literature, and history, as well as the training necessary to differentiate between the resources available to them.

The fact that the Holocaust is the most documented genocide in the world means that there is enormous potential for teaching it. But, it also means that the subject can be a daunting task. It is not sufficient to tout the value of Holocaust education alone; we must also prepare teachers to do so. ■

*Christine Beresniova is the former executive director of the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust. She received her PhD from Indiana University.*



Executions of Jews by German army mobile killing units (Einsatzgruppen) near Ivangorod Ukraine, 1942

# How to speak to children about antisemitism

**S**ilence is not a good response to antisemitism. In my suburbia childhood home, we knew not to ask grandma why she had so few extended family members, why her friends had numbers tattooed on their arms, or where she learned the foreign language that she used to tell secrets to my parents. There were other times when conversation was not held. As young children, my sister and I were playing in our basement and found a box of valuables. We were so excited to discover this that we immediately ran to tell our parents. They were not as excited. I cannot remember the explanation verbatim but my father simply explained that those were kept in the basement, just in case. My sister asked, Just in case what? We did not really receive a response.



**RABBI MEIR MULLER**

As I got older, I understood that my father, who was conceived in Austria in 1939 and born in the United States the next year, felt that Jewish people must always be ready to flee, that the next national catastrophe was imminent, and that antisemitism was never far off. I do not judge my grandmother or parents for their silence, but not addressing an issue is not a solution. For my sisters and I, the silence suggested an otherness, a danger that was not defined, and in our not knowing, we sensed that one day a reckoning could occur.

Today as Head of the Cutler Jewish Day School and assistant professor in USC's College of Education, I work daily with children and future educators on difficult topics such as antisemitism, racism and bias.

While somewhat controversial, I discuss with future teachers the problematic notion of the "innocence of childhood". Young children experience and hear about antisemitism, racism, bias and acts of hatred and we as adults must address these issues with children. The following are points that might assist families in speaking with children about specific incidents.

- **Adults should first process their own feelings so that when they speak to younger people, they are clear on what they feel and think.**
- **With very young children, a simple message of a few sentences is more appropriate than a story with details. For instance, "A bad thing happened at a .... synagogue, church, mosque, school .... it is very sad because people were hurt and people were killed."**
- **Next, allow children to ask questions. Remember that children process information by asking questions repeated times.**
- **It is important to validate the child's feelings and respond with a message that will help the child feel secure. For instance, one might say, "I understand that what happened was scary but know the adults in your life will do as much as they can to keep you safe and that most people will never have something like that occur to them."**
- **Check back with the child at a later date (a day or even week later) to see if there are any other questions or unresolved feelings.**
- **Discuss and plan actions that the child and family can do to counter intolerance and prejudice.**



Above and below: Rabbi Muller with students at Cutler Jewish Day School



Helen Mueller, grandmother of Rabbi Meir Muller

Eventually, in her old age, my grandmother shared her story; how she was forced from her job and made to clean streets (a common occurrence employed to shame Jewish people), witnessing a Nazi officer shoot her sister on the street with no warning, giving everything she owned as a bribe to a guard at the Dachau concentration camp, who months later miraculously released my grandfather, and other details of her life in Austria. She found that telling her story was restorative and it helped me put childhood fears in perspective.

Unfortunately, seventy-five years after the Holocaust, there is a rise in acts of antisemitism in our country and the world. My life lessons have taught me that silence will not improve this situation. Only through engaging children in discussion, can we hope to form adults who recognize inequity and act toward creating a just society. ■

*Rabbi Meir Muller, PhD serves as an assistant professor in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina and is the head of the Cutler Jewish Day School.*

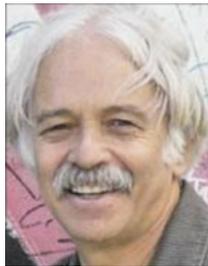
**As I got older, I understood that my father ... felt that Jewish people must always be ready to flee, that the next national catastrophe was imminent, and that antisemitism was never far off.**



# Take Off Your Yarmulke

To break up the long drive across the south of Poland from Zamosc in the east to Krakow in the west, the bus carrying our study-abroad group of 25 students turned off the highway in search of Markowa, a village in the piedmont of the Carpathian Mountains, where a new museum with the intriguing name, The Ulma Family Museum to Poles Saving Jews in World War II, had just opened. Recessed in the terrain to blend in with the surroundings, the geometric form of this surprising building recalls a large farm house or barn, rendered with materials and craftsmanship that hint at the grandeur of the story told inside.

In the fall of 1942, as the Nazis intensified the search for Jews, Jozef and Wiktoria Ulma and their six children took eight Jewish fugitives into their small house and hid them for the next year and a half, knowing all the while that Poles caught helping Jews faced the death penalty. The eight people who approached the Ulmas belonged to the Gold-



**THEODORE ROSENGARTEN**

man family of nearby Lancut. The Goldmans traded livestock with Jozef and tanned hides and sawed timber with him, which they continued to do during their refuge. They were hidden in plain sight, and it took willful blindness on the part of the Ulmas' friends, neighbors, and trades people who visited the house to safeguard the Jews.

But the Ulmas' protection broke down. They were denounced by a Polish policeman (of Ukrainian background, we're told) from Lancut, and at dawn on March 24, 1944 five German gendarmes and several Polish policemen arrived at the Ulmas' house in horse carts. First they shot the Jews—seventy-year-old Chaim Goodman, followed by his four sons, and a granddaughter. Then they shot Jozef and Wiktoria in front of their children.



**German policeman Josef Kokott, one of the shooters**  
Photo by Yad Vashem



**The Ulma Family.** Photographer unknown, courtesy of The Ulma Family Museum

**They decided to shoot the children, ranging in age from eight to two. Within a few minutes, 17 people were dead, including the child Wiktoria started giving birth to at the moment of the execution.**

The order of death is known from testimony given by the Polish cart drivers at the trial of Josef Kokott, a German policeman and one of the shooters, who many years later became the only member of the killing squad to face a court. "See how Polish pigs die for concealing Jews," Kokott had crowed.

The Germans weren't finished. They decided to shoot the children, ranging in age

from eight to two. Within a few minutes, 17 people were dead, including the child Wiktoria started giving birth to at the moment of the execution. The German leader ordered the bodies buried in a single grave, but gave in to the pleas of the Polish witnesses and dug two holes, one for the Christian dead and one for the Jews. The police drank themselves numb with three litres of vodka



**Four of the Ulma children.** Photo by Jozef Ulma, courtesy of The Ulma Family Museum

and ransacked the Ulma house. But they didn't touch Jozef Ulma's library or his cameras and photographs.

A progressive farmer, fruit grower, and pioneer in beekeeping and silkworm breeding, Ulma's chief passion was photography. He took thousands of photographs, and a selection from the 800 or so that survive make up the core exhibit of the museum. They give a vivid picture of village life between the wars, for both Christian and Jewish residents of Markowa. Ulma's main subjects were his wife and children.

I visited the Museum again, in May, 2018, with a new group of students. The nationalist government's campaign for a heroic approach to Polish history was in full swing. The Ministry of Culture had announced in 2017 that the state was taking over funding the museum, because the nation's first museum to Poles who rescued Jews ought to come under the aegis of the state. Thus a local, "organic" initiative, to recognize an extraordinary example of resistance to evil, in this corner of the sub-Carpathians, was usurped by the state for the purpose of turning it into a national institution with a national story.

Then came bombshell legislation, passage by the Polish parliament of a bill that would make it a crime to accuse Poland of complicity in the Holocaust. Inside the Presidential Palace, Polish President Andrzej Duda hesitated. Outside the building, demonstrators chanted "TAKE OFF YOUR YARMULKE, SIGN THE BILL."

He signed it, so that henceforth anyone who "claims, publicly and contrary to the



**Wiktorja Ulma and her six children.** Photo by Jozef Ulma, courtesy of The Ulma Family Museum

facts, that the Polish Nation ... is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich" would face three years in prison.

Response to the "Polish Holocaust law" from beyond Poland's borders was swift and ferocious. Naftali Bennett, then education minister of Israel, spoke for the survivor population when he said, "The Blood of Polish Jews cries from the ground, and no law will silence it." Israel Katz, on his first day as Israel's acting foreign minister quoted former prime minister Yitshak Shamir, who

remarked Poles "sucked antisemitism with their mother's milk."

Poland "rejects antisemitism very radically," countered the country's ruling party chairman. "But we are also a sovereign state and we have a duty to start the fight against ... this great defamatory campaign against Poland, namely insulting Poland, blaming us for someone else's actions."

When western Europe and the United States added their condemnation, the Polish government removed the criminal penalty. But the intention to revise the narrative of Polish collaboration had won the day. The Polish and Israeli governments agreed to reject all efforts to blame Poland for the crimes committed "by the Nazis and their collaborators of different nations."

Uproar greeted the announcement of the Polish-Israeli detente. Historian Yehuda Bauer grieved, "We have accepted the mendacious official Polish narrative [to our] eternal disgrace."

I returned with a friend to the Museum seven months later, on a cold, rainy day in December. In three hours, only one other visitor showed up, and he turned out to be a nephew of Jozef Ulma, born shortly after the war. Mr. Ulma had helped provide some of the artifacts on display, including furniture built by Jozef and a large study Bible opened to the page of "The Good Samaritan" with Jozef's writing in the margins. My friend asked Jerzy why his uncle risked his loved ones to take in the Goldmans. Jerzy smiled and said, "He was a complete human being."

Historian Jan Grabowski cautions that it's a mistake to think this is the whole story of Markowa. True, Markowa was a village where some Poles displayed made huge sacrifices to rescue Jews; it was also a village "where some Poles murdered Jews with great zeal [and] sometimes the very same people both saved and murdered Jews." Twenty-one Jewish people are known to have survived the war hiding in Markowa, but 24 or more did not, and many died at the hands of their rescuers.

At the Ulma Family Museum we learn that the Jewish annihilation did not take place on the periphery of Polish society, as the story of Polish victimhood suggests. In rural Markowa the majority of ordinary Poles experienced the murder of their Jewish neighbors in their yards and fields and village square. These Polish farm people were not passive bystanders to German violence. They could offer friendship and shelter to terrified Jews, or they could participate in their extermination. The museum confronts visitors with this dilemma. It conveys the message that choices made by individuals, and by whole communities, could make a difference, and in the universe of Nazi terror these choices were often the only things that made a difference. ■

**Theodore Rosengarten is Zucker/Goldberg Chairman of Holocaust Studies, College of Charleston and associate professor of Yaschick/Arnold Jewish Studies at College of Charleston.**



**Study abroad students outside the Ulma Family Museum.** Photo by Jerzy Pytko, courtesy of Jerzy Pytko

# Jews of Shanghai

## Holocaust Survivors Felicia and Simon Kassel

**M**y father, Simon Kassel, was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1921. His father was a Yiddish writer from Russia. He died early in his career. My grandmother, Felicia Kassel, was a woman of noble bearing, set in her ways. I credit her with saving my father's life.

Before the Nazis came to Warsaw in September 1941 Simon and Felicia had a comfortable life. They had enough money to avoid going without. They had friends and family. So it was always particularly sobering to me that Felicia, unlike her sisters, unilaterally decided to leave all that was familiar and leave Warsaw before the invasion. How hard that decision must have been. Many of those who stayed perished at the hands of the Nazis. But where to go? It seemed as if the whole world had turned its back on the Jews seeking to leave eastern Europe. The doors to immigration were closed. Except one.

I don't know when Felicia learned or how she learned that a possible escape route out of Europe was to China. The city of Shanghai was an open city. The Japanese, who controlled many sectors of the city, did not require passports or visas for entrance. Word spread that Jews could travel to this foreign land to seek refuge. And so my grandmother went and took my father with her. It would be a two year voyage. Felicia and Simon headed to Lithuania. I wonder if Felicia and Simon met Chiune Sugihara, the officer in Japan's Lithuanian consulate who recognized the perilous state of the Jewish refugees and issued countless exits visas out of the country.



JOHN KASSEL

From Lithuania they traveled to Moscow. They boarded the Trans-Siberian Railroad for the ten day, 5700 mile trip to the eastern edge of the country, landing in Vladivostok. To my father, at age 19, it must have seemed somewhat of an adventure. There was a constant barrage of new sights to see and the commotion of people to meet.

Once in Vladivostok, Felicia and Simon got passage on a steamer destined for China. During the war maybe upwards of 20,000 Jews found refuge in Shanghai. Shanghai had been a thriving metropolitan city and home to many very wealthy Jews from Baghdad, Bombay and Cairo. In the early 1900s there were synagogues and Jewish magazines established there. More Jews came after the 1917 Russian Revolution. And now Jews were coming to escape the Nazis.

Leaning over the railing on the bow of the steamer, my father saw the harbor of Shanghai come into view. It was an impressive sight. He noted the blue-green of the east China Sea meeting up with the muddy waters of the Yangtze river forming a line so straight that he thought it must have been drawn by a pencil.

The refugees were led off the boat and placed in trucks bound for the neighborhood in Shanghai called Hongkew. It was filled with Chinese suffering from extreme poverty and rampant disease. They were treated inhumanely by the Japanese occupiers. But the Chinese were generally welcoming to the European refugees and the Japanese exhibited none of the genocidal rampage of their German allies. By 1941 the



Somehow he found a hospital where the surgery was performed successfully.

By 1945 the war ended. Soon there would be the Communist Revolution in China. Refugees were leaving with the assistance of Jewish aid groups. Felicia and Simon came to the States and eventually New York by 1947. He married a young woman from Yonkers, NY, my mother Charlotte Lewis. The couple moved to Washington, D.C. and raised two boys. Felicia

followed the family to D.C. Simon finished his education at George Washington University with a degree in electrical engineering. He worked for the Library of Congress in their Soviet physics section. Felicia helped raise her two grandchildren.

About a year ago, a friend traveled to Shanghai on a business trip. He knew the story of Felicia and Simon. He asked if I wanted him to look for evidence of my father and grandmother. Of course I said, "yes". In the Hongkew neighborhood is the Jewish Refugee Museum, it contains a wall of names of the Jewish refugees who spent the war in Shanghai. I received an email from my friend. It contained a photo of the wall. There were two names I recognized. Felicia (Fagia) and Simon (Szymon). ■

*John Kassel is an attorney in Columbia, South Carolina.*

Japanese had full control of the city. By 1943 the Japanese imposed more restrictions on the European Jews, sequestering them in a smaller district in Hongkew. Life for Felicia and Simon was hard but they were not hungry. They managed to establish a life during the 6 years they were there. Stories of mass killings came to them from Europe as the Germans executed their plans for the Final Solution. The question was whether such atrocities would engulf the Jews in China. That did not happen.

Instead, Simon earned money where he could. He took classes at a Jesuit School. He visited the shops where merchants sold boiled water to avoid the cholera epidemic. At one point he was besieged by an inflamed appendix and needed it removed.

KARPELINI • MORDKO KARPENSZPRUNG • E.T. KARPOFF • MAX KARPOV  
NY KASHKIM • ARNOLD KASPAR • JULIE KASPAR • ROSE KASPAR •  
• FAJGA KASSEL • HERTA KASSEL • OSKAR KASSEL • SZYMON KASSEL •  
WITZ • REGINE KASSNER • FERDINAND KASSTAN • KLARA KASSTAN •  
WAN • LONNY KASSWAN • MIRLA KASSWAN • DAVID KASTROVICKI •



Hans Hermann Eschen (center) at two years old in 1912, with his brother Fritz Eschen, 12 (left) and his sister Charlotte (Carlotta) Eschen, 13.

# You are Good People

## Holocaust Survivor Hans Hermann Eschen

**M**y father was born Hans Hermann Eschen on October 22, 1910 in Berlin, Germany to Leopold and Therese Eschen. His parents were in the garment industry, with a manufacturing operation in a near-by suburb, and a store-front main office and custom tailoring shop in Berlin. The family was prosperous, but his father died when my father was only three years old. His mother, a patriotic German, invested the



**TERRY GARBER**

family savings in war bonds, which proved disastrous. His mother died in 1923, and his older sister Charlotte and her husband Hermann Wolff, took over the business. By the mid-thirties, prosperity had returned; my father told me that he learned to drive in the US Army because while he was in Germany the family either had a chauffeur or was too poor to own a car.

My father became a lawyer, completing his studies at the University of Berlin in 1934. He then became an intern in the courts. But in 1935, after Hitler consolidated his hold on the German government, he was, in his words, "disbarred and disenfranchised." He began working in the family shop, and connected with an underground group working to get influential Jews out of the country.

One day in 1938, an older man, a regular customer, came into the shop and at the conclusion of his business turned and asked

my father, "Hans, when are you leaving for America?" My father recalled that he froze with fright. Members of the underground had top secret contingency plans for their own escape. Without a word, the man pulled out his wallet, took out an identification card, and laid it on the counter. He was a high-ranking SS officer. The man looked my father straight in the eyes and said, "I knew your parents; you are good people. Go! Now!." And he turned and left the shop.

My father left the next day, just months before Kristallnacht, with one change of clothes, three books, and \$60 to his name. He arrived at Ellis Island, and settled in New York City, changing his name to Harold Hermann Eschen, wanting to keep his initials.



Hans at 16 (left) in 1926 with Fritz, 26.



Troops of the 47th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 9th Infantry Division, march through Remagen to cross the Ludendorff Bridge on March 9, 1945.

Coming from a Liberal Jewish family, and not speaking Yiddish, my father did not feel at home in New York. He contacted a Jewish family organization, and asked to be resettled to a smaller city with a liberal congregation. He was offered the choice of Memphis, TN or Birmingham, AL, and since he had heard of Memphis, he chose that. The organization got him to Memphis, and arranged for him to board with the Solomon family. They belonged to Temple Israel, one of the oldest and largest Reform congregations in the South. The son, Monroe Solomon, was about the same age as my father. His circle of Temple friends included Norine Lehman, a petite redhead who years later became my mother. My parents were married in 1941, and my father was transformed overnight from draft status "enemy alien" to "IA." He enlisted in the US Army and his knowledge of German language and geography was useful; he can be seen in documentaries in the first jeep in the Battle of Remagen to cross the Ludendorff bridge, because he could understand the road signs!

On return to the US, he went to law school on the GI Bill and became a lawyer once again. Gradually, through the work of the American and International Red Cross organizations, he discovered that his older brother and three cousins had survived. In the summer of 1959 my father, mother and I traveled to England, Germany, and the Netherlands to reconnect with the remnants of our family.

My father also looked forward to a reunion with a college friend, Werner, who before the war was an engineer working for Otto Porsche. As my father relayed, his friend Werner received word that the Nazis were coming to visit the Porsche plant, to "see what they were doing for the war effort." He

realized that they were coming to seek out all of the Jews working in the plant. Werner was not Jewish, was not a Nazi sympathizer, but was helping my father, with the work of the Berlin underground. Werner quickly organized a patriotic rally at the plant, complete with flags and rousing songs. When the Nazi party arrived, he greeted them warmly and invited them to join the rally. While the songs and patriotic speeches went on, Werner's associates were spiring all of the Jewish workers out of the plant to waiting buses taking them to safety. The rally ended, the Nazis did a quick tour and left, congratulating Werner for his work on behalf of the new Germany.

Werner now lived in East Berlin with his wife and children. My father was able to connect with Werner to arrange a meeting — we planned to meet them at one of the four checkpoints between the Eastern and Western halves of the city. The 'meeting' was a big disappointment of our summer trip. Werner and his wife had to apply three months in advance to cross 50 meters into the West. There could be no touching or gifting, and their children were held behind. Werner's wife had risen rapidly in the Communist party and she was watching him. As a child I could clearly see that he was terrified by the visit. We did not meet.

I often wonder what happened to 'break' this man who could have merited the name of "Righteous Among the Nations." I now wonder whether he lived to see the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. Unfortunately, my own father, who died on June 24, 1984, did not. ■

*Terry Garber worked at the S.C. Department of Revenue Services for 30 years. She was on the team that developed IRS electronic coding.*

# Importance of Remembrance

## Holocaust Survivor Mila Salholz

**M**y Grandma, Mila Salholz, was born in Poland in 1919. She lived in Niedzwica Duza, a small village with a major railroad junction outside of Lublin, Poland. She was the oldest of her siblings and lived with her mother, father, three younger brothers and one younger sister. Her father, Meier Malkiesman, was a wholesale wheat merchant and his job provided a good income for the family. They were actually the only Jewish family in the village, but other Jewish merchants would commute from Lublin, a much larger city only 15 miles away. She



DAVID POLEN

had many Polish neighbors, the countryside was beautiful, and attended school in Lublin.

The invasion of the Nazi's turned her family's life upside down. They were ordered out of their home and her father rented a place in the village. Somehow they managed to live from day to day.

By 1942 the roundup of the Jews began in all the surrounding villages. Many Jews were first brought to a little town called Belzyce and then were transferred to railroad station in Niedzwica Duza and put on trains going to Majdanek, a Nazi death camp. Her father was one of the first taken to Majdanek, where he was murdered.

My Grandma's mother, Sara Malkiesman, found a hiding place for herself and her two youngest children, Elie, a twelve year old boy and Genia, a nine year old girl. However,

**The invasion of the Nazi's turned her family's life upside down. They were ordered out of their home and her father rented a place in the village. Somehow they managed to live from day to day.**



Mila Salholz fled eastward toward the Soviet Union after her parents and younger siblings were murdered. She was eventually captured by the Soviets and spent the entire war in a Siberian prison camp.



Mila and baby Benjamin, brother of David Polen

that was short-lived. In search of another place, her mother contacted her Polish neighbors. One agreed to let my Grandma's mother, Sara, and her younger brother Elie stay, but not her younger sister, Genia. After offering a large sum of money, another farmer took my grandma's sister, Genia.

Only two weeks later, the neighbor notified the Nazis and they took away my Grandma's mother, Sara, and her younger brother, Elie. They were both shot and immediately buried behind the town hall. There was a mass grave for all Jews caught in the vicinity; about 150 Jews were buried there. Her sister, Genia, was told about her mother's fate and ordered to leave by the other farmer. The Nazis spotted her and as she was running shot at her. She was shot in the leg and didn't have a place to go. She remained hiding for day or two, and then dragged herself and knocked on the door of a neighbor. They couldn't take her in. They

later told my Grandma that her foot was gangrened and she told them that she was going to the Nazis because her mother was gone and she has nobody and nothing to live for ... The Nazis shot Genia and buried her at the same spot her brother and mother were murdered.

Later on during the final roundups, her two brothers, my Uncle Henry and Uncle Joseph ran away to the forest. My grandmother, Mila, fled eastward toward the Soviet Union. She was eventually captured by the Soviets and spent the entire war in a Siberian prison camp. Her

brothers, Henry and Joseph were



Uncle Henry and Aunt Marilyn

eventually caught and sent to concentration camps. The three of them somehow managed to survive. My Uncle Henry and my Aunt Marylyn's Oral History can be heard online, thanks to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn47743).

After the war, my Grandma Mila, Uncle Joseph and Uncle Henry all settled in New York. My family lived across the street from my Grandma Mila and Grandpa Simon (also a survivor). I have fond memories spending many afternoons with my Grandma and enjoying her authentic Polish-Jewish cooking. They had successful lives, raised families, and contributed to their communities in so many vital ways. But they could never forget. My uncles made it their sacred goal to exhume the bodies of their family from that mass grave and put their names on gravestones. The stones at the Lublin Cemetery are there due to the effort of my Uncle Joseph and Uncle Henry who went through the effort and expense of exhuming the remains that brought them to eternal resting place at the Jewish cemetery in Lublin.

My Grandma's life and Uncle Henry and Uncle Joseph are lives of both immense sadness and immense joy. They loved their families and living in America. But they never forgot and they often spoke about what they experienced in Poland. They spoke often of their mother, father, brother Elie and sister Genia, the importance of remembrance, the bond of family, and the need for humanity. ■

*David Polen is a Columbia attorney.*

# The Story of My Father

## Holocaust Survivor Abraham Nysenholz

This is a story about my father, Abraham Nysenholz. Abe was born on February 15, 1910 to Hendla Leah and Josef Leib Nysenholz. He had 8 siblings, was the middle child and was born in a small but famous Hasidic town of Gora Kalwaria, (Ger) Poland, 30 miles SE of Warsaw. As a young boy, Abe had both Jewish and Polish friends. He had occasional "harassment" from Polish classmates. He enjoyed working with his father in selling animal skins and harvesting the fruit orchards.

Abe did his mandatory army training in the Polish army prior to the war. He was very proud that he was singled out as an accomplished sharp shooter and marksman and won competitions. He received a commendation medal and a certificate.

Ultimately, the entire Jewish community (3,500) of Ger were all rounded up and sent to the Warsaw Ghetto then deported to Treblinka Extermination Camp. Almost all the Jews of Ger, who did not leave for



JANET PAUL

Russian or other hiding places, perished in the Nazi death camps. My father ran away into the woods when roundups started. He escaped into the forest and hid at a close non-Jewish friend's home for a few nights. His very close Polish friend informed him that he could stay but for only a few days and then was asked to leave because of the danger it put his friend and his family for sheltering a Jew.

From 1940-1941, he was in the Warsaw Ghetto. While in the ghetto, driving a wagon with stones, he was able to smuggle in food for others. On August 3, 1944, Abe arrived in Auschwitz. He was tattooed on his left arm at Auschwitz-Birkenau with the number B 1981. He was in multiple concentration camps and was often beaten and tortured.

He was liberated by the American army in May 1945 and weighed 80 pounds. He was infested with lice, couldn't open his eyes and in kidney failure. He remembered a dream where his mother appeared and said, "You will recover and get married and have a family, just hold on." Abe never forgot his mother's encouragement through this dream. It gave him hope to live.

After Abe recovered, he was in desperate search of finding any living survivors

**He was liberated by the American army in May 1945 and weighed 80 pounds. He was infested with lice, couldn't open his eyes and in kidney failure. He remembered a dream where his mother appeared and said, "You will recover and get married and have a family, just hold on."**



Giza and Abe's wedding picture



Abraham Nysenholz

of his family. He traveled to his hometown, Ger, to see if any other family members had survived and traveled to many DP camps looking for family. But despite his efforts, no other family members were found.

In Fohrenwald, Germany a Displaced Person Camp run by the JDC (Joint Distribution Committee), Abe became part of the Fohrenwald D.P. Police. He met his wife, Giza (Gendel) Wladimirska and her two surviving siblings, in the D.P. camp. It was not long before the two decided to marry, and begin a life together. Many in the D.P. camp were desperate to bring happiness back into their lives after their horrific experiences. They were married in a Jewish ceremony in Fohrenwald on March 24, 1947, witnessed by Giza's family, sister Mania Blady, her husband Hyman Blady, brother Abe Vladimir and with a handful of friends.

The JOINT sent them on a honeymoon in Berchtesgaden, Germany (Hitler's summer retreat). Despite the joy of her marriage, Giza felt melancholy and cut the honeymoon short. She missed her siblings. Abe was very disappointed but wanted to keep his bride happy, so they left the area early. Abe repeatedly reminded Giza for the rest of her lifetime how she shortened their honeymoon stay.

After they were married, they tried to immigrate to Israel with Giza's family. However, the British blockade stopped this move for the family. Shortly afterwards, Abe learned through acquaintances that he did have two surviving nephews that were hidden in Belgium. Adolphe (Dolphy), at the age of 3 was placed with a Christian Belgium farmer's family and Isadore (Zizi) 8 years of age was placed in a Jesuit school. Immediately after their placement, their parents were deported to Treblinka.



Abe revisits Auschwitz in 1996

After finding his two nephews, Abe and Giza tried to do the best they could to provide and support them. But the nephews were unable to adapt to life in a small apartment and a different language. They decided to place the young Dolphy in a children's home with other children who had been hidden. Zizi the older nephew was 16 years old and went to Israel. They both became well-educated and successful in their careers and in their personal lives. Dolphy became a University Professor at the University of Brussels, a writer and playwright. Zizi became an Anesthesiologist, a Dentist, an Acupuncture specialist and accomplished musician. Now, they both have beautiful families of their own.

After obtaining a marriage license in civil court, Abe, wife Giza and their 5-year-old daughter Helene Rose traveled to America on the S.S. United States from Le Havre Port, France, arriving in New York City harbor on May 19, 1953. The American JOINT assisted Abe, Giza and Helene through the process of immigration and helped them financially. They disembarked in New York City and went directly to family in Philadelphia, PA, in the USA. The plan by the immigration bureau was that they were supposed to go to Missouri but staying close to family was paramount.

There was a small community of Holocaust survivors living in Philadelphia, PA. Everywhere in this community Yiddish was spoken. This provided a comfort level and a level of security. Through the JOINT, Abe found a job in a clothing factory and an apartment was provided. Another baby girl was born into the family on June 26, 1954, Janet Louise. They all became naturalized US citizens, and were sworn in on December 15, 1958, Philadelphia City Hall, Pennsylvania.

Abe wanted to go back to his hometown before he died. The entire family made the trip to Ger, Poland on May 13, 1996. It was an unbelievable experience. Abe passed away on December 31, 2009. ■

Janet Paul, RN, works at Lexington Medical Center.



Denise Deveaux and Joe Engel, above and right

# My Personal Charleston Hero

## Holocaust Survivor Joe Engel

**T**wenty years ago, I met a man that would change my life in ways I would never have dreamed. Meeting him rocked me to the core and I felt a grief I had not ever felt before. I was an eighth grade literature teacher and was looking for the best literature for the genre of diaries and I chose one that many have used in the past. As I began to teach *The Diary of Anne Frank*, I had so many questions from my students for which I felt I had no answers. I did some research about the Holocaust and discovered that right here in my town we had a Holocaust survivor. I contacted the Charleston Jewish



**DENISE J. DEVEAUX**

ish Federation to invite him to speak at my school, Northwood Academy. Joe Engel shared his story of survival and I had never seen over 400 students sit in such silence. After he spoke, I asked him if I could possibly meet with him to get more information about how he was able to make it to America after World War II ended. We met for lunch at his favorite restaurant and he spoke of the horrors that he had endured in more detail and his memories of losing nearly every member of his family. Born in Zakroczym, Poland, he was one of nine children. His small town just outside of War-

saw was a farming town. His parents were uneducated and Joe and his brothers and sisters attended public schools. When the Germans invaded Poland, his town became a ghetto. Soon the residents were forced into cattle cars and taken to concentration camps. There they were forced to work and faced starvation, disease, beatings, and the gas chambers. Death was a reality from moment to moment. Joe was sent to a brick laying school at Auschwitz, the most notorious of the death camps. As I listened, I just could not understand how humans could do such horrific things to another human. I thought to myself, "my students need to learn about the Holocaust," but I felt so ill-equipped. I discovered the Charleston



The Joe Engel Memorial Daffodil Garden at Northwood Academy in Charleston.

Jewish Federation REMEMBER Committee for Holocaust and Genocide Education. I contacted them and asked if I could become involved and was welcomed to join. As I began to learn more about the need for Holocaust education, I searched for ways to get more involved. Joe was like my cheerleader and was always encouraging me. One day, I got a phone call and Joe invited me to attend the Charleston Jewish Federation's Interfaith Pilgrimage to Poland. We would be going for the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz. I could not believe it! We traveled throughout Poland and Joe told me all about his life before, during, and after the war. The day we went to Auschwitz, I really did not know what to expect. I was shocked that the camp looked much the same with the crematoria still intact and many of the barracks still standing. Joe and I were walking along a path towards one of the barracks and suddenly Joe became very quiet, stopped and looked about as if remembering. I was frozen and did not know if I should say something — what does one say to someone remembering the very place that destroyed every shred of his humanity? Joe looked at me and said, "I don't remember birds singing here. I don't remember green grass or trees...please remember to tell your students about this place...tell them to Never Forget what happened here..." At that moment, I knew what my life calling would be. I would spend the rest of my life telling Joe's story and I would tell my students to tell their families and everyone they know about when humanity was at its worst. Joe was just seventeen years old on January 19, 1945, when he was put on a train with a destination that he did not know. He had endured

unbelievable torture for years in Auschwitz, endured the death march in freezing temperatures and now he was on the train. He thought he had nothing else to lose and decided to jump out of the top of the train into the snow and hid for hours. He found a farm a few miles away and this began his path to freedom. He found a resistance group hiding in the woods and joined them in destroying police stations. He was finally liberated and decided to go home only to discover the majority of his family was gone. After spending some time in a Displaced Persons camp, he found out a sister and two brothers had survived. Through a refugee agency, he contacted an aunt in New Orleans who helped him get an affidavit to immigrate. He found his way to America and found freedom in Charleston, South Carolina and opened a dry-cleaning business. He has spent decades speaking in schools sharing his amazing story. Joe is an



example of triumphing over evil. He has received numerous awards and is the most remarkable man in Charleston. He even has a street named after him as well as a movie made about his life. For his 90th birthday, I invited him to my school and we surprised him with a birthday party and planted a Daffodil

Garden in his honor. When I am asked why I am involved in Holocaust education, it is because of Joe Engel and the six million who perished. ■

*Denise J. Deveaux has been an educator at Northwood Academy in Charleston, South Carolina for 29 years and is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Teacher Fellow.*

# Rutka's Notebook

## A Voice from the Holocaust

In June, 2019, I found myself in Poland. I never thought that I would make the trip to my parents' homeland. I had promised my mom as such. But in January, a set of events occurred that rekindled my thoughts of visiting the birthplaces and towns of my parents and face my family's difficult past. With my youngest brother, Herb Stern, my husband and I decided to join the SC Council on the Holocaust-Eastern European trip. We decided to add additional days, obtain a private guide, Tomas Cebulski, and visit the two towns of my father, Kielce and Lodz, and the two towns of my mother, Wloszczowa and Bedzin.

Bedzin was my favorite town. It was exactly as my mom described, but we children thought she was exaggerating. She described her house (apartment) on a lovely green square in the center of town, across the street from the synagogue and a nearby church, and a large medieval castle! And it was! While exploring and marveling about the beauty of the town, we met an interesting Bedzin, Polish native Adam Szydowski. We spent a fascinating afternoon with Adam, who had assumed the mantle of saving and chronicling the history of Jewish Bedzin. He had been responsible for creating Memorials and monuments to the Jewish heritage of the past. Prior to the Holocaust half of the Bedzin population was Jewish, now there are no Jews there. Our guide asked if we knew of Rutka Laskier. "No", I answered, "who is she?" She was a 14 year old girl, in Bedzin, who lived around the corner from my mom, was two years younger and who wrote a diary about the Bedzin ghetto from January 19, 1943-April 24, 1943 when she was deported. My mom was deported from the Bedzin Ghetto on August 3, 1943! I was filled with wonder, excitement, fear, and questions.... Did Rutka know my mom? Is my mom mentioned in her diary? What were the conditions in the Bedzin Ghetto?

This long lost diary of Rutka Laskier is often referred to as the "Polish Anne Frank diary". Although only three-and-a-half months was recorded in this diary compared to the 25-and-a-half months in Anne Frank's diary, the description of fear, food shortages, witnessed murders of the elderly and small babies and children filled the pages. I finally knew what my mom was exposed to when only 16 years

old. My mother was not mentioned in the diary, but other friends of Rutka were and it showed the side of a young girl, working through the horrors of the Holocaust, the throes of adolescence, and the almost certainty of pending death.



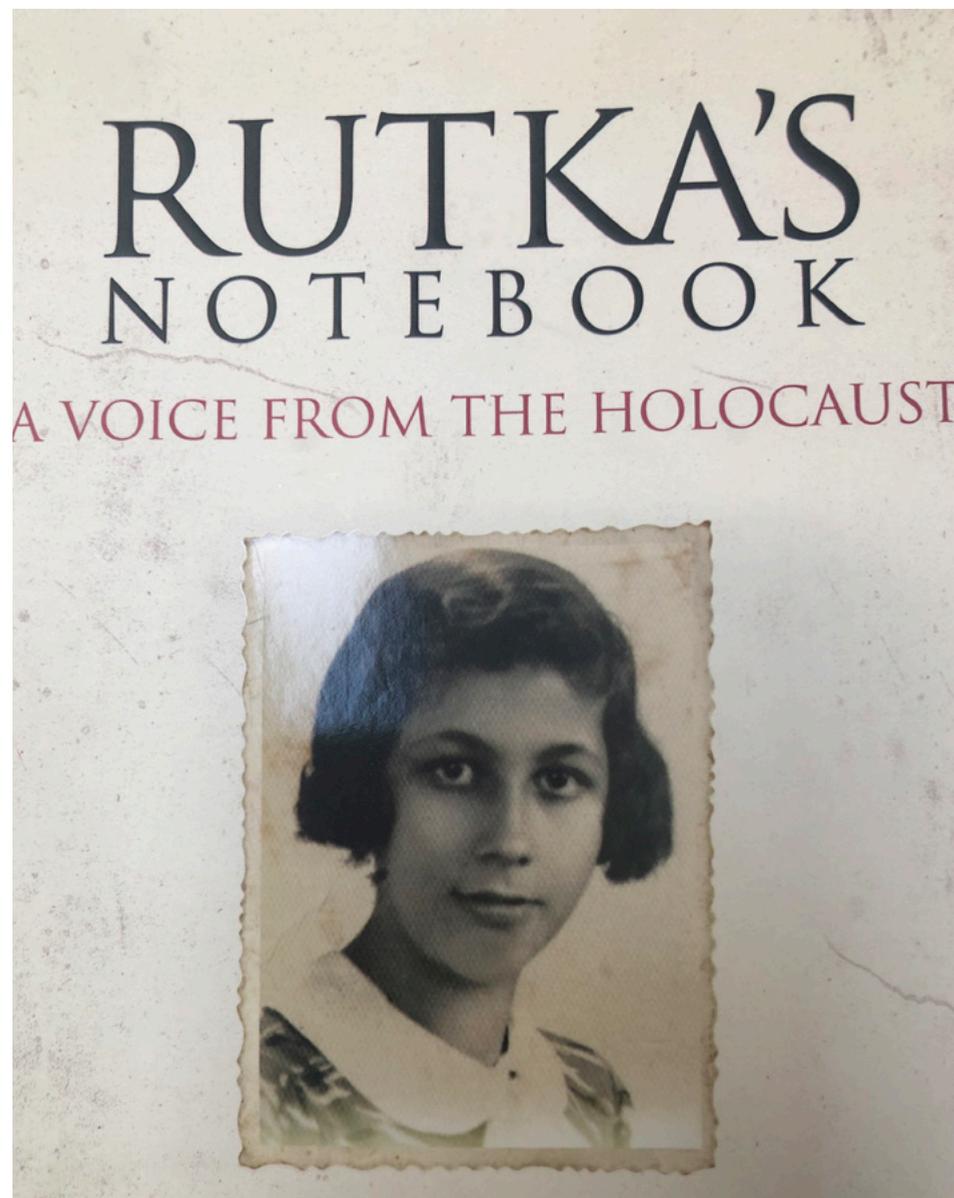
From left: Bruce and Lilly Filler, Adam Szydowski and Herb Stern in Bedzin, Poland.

The discovery of this diary is an amazing story! Fourteen year old Rutka had a gentile friend, Stanislaw Sapinska, who was the 20-year-old daughter of the landlord and who promised Rutka that she would "save" the diary if anything happened to the Laskiers. They decided on a hiding place for the diary: under the staircase of the apt where Rutka lived. And at the end of the war Stanislaw returned to the apt, which was in good condition and retrieved the diary.



A New Family Yaacov Laskier poses for a family portrait with daughter Zahava and second wife Hanna Wiener, whom Yaacov met in a refugee camp in Cyprus after the war.

Rutka Laskier's sister Zahava found about her hidden diary in 2006.



The diary was kept secret for 61 years until 81 year old Stanislaw was convinced to reveal its existence to the world by her nephew. The diary was first published in 2006 in Poland and then by Yad Vashem.

The diary discovery led to another amazing story of Yaacov Laskier, Rutka's father, who had survived the Holocaust, and emigrated to Israel when he found out that his Polish family: Rutka and Joachim-Henius (his children) and Dvorah (his wife) had perished in the Holocaust.

Yaacov remarried in Israel and had daughter, Zahava. At age 14, Zahava found out about her father's Polish family and 14 years later decided to name her baby daughter Ruth, after her half sister. It was only in 2006 that Zahava found out about the hidden diary, and began to read the diary written by Rutka.

"At the beginning of 2006, I (Menachem Lior, friend of

Rutka) was contacted by Adam Szydowski, one of the leaders of the Jona Organization in Bedzin, Poland, whose mission was to preserve the Jewish culture of Zaglembe (southwest Poland). He told me about the discovery of the diary in Bedzin that once belonged to a young Jewish girl named Rutka Laskier....". And we had met Adam in June, 2019. He had figured prominently in reuniting Zahava with the diary of her sister Rutka.

In 2008, the diary was published in English, "Rutka's Notebook—A Voice from the Holocaust." Reading it certainly heightened the admiration for my parents, especially my mother, Jadzia Szklarz Stern, who lived through hell. I am glad I went to Poland to see, feel, touch and now better understand her life before and during the war. It was a complex history to decipher and to try to understand. It is still something that I ponder frequently. ■

Lilly Filler, MD is co-chairwoman of the Columbia Holocaust Education Commission and chairwoman of the S.C. Council on the Holocaust.

# HOLOCAUST EDUCATION RESOURCES

**COMPILED BY  
LYSSA HARVEY**

*Co-chair, Columbia  
Holocaust Education  
Commission; teacher,  
therapist, artist*



## **Columbia Holocaust Education Commission**

### **columbiaholocausteducation.org**

Promotes awareness of the Holocaust and fosters education in grades K-12 throughout the state of South Carolina. The Commission, an outgrowth of the successful campaign to erect the Columbia Holocaust Memorial, sponsors the Holocaust Remembered exhibit, including teacher education guides, and provides grants to educators and institutions to provide innovative, quality Holocaust education.

## **Holocaust Archives, Jewish Heritage Collection, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston**

### **ccpl.org/holocaust-special-collection**

Sponsored by the College of Charleston and housed in the Special Collections Department at the Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, the Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC) has been collecting archival material related to the Holocaust for 15 years. JHC's Holocaust Archives includes hundreds of documents, photographs, and artifacts belonging to survivors of the Shoah, liberators, and other eye-witnesses now living in South Carolina. Contact Dale Rosengarten, Curator, Jewish Heritage Collection, 843-953-8028, or [rosengartend@cofc.edu](mailto:rosengartend@cofc.edu).

## **Holocaust Research Section at Charleston County Library features Zucker Holocaust Collection, Shoah Foundation Survivor Videotapes**

### **jewishcharleston.org/community- directory/jerry-and-anita-zucker- holocaust-memorial-collection**

The Jerry and Anita Zucker Holocaust Memorial Collection at the Charleston County Library is home to some 400 books for citizens, students, and educators to do further research about the Holocaust. Also included are 55 video documentaries, and 28 videotaped survivor testimonies from the Visual History of the Shoah Foundation, available for checkout for individual or classroom use. The Charleston County Main Library is located at 68 Calhoun St. For more information, please call 843-805-6930.

## **The Selden K. Smith Holocaust Education Foundation**

### **holocausteducationfoundation.org**

Named in honor of the long-time chair of the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust and a retired history professor from Columbia College, the foundation provides funds to schools, colleges, churches, synagogues, civic groups, and individuals for research, student field trips, teacher training and workshops, classroom supplies, Holocaust speakers, exhibitions, and related educational programs.

Donations can be made via the website or mailed to The Selden K. Smith Foundation for Holocaust Education, c/o Minda Miller, Chair, PO Box 25740, Columbia, SC 29224.

## **South Carolina Council on the Holocaust**

### **scholocaustcouncil.org**

#### **Professional Development in SC**

The SC Council on the Holocaust is committed to providing professional development to all teachers in the state. Appropriate credits will be awarded in compliance with the SC State Education Standards. These courses are offered throughout the state; check the SC Council on the Holocaust website for times and places. If teachers or administrators have any questions, please direct all correspondence to [education@scholocaustcouncil.org](mailto:education@scholocaustcouncil.org).

The Council also supports teachers to attend well known national and international courses for their professional development: i.e., Centropa and Jewish Federation for the Righteous. The teachers must be approved by the Council to receive course compensation. The Council offers a Summer Institute Course in Partnership with USC, June 22-26, 2020 entitled "Inquiry approaches to teaching the Holocaust". Please check the website for criteria and application.

#### **Mini Grant Program**

The SC Council on the Holocaust provides mini-grants for teacher projects throughout the year. The grant application can be found online and support must align with the Holocaust Council.

#### **Eastern Europe Trip**

The SC Council on the Holocaust plans an Eastern European trip every other year. Teachers are subsidized for attending, but it is an application process. Please check website in the fall of 2020 for upcoming international trip in 2021.

## **South Carolina Educational TV**

### **scetv.pbslearningmedia.org/ search/?q=holocaust**

SC ETV and PBS provide this link to many different Holocaust Education articles, online resources, and videos featuring research and projects and research related to education. This is a free resource with close to 200 different resources.

## **learningwhy.org/search- results?keywords=holocaust**

This SCETV website "Learning Why" provides free online lesson plans to educators on the Holocaust.

## **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

### **ushmm.org/teach**

The Museum offers free educational resources on a variety of Holocaust-related topics, available for classroom use. For more information on Holocaust resource centers in each state, please visit [ushmm.org/teach](http://ushmm.org/teach) designed to challenge assumptions and develop critical thinking. This website provides many Resources for Educators Lesson Plans.

## **DIGITAL RESOURCES**

- **Columbia Holocaust Education Commission**  
[columbiaholocausteducation.org](http://columbiaholocausteducation.org)
- **South Carolina Council on the Holocaust**  
[scholocaustcouncil.org](http://scholocaustcouncil.org)
- **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**  
[ushmm.org](http://ushmm.org)
- **Yad Vashem: The Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority**  
[yad-vashem.org.il](http://yad-vashem.org.il)
- **Facing History and Ourselves**  
[facinghistory.org](http://facinghistory.org)
- **Centropa**  
*Where Jewish History has a name, a place and a story*  
[centropa.org](http://centropa.org)
- **Echoes and Reflections: Multimedia Holocaust Education Kit**  
*Anti-Defamation League*  
[echoesandreflections.org](http://echoesandreflections.org)
- **Southern Poverty Law Center**  
[teachingtolerance.com](http://teachingtolerance.com)
- **Simon Wiesenthal Center**  
[simonwiesenthalcenter.org](http://simonwiesenthalcenter.org)
- **University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute**  
[usc.edu/college/vhi](http://usc.edu/college/vhi)
- **The REMEMBER Program of the Charleston Jewish Federation**  
[jewishcharleston.org/remember](http://jewishcharleston.org/remember)
- **UNESCO Clearinghouse on Global Citizenship Education**  
*Teaching resources, articles and other research publications on education about the Holocaust in various languages*  
[gcedclearinghouse.org](http://gcedclearinghouse.org)

## **With Our Sincere Thanks and Gratitude**

This "Holocaust Remembered" supplement could not have been developed without the work, ideas and financial support from many in the community. The Columbia Holocaust Education Commission wishes to thank everyone involved in this project!!

### **To our Sponsors —**

The Arnold Foundation, The Columbia Jewish Federation, The SC Council on the Holocaust and The Columbia Holocaust Education Commission — thank you for your financial generosity and your generosity of spirit for this project.

### **To our Contributors —**

A special thank you to all of the authors who spent countless hours researching and writing this historical narrative. We expected a factual narrative and you have provided that.

### **To the Survivors, Liberators and Eyewitnesses —**

To the individuals themselves and to the families, we have the deepest respect and gratitude. You have all spoken and written of a very difficult time in your life and we are deeply thankful that you shared your stories. Only by hearing your life testimonies can we continue to tell the stories and battle those that wish to "rewrite history". We must never forget the Lessons of the Holocaust and through these stories the lessons will live.

### **Free Times of the Post and Courier and The State of McClatchy papers —**

We are so thankful that you have continued to see this as a worthwhile project and worked with us to bring this to the community and to the state of South Carolina. Thank you to Chase Heatherly and especially Lisa Willis of Free Times, who has spent countless hours developing these pages. You have provided the vehicle to reach the public and we have provided you with the amazing personal and historical stories of the Holocaust.

*The Holocaust Remembered  
supplement and this resource page  
are available in a digital format at  
[free-times.com/holocaust](http://free-times.com/holocaust).*