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# The End of the Holocaust Generation and the Implications in the Future of Educational Programming in Holocaust Museums

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The End of the Holocaust Generation and the Implications in the Future of Educational  
Programming in Holocaust Museums

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## Abstract

In the aftermaths of the Holocaust, survivors have shared their experiences of the war with audiences in museums and educational institutions as a way to bear witness and teach new generations about hatred, intolerance, and indifference. The generation who lived through the Holocaust is dwindling, and a needed change in educational programming is rapidly approaching Holocaust museums. The implications of this thesis will be to demonstrate that United States Holocaust museums are acutely aware of the dilemma of replacing the physical presence of survivor commentary with adapted programming that also includes lessons on the removal of contemporary hatred and violence.

This thesis will focus upon three United States institutions – The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York, and the New York Tolerance Center: A Simon Wiesenthal Center, Museum of Tolerance Project – and will address the changes in educational and public programming, the second generation, and how these museums have taken strides in addressing the future of Holocaust education in a world without survivors.

# The End of the Holocaust Generation and the Implications in the Future of Educational Programming in Holocaust Museums

## *Preface*

In high school, I attended an after-school conservatory where we studied music and theatre. In 1999, my senior year in high school, I was appointed head of the student committee for historical research and educational materials for Hans Krasa's Czech children's opera *Brundibar*, performed in the Terezin Concentration Camp. I had the privilege of befriending Ela Stein Weissberger and hearing her story of being one of the only child survivors of the original cast. From that moment on, my life was forever changed. I would eventually go on to major in history at the University of Colorado, focusing on the Holocaust, where I wrote my thesis on the children of Theresienstadt. I found that the expression of truth in the face of deceit became a form of internal resistance for the children of Terezin and that, while the purpose of the camp was to mislead public opinion concerning the treatment of the Jews, the children used their few freedoms such as writing, drawing, and singing, as a way to resist the Nazi regime.

The concept for my master's thesis was developed out of my love of the survivor story and the impact that they can make upon a life. In my master's thesis, I explore the future of Holocaust museum education and how the stories will remain powerful and palpable as the last remaining Holocaust survivors begin to pass away. I explore the future of educational and public programming in Holocaust museums, and I am hopeful that with the evolution of museum programming there will be a transformative experience, where people will move out of perceiving the Holocaust as history and into the understanding that genocide can occur within any society. It is important for survivors to have their stories remembered, and for future generations to actively confront the repercussions of genocide, violence, and hatred.

## Introduction

According to Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, “He who hates one group hates all groups. He who hates one minority hates all minorities. Wherever and whenever a project even close to similar to that project that Hitler had for the Jews and some other people, we must immediately do whatever we can to stop it.”<sup>1</sup> In the aftermaths of the Holocaust, survivors have shared their experiences and memories of the war with audiences in museums and educational institutions as a way to bear witness and teach new generations about hatred, intolerance, and indifference. The deeply personal first-person accounts of Holocaust survivors have been intricately documented by museum professionals and scholars and, with the permission of the survivor, have been shared with the public. The death of six million Jews, two-thirds of European Jewry, during the Holocaust left mankind with new thresholds of inhumanity. While the children who survived the Holocaust have now grown old, they explicitly recounted and documented the atrocities that they experienced during their childhood with difficulty and silent resistance after the war.

The generation who lived through the Holocaust is dwindling, and a needed change in educational programming is rapidly approaching Holocaust museums and institutions. Holocaust museums and institutions are faced with the great task of personalizing history and adjusting their educational and public programming after the Holocaust generation passes on. In 1994, *The Freedom Review* published Robert Bonte-Friedheim’s article, *Museums (and Memory)*. Bonte-Friedheim writes:

The passing-away of living memory – the period when the last people who have experienced a historical event are dying – is crucial for the self-definition and historical identity of human communities. World War II and the Holocaust are now vanishing from

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<sup>1</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Washington, D.C., *The Power of Truth*, Video. <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/about/video/?content=poweroftruth>

first-hand experience, hence...museums on opposite sides of the Atlantic have gone up to ensure a particular kind of public remembrance.<sup>2</sup>

The implications of this master's thesis will be to demonstrate that United States Holocaust museums are acutely aware of the dilemma of replacing the physical presence of survivor commentary with programming that will push future generations further to remove hatred and violence, while breeding awareness of genocidal issues. Though these educational methods will never substitute for the presence of a witness, this is the reality that museum educators are beginning to face. According to Sara Bloomfield, Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., "Every single day we are losing some aspect of the authentic voice of the Holocaust, whether it's the loss of the survivors, the other eyewitnesses, or the deterioration of the material, every single day...We are in a race against time every single day."<sup>3</sup> When survivors are no longer available to discuss their personal experiences during the Holocaust, the educational and public programming will evolve as a way to continue to make the survivor story and Holocaust history tangible to future generations.

This thesis will focus upon three United States institutions – The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York, and the New York Tolerance Center: A Simon Wiesenthal Center, Museum of Tolerance Project – and will address the changes in their educational and public programming. This thesis will describe the strides these museums are taking in addressing the future of Holocaust education in a world without survivors. While museums will no longer have the physical presence of survivors to tell their stories, documentation and representation is being left through oral histories, photographs, writings, and the surviving generations of their children

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<sup>2</sup> Bonte-Friedheim, Robert. *Museums (and Memory)*. *Freedom Review*; June 1994, Vol. 25 Issue 3, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., *The Power of Truth*, Video.  
<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/about/video/?content=poweroftruth>



and grandchildren. As the last generation of Holocaust survivors pass away, a new generation must be introduced to one of mankind's darkest hours, for this will be a new beginning to remembering, teaching, and encouraging active participation in the lessons of the Holocaust.

In order to explore this topic, the thesis is divided into six chapters that will portray the inner workings of educational programming and future implications at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, and the New York Tolerance Center. Chapter 1 explores the importance and need of Holocaust institutions and the applicability of memory in society today. Chapter 2 details the main types of educational programming and the role of the survivor within the museum, including the education of school-age youth and the role of Speakers Bureaus within these museums. The next three chapters focus on a specific museum: Chapter 3 on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Chapter 4 on the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust; and Chapter 5 on the New York Tolerance Center. The chapters will delve into the types of programming using the survivor, and the future implications in Holocaust educational programming within these museums when Holocaust survivors are no longer physically present to share their first person accounts. These chapters will also describe the background, founding information, and mission statement of each museum. Chapter 6 discusses the role of the second generation in the future of the educational programming at these United States institutions.

Margo Rouard-Snowman, who wrote on the future of museums in *Museum Graphics* stated, "The Museum has become a centre for communication, a rallying point and place of cultural union."<sup>4</sup> Holocaust museums have become a meeting place that provides a forum for the

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<sup>4</sup> Rouard-Snowman, Margo. *Museum Graphics*. Thames and Hudson Inc., 1992, p. 15.

examination of basic moral issues. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust institutions teach that “the Holocaust was not an accident in history—it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur.”<sup>5</sup> It is commonly known that populations other than the Jewish contingency were targeted for destruction for racial, ethnic, or national reasons during the Holocaust, including gypsies, the handicapped, Poles, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, prisoners of war and political dissidents. This thesis specifically focuses upon Hitler’s Final Solution for the Jews, as they were the only group targeted for complete annihilation. The education departments at Holocaust museums and educational centers strive to make this history palpable to its visitors through the use of first-hand experiences of survivors and artifacts in the museum’s collection. As Michael Berenbaum wrote in *After Tragedy and Triumph*, “The Holocaust has moved beyond the ghetto and entered the mainstream; our task now is not evasion but responsible address.”<sup>6</sup>

When the Jewish State of Israel created the renowned Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem, it urged mankind “never to forget.” Avner Shalev, chairman of Yad Vashem stated, “Remembrance is not just a slogan – we need it to serve the present and the future. It has to be a part of our cultural environment. People have to say, ‘Our basis for coexisting as human beings collapsed during the Holocaust. It didn’t function.’”<sup>7</sup> Established in 1953, Yad Vashem played a key role in the creation of true memorials to the Holocaust, and is the pioneer of Holocaust

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<sup>5</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., Guidelines for Teaching. <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/guideline/>

<sup>6</sup> Berenbaum, Michael. *After Tragedy and Triumph: Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience*. Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Svoboda, Elizabeth. *Never Forget, Never Again*. Science & Spirit; Sep/Oct 2006, Vol. 17 Issue 5, p. 43.

museums world-wide.<sup>8</sup> After the creation of Yad Vashem, numerous Holocaust museums and memorials quickly followed its lead. According to James E. Young, Professor of English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, “The number of monuments and memorial spaces in Europe, Israel, and America now reaches into the thousands, with dozens more being proposed and erected every year...Some of these memorials and museums occupy the former sites of destruction, while others are built at great remove from the killing fields.”<sup>9</sup> In 2004, Debra Marshall wrote the article, *Making Sense of Remembrance*, where she discusses the importance of location when addressing memory within museum and memorial sites. Marshall stated, “Place is closely bound up with remembrance. It is the site where the past and the present meet and it is the terrain through which ideological and symbolic struggles are played out.”<sup>10</sup> Young wrote, “Unlike European memorials, however, often anchored in the very sites of destruction, those in America are removed from the ‘topography of terror.’”<sup>11</sup> European concentration and death camps have now become museums – memorials to those people who lost their lives on the soil.

Museums as primary sites of destruction, for example, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belson– or on-site historical museums – for example, the Anne Frank House – differ from those museums created beyond the grounds where the actual atrocities occurred. For example, Holocaust museums in America have caused a stir about how visitors’ memories are shaped at such locations. Joanne Jacobson wrote an article, *The Politics of Memory*, where she addresses this controversy:

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<sup>8</sup> Yad Vashem, Israel. [http://www1.yadvashem.org/about\\_yad/jubilee/history.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_yad/jubilee/history.html)

<sup>9</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 199, p. ix.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall, Debra. *Making Sense of Remembrance*. *Social & Cultural Geography*; March 2004, Vol. 5 Issue 1, p. 42-43.

<sup>11</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 199, p.283.

Holocaust memorials and memorializing have in fact emerged as an arena of high political drama, in which the political life of memory is crystallized and perpetually played out. Throughout Europe, in Israel and in the United States, wherever location or inheritance provokes a sense of responsibility to remember, debates over such basic questions as theme, location and design of Holocaust memorials have exposed and renewed unresolved questions about how each remembering entity – state, nation, community – wishes to see itself.<sup>12</sup>

Whether a heritage site is at the primary historic location or outside of that realm, museums are filled with authentic items like box-cars, suitcases, and hair. However, the displaying of these objects has caused scholars to discuss the “domestication” of observing objects in America versus observing objects at an authentic site, such as Majdanek in Poland. Edward T. Linenthal argues that shoes displayed at museums have a profound impact upon the visitors; however, the experience may be different depending on the location where the shoes are viewed. Linenthal explains:

Even though they [shoes] – and other artifacts – were skillfully woven into the fabric of an intense Holocaust narrative, their raw power and seemingly unmediated presence in the barracks at Majdanek was moderated. In both places [Majdanek and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum], of course, the shoes served as props in a larger story. In Majdanek, however, the story was told within the total environment of the camp, an environment that seemed to collapse the distance between event and recollection of the event, an environment in which the shoes were actually worn, taken off, left behind, collected. They were less selected artifact – by definition something out of place, put on display – than remnant, at home in the camp. In Washington, the shoes clearly had the status of artifact...their presence as part of a narrative in the controlled environment of the museum domesticated them, made them ‘safer’ to view.<sup>13</sup>

Oren Baaruch Stier, author of *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust*, concludes, “Thus a museum space is constructed as both domesticated and estranged, a process that is tied to its objects’ heterogeneity.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Jacobson, Joanne. *The Politics of Memory*. *Nation*; October 18, 1993. Vol. 257, Issue 12, p. 431.

<sup>13</sup> Stier, Oren Baruch. *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2003, p. 126.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 126.

On-site historical museums in Europe, such as the Anne Frank House, have become international destinations. Anne Frank may be the most well-known child victim of the Holocaust. According to Marja Verbraak, who wrote the article, *The Paradox of the Anne Frank House*:

Soon after publication of the diary in 1947, readers were drawn to the Prinsengracht to see the hiding place. The first twelve months following the official opening of the museum in 1960 brought 9,000 visitors. In 1998, visitors numbered more than 800,000. The paradox of the Anne Frank House is that this tiny space, which was intended to remain secret, now attracts the attention of hundreds of thousands of people.<sup>15</sup>

In 1999, the Anne Frank House completed an extensive renovation project, where the museum was modified to cater to the increase in the number of visitors. Verbraak points out that there is something that appeals to visitors of museums about being in a space considered “authentic.” The concept of “authentic” is a topic debated by scholars universally. Laura Quinn wrote the article, *The Afterlife of Anne Frank: A Space for Translation in the Anne Frank House*, where she addresses history, memory, and the authenticity of representation of the Holocaust within the context of Anne Frank and the museum. Quinn writes:

The experience promised inside is an encounter with the reproduction and interpretation of Anne Frank’s texts and the ‘original’ space where her echo is sought... The story of Anne Frank is tragic. It is also alive. It is occupied physically by visitors to the site that represents her as a memorial and psychically when we attempt to grasp her experience and the trauma of the war. Through various forms of reproduction, whether perceived to be corrupt or pure, Anne Frank has nonetheless achieved fame... Her [Anne Frank’s] history and memory merge in the afterlife of her diaries and the abstractly rich site which represent her... There can be no ‘going back’ to Anne Frank’s literal experience.<sup>16</sup>

Anne Frank’s legacy is told through the house where she lived and hid with her family for more than two years, as she wrote in her diary and detailed her experience in hiding during the war.

Though the Anne Frank House is an “authentic” historic site, controversy remains even amongst

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<sup>15</sup> Verbraak, Marja. *The Paradox of the Anne Frank House*. Museum International; January 2001, Vol. 53 Issue 1, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Quinn, Laura L. *The Afterlife of Anne Frank: A Space for Translation in the Anne Frank House*. Parallax; July 1999, Vol. 5 Issue 3, p. 48-49.

the most praised European museums and historic sites for Holocaust history. Quinn writes, “The assumption is that reconstruction will be both more historically ‘authentic’ and more rewarding for visitors. And yet, the most affecting historical sites...are often those that attempt to literally show and tell the least.”<sup>17</sup>

Rick Crownshaw, who wrote on the difficulty in addressing memory within the museum in his article *Photography and Memory in Holocaust Museums*, concentrated on how forms of memorialization might transmit a cultural memory of genocide to those who did not witness the event, specifically in America. Crownshaw wrote, “One of the challenges faced by Holocaust studies is how to theorize adequately a means of Holocaust memory’s transmission from the generation that witnessed the event to those born after. In other words, the challenge is how to conceive of a means of thinking the after-life of Holocaust memory.”<sup>18</sup> According to Crownshaw, American museums have been subjected to criticism because of the “Americanization of Holocaust memory.”<sup>19</sup> Crownshaw explains:

Americanization is orchestrated by the dynamics of the museum’s exhibition and memorial spaces; and the evolution of Holocaust memory in America has reached nationalist conclusions in the conceptualization and realization of the museum itself...[In America] The idea of the nation state is redeemed, antithetically in an American form, by the exhibition’s emphasis on the United State’s role as liberator of camps in West Germany and as a place of refuge (albeit limited) for those who survived the camps.<sup>20</sup>

Young argues:

It is this shock that provokes remembrance of things not witnessed (a vicarious or secondary witnessing) and it is these architectural forms that act as conduits of trauma. Although this memorial concept, not limited to architecture, is designed to transmit Holocaust memory, it is a concept that needs thinking through carefully, as the theorization of vicarious witnessing that attends such memorial forms runs the risk of

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<sup>17</sup> Quinn, Laura L. *The Afterlife of Anne Frank: A Space for Translation in the Anne Frank House*. Parallax; July 1999, Vol. 5 Issue 3, p. 51.

<sup>18</sup> Crownshaw, Rick. *Photography and memory in Holocaust museums*. Mortality; May 2007, Vol. 12, Issue 2, p. 176.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 177.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 178.

universalizing trauma, and of displacing the historical specificity of the experience of the Holocaust's witnesses.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the controversy that ensues over memory, location, and representation, according to Stier, "All museums are, at the most fundamental level, concerned with information: its generation, its perpetuation, its organization, and its dissemination...their collections of material remnants of the past are of value, and worth preserving, primarily for the information embodied in them."<sup>22</sup> Though the forms of remembrance differ, all Holocaust museums create memory.

Shalev stated:

A successful memorial should make you ask yourself, 'Where am I really with regard to these events? Does this memorial bring up any commitment in me, as a human being, to take action? It should be one where you leave with a sense of inspiration, where you feel encouraged to go on reading and thinking about what happened. Any site that continues this process is a good one.

The Israel Science and Technology Center, located in Tel Aviv, details that Holocaust museums, memorials and educational centers range world-wide, including the Museo del Holocausto in Buenos Aires, Argentina and the Holocaust Education Center in Fukuyama-City, Japan, to numerous memorials and museums across Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Poland, France, the Netherlands, Russia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.<sup>23</sup> In the United States alone, there are twenty-five Holocaust museums, memorials, and study centers as of 2010. These institutions not only act as a way to remember, but as a form of education that explores the danger of hatred and teaches visitors, young and old, very simple lessons of humanity, through the difficult and tragic ending for the millions lost in Hitler's Final Solution. In the article, *Seeking Numinous*

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<sup>21</sup> Crownshaw, Rick. *Photography and memory in Holocaust museums*. Mortality; May 2007, Vol. 12, Issue 2, p. 177.

<sup>22</sup> Stier, Oren Baruch. *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2003, p. 116.

<sup>23</sup> Israel Science and Technology Homepage, Jewish Studies: Global Directory of Holocaust Museums. <http://www.science.co.il/holocaust-museums.asp>

*Experiences in the Unremembered Past*, Catherine Cameron and John Gatewood wrote, “Historical sites and museums in both North America and Europe have become increasingly popular visitor destinations over the past decades, a fact promoting the observation that history has become a booming industry.”<sup>24</sup> While the memory of the Holocaust should never be cheapened as an example of a “booming industry,” Holocaust museums and memorials have unarguably become international destinations for education and remembrance. According to Stier, “Holocaust museums ultimately serve to tell stories, to find ways of speaking out of the silence that is the abyss of the past and of conveying such speech to visitors.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cameron, Catherine N. and Gatewood, John B. *Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past*. *Ethnology*, Winter 2003, Vol. 42 Issue 1, p. 55.

<sup>25</sup> Stier, Oren Baruch. *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2003, p. 148.



## **Chapter 1 – The Need for Holocaust Museums and Memory within Holocaust Education**

The further the events of the Holocaust recede into time, the more prominent its museums and memorials become. Chapter 1 delves into the need for Holocaust museums in society today. This chapter addresses the importance of public memory and the ways that museums, as educational centers, not only create and reinforce memory of the Holocaust period, but encourage political and communal action.

In 1994, Steven Spielberg stated, "...every drive-by shooting or incident of hatred in the neighborhood or in the classroom is related to the past. Much of the violence of today can be traced back to the fact that our generation wasn't educated in the history of hatred from the beginning of time. To understand what's happening today, you have to look back."<sup>26</sup> Holocaust museums are charged with the great task of unveiling what humans are capable of when hate populates a people. They are also charged with capturing memory. According to Young, "As the period of the Holocaust is shaped in the survivors' diaries and memoirs, in their children's films and novels, public memory of this time is being molded in a proliferating number of memorial images and spaces."<sup>27</sup> Museum memorials serve a different purpose in society than art museums. While the traditional goal of art museums has been to provide an aesthetic as well as educational experience, Holocaust institutions have as their primary basis political and social action. Young wrote, "Where contemporary art invites viewers and critics to contemplate its own materiality, or its relationship to other works before and after itself, the aim of memorials is not to call attention to their own presence so much as to past events *because* they are no longer

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<sup>26</sup> *Meet: Steven Spielberg—Calling the Shots*. National Education Association, November 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 199, p. 1.

present. In this sense, Holocaust memorials attempt to point immediately beyond themselves.”<sup>28</sup>

Holocaust memorials and institutions that address Holocaust history suggest themselves as the basis for political and communal action.

According to Young, “Holocaust museums are increasingly becoming the centers for historical education, activism, and fundraising. Consequently, instead of learning about the Holocaust through the study of Jewish history, many Jews and non-Jews in America learn the whole of Jewish history through the lens of the Holocaust...Holocaust memorials and museums tend to organize Jewish culture and identity around this one era alone.”<sup>29</sup> Young also wrote:

Counting sites throughout Germany, Austria, Holland, France, Poland, Israel, and America, it seems likely that as many people now visit Holocaust memorials every year as died during the Holocaust itself. Year in and year out, millions of Holocaust ‘pilgrims’ have stood in these sites to remember, each one taking away a different experience of that moment, a unique memory.<sup>30</sup>

While the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and the New York Tolerance Center take the visitor on a journey through hatred, portraying the prejudices that engulfed a nation during the Second World War, along with the repercussions that such hatreds have upon survivors and future generations, they also represent present-day issues and work to remain relevant in the lives of their visitors. Holocaust survivors continue to work with museums to bring personal stories of the Holocaust to the public eye in order to create change and stir emotion in the lives of everyday individuals and visitors through their recollections of the past. According to Young, “In keeping with the bookish, iconoclastic side of

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<sup>28</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 199, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 349.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, Preface, x.

Jewish Tradition, the first ‘memorials’ to the Holocaust period came not in stone, glass, or steel – but in narrative.”<sup>31</sup>

Elie Wiesel wrote, “Persecutions, massacres, mutilations, rapes, burnings: was it not hatred that inspired and justified them?”<sup>32</sup> Holocaust museums are needed as a way to commemorate and remember the murderous tragedy of the Holocaust; however, they are also needed as a way to explore the danger of hatred, to understand the power of people, and the grave responsibility that humanity holds to speak up against injustice. According to Young, “we must go on to ask how memorial representations of history may finally weave themselves into the course of ongoing events.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, Holocaust museums and memorials are in a constant state of learning to stay relevant and inspire action within current world situations. Holocaust institutions delve into both past and present issues of genocide and strive to make these shattering realities relevant and tangible to future generations.

Holocaust museums and centers exhibit the roots of hatred against the Jewish people, specifically focusing on the years between 1933 and 1945, but they also portray the aftermaths of the war upon those who lived through the terrors of the Holocaust. Museum education professionals at these institutions address more than the history of the Holocaust. They also address social action and awareness. Museum professionals utilize personal stories of survivors, along with diaries, drawings, poems, and other collections to explore the details of the Holocaust. The survivor stories and objects collected enable museums to personalize the Holocaust and

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<sup>31</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 199, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Wiesel, Elie. *After the Darkness: Reflections on the Holocaust*. Schocken Books, Random House Inc., New York, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 199, p. 12.

teach lessons of humanity and tolerance to its visitors. Each educational scenario provides a new and different way for visitors, students, and teachers to connect to this history.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and the New York Tolerance Center collaborate with professionals from the fields of law enforcement, the judiciary, the military, diplomacy, medicine, education, and religion, with emphasis on the role of their particular professions and the implications of their responsibilities. These key segments of society will affect the future of society as Holocaust museums take a hands-on role in the education of such individuals. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, these programs act to “intensify their sense of commitment to the core values of their fields and their roles in the protection of individuals and society.”<sup>34</sup>

In addition to leadership training programs, these museums sponsor on-site and traveling exhibitions, educational outreach, Web site, campus outreach and Holocaust commemorations. As memorials to the Holocaust, these institutions work to prevent genocide and promote tolerance and action through programming. Working with Holocaust survivors and an array of organizations, Holocaust museums and institutions are also leaders in galvanizing attention to current crises, such as the genocide in Sudan and racism that runs rampant through the internet. Holocaust museums also contribute to the education of the public and children in the United States, Israel, and Germany in learning about World War II and the Holocaust. And it comes by no surprise that Holocaust survivors play an integral role at these institutions in the education and public programming of its visitors, students, and teachers.

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<sup>34</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/about/>

## **Chapter 2 – Main Types of Programming and the Role of the Survivor within the Museum**

The first postwar decades were characterized by what Jeshajahu Weinberg called a “conspiracy of silence” by perpetrators, victims, and bystanders alike.<sup>35</sup> It was not until the early 1980s that personal testimony became very popular, and survivors, for the first time, felt able to talk about their experiences.<sup>36</sup> Chapter 2 details the role of the survivor in museum education. This chapter addresses Holocaust education for all ages, including school-age students, along with the prominent role of survivors in Speakers Bureaus at the specified United States institutions. Karen Polak, Head of the Education Department at the Anne Frank Foundation in Amsterdam, spoke of the importance of personal testimonies in Holocaust education at the Ninetieth European Teachers’ Seminar in Germany in November of 2000. Polak stated, “Many of those who currently make use of eyewitnesses in schools or Holocaust centers are concerned that their numbers are rapidly diminishing and that very soon a valuable teaching resource will be lost.” Polak explained that it is important for visitors to hear personal testimonies from Holocaust survivors, because “by focusing on the individual, the victims are shown as normal people with ordinary, everyday concerns...This would seem to be a crucial factor in determining the success of any Holocaust education program.”<sup>37</sup>

Because Holocaust museums and centers are aware of the dilemma they face as the Holocaust generation continues to age, these institutions have worked tirelessly to collect survivor stories. Polak explained that Steven Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation project, which by the end of 1999 had recorded more than 50,000 testimonies, reflects the next path in Holocaust

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<sup>35</sup> Weinberg, Jeshajahu and Rina Elieli. *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> *Teaching about the Holocaust and the history of genocide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Council of Europe Publishing Editions, Donaueschingen, Germany. November 6-10, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

education at museums and the positive impact that the survivor story will make even when witnesses are no longer available to share their stories in person. The stories will continue to be told through such media as film, diaries, memoirs, and letters. These personal testimonies will remain of pedagogic value, something that visitors will continue to personalize with.

Hildegard Vieregg, a member of the German Talk Force, also spoke at the Ninetieth European Teachers' Seminar in Germany in November of 2000. At this conference, Vieregg spoke on the role of museum education:

The effectiveness of using survivor testimony has much to do with the preparation that goes on in the classroom. Hearing a survivor is usually the culmination of the unit of study. The students have gone through a good number of lessons that have addressed a broad spectrum of issues and content surrounding the history, so the 'stage' is set, so to speak, for the survivor's presentation.<sup>38</sup>

Museums help cultivate the education of teachers, so that in turn, they can prepare their students for such an experience. In addition to the student experience, Holocaust survivors participate in Speaker's Bureaus at museums and educational centers, where they are not only sent to schools and universities, but to speak on panels and to various professionals.

The presence of survivors has inspired countless individuals and educated the masses on the power of people and the repercussions of indifference. As an example, Ela Stein Weissberger, a survivor of the Terezin Concentration Camp, has worked tirelessly with children and school groups to portray not only the fear that engulfed the era, but the little simplicities in life that are so important to appreciate. Today, Weissberger still speaks often to children, not so

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<sup>38</sup> *Remembering the Past, Educating for the Present and the Future: Personal and Pedagogical Stories of Holocaust Educators*. Edited by Samuel Totten. Praeger Publishers, 2002, p.234.

much about the terror, but about the little things to appreciate, such as having a pet and going to school.<sup>39</sup>

Currently, as of 2010, twenty-four states have established commissions or legislations that require each state middle school and/or high school to include the study of the Holocaust in their education. There are an additional eleven states that have established academic standards, specifically in history/social studies that require schools to explicitly address the Holocaust. According to the statistics provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as of 2010, thirty-six states currently study the Holocaust as part of their curriculum (this number includes the District of Columbia as a state).<sup>40</sup> As the calculations prove, there are still another sixteen states that do not require the study of the Holocaust in their academic standards. These states include Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Please note that although a state may not be legally required to study the Holocaust as part of their curriculum, it does not mean that students in the specified states do not study the Holocaust at all.

### ***Education within Holocaust Institutions***

In pursuit of education at these institutions, programming is offered to visitors of all ages. Holocaust museums have become not only a central institution for school-age Holocaust education, but also a vibrant culture and educational center offering interested audiences a great variety of Holocaust-related programs. When these institutions work with school-age students, teacher and student packets are often provided, assisting teachers to tell the story of the

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<sup>39</sup> Gelfand, Janelle. *A Conversation with Ela Stein Weissberger*. The Cincinnati Inquirer, October 19, 2000.

<sup>40</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Education, State Profiles of Holocaust Education. <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/states/>

Holocaust in an explicit and appropriate manner, helping students understand the sad and difficult experiences of other children during the Holocaust.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and the New York Tolerance Center, collaborate with schools and teachers to cultivate the enhancement of education of the Holocaust amongst students. These institutions have detailed educational curriculum packets, along with sections on their website that provides teachers with classroom curriculums on the study of the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Memorial addresses questions such as: Why teach about the Holocaust? Are you new to teaching about the Holocaust? There are also sections on Lessons, Activities and Teacher Guides and Common Student Questions about the Holocaust.<sup>41</sup> In addition, each museum has packets of teaching materials, guides and student workbooks that can be sent to teachers or downloaded from the website to assist in the path the teacher takes when addressing the topic of hate, tolerance, or indifference through history. All specified institutions also offer programs that include utilizing Holocaust survivors in the school programming and curriculum.

According to the statistics provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

Students in grades six and above demonstrate the ability to empathize with individual eyewitness accounts and to attempt to understand the complexities of this history, including the scope and scale of the events. While elementary students are able to empathize with individual accounts, they often have difficulty placing them in a larger historical context. Such demonstrable developmental differences have traditionally shaped social studies curricula throughout the country; in most states, students are not introduced to European history and geography—the context of the Holocaust—before middle school. Elementary school can be an ideal location to begin discussion of the value of diversity and the danger of bias and prejudice.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C, <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/guideline/>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, Guidelines for Teaching. <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/guideline/>



These critical themes can be addressed through the historical exhibitions at various Holocaust museums. Each institution also provides relevant information on pre and post-visit in order for the lessons to be reinforced by the teacher in the classroom.

At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the exhibition *Remember the Children: Daniel's Story*, introduces students in grades four and up to the history of the Holocaust. The exhibition tells about real events based on the experiences of Jewish children, specifically from Germany. It takes a multimedia approach, which was carefully designed for late elementary school students as an introduction and not an in-depth look at the history. At the end of the exhibit, there is a section where the children can write to Daniel or draw him a picture. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum section on Exhibitions, "Professionals in all fields of child development assisted in and reviewed the making of *Daniel's Story*. Museum and classroom educators and interpreters participated in the creation of the exhibition. Three eminent child psychiatrists reviewed every detail."<sup>43</sup>

The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust also has detailed educational materials and prints numerous student workbooks and teacher booklets. One such student workbook is entitled, "Meeting Hate with Humanity: Life During the Holocaust." The student workbook is for grades seven through twelve and addresses concepts of heritage, values and community, anti-Semitism, propaganda, deception, and resistance. The workbook also provides a pre and post-visit museum activity, a timeline addressing the chronology of key events from 1933-1945, and a glossary that defines terms such as "bystander," "ghetto," and the

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<sup>43</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C, Exhibitions.  
<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/exhibit/>

“Nuremberg laws.”<sup>44</sup> The teacher booklet provides information on Jewish life and questions students often ask about Jewish life based upon the information provided in the student workbook such as, “Why do some Jews dress differently?” and “What does it mean that some meats, or other foods, are ‘kosher?’” This booklet guides teachers in providing answers to these questions. The booklet also provides a short history of anti-Semitism, details on the Holocaust, and suggestions for museum pre and post-visit activities.<sup>45</sup>

While the New York Tolerance Center is a much smaller institution than the Holocaust Memorial in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, the Tolerance Center’s educational programming is just as impactful as any large institution, specifically in its programming for youth. For example, the New York Tolerance Center offers programming through *Tools for Tolerance for Teens*, whose specific purpose is to inspire students to learn from the past, engage in the present and assume responsibility for a better future. One such program connected with *Tools for Tolerance for Teens* is “Learn Then, Learn Now, Learn How.” This program is for grades ten through twelve and explores past and current genocides, crimes against humanity and intolerance within the United States. Students discover what is happening today in the global community and the nation and how these events are related to lessons from history. Students are asked to consider how they can become agents for positive change. This program includes personal testimony from a Holocaust survivor, and activities to inspire action and meaningful take-aways from the day.

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<sup>44</sup> *Meeting Hatred with Humanity: Life During the Holocaust*. The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, Educational Materials.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4-5.

## *Speakers Bureaus*

A sense of duty and obligation to share experiences and memories is real and present for many Holocaust survivors.<sup>46</sup> Holocaust survivors play a key role specifically through Speakers Bureaus at museums. Speakers Bureaus provide exclusive access to highly compelling and immensely instructive presentations by Holocaust survivors and are an invaluable resource that these museums provide to educators, schools, associations, community groups, state and local institutions, government organizations and agencies, and professional societies. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, the first person, eyewitness accounts of Holocaust survivors “unite personal experience with history in a way that is extraordinary in its immediacy and power.”<sup>47</sup>

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and the New York Tolerance Center all have active Speakers Bureaus at their institutions. Holocaust survivors become avid non-fiction story-tellers through these bureaus, and speak both onsite and offsite. Survivors are in high demand to participate in speaking engagements at schools and within various organizations. According to Diane Saltzman, Acting Director at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in fiscal year 2009, approximately 40,000 individuals heard from a Holocaust survivor at the Museum or at an off-site location in a program organized by the Survivor Affairs Speakers Bureau. According to Elizabeth Edelstein, Director of Education at the Jewish Museum of Heritage, about 11,650 individuals heard Holocaust survivors speak through the museum’s Speakers Bureau during the fiscal year of 2009. And lastly, according to

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<sup>46</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial, Washington, D.C., Survivor Affairs.

<http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/survivoraffairs/memory/>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, Speaker’s Bureau. <http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/survivoraffairs/speakers/>

Curran Geist, Program Manager at the New York Tolerance Center, approximately 1,750 visitors and participants hear Holocaust survivors speak through the Center's Speakers Bureau.

According to an article in the *New York Times*, Sally Engelberg Frishberg, a survivor and member of the Speakers Bureau at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, explains that she is "on a mission to convey her story to schoolchildren with messages of the power of love over hate." Frishberg, who was concealed in an attic for two years with fifteen other people, was a "hidden child" during the war. She tells students that her greatest hope is that "some of you will hear me and teach others, to build a chain of people who care."<sup>48</sup> Many of those who currently make use of eyewitnesses in schools or in Holocaust centers are concerned that the numbers of living survivors are rapidly diminishing and that very soon a valuable teaching resource will be lost.<sup>49</sup> The survivor plays an instrumental role in Holocaust education at museums, memorials, and educational centers. But when survivors have passed on, how will the educational and public programming within Holocaust institutions remain compelling? Various museum professionals have addressed the direction that museums are taking to not only ensure that the educational programming remains compelling, but is tangible and accessible to future generations of visitors, teachers, students, and families of survivors alike.

In *Absorbing the Holocaust, With Help From Survivors*, Dulcie Leimbach addressed the impact that the Speakers Bureau at the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust has upon students in an article in the *New York Times*. The article recounts the story of Bronia Brandman, through her own narrative. The Nazis branded her forearm with the number 52643. She tells of the loss of her parents, her three sisters, and one of her brothers. She

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<sup>48</sup> Leimbach, Dulcie. *Absorbing the Holocaust, With Help From Survivors*. The New York Times, March 28, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Teaching about the Holocaust and the history of genocide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Council of Europe Publishing Editions, Donaueschingen, Germany. November 6-10, 2000, p. 18.

tells of her imprisonment in Auschwitz from ages twelve to fourteen and how it took her twenty-five years to laugh again. On one afternoon, a class of tenth graders from a school in the Bronx visited the museum for their global studies class. Before visiting the museum, they were taught about the Holocaust through a textbook and video on Auschwitz. Pedro Concepcion, who was sixteen at the time, heard Brandman speak and said, “Twenty years from now, she’s not going to be alive and all the Holocaust survivors, too. It’s good for youths to learn about the Holocaust... We have living proof that it happened.”<sup>50</sup> David G. Marwell, the Director at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, explained in the *New York Times* article that getting students to integrate the first-person experiences into their own lives, drawing lessons they can use, like dealing with bullies, are some of the museum’s goals through the Speakers Bureau. Marwell stated, “We believe this history has a meaning. We don’t simply present and teach it for its own sake.”<sup>51</sup>

The influence of the survivor not only impacts the visitor – students, teachers and researchers – but the survivor story also profoundly affects museum professionals and educators who are intricately involved in bringing survivors to the forefront to share their stories. In *Remembering the Past, Educating for the Present and the Future: Personal and Pedagogical Stories of Holocaust Educators*, Samuel Totten, a genocide scholar, explained the deep admiration that museum professionals and scholars have for Holocaust survivors:

Those of us in the field of Holocaust studies have a deep respect for all survivors... We realize how difficult it is for them to put into words what they experienced. Through their tortured expressions we can almost feel the personal anguish they carry with them.

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<sup>50</sup> Leimbach, Dulcie. *Absorbing the Holocaust, With Help From Survivors*. The New York Times, March 28, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, March 28, 2007.

For many of us, they embody an era that dominates our professional lives and to which we have committed ourselves.<sup>52</sup>

Totten then recalls the evolution of the lessons and the incorporation of survivor testimony into training. Totten explicates the power of survivor testimony in the classroom when writing:

As these 'living links' to the past slowly make their way to podiums and begin to speak, all those present are transported back to a time that we cannot fully understand. The survivor's soft accented voices conjure up images of loving families, tight-knit communities, friends at school, and holidays at home. Yet within the span of just a few seconds, those same voices are capable of creating the most dramatic of mood swings as they painfully relate the horrific realities they experience. We stand with them as they pass before Dr. Mengele; we walk with them through ghetto streets and concentration camp gates; we weep with them as their loved ones are murdered; and in the end we can only marvel at their strength.<sup>53</sup>

Speakers Bureaus provide a pathway for the connection of the past to the present. As Berenbaum details in his book, the events of the Holocaust at times "seem too enormous to be comprehended. For many, the sheer number of victims – six million Jews, millions of others – cannot be fully understood."<sup>54</sup> When visitors and educators are able to hear the first person account of the survivor, one is often much more enabled to personalize to the past. The survivor story makes this sinister time in history palpable and the sheer number of six million becomes personal with the story of one. Because of the Speakers Bureaus at these museums, and the choice that many Holocaust survivors have made to share, remember, and detail their experiences, museum professionals and visitors alike are more aware and knowledgeable of history and humanity.

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<sup>52</sup> *Remembering the Past, Educating for the Present and the Future: Personal and Pedagogical Stories of Holocaust Educators*. Edited by Samuel Totten. Praeger Publishers, 2002, p.234.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.232.

<sup>54</sup> Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Little, Brown, & Company, 1993, p. 235.

### **Chapter 3 – The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.**

When the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in April 1993, Holocaust survivors saw their dream come true. Chapter 3 not only addresses the history, founding, and mission of the museum, but delves into the current role of survivor participation within the museum and future museum educational programming within the institution.

#### ***History and Founding***

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America's national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as a memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust.<sup>55</sup> According to Young, "Of all Holocaust memorials in America, none can begin to match in scope or ambition the national memorial..."<sup>56</sup> As a national landmark, the museum has become an emblem of importance in American history. The United States Memorial Council wrote, "This Museum belongs at the center of American life because as a democratic civilization America is the enemy of racism and its ultimate expression, genocide. An event of universal significance, the Holocaust has special importance for Americans: an act and word the Nazis denied the deepest tenets of the American people."<sup>57</sup>

On April 22, 1993, after fifteen long years in the making, President Bill Clinton dedicated the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to preserve the memory of the Holocaust for all Americans. Several days later, on April 26, the museum officially opened its doors to the vast public for the first time. Since its opening, the museum has had unprecedented attendance

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<sup>55</sup> Weinberg, Jeshahahu and Rina Elieli. *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995, p.23.

<sup>56</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1993, p. 335.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 337.

records, as 5000 visitors a day continue to wait in line to see the exhibitions and experience the architecture of the museum.

The museum sits on 1.9 acres of land adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., made available by the federal government for the museum site. The entire cost of its construction totaled nearly \$200 million and was paid for by private donations. Symbolizing the museum's mission and the history it would convey, the museum was built upon two milk cans containing soil and ashes from Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Theresienstadt, Treblinka, and the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery, where millions had died during the Holocaust and were buried. The groundbreaking ceremonies took place on October 16, 1985. James Ingo Freed, the architect of the United States Holocaust Memorial, explained that the building was designed as “a resonator of memory.”<sup>58</sup> The pattern of the brick in the walls is reminiscent of the barracks in Auschwitz. Thus, according to Linenthal, the museum became “the nation’s most sacred soil – home of the monumental expressions of core national narratives...holy soil.”<sup>59</sup>

The Permanent Exhibition Guide, provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, details that visitors typically spend between one and three hours in the exhibition. The museum’s commission envisioned a three-part institution: museum, monument, and educational center. The permanent exhibition space that documents the history of the Holocaust is designed around the Hall of Witness. The permanent exhibition has three floors: Nazi Assault – 1933 to 1939, The Final Solution – 1940 to 1945, and the Last Chapter. The Hall of Learning is designed to confront the contemporary implications of the Holocaust through education. Lastly,

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<sup>58</sup> Weinberg, Jeshahahu and Rina Elieli. *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995, p.25.

<sup>59</sup> Linenthal, Edward T. *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 2001, p. 57.



the Hall of Remembrance is designed as the formal memorial space to mourn those who were murdered, where an eternal flame burns. Unlike most historical museums, it is based on a narrative rather than on a collection of works of art and artifacts relating to history. Weinberg, the founding director of the museum, explained that, “the museum reflects not only the historic event of the Holocaust, involving victims and perpetrators, but also the story of the bystanders, the rescuers, and liberators.”<sup>60</sup>

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is a prime example of the struggles that Holocaust museums face in representing this controversial history. Holocaust survivors were a large part of the creation of the Holocaust Memorial. Linenthal, addressed the many struggles in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial in his book, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. He portrays the difficulties in the representation of such an emotionally charged tragedy. Linenthal explores how the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was challenged with various long-standing arguments in regard to what would be represented in the permanent exhibition and how the museum would personalize the tragedy of the Holocaust to its visitors.

One specific aspect of representation that became a very personal form of contention amongst survivors, board, and committee members alike was whether or not the museum should exhibit human hair. Some claimed that exhibiting the hair would personalize the story and if left out of the exhibition, then the museum wasn't really telling the whole story. Others fought avidly against it, calling it an act of defilement saying, “This isn't wood. This isn't metal. This is part and parcel of people. It's hair, and what is hair for most of us? It's our mothers, it's our

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<sup>60</sup> Weinberg, Jeshahahu and Rina Elieli. *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995, p.18.

lovers...”<sup>61</sup> Linenthal writes that in this scenario, the commemorative voice, the voice of the survivor, won out. In the end, the museum would keep the hair but not display it. In the exhibit in Washington, D.C., in front of a color photograph of women’s hair is an open area, representing the boundaries of commemorative space owed to the survivors, in hope that perhaps, someday, the hair will fill this space. To this day, the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum stands as an authoritative public narrative, but not an uncontested one. While this museum remains one of the most visited museums in the United States, Linenthal explains that, indeed, “a permanent exhibition is not an encyclopedia and cannot be all things to all people.”<sup>62</sup>

### ***Mission Statement***

According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the primary mission of the museum is to “advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.”<sup>63</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum reminds visitors, students, teachers, and scholars of the fragility of humanity, the fragility of democracy and, according to Berenbaum, “how vigilant we must all remain in defending the core American values – indeed, the core human values – of individual dignity, social justice, and civil rights.”<sup>64</sup> Timothy Kaiser, Director of Educational Resources at the United States Holocaust

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<sup>61</sup> Linenthal, Edward T. *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 2001, p. 215-216.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 216.

<sup>63</sup> Weinberg, Jeshahahu and Rina Elieli. *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995, p.23.

<sup>64</sup> Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Little, Brown, & Company, 1993, p. 235.

Memorial Museum, explained that the museum's goal is to bring the stories of the survivor beyond the walls of the museum. Kaiser stated, "We recognize that learning the history for history sake is not transformative. We need to move out of history into action."<sup>65</sup>

Weinberg explained that "the museum's educational responsibility is to help visitors apply the metaphoric meaning embedded in Holocaust history to their contemporary experience as individuals and as members of society."<sup>66</sup> Thus, the museum's educational role is demonstrating the applicability of the moral lessons learned from the Holocaust to current and future events. One of the fundamental lessons of the museum is that the bystander shares in the guilt. According to Weinberg, the museum hopes to "create an encounter between the visitor and the moral imperative to act."<sup>67</sup>

### *Types of Programming Using Survivors and Future Implications*

According to the museum website on Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum recommends grounding the history through the use of a variety of artifacts which are the evidence of what took place during the Holocaust. This approach also aids in meeting state and national teaching standards, which frequently endorse the use of primary sources.<sup>68</sup> Kaiser explained that, for the museum, the role of the survivor in Holocaust education is that of personalization. To Kaiser, personalizing is connecting the past to the present. Kaiser clarified, "For us too, we think about our audience a lot. Since our audience isn't Jewish, we find that individual stories are a hook that people can identify with." The

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<sup>65</sup> Holly Myers interview with Timothy Kaiser on March 22, 2010. Subsequent citations will appear parenthetically in the text.

<sup>66</sup> Weinberg, Jeshahahu and Rina Elieli. *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995, p. 19.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>68</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., Guidelines for Teaching. <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/guideline/>

educators at the museum think intensely about this concept of personalization and how to relate stories of the Holocaust to visitors. As Kaiser explained, the Holocaust happened in Europe, the photographs are in black and white, and the understanding of the death of six million is difficult to grasp. Because of this, Kaiser works outside of the box to bring the first person stories of the survivor center stage. The museum has about forty survivor volunteers, all in high demand, that speak at the museum, schools, and military bases. (Kaiser Interview)

One of the many ways the museum chose to take steps to personalize Holocaust history is through the identity-card project, which is a simple four-page card that visitors pick up at the beginning of their exploration through the permanent exhibition. These identity-cards enable the visitor to follow a person through their life, and sometimes death, during the years of the Holocaust. According to Linenthal, this was “an attempt to use photographs to convey the personal message of the Holocaust.”<sup>69</sup> Kaiser explained that the museum’s strategy has always been personalization, stating: “We have found – personalize the history wherever possible...and that’s where the ID card came about.” Because most of the visitors to the museum are not Jewish and have little or no connection to the Holocaust, the identification card project helps personalize the vastness of six million. (Kaiser Interview) Before the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, when Debbie Klingender, of Peter D. Hart Research Associates, interviewed members of focus groups for their reaction to various proposed museum exhibits, the identity card project was “a smash hit.”<sup>70</sup> Linenthal details that the focus group “very much liked the idea that they could identify with someone like them in the midst of this horrible story;” however, one focus-group member foresaw defilement emerging out of this idea

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<sup>69</sup> Linenthal, Edward T. *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 2001, p. 187.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 187.

stating, “I can see right outside of the museum 10,000 cards on the ground...They’re going to be blowing up and down the street.”<sup>71</sup> However, Kaiser stated, “Though there is the occasional kid who throws the identification card around, visitors have been profoundly respectful and appreciative of the identity cards.” (Kaiser Interview)

The personalization of the experience brings the visitor face to face with history. The museum has developed nearly 600 identification cards. Approximately half of them are about Holocaust survivors. These cards describe the experiences of those who hid or were rescued, as well as those who survived internment in ghettos and camps. The other half represents the experiences of people who died. To create the identification cards, a team of five museum staff members interviewed 130 survivors of the Holocaust. The survivors described their own experiences as well as those of relatives who died during the Holocaust. The identification cards were developed from those interviews and from other oral histories and written memoirs. Each identification card has four sections. The first section provides a biographical sketch of the person. The second describes the individual’s experiences from 1933 to 1939, while the third describes events during the war years. The final section describes the fate of the individual and explains the circumstances—to the extent that they are known—in which the individual either died or survived.<sup>72</sup> The identity cards are a way for visitors to relate with the survivors and victims of the Holocaust. When Holocaust survivors have passed on, the identity cards will remain as a way to bring visitors inside the story, rather than learn about the Holocaust from a distance.

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<sup>71</sup> Linenthal, Edward T. *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 2001, p. 187.

<sup>72</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Division of Education, Resources for the Classroom, Identification Cards. <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/resource/pdf/idcards.pdf>

### ***Current Survivor Museum Participation***

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum continues to personalize their education to the vast public. Under the auspices of Kaiser, the public program *First Person – Conversations with Holocaust Survivors*, takes place Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 12:00p.m., where a journalist interviews a survivor on the stage of the museum’s auditorium. Up to 180 people eagerly pack into the auditorium to hear the stories of survivors. The first person accounts are the heart of Holocaust education at the museum. For example, Kaiser explained that even the artifacts that Holocaust survivors carried with them had special meaning. Kaiser stated, “Sometimes you can begin with an object.” One survivor at the museum talks about a bowl she used at Auschwitz when they were fed. The survivor will explain that, in Auschwitz, a bowl was a person’s life and death. If the person’s bowl was lost or stolen, they could not eat, and no matter how mere the rations were, food was their lifeline. If the SS men shot a bullet into a victim’s bowl, it was a death sentence. Kaiser explained that, “It’s all about the objects and artifacts (like the bowl).” If educators can begin there, with objects, artifacts, and first person accounts, it will be the foremost step in personalizing Holocaust history to visitors of the museum. Kaiser explained that, “This is something that happened in Europe; the photographs are black and white, but when they (the visitors) hear a survivor talk, they connect.”

While the visitor may not be able to specifically relate to another place, time, and culture, what visitors can relate to is humanity. After all, the survivor was in school, visitors can understand aspects like a best friend turning against them. With this, students and visitors begin to identify with the personal experiences of the survivor. Kaiser stated, “Our goal is to make survivors and our stories accessible to our visitors... This is why we say, ‘These are our witnesses.’” Because of this, Kaiser works to turn each of these *First Person* programs into a

podcast. At this point, there are thirty podcasts available on the website and there are 15,000 downloads on the podcasts per month. (Kaiser Interview)

At one of the *First Person's* programs, Kaiser relayed that whenever it is appropriate, the original document, letter, or diary is put on the screen for the audience to see. As one such Holocaust survivor retold her story to the audience, Tim put the document that ordered that specific victim to Auschwitz. Tim highlighted her name on the screen and explained that, "it was only a boring document, in German, but people gasped because this document had consequences. She was going from Belgium to Auschwitz." Kaiser emphasized that memoirs, letters, documents, and diaries are a powerful educational tool and are still extremely important. The museum must find ways that make these first person accounts interesting for people even after the passing of Holocaust survivors. (Kaiser Interview)

The museum has used the diary of Anne Frank as a connection to the past, specifically for the child audience. In 1990, under the leadership of Adeline Yates, wife of Congressman Sidney R. Yates, a group of Congressional wives and other women formed the Committee to Remember the Children, in honor of the estimated 1.5 million children killed during the Holocaust. They invited thousands of young students throughout the nation to help create this wall of remembrance. The children recorded their impressions of the Holocaust on ceramic tiles that were then combined to create this permanent memorial.<sup>73</sup> On one of the three-thousand ceramic tiles created by elementary and middle school students as a way of expressing their

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<sup>73</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.  
<http://www.ushmm.org/research/library/faq/details.php?topic=06>

thoughts and feelings about the Holocaust and its victims, one child visitor to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum wrote, “Hope lives when people remember.”<sup>74</sup>

The impact of tangible documents such as diaries, memoirs and letters will act as yet another form of the personalization of Holocaust history to visitors once survivors have passed on. These tangible elements will operate as the bridge between the survivor, the victim, and future generations. From the poems and drawings of the children of the Terezin Concentration Camp, to Gerda Klein Weissman’s memoir, “All But My Life,” to the letters written and preserved by family members during the Holocaust, these documents will never fail to personalize and preserve Holocaust history to future generations. Through this, Holocaust survivors will be remembered as people who embodied humanity and a reminder to all visitors of the commonality amongst citizens of humanity.

All focus at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is on survivor testimony. Kaiser explained: “Whenever possible, we put the survivor voice and the personal story into our projects. We are trying to capture the stories.” In looking forward, videos, films, podcasts, animated maps that allow visitors to see where and how Holocaust victims and survivors traveled, and other digital media will be the future of the museum in relaying the survivor story. All of these forms of media are still visual and while the survivor will eventually not be physically present, it is another form of visual connection to the past for the audience. Kaiser stated, “It’s going to have to be the future. It’s inevitable, we can’t stop it. For us now, it is really thinking, one-hundred years from now, what will people wish they had heard from a

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<sup>74</sup> Bachrach, Susan D. *Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust with Images from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Boston: Little Brown, 1994, p. 86.



survivor? What would we have wanted to know one-hundred years from now, when even we're not around?"

As an historian, Kaiser is interested in capturing not only the survivor stories, but the questions that people ask at the programming in order to create materials and various learning packets for the museum. Kaiser believes that the "big picture questions" will be the guiding answers for the museum. Kaiser explained that visitors are not asking survivors questions such as, "Were you hungry at Auschwitz?" The questions the audience asks are deeper. The big picture questions that Kaiser refers to are – "Do you believe in God? Can you forgive? What is your faith in humanity? Did you ever go back to Poland?" These questions are the heart of understanding the survivor experience, and the current goal that Kaiser is working towards documenting. He stated, "It's good to have the history captured and we need to continue to gather the historical narrative, but we need to focus on these other questions. We need to capture answers as well." (Kaiser Interview)

While Holocaust survivors are still actively involved in their work with the museum, age is beginning to show on the faces of the survivors and memories are beginning to fade. Kaiser explained, "We have some problems with some of our survivors and their memory. Within the past year, there is one specific survivor that we cannot put up on stage because of her memory." Because of the changes occurring in survivors due to age, Kaiser is working towards developing a next step so he can still use the physical presence of the survivor, but ensure the accuracy of the story. Kaiser stated, "We're a history museum and we need to be true to the history. So we are trying to come up with ways to include the survivor while finding new ways to tell the story. Could we take a multimedia experience?" Because many of the survivors have written their memoirs or recorded their stories on film, Kaiser is currently exploring the possibility of

showing a clip from the survivors' oral testimony or having the survivor read excerpts from their memoir and then comment on it so that the survivor can still be actively involved. Kaiser said, "We're experimenting with some stories to see how it works. Is it a substitute for a survivor? Absolutely not. But this is a reality that educators have to work with." (Kaiser Interview)

### ***Future Museum Educational Programming***

The museum is also putting into effect other programs that, while they are actively involved in working with survivors, will remain prominent and prevalent upon their passing. *The Memory Project*, based on the "Leave-A-Legacy" Writing Workshops, provides participants – survivors who are volunteering at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum – with a powerful outlet through which to bear witness. These guided writing workshops strengthen the ability of survivor writers to recount their experiences for their families and for the historical record. This is one more way that the museum helps survivors, eyewitnesses to the Holocaust, teach new generations about hatred, intolerance, and indifference, and to expand the understanding of Holocaust history from the deeply personal perspective of the survivor. This form of documentation will remain widely accessible to visitors upon the passing of Holocaust survivors. Like Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation project, survivor testimonies will remain as lasting documentation and commemoration of the stories, survivors, and victims of the Holocaust.

The museum's educational programming not only involves survivors in teaching students and visitors, but offers courses to leaders in various fields that raise ethical questions in practices of law, medicine, and other positions in society. Sheila Polk, a prosecutor in Arizona, took a course at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. She explained the evolution in her

thinking after her participation in the program. Polk explained in a video documenting the course through the museum:

I have taken ethics courses for twenty-six years now as a prosecutor and have never been touched or impacted in the way that the lessons of the Holocaust impacted me. The program begins with the Nazi rise to power and chronicles the role of law enforcement and prosecutors and now judges in allowing the Holocaust to happen. By the time I had finished the course I went from believing that the Holocaust had nothing to do with me and my role as Yavapai county attorney, to knowing that the Holocaust has everything to do with my role as county attorney, with my role as a prosecutor. And with me as a person. By the time I flew out of Washington D.C. the next day and made it back to Prescott, Arizona, I was already thinking that I want all the prosecutors in Arizona to have the advantage of this course.<sup>75</sup>

In 2007 and 2008, virtually all Arizona prosecutors and judges were trained by the museum. In 2009, the museum will teach this history to Supreme Court Chief Justices in all fifty states. This is yet another aspect of the future of Holocaust museums without the survivor.

One of the newest projects of the United States Holocaust Memorial is *World Is Witness*, a project that bears witness to genocide and related crimes against humanity around the world. Michael Graham, the Coordinator of the Genocide Mapping Initiative, explained that “the museum tries to profile both stories of courage and stories of reality and try to find that balance between helping people to understand what they can do but also reminding us all of what’s really happening.”<sup>76</sup> This program moves beyond the story of survivor and targets present issues of genocide through eyewitness testimony, photographs, interactive maps and more. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum not only remembers the Holocaust, but strives to present genocide and mass atrocities around the world. Sarah Bloomfield, the present Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum states, “The world we live in today calls for being

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<sup>75</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Power of Truth, Video. <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/about/video/?content=poweroftruth>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, The Power of Truth, Video. <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/about/video/?content=poweroftruth>

bold.”<sup>77</sup> The museum’s programming is meant to make strides in society towards a more aware public and a better future. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum will continue the legacy of making change, impacting lives, and working toward a more peaceful future through its various educational programs.

Holocaust survivors too are working towards moving from memory to action. Kaiser stated, “One of our survivors came and stood with survivors from Darfur. We need to link together. A lot of our survivors are speaking out against these issues. We recognize that learning the history for history sake is not transformative. We need to move out of history into action.” (Kaiser Interview) The museum has a new exhibition on meeting the challenge of genocide: *From Memory to Action: Meeting the Challenge of Genocide*. This exhibition begins with a quote from Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and Museum Founding Chairman at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – “We say never again...but what does that mean?” Tim explained:

Those words are meaningless when it continues to happen. This exhibition is a way to motivate our visitors to think about this. We are trying to show what is the lesson here? What have we learned from past? These questions tie into some of the big picture questions that the museum is seeking to capture. (Kaiser Interview)

A key aspect of the *Take Action* exhibition is a card that each visitor is to fill out, answering the question, “What will you do to help meet the challenge of genocide today?” The visitors then sign their name and add their pledge to a glass case the museum has provided. The visitors are also encouraged to go online and demand action from their governments. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is not merely cultivating historic knowledge of the Holocaust, but pursuing concrete action from its visitors.

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<sup>77</sup> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., The Power of Truth, Video. <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/about/video/?content=poweroftruth>

The museum provokes thought and reflection in all of its visitors by presenting extensive and detailed exhibits and a vast array of archives. It is its primary goal to see that people never stand idly by while fellow human beings are persecuted. Numerous Holocaust survivors have joined the fight against modern day genocide and have encouraged future generations to do the same. Elie Wiesel, offered an image of how to live in the aftermath of the Holocaust stating, "...And because there is murder in the world...and we know how helpless our battle may appear, we have to fight murder and absurdity and give meaning to the battle, if not to our hope."<sup>78</sup> While Holocaust survivors cultivate memory, they also cultivate action.

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<sup>78</sup> Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Little, Brown, & Company, 1993, p. 222.

**Chapter 4 – The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust,  
New York, NY**

Dr. David G. Marwell, Director of the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, wrote, “It is surely impossible to reduce the museum experience, or indeed the history of the Holocaust and the years surrounding it.”<sup>79</sup> Chapter 4 describes the history, founding, and mission of this museum, then explores the current role of the survivor and the future implications of educational programming within the museum.

***History and Founding***

The New York Holocaust Commission was established in 1982, and shortly thereafter, the State of New York offered land, proposing that a Holocaust remembrance museum be constructed at the southernmost tip of Manhattan, a site in geographic dialogue with such distinct American landmarks as the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Shortly thereafter, a collection of artifacts, photographs, and audio and video testimony began, and the staff was formed. The unique hexagonal structure of the building represents the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust as well as the six points of the Star of David. The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust opened its doors on September 15, 1997.

Three chronological, thematic full-floor exhibitions depict the Holocaust within the context of twentieth century Jewish life. The first floor, *Jewish Life a Century Ago*, focuses on pre-Holocaust culture, exploring traditions, rituals, and daily life from the late-nineteenth century to the early 1930s. In devastating contrast, the second floor's exhibition, *The War Against the Jews*, chronicles the years leading up to and including the Holocaust. The museum focuses on

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<sup>79</sup> *To Life: 36 Stories of Memory and Hope*. Museum of Jewish Heritage – A living Memorial to the Holocaust. Bulfinch Press: AOL Time Warner Book Group, 2002, p. xv.

illustrating the Jewish people's humanity, dignity, and spiritual resistance when confronted with Hitler's Final Solution. *Jewish Renewal*, on the third floor, highlights the postwar years through the present, and addresses the Jewish response globally to social injustice and intolerance after World War II; the creation of modern Israel; the establishment of America as a dynamic home of Jewish culture and tradition; and the regeneration of the Jews as a people. The museum as a whole documents the history of what happens when government abuses its power and its citizens.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage acts as a living memorial, a museum that celebrates the continuity and heritage of Jewish life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, before and after the war. The museum's core exhibition consists of more than 20,000 artifacts, photographs, documents, and archival original films that illustrate Jewish heritage in the twentieth century. In addition, the collection provides source materials for permanent, temporary, and traveling exhibitions. The special exhibitions allow the museum the opportunity to complement the themes expressed in the core exhibition in greater detail. The special exhibitions are often used as part of the museum's curriculum passed along to teachers.<sup>80</sup> The museum is also one of the repositories of Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, which gives voice and breath to these histories. According to Dr. David Altshuler, the museum's founding director, "the objects in the museum, as well as the stories they tell, resonate for people long after the visit to the exhibition ends."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, History of the Museum. [http://www.mjhnyc.org/museum\\_aboutus\\_a.htm](http://www.mjhnyc.org/museum_aboutus_a.htm)

<sup>81</sup> *To Life: 36 Stories of Memory and Hope*. Museum of Jewish Heritage – A living Memorial to the Holocaust. Bulfinch Press: AOL Time Warner Book Group, 2002, p. ix-xi.

From the outset, the founders of the museum wanted to tell the story of the Holocaust using the voices of the Jewish experience to show that the victims of the Holocaust were not faceless or nameless, thus personalizing the stories of the Holocaust. According to Robert M. Morgenthau, Chairman at the museum, “Every object – every photograph, document, article of clothing, musical instrument, or candlestick – has a human story to transmit. It may be the story of a journey taken across an ocean to an unknown world, or the fond memories of a wedding attended in a shtetl. Or it may express a simple act of friendship during an icy winter in a labor camp. These objects represent lives lived and are witnesses to lives lost.”<sup>82</sup> This focus on life stories is what makes the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust distinct as a Holocaust memorial and a history museum.

### ***Mission Statement***

The mission of the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust is to “honor those who died by celebrating their lives, cherishing the civilization that they built, their achievements and faith, their joys and hopes, and the vibrant Jewish community that is their legacy today.”<sup>83</sup> According to Marwell, “The museum has an unwavering commitment to commemorate the lives of those who perished as it honors those who struggled to survive to rebuild their lives, families, and communities.”<sup>84</sup> The museum’s foundation is based upon the use of personal stories to tell the history of the Jewish people in the twentieth century.

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<sup>82</sup> *To Life: 36 Stories of Memory and Hope*. Museum of Jewish Heritage – A living Memorial to the Holocaust. Bulfinch Press: AOL Time Warner Book Group, 2002, p. ix-xi.

<sup>83</sup> The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, New York.  
[http://www.mjhnyc.org/museum .htm](http://www.mjhnyc.org/museum.htm)

<sup>84</sup> *To Life: 36 Stories of Memory and Hope*. Museum of Jewish Heritage – A living Memorial to the Holocaust. Bulfinch Press: AOL Time Warner Book Group, 2002, p. xiv-xv.



### ***Current Survivor Museum Participation***

Elizabeth Edelstein explained in an interview that Holocaust survivors are among the museum's gallery educators, members of the Speakers Bureau, and constant participants in the educational and public programming. The education department arranges for on-site and off-site public programming for schools that Edelstein coordinates. The Museum of Jewish Heritage currently has 128 active Holocaust survivors who are part of the Speakers Bureau and who boldly share their stories to school groups and at the museum's public programming events. Edelstein, who has constant contact with Holocaust survivors, emphasized that Holocaust survivors are currently the museum's best educational tool.<sup>85</sup>

### ***Future Museum Educational Programming***

The museum is looking ahead with an understanding that the public and educational programming will eventually change. Edelstein describes the current role of survivors as absolutely invaluable. Edelstein explained that "the museum was designed with the knowledge that we will eventually no longer have Holocaust survivors with us....and there are so many ways that we use survivors stories." (Edelstein Interview) The Jewish story, and the story of the Holocaust, is told from the perspective of those who lived it – of the experience of Jews as active agents, rather than passive. Edelstein explained that as visitors make their way through the different floors of the museum, they will hear the voices of survivors, their stories, their past experiences, their traditions. The voice of the survivor was created as an ever present way of personalizing history for the visitors of the museum. When survivors are gone, their voices will remain.

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<sup>85</sup> Holly Myers interview with Elizabeth Edelstein on February 10, 2010. Subsequent citations will appear parenthetically in the text.

In looking ahead, the Jewish Museum of Heritage has ensured that all visitors will have access to survivor testimonies through the Shoah Visual History Foundation. She explained that the Museum of Jewish Heritage is looking for successful ways of incorporating survivor testimony into the museum programming and is taking strides in thinking ahead once survivors have passed on their legacy onto future generations. One such program is *Coming of Age During the Holocaust, Coming of Age Now*, which is a study for bar and bat mitzvah students that provides them with the resources to learn about the Holocaust through the stories and artifacts of young people who became thirteen years of age during the Holocaust. The tour engages students in a dialogue in the museum galleries on the themes of Jewish identity, community, and responsibility. There are thirteen stops on the tour, symbolic of the bar mitzvah.<sup>86</sup> Through the curriculum, students are guided through reading and writing activities to reflect on the challenges these survivors faced before, during, and after the Holocaust. As a result of studying this curriculum, students grow in their understanding of the Holocaust, of their community, and of themselves. Edelstein explained, “We’re careful not to frighten them...and they listen to edited portions of survivor testimony. This has been a very successful way of incorporating survivor testimony.” (Edelstein Interview)

Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE), one of the programs recently implemented into the museum’s educational programming, is a two-week all-expenses-paid intensive course, specifically designed to address contemporary ethical issues through a unique historical context. Edelstein explained that while this program is not survivor based, it is forward thinking. (Edelstein Interview) The fellowships provide law and medical students a forum in which to examine contemporary ethical issues through a structured program.

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<sup>86</sup> Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, New York, Bar/Bat Mitzvah. [http://www.mjhnyc.org/teach\\_students\\_c.htm](http://www.mjhnyc.org/teach_students_c.htm)

The program uses the role of their chosen profession, whether law or medicine, as a looking glass to address the history of Nazi Germany as a backdrop for the consideration of contemporary ethical issues. The program will also soon include seminarians, journalists, and business students. Following an introductory session in New York, each group of Fellows travels to Berlin, Krakow, and Oświęcim (Auschwitz). The group initially gathers at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York for a brief orientation that includes visiting the museum's exhibits, meeting with Holocaust survivors, and working with FASPE staff and guest scholars. In the program, students explore such topics as The Rule of Law vs. Lawlessness; The Role and Limits of Bioethics; The Goals of Morality in the Face of Evil; The Responsibility to Report; and Ethical Limitations on Profit-Seeking.<sup>87</sup>

It is assumed that these bright students will eventually be the leaders in their various fields and participation in a program such as this will act as a form of awareness and action to encourage people to never again stand by as tragedy and murder consume a nation. Father John Langan, Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University and on the leadership faculty of FASPE, stated, "If we have people who are going to be leading voices in various professions, it will be valuable in broad social terms if these people are ready to pay serious attention to the ethical dimensions of their professional lives."<sup>88</sup> Professor Ari Goldman, Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and also on the leadership faculty of FASPE, stated, "The way that we write about genocide, the way that we write about corruption, the way that we hold people accountable... these are eternal lessons. So what happened then, has lessons for all

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<sup>87</sup> Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, New York, FASPE.  
<http://www.mjhnyc.org/faspe/>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, FASPE. [http://www.mjhnyc.org/faspe/pr\\_seminary.html](http://www.mjhnyc.org/faspe/pr_seminary.html)

time.”<sup>89</sup> As the program so vividly and purely addresses, what happened during the Holocaust provides lessons for yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

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<sup>89</sup> Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, New York, Journalism.  
[http://www.mjhnyc.org/faspe/pr\\_journalism.html](http://www.mjhnyc.org/faspe/pr_journalism.html)

## **Chapter 5 – New York Tolerance Center: A Simon Wiesenthal Center, Museum of Tolerance Project, New York, NY**

Simon Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor, was committed to the theme of hope, freedom, and tolerance. He left his legacy through his educational institutions world-wide. Headquartered in Los Angeles, the Simon Wiesenthal Center maintains offices in New York, Toronto, Boca Raton, Paris, Buenos Aires and Jerusalem.<sup>90</sup> Chapter 5 explores Simon Wiesenthal's New York Tolerance Center and addresses the history, founding, and mission of the institution. This chapter describes current interactive programming, the role of the survivor, and future implications of major areas of educational programming.

### ***History and Founding***

In the late 1980's, the Simon Wiesenthal Center leadership and representatives from the world's top museums began discussing how to promote tolerance and understanding. Adding to the impetus for such a museum was the troubling discovery that a new generation of young people was beginning to question whether or not the Holocaust ever happened. The decision was made to create a museum – but not an ordinary museum of artifacts and documents. As Simon Wiesenthal expressed, “it must not only remind us of the past, but remind us to act. This Museum should serve to prevent hatred and genocide from occurring to any group now and in the future.”<sup>91</sup> The task was to create an experience that would challenge people of all backgrounds to confront their most closely-held assumptions and assume responsibility for

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<sup>90</sup> The Museum of Tolerance: A Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum.  
<http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWlBpJLnF&b=4441257>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, Our History and Vision.  
[http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tml6KfNVLtH/b.4866027/k.88E8/Our\\_History\\_and\\_Vision.htm](http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tml6KfNVLtH/b.4866027/k.88E8/Our_History_and_Vision.htm)

change. This museum was to be an institution that advocates human rights and international understanding.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is an international Jewish human rights organization dedicated to generating change through education by confronting anti-Semitism, hate and terrorism, promoting human rights and dignity, standing with Israel, defending the safety of Jews worldwide, and teaching the lessons of the Holocaust for future generations.<sup>92</sup> Simon Wiesenthal dedicated his life to tracking down Nazi war criminals. Almost immediately after World War II ended, Wiesenthal began his quest to bring Nazi criminals to justice. According to Hella Pick, author of *Simon Wiesenthal: A Life in Search of Justice*, “It took Simon Wiesenthal about eighteen months to transform himself from concentration camp inmate to founder of ‘The Historical Documentation Centre,’” whose purpose was to search for war criminals.<sup>93</sup> Wiesenthal interviewed Holocaust survivors and wrote detailed reports of Nazi atrocities. Through his research, Wiesenthal was able to gather information and pinpoint where Nazis were hiding. He then worked with various governments and presented his information to the authorities. According to statistics provided by Laura S. Jeffrey, author of *Simon Wiesenthal: Tracking Down Nazi Criminals*, Wiesenthal succeeded in tracking down and bringing to justice more than one thousand cases of men and women who took part in Nazi war crimes.<sup>94</sup> He is best known for his discovery and capture of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. Wiesenthal continued his work in education, tolerance, and remembrance through the creation of the Museums of Tolerance. Wiesenthal once said:

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<sup>92</sup> The Museum of Tolerance: A Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum.

<http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=IsKWLBpJLnF&b=4441257>

<sup>93</sup> Pick, Hella. *Simon Wiesenthal: A Life in Search of Justice*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996, p. 95.

<sup>94</sup> Jeffery, Laura S. *Simon Wiesenthal: Tracking Down Nazi Criminals*. Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1997, p. 73.

I am not motivated by a sense of revenge...I am forever asking myself what I can do for those who have not survived. The answer I have found for myself...is: I want to be their mouthpiece...But we, the survivors, have an obligation not only to the dead, but also to future generations: we must pass on to them our experiences so they can learn from them. Information is defense.<sup>95</sup>

The Simon Wiesenthal Centers were born from the experiences of Holocaust survivors, in hopes that future generations would be affected by the work done by Wiesenthal's museums and organizations.

The New York Tolerance Center is a Professional Training Institution and lies in the heart of Manhattan on East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, just blocks from New York's famous Grand Central Station. It is an education and professional development multi-media training facility targeting educators, young people, law enforcement officials, doctors, scientists, nurses, librarians, human resources specialists, corporate employees, and state/local government practitioners. The Center specifically works with the New York and New Jersey State Police Departments, NYPD, New York City Parks Department, District Attorney's offices of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island, Grand Central Partnership and various other corporate and Jewish groups.<sup>96</sup> The New York Tolerance Center was modeled after the successful "Tools for Tolerance Program" at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The Tolerance Center provides participants with intense educational and experiential training programs, school field trips and group tours. Through interactive workshops, exhibits, and videos, individuals explore issues of prejudice, diversity, tolerance, and cooperation in the workplace, school campus and community.

While the institution is smaller in size than many other museums, the impact upon its visitors is substantial. According to Curran Geist, approximately 2,000 law enforcement professionals, 1,600 teens, and 300 teachers are trained through the museum in New York each

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<sup>95</sup> Jeffery, Laura S. *Simon Wiesenthal: Tracking Down Nazi Criminals*. Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1997, p. 11-12.

<sup>96</sup> Simon Wiesenthal Center. <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4441265>

year. The Center leads approximately 4,000 group tours per year.<sup>97</sup> According to the New York Tolerance Center's website, the museum offers full and half-day programs, along with retreats. The programs and workshops offered by the Center aim to "strengthen ethical and bias-free decision making, enhance cultural competency, develop progressive leadership practices, and build capacity for inclusive and equitable organizations."<sup>98</sup>

### ***Mission Statement***

According to Geist, the overarching message of the organization is "to learn from the past, to engage in the present, and change the future." (Geist Interview) The Museum of Tolerance is the educational arm of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an internationally acclaimed Human Rights Organization dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and fostering Tolerance and understanding through community involvement, educational outreach and social action. The Museum of Tolerance challenges visitors to explore the meaning of Tolerance and the consequences of intolerance by focusing on the history of the Holocaust and the dynamics of discrimination in our world today. Through unique state-of-the-art teaching technologies and interactive exhibits, the Museum of Tolerance engages visitors in a journey of self-discovery, to confront their own prejudices and to assume responsibility for the choices they make.

The main focus of the New York Tolerance Center is to explain how ordinary people can make a difference and work towards a better future. In a film developed specifically for the Center, it is said, "Without the participation of ordinary people, Hitler's war would have been impossible." (New York Tolerance Center Film) Geist stated, "One of our goals our institution

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<sup>97</sup> Holly Myers interview with Curran Geist on April 8, 2010. Subsequent citations will appear parenthetically in the text.

<sup>98</sup> The New York Tolerance Center, Programs & Workshops, New York, New York.

[http://www.nytolerancecenter.com/site/c.klYldMMJpE/b.5551079/k.F0F/Programs\\_Workshops.htm](http://www.nytolerancecenter.com/site/c.klYldMMJpE/b.5551079/k.F0F/Programs_Workshops.htm)



aims to show is that it's not just a Jewish issue...It's a human issue. Everyone has to be held accountable and has a role." (Geist Interview)

### ***Types of Programming and Future Implications***

The New York Tolerance Center is a unique institution, as every visit is on a reservation basis only. Thus, the general public and school groups alike must reserve their visit in order to participate in this state-of-the-art interactive training and educational facility. The New York Tolerance Center focuses much of its educational programming upon global hate and documents current hate groups. Geist stated, "Hate can't happen overnight. Hate is a process, as we're born without prejudice." Thus, the museum has five, very focused, exhibitions that explore the past, modern-day hatred, and ways to fight prejudice and promote tolerance.

*Power of Words* is an exhibit that features a film that demonstrates how modern-day figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Franklin Roosevelt used their words to instill hope while others like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Osama Bin Laden and other extremists used the same power to spread lies and incite hatred. *The Hall of Memory*, also referred to as *In Our Time*, offers the story of the Holocaust through a multimedia theater that presents a thought-provoking film, where participants learn about genocide in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Through discussion and viewing eye-witness testimony, the visitor is encouraged to reflect upon the lessons of history and their meaning today. Based upon the ongoing Simon Wiesenthal Center research and investigation of hate on the internet, *Globalhate.com* is the portion of the Center equipped with touch screen computer terminals that unmask the dangerous proliferation of hate on the internet and introduce questions for critical thinking in a media saturated society. *The Millennium Machine* offers a media presentation that

focuses on pressing human rights issues such as the plight of refugees and political prisoners, the exploitation of women and children, the threats of domestic and international terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction. Participants in this theatre experience will test their knowledge of the subject matter via automated response technology and are challenged to discuss solutions to these complex, global problems. The *Point of View Diner* is a modern cyber-café that screens a variety of scenarios portraying situations of escalating conflict in a contemporary American context. Through the use of cutting edge technology, group members can ‘interview’ the main characters in each video scenario and then register their personal opinions on the issues raised. The results of the anonymous vote are instantly tabulated, providing a springboard for dialogue on violence prevention, conflict resolution and personal responsibility. Video scenarios include the Freedom of Speech, Teen Bullying, and Domestic Violence.<sup>99</sup>

Many exhibition tours of the New York Tolerance Center begin in the Hall of Memory, dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust. Geist explained, “I am always surprised at how many students and professionals, even law enforcement professionals, do not know that the Holocaust happened...or think that the Holocaust was a hoax.” (Geist Interview) As the visitors face the screen where they will view a video on the Holocaust, the left wall lists names of death and concentration camps, such as Auschwitz, Dachau, and Theresienstadt, and the right wall lists “The Righteous Among Nations,” names of people who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save another. The middle, where the screen lies, is representative of most of society and the power that the middle holds. (Geist Interview)

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<sup>99</sup> The New York Tolerance Center, Exhibits, New York, New York.  
<http://www.nytolerancecenter.com/site/c.lkiYldMMJpE/b.5148419/k.E0F1/Exhibits.htm>

Geist speaks to groups of high school students before they view the film on the Holocaust. Geist explains the mission and history of the Center to the audience and asks student visitors questions such as, “Why do you think we call this space the Hall of Memory? Why is this significant for us as an organization? What is the overarching message?” Geist speaks on the Holocaust and hate in general to the Center’s visitors explaining that, “You’re going to learn how a culture could evolve to a place where people were being murdered...Lots of communities were targeted during the Holocaust and all groups have been stereotyped and discriminated against.” Geist continues:

Don’t be embarrassed by the word ‘different.’ Each one of you can be a leader. Each one of you can make a difference. In many ways, most of society is in the middle and the power often lies in the middle. And you often have a choice...The Nazis used propaganda – What would you do? (Geist Interview)

The educational methods at the New York Tolerance Center portray in every aspect of their teaching that each of us has a choice, can make a difference, and can be a leader in society.

One of the objectives of the New York Tolerance Center is for Holocaust history to remain tangible upon the passing of survivors. Geist explained:

In order for Holocaust education to be effective, it needs discussion and dissection. These must be key components. At the Center, we don’t just simply show a film on the Holocaust and move on. There are no un-guided visits. There is always a facilitated discussion. There is always a classroom component. All training programs bring discussion. We focus on dehumanization and we dissect the process. (Geist Interview)

The film on the Holocaust shown to visitors at the New York Tolerance Center at the beginning of a visit not only addresses a timeline leading up to World War II and through the Holocaust, but uses first person accounts by survivors. These personal stories are a way for visitors to learn from the past and connect with those who lived through the Holocaust. While the footage and photographs in the film are in black and white, all survivor interviews are in color. The

survivors in the film not only relay pieces from their own story, but survivors leave the audience with advice on how to move forward. For example, one of the survivors from the film stated, “I know that hate can create beasts out of human beings...Learn from us. Learn from our experiences...Above all, try not to plant the seeds of hate...Respect every human being.” (New York Tolerance Center Film)

The New York Tolerance Center has an emphasis on digital media, specifically centered on “The New Face of Hate – Digital Technologies” and the repercussions that this has upon youth. Written in large letters on one of the walls at the New York Tolerance Center is the following:

In America, hatemongers have repackaged age-old hatreds, trading Klan hoods and Nazi armbands for digital technologies. Global hate has inspired international terrorists to target the United States as a symbol of democracy and personal freedoms. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, extremists are crossing national and technological borders to lead followers to commit violence and terrorism.

As an expression of portraying not only hate of the past, such as experienced by victims during the Holocaust, the New York Tolerance Center works to bring awareness towards hate propaganda of today. This is done through the exhibition on *Globalhate.com*. As part of the Center’s awareness project, the Center presents information on “Digital Terrorism & Hate 2.0,” which exposes various hate websites, along with information on how to report such websites.

Digital Terrorism & Hate 2.0 encourages both students and professionals to take action in reporting hate sites and crimes. Digital Terrorism & Hate 2.0 provides the visitor with real examples. Many of these hate sites specifically target Jews, Arabs, Muslims, and Blacks. One such site is called “White Nationalist Info.” White Nationalist Info is a resource for white supremacists, with dozens of racist and anti-Semitic articles, especially about alleged Jewish “control” of the media and politics. A YouTube video is also provided that expresses “Israel’s

treachery against the USA.” Another hate website the New York Tolerance Center makes visitors aware of is the “Jewish Tribal Review,” a website charging that Jews control everything from pornography, the media, politics to popular culture. The site asks the question, “Is this site ‘anti-Semitic?’” Its answer is another question by Joe Wood – “Telling the Truth is Not Anti-Semitic, Am I right?”<sup>100</sup> Most visitors express shock at the realization that these sites are not scarce, but profuse within society. With the help of Holocaust survivors, this sort of hatred is exactly what the Tolerance Center fights.

As the Holocaust generation continues to age, Geist believes that while the loss of Holocaust survivors will impact all museums, “The Holocaust was well documented and the survivor stories will live on.” Geist goes on to explain, “With our organization, memoirs, letters, and diaries already play a big role.” (Geist Interview) The New York Tolerance Center has consolidated much of the survivor story through these tangible items into the film viewed by visitors. Though the New York Tolerance Center focuses on Holocaust education, the museum is centered upon safeguarding all human rights. Geist stated, “If we can touch one person, that’s good enough for us.” (Geist Interview)

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<sup>100</sup> Simon Wiesenthal Center, Snider Social Action Institute. Digital Terrorism & Hate 2.0., CD.

## Chapter 6 – The Second Generation within the Museum

According to Young, “The reasons for memory change with every new generation.”<sup>101</sup> Two generations have passed since the end of World War II. Chapter 6 addresses the role of the second generation within the museum. Young wrote, “While the survivors remember themselves and loved ones lost, their children build memorials to remember a world they never knew, an act of recovery whereby they locate themselves in a continuous past.”<sup>102</sup> Marianne Hirsh describes this as postmemory. In her article, *The Generation of Postmemory*, she writes, “Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.”<sup>103</sup> In the words of Alex Krieger, a child of survivors and an architect who was active in the creation of The New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston:

It’s not for my parents that I pursue this endeavor... This memorial will be for me. Because I was not there, and did not suffer, I cannot remember. Therefore, I very much need to be reminded. This memorial will be for my six-month old daughter, who will need to be reminded even more. It will be for her children who will need to be reminded still more. We must build such a memorial for all of the generations to come who, by distance from the actual events and people, will depend on it to activate [memory].<sup>104</sup>

The utilization of the second generation within Holocaust museums and institutions is still evolving. While there is not an exuberant amount of educational programming involving the second generation, museums are in the process of creating this type of programming. The Museum of Jewish Heritage, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the New York

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<sup>101</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1993, p. 285.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, p. 285.

<sup>103</sup> Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory*. *Poetics Today*, Spring 2008, Vol. 29 Issue 1, p. 103.

<sup>104</sup> Young, James E. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning: The Texture of Memory*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 199, p. 285.

Tolerance Center adopt different approaches in the utilization of the second generation within the dynamics of each institution.

### ***Second Generation at the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust***

What has become ever more apparent is that the second generation will take on more prominent roles within the Museum of Jewish Heritage as we begin to lose the physical presence of Holocaust survivors. Edelstein explained that the second generation has already begun to take on prominent roles within the museum and that the museum has proudly put into place two new programs, specifically directed toward the children of survivors. Edelstein delicately described that these programs work to explore the experiences of the children of Holocaust survivors, which are inextricably intertwined with their parents. Rabbi Moshe Yuhuda Berkowitz, a second generation and member of the Ger Hasid, spoke of the young boys of his community as they performed a beautiful song. Rabbie Moshe stated one perspective:

The children here...are grandchildren of survivors from the concentration camps. They are a little bit different than my generation was. I'm a son of a camp survivor. We try to give our children much more attention, much more time. Some of us felt that our parents, the generation gap between them and us were two generations, not one generation. We are the first generation who are on the same wave length as our children.<sup>105</sup>

To explore the second generation experience deeper, and learn about the post-war years of Holocaust survivors in a new light, the museum created or cultivated the programs *The Moth Stories Told* and *How to Write our Parents War*. Both programs, which have been received enthusiastically, deal with this concept of non-fictional story-telling and act as a form of healing, remembering, and oral history.

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<sup>105</sup> *A Life Apart: Hasidism in America*. Produced and directed by Menachem Daum and Oren Rudavsky, PBS Broadcast, 96 minutes, 1997.

In January 2010, the Museum of Jewish Heritage embarked on a storytelling workshop for children of Holocaust survivors. According to Moth instructor Terence P. Mickey, the MothShop Community Program, a not-for-profit storytelling organization, launched in 1999, “specifically offers storytelling workshops to the community at large, focusing on high school-age teens and adults from underserved populations. The workshops teach participants how to use the key elements of narrative to shape their life experiences into well-crafted stories... The stories, as with all Moth stories, are true stories.”<sup>106</sup> According to The Moth website, the mission is “to celebrate the ability of stories to honor the diversity and commonality of human experience, and to satisfy a vital human need for connection.”<sup>107</sup> The Moth does this by helping the storytellers shape their stories and share them with the community at large. One goal of The Moth is to present the finest storytellers among established and emerging writers, performers and artists; another is to encourage storytelling among populations whose stories often go unheard. Because the Museum of Jewish Heritage focuses upon the Jewish experience, the stories of the second generation still play a role in the history of remembrance at the museum and The Moth program helps to cultivate these stories.

While the children of Holocaust survivors are not The Moth's classically underserved population, Terence P. Mickey stated that the second generation “is underserved in the sense that their stories of childhood spent in the shadow of the Holocaust have not been widely told. The experience of growing up as a child of survivors has all the essential elements of storytelling: structure, character, moral, humor, suspense, conflict, and resolution.”<sup>108</sup> The Museum, working

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<sup>106</sup> Blog from Battery Place. 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Stories at the Museum, February 24, 2010. <http://mjhstaff.blogspot.com/>

<sup>107</sup> The Moth, Mission Statement. <http://www.themoth.org/mission>

<sup>108</sup> Blog from Battery Place. 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Stories at the Museum, February 24, 2010. <http://mjhstaff.blogspot.com/>



in conjunction with the MothShop Community Program, hopes that through participation in the Moth storytelling workshops, the second generation will learn how to use the key elements of narrative to shape their life experiences into well-crafted stories, and that these stories will then be used in educating future generations about the Holocaust. Mickey, wrote in his Blog from Battery Place that:

The hardest part of teaching storytelling is asking your students (the second generation in this case) to be vulnerable since the art form is based on revealing and sharing an intimate part of yourself, but everyone in the group has risen to the challenge... While all of the participants share the common thread of “Second Generation,” and they relate to one another with similar details from their lives – “We never waited on lines either,” or “We had enough food stockpiled in our cabinets to last us a lifetime” – all of the stories have the stamp of the singular on them. While each story may remember a mother or father, they’re equally revealing of a son or a daughter.<sup>109</sup>

As this program has only begun to flourish, the second generation will play a prominent role in the future of museum educational programming within the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

According to Edelstein, many children of Holocaust survivors are active within the museum and now sit on the museum’s board and are on the planning and advisory committee. Edelstein explained that, “And now, even more so, I am happy to say we see succession planning on our board. Our children of survivors are (also) instrumental in planning fundraising events and Yom HaShoah events.” (Edelstein Interview)

While museums sometimes face challenges in bringing the complicated narratives of the past into the present, the efforts of doing so will leave a lasting legacy upon the visitors of the museum. Survivor stories are a crucial piece of remembrance, as without the documentation of the survivor story, it would be difficult for future visitors to personalize this history; however, for

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<sup>109</sup> Blog from Battery Place. 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Stories at the Museum, February 24, 2010. , <http://mjhstaff.blogspot.com/>

the Jewish Museum of Heritage, the stories of the second generation will also play a prominent role in the future educational programming of museums.

On January 24, 2010, the Museum of Jewish Heritage presented its first program of *How to Write Our Parents War*. The museum presented a panel discussion and memoir writing workshop with numerous writers and critics in history and literary studies, including Judith Greenberg (*Cypora's Echo*), Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (*Ghosts of Home*), Irene Kacandes (*Daddy's War: Greek American Stories*), Nancy Kricorian (*Zabelle*), and Gabrielle Schwab (*Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*); moderated by Nancy K. Miller (*Bequest and Betrayal: Memoirs of a Parent's Death*).<sup>110</sup> Following the discussion, audience members participated in a memoir writing workshop in small groups led by the individual panelists. As Edelstein explained, it is important for the museum to work with many strands of the community. She also stated that “There is nothing that will substitute for being in the presence of a survivor, but their testimonies will play a profound role in the future of museum educational programming.” (Edelstein Interview)

### ***Second Generation at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum***

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum endorses the use of primary sources, one of the reasons that it is so important that the museum focuses on the survivor story as first-person accounts as opposed to using the second generation to re-tell the stories. Kaiser explained that because the Holocaust Memorial is a history museum, the Holocaust survivor is their primary voice. Kaiser stated, “For historians, we want the voice of the people who were in the actual experience. For presentation purposes, you could have a son or daughter introduce the film.

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<sup>110</sup> The Museum of Jewish Heritage, Events, New York, New York.  
[http://www.mjhnyc.org/safrahall/visit\\_safra\\_26.htm](http://www.mjhnyc.org/safrahall/visit_safra_26.htm)

Their life was affected by their parents.” Tim explained the importance, as an educator, of hearing the first person accounts of Holocaust survivors from their perspective and not from the perspective of their children, although the second generation story is also important. (Kaiser Interview)

Menachem Rosensaft, a child of Holocaust survivors, reiterates the importance of the first person account in stating:

We are the children of survivors. Confronting our collective identity has not been without cost...we do not share in our parents’ exclusivity. They went through the Holocaust. We did not. They saw their families and friends murdered. We grew up in comfort and security. We are not survivors in any sense of the term. They, and they alone, are entitled to that designation. Nor do we have any exclusive right to the survivors’ legacy or to the memory of the Holocaust. These belong to the Jewish people and to humankind....We were given life and placed on earth with a solemn obligation. Our parents survived to bear witness. We, in turn, must be their attestors.<sup>111</sup>

Although the museum welcomes the involvement of the second generation, the focus will remain on the survivor voice, whether that is in first person, through film, podcasts, or other digital media – the first person accounts will remain as the core to Holocaust education at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

### ***Second Generation at the New York Tolerance Center***

As part of the methods used at the Museum of Tolerance, docent volunteers lead the group tours. According to Geist, a large contingency of docent volunteers are from the second generation. The New York Tolerance Center places an important role upon personalization and first person accounts. Geist explained:

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<sup>111</sup> Wiesel, Elie. *After the Darkness: Reflections on the Holocaust*. Schocken Books, Random House Inc., New York, 2002, p. 43.

We do not use the second generation to speak directly about the Holocaust and share their parents stories...Down the road (as a second generation), being a child of a survivor can affect you and will ultimately shape your view of the world...But using the second generation story is not currently something we do. (Geist Interview)

While the role of the second generation is important at the Center, the New York Tolerance Center will continue to use personal stories from witnesses through various forms of media, specifically film, when the Holocaust generation has passed on. The survivor stories will continue to be a core part of the Center's teaching and representation of the Holocaust.

### *Second Generation Significance*

At the Ninetieth European Teachers' Seminar in 2000, Polak emphasized the importance of the first-person, survivor account in Holocaust education at museums. Polak highlighted the essence of "making use of eyewitness recollection...if handled properly, it can have an impact unmatched by any other resources employed to teach the Holocaust...the accounts of eyewitnesses must be personal."<sup>112</sup> While the story of the second generation may be included at many Holocaust institutions, the first person account will always remain at the center of Holocaust education. However, the second generation will continue to pass on through oral history their stories of family, tradition, and past to future generations. Malke Klein, a second generation, stated "My father, he says to the children, 'Do you know why I'm alive today? I'm alive today because you had to be born. You had to be born...that is why I had to stay alive... You have a responsibility to continue.'"<sup>113</sup> Children of survivors will tell the stories of their parents and the impact that the Holocaust had upon them as the second generation. And stories, such as these, will continue to be recounted:

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<sup>112</sup> *Teaching about the Holocaust and the history of genocide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Council of Europe Publishing Editions, Donaueschingen, Germany. November 6-10, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>113</sup> *A Life Apart: Hasidism in America*. Produced and directed by Menachem Daum and Oren Rudavsky, PBS Broadcast, 96 minutes, 1997.

In 1948, Menachem Rosensaft was born in the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp. His parents survived the horrors of Auschwitz, his grandparents did not, nor did his brother, who died in a gas chamber. Rosensaft reminds future generations that all must bear witness:

We must, both individually and collectively, raise this voice on-behalf of all, Jews and non-Jews alike, who are subjected to discrimination and oppression, or who are threatened by annihilations, anywhere in the world. And we may never be passive, or allow others to be passive in the face of oppression, for we know only too well that the ultimate consequence of apathy and silence was embodied forever in the flames of Auschwitz and the mass graves of Bergen-Belsen.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Wiesel, Elie. *After the Darkness: Reflections on the Holocaust*. Schocken Books, Random House Inc., New York, 2002, p. 43.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

When the presence of Holocaust witnesses are no more, Holocaust museums and educational institutions will remain as lasting memorials. The educational materials and programming will be carried on through various other forms as strong reminders of the power of people, the power of hate, and the importance of remembrance. And the legacy of survivors will be left through the impeccable documentation of these museums and research centers. At the United States Holocaust Memorial, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and the New York Tolerance Center, the role of surviving generations will be amplified and the children and grandchildren of survivors will take on an important responsibility within the museum, whether it is introducing the film of a father, mother, grandfather, or grandmother, participating in Holocaust Remembrance programming, sitting on the Board of a museum, or playing an active role as a docent at one of the museums.

The lessons of Holocaust history will be remembered and taught to generations to come through the teachings preserved at museums. According to the information provided by the contacts at the three museums studied within this thesis, the core of Holocaust museums and research centers is not only to educate and remember, but to promote awareness, tolerance, and ultimately, action. These museums can serve as a model for other Holocaust programs. As the museum professionals at these institutions discussed, Holocaust museums are moving from remembrance to action. And because of the educational programming that these institutions continue to put into place, just as surely as the sun rises and sets, the world will remember.

These museums will carry on the legacy to future generations in teaching the lessons that survivors have so often spoken of – Those of compassion over cruelty, social justice over

oppression, and boldness over indifference. By personalizing the history of the Holocaust, the understanding of what explicitly happened will remain within the grasp of visitors through Holocaust education at museums. The personalization of history will remain applicable through numerous programs provided through museums. Educational programs, such as Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics, *How to Write our Parents War*, and *The Moth Stories Told*, cultivated through the Museum of Jewish Heritage; the identity cards, *World is Witness*, and various aspects of other programming at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; and the focus on digital media programs and technology at the New York Tolerance Center, are glimpses into the future of educational programming at Holocaust museums and educational institutions that deal with Holocaust history. The impact of documents such as diaries, memoirs and letters will also be influential. And while the role of the second generation varies within each institution, surviving generations of children and grandchildren of survivors will be amplified within the museum.

Holocaust museums and institutions are acutely aware of the dilemma of replacing the physical presence of survivor commentary with something that will still be effective and push future generations to further remove hatred and violence, while breeding awareness of genocidal issues. Though the programming and educational methods will never substitute for the presence of a witness, museum educators are aware of the reality of the situation and are working to ensure that Holocaust history remains tangible at their institution. While there are differences in the missions and educational methods of each museum, museum professionals and visitors alike can be sure of one thing: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, and the New York Tolerance Center: A

Simon Wiesenthal Center, Museum of Tolerance Project will act as a way of preserving life, preserving history, and cultivating action amongst citizens of humanity.



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