

CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST
& GENOCIDE STUDIES

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2020

Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies News

From the Director

In the past two decades we have witnessed a steady expansion of interest, beyond Jewish institutions, by the number of government officials willing to introduce and participate in some form or fashion in public observances of Holocaust Remembrance Day. Commemorations are now held in more than 35 countries on January 27th, the day on which, in 1945, Soviet troops liberated the largest Nazi death camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau.

This broader initiative of reflecting on the cataclysmic implications of this singular historical event and the lessons that can be applied for a global audience has generated extraordinary interest. Still, it also poses significant challenges in how this tragedy is recounted. There is both a faithfulness to preserving the historical specificity of the Shoah (the destruction that befell European Jewry) and a need to broaden how this tragedy is defined to encompass and acknowledge non-Jewish victims of the Nazi regime. Moreover, the commemorations are sometimes organized to pay respect to all those who have suffered genocides or crimes against humanity.

We often hear that the only proper and “good” use of the past is for purposes that transcend ethnic, religious, or national barriers. It is the “exemplary memory,” of which author [Tzvetan Todorov](#) wrote about, which is different from a recollection that does not lead beyond itself, of the affected group. While the January 27th commemorations aim to render the Holocaust or its lessons easily relatable to all people, it ignores an irrefutable sociological axiom. Namely, that all collective memory is essentially group-based since the remembered events happened to individuals in specific groups, and those groups endow that past with a particular meaning. The need to package exemplary and abstract memory to appeal to everyone risks diluting facts that are complex, sometimes uncomfortable, and often resist emotional uplift.

Historian Enzo Traverso pointed out recently that in the 21st century, the Holocaust is presented as a secular theodicy, a grand moral tale that pits almost pure goodness versus absolute evil. Traverso's critique is somewhat overblown. Still, he pushes us to look beyond the slogans and the hashtags and to rethink the ways to remember the Holocaust meaningfully.

Last year, while I was on sabbatical in Madrid, I attended the International Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony that took place in the Spanish Senate. Foreign Minister Josep Borrell recalled in his address that as a child, every Good Friday, he and his

friends used to run down the streets of his village in the Catalan Pyrenees with torches and rattles. And they were shouting "a matar jueus!" (kill the Jews). That Easter tradition was nothing other than the theatrical re-enactment of a pogrom.

Borrel had boldly chosen to bypass the standard watchwords and warnings that typically allows those in attendance to put themselves above it all, at a significant and safe distance from one of the 20th century's defining tragedies. Instead, he shared his personal memory of a moment where he was closer to the perpetrators than the victims. That lesson cut deep in the audience.

Alejandro Baer
Stephen C. Feinstein Chair & Director

Film Screening

International Holocaust Remembrance Day Event

TODAY - Monday, January 27

1:00 - 2:30 PM

[120 Andersen Library](#)

[Who Will Write Our History?](#)

"In November 1940, days after the Nazis sealed 450,000 Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, a secret band of journalists, scholars and community leaders decided to fight back. Led by historian Emanuel Ringelblum and known by the code name Oyneg Shabes, this clandestine group vowed to defeat Nazi lies and propaganda not with guns or fists but with pen and paper. *Who Will Write Our History* mixes the writings of the Oyneg Shabes archive with new interviews, rarely seen footage and stunning dramatizations to transport us inside the Ghetto and the lives of these courageous resistance fighters. They defied their murderous enemy with the ultimate weapon – the truth – and risked everything so that their archive would survive the war, even if they did not."

Presented by the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in conjunction with GER /JWST 3633: The Holocaust: Memory, Narrative, History; cosponsored by the Center for German and European Studies, Center for Jewish Studies, and the UMN Libraries' Archives and Special Collections.

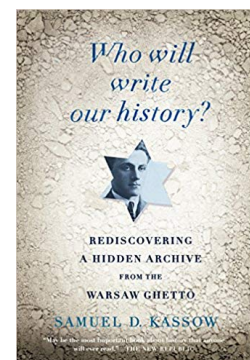
Mark Your Calendar

[Who Will Write Our History](#) author Samuel Kassow will be speaking at the University of Minnesota

Thursday, February 13

11:30 AM

[710 Social Sciences](#)



Presented with the Holocaust, Genocide, and Mass Violence (HGMV) Studies Interdisciplinary Graduate Group, made possible by the Jewish Community Relations Council

View our complete spring
calendar

Resources from CHGS

The Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies has a number of resources that are accessible through our digital collections.

[Minnesota and the Holocaust: Survivors, Witnesses, Liberators](#) chronicles the Holocaust through the eyes of Minnesotans who experienced it with a mix of art, photographs and testimony.

The [Minnesotan Oral Testimony Project \(1984\)](#) was a project organized by the JCRC of Minnesota & the Dakotas and the Anti-Defamation League with collected accounts of the Holocaust from survivors who settled in Minnesota. It's now part of the USHMM's collection.

The [Portraying Memories Series](#) features conversations between contemporary artist Felix de la Concha and nine local Holocaust survivors. While sitting for a portrait painting, de la Concha's subjects talk about their lives and share their testimonies. In all, Felix more than thirty-six survivors have participated in this powerful project.

Resources from the U of M Library

The Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies Librarian, Brian Vetruba, has a regularly updated blog with resources on the Holocaust, including:

- [Klemperer Online: Diaries 1918-1959](#)
- [Recent Books about the Holocaust Added to the Library](#)
- [New Books added about Holocaust Memory and Memorialization](#)

Visit Brian's blog [here](#).

Blog Archives

Below is a selection of articles related to International Holocaust Remembrance Day from our blog archives:

[Holocaust Remembrance Day: A Litmus Test of the Trump Administration's Approach to the Remembrance and Management of Mass Atrocities](#), January 2017

[On Good and Bad Memory](#), January 2014

[Memory Since Day One](#), January 2013

Community Events

Monday, January 27, 2020
7:00-8:30 pm
[Beth El Synagogue](#)

Hidden Recipes

Author Eva Moreimi reads from her memoir and shares her family story on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Free and open to the public but registration is required.



Ongoing, until February 2
[Phipps Center for the Arts, Hudson, WI](#)

A Shayna Maidel (A Pretty Girl)

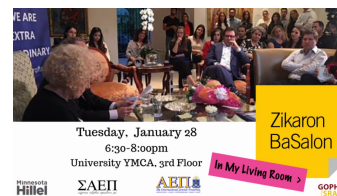
Two sisters – one a survivor of the Holocaust, the other sheltered in America – meet after a separation of almost 20 years. Their heart-wrenching reunion shows that if war can tear a family to pieces, love can put it back together.



Tuesday, January 28
6:30 pm
[University YMCA](#)

Zikaron BaSalon (Remembrance in the Living Room)

Gopher Israel invites you to commemorate the Holocaust in a personal way, among friends, in an intimate atmosphere. They will be gathering and hear the personal story of the survivors, sing, think, read, talk and most importantly - listen.



The Genocide Education Outreach Project

The Center's GEO program, [Genocide Education Outreach](#), is taking knowledge and expertise from the university directly to classrooms across the state.

CHGS Annual Report

The [CHGS Annual Report](#) features a review of last year's public lectures, partnerships, research, and opportunities for students and educators.

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