

STRASSLER CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE STUDIES

AT CLARK UNIVERSITY

THE TROUBLE WITH WHAT IS UNTHINKABLE IS THAT AT TIMES IT MUST BE THOUGHT ABOUT,”



John Lukacs, a historian and Holocaust survivor, trenchantly observed. Our faculty and students are deeply committed to thinking about the unthinkable. Until now, they have done so primarily through the lens of history, as scholars engaged with the tragic past. With the start of the fall 2021 semester, the Strassler Center embarked upon an innovative interdisciplinary PhD program that expands our efforts to address political, social and cultural issues of genocide and mass violence. This program will give students greater opportunities to employ the tools of diverse disciplines to examine past cases of genocide and mass violence. Importantly, it will also teach them ways to detect and perhaps thwart prospective genocides. Such work makes it possible to engage productively with the unthinkable.

A broad range of academic specialties will address important questions that genocide scholars pose. Psychologists illuminate the emotions of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. Sociologists explain how social relationships create the conditions for mass murder. Political Scientists analyze the governance and power structures that engender political violence. Anthropologists examine the meanings that cultures ascribe to violent human behavior. These and other disciplinary approaches can train graduates for a range of careers that promote scholarship or make a difference to people at risk of violence or those seeking to rebuild just societies in the aftermath of mass atrocities. The PhD in Genocide Studies will be geared toward students aiming to apply their knowledge to real life situations as practitioners. The history program, with its core commitments to studying and teaching about the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide, will continue to prepare those seeking professional work in academe, museums, memorials, and archives. Students in either program will be trained to confront the unthinkable; they will engage with it directly in order to produce valuable knowledge and practical solutions.

The fall 2021 appointment of two visiting scholars will advance the new program as they help the Strassler Center

realize its ambitions to connect research and scholarship with pedagogical and political efforts to prevent current and future mass atrocities and human rights violations. These faculty members bring new skills and approaches to understanding the complex causes and consequences of genocide. As the Dr. Thomas Zand Professor, anthropologist Sultan Doughan will study the relationship between education about the Holocaust and the growing problem of new and continuing forms of antisemitism. Political Scientist Chris Davey, holder of the Charles E. Scheidt Professorship, will introduce teaching about genocidal violence in Africa and methods of genocide prevention.

A series of lectures considering the impact of climate change, over the 2021-22 academic year, will challenge our conception of genocidal events and will extend our engagement with the unthinkable. According to the environmentalist Rachel Carson “man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.” Until now, devastating man-made crises such as pandemics and environmental disasters were mostly left to the domain of the natural sciences. Yet, the consequences from these human induced catastrophes have the potential to imperil not only Earth’s ecosystems but also all living species. Moreover, they disproportionately impact marginalized communities and the eventual cost to human life could be on an unforeseen scale. Understanding these threats and how to prevent them resonates with genocide scholars who study mass death and whose practitioners strive to prevent them.

The support of alumni, donors, and friends makes this challenging work possible and helps us to shed light on the darkest corners of humanity.

MARY JANE REIN, PHD,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THOMAS KÜHNE, PHD,
DIRECTOR AND STRASSLER COLIN FLUG PROFESSOR

The image features a complex abstract design. A large, dark purple, stylized letter 'E' is positioned on the left side, extending vertically. A horizontal yellow band with a textured, marbled appearance runs across the top. Below this, a thin yellow line is visible. The background is white with a grid of thin grey lines. The word 'EVENTS' is written in a large, bold, dark purple font in the upper right quadrant. A large, semi-transparent, light purple 'EVENTS' is overlaid in the center, partially obscured by the dark purple 'E' and other elements. At the bottom, there are several rectangular blocks: a large yellow textured block on the left, a dark purple textured block in the center, and a dark purple textured block on the right. The overall aesthetic is modern and graphic.

EVENTS

EVENTS

PANEL DISCUSSION: “RACE, RACISM, AND POLICING: A LONG HISTORY”

8 October 2020

A tidal wave of social and political unrest during 2020 culminated in widespread demands for change. Protests in response to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor inspired debates and movements that drew attention to the long struggle to end police brutality. Systemic racism in America is not just a contemporary issue, as the title of this panel affirmed. Professor Frances Tanzer invited three scholars to address the historical issues that thread through current conversations about race and policing.

Ousmane Power-Greene (Clark University) described law enforcement’s failure to acknowledge the long history of anti-Black violence and policing. Turning to the 19th century, he addressed the false dichotomy between the free-north and slave-south. He explained that the police and white civilians constantly surveilled freed blacks in the north and mid-west, despite the shaping of whites in these areas as abolitionists. Freed African Americans experienced profound insecurity due to state-sanctioned anti-Black violence and the deputization of men searching for fugitive slaves above the Mason-Dixon Line. Power-Greene asserted that “if southern free blacks felt like they were living in a literal police state in the nineteenth century, northern free blacks felt they could be arrested and jailed at any moment.” Highlighting how the history of policing has informed contemporary injustices, Power-Greene declared that recognizing early examples of state and collective violence is crucial for repairing the ongoing damage inflicted on Black communities.

Carl Suddler (Emory University) began by underscoring that Breonna Taylor had still not received justice. As a carceral historian, he asserted that “this was not a failure of the justice system; this was the justice system doing exactly what it was designed to do.” Over the past century, conversation and action have failed to advance reform. Suddler’s research seeks to develop a better understanding of racial inequities, including housing, schooling, and the legal system. Drawing on a chapter from his recently published book, *Presumed Criminal: Black Youth and the Justice System in Postwar New York*, he discussed the “Harlem Six,” a group of boys convicted for the death of a white female shopkeeper in 1964. Their experiences reveal the construction of criminality as a racial problem by the 1960s. Attempts to create a fair and just legal system instead fostered systemic and institutionalized racism. Two laws established at the time, no-knock and stop-and-frisk, continue to excessively impact African Americans, including Breonna Taylor, a victim of the no-knock law. Suddler, questioned whether the history of policing in this country demonstrates that “we have run out of options in terms of reform...so what now?”

Anne Gray Fischer (University of Texas, Dallas) began with a serious observation. “I am deeply moved that this event is sponsored by a Center dedicated to interrogating genocide: because we can’t talk about the history of policing in this country without talking



about the history of a systematic regime of targeted hate and violence against people of African descent. The history of policing in the U.S. is one strand in a global and interconnected history of genocidal state violence.” An urban historian researching the intersection of gender, race, and law enforcement, Fischer studies Black women and their experiences with racist policing, laying bare the underlying practices and justification. She described the relationship between policing centered around the criminalization of minorities and the use of police as “frontline enforcers” of gentrification. Taylor’s family made this exact claim in Louisville, exposing a direct correlation between her murder and the push to remove her apartment building to develop a large real-estate project. Linking policing with business interests in urban areas, Fischer described the protocols for controlling and banishing sex workers from city centers. These efforts, which became a model for policing alleged gang members, drug dealers, and the homeless, continue today and disproportionately target poor Black women. Fischer reasoned that “gentrified cities reflect at once the proof and the erasure of state violence against women.”

The panelists illuminated the tangled history of racism and policing in the U.S. as they raised vital questions about future law enforcement. Tanzer noted in conclusion that the dominant narratives of this history omit the voices of minorities and marginalized people while accepting the acts of violence against them. Discussions such as this panel represent steps in the right direction.

Lauren Ashley Bradford

PANEL DISCUSSION: “TESTIMONY AS ACTIVISM: ARCHIVES OF DISPLACEMENT”

9 November 2020

How victims fleeing violence, conflict, and forced migration cope with displacement is salient to the work of Professors Anita Fábos (IDCE) and Frances Tanzer (Strassler Center). The Strassler Center co-sponsored their jointly moderated webinar examining the intersection between research and activism with the Higgins School for Humanities, the department of International Development, Community and Environment, and the programs in Media, Culture & the Arts, and Peace and Conflict Studies. In discussing the role of activism in historical and current stories of displacement, the panelists were in dialogue with each other in showing how testimonies amplify voices seeking to achieve justice and positive change. They began by explaining their academic and professional trajectories.

Historian Natalia Aleksion (Touro College) described a dinner with two sisters who reminisced about surviving the Holocaust and meeting their future husbands while hiding in a forest bunker. Their highly intimate account of daily life conducted in Polish, which the sisters assumed she could not understand, intrigued Aleksion and contrasted with the silence of her own survivor family. Through testimonies and interviews, she uncovered other very personal survival accounts. Her presentation focused on Adela Hilsenrath who, as early as 1944, recorded her wartime experiences hiding with her young son and husband. Writing in both the first-person and the plural we, Adela places her individual suffering into tension with the communal experience of destruction and displacement in Drohobych, Poland. Expressing feelings of material loss, she describes leaving her beloved home as well as her country and native language.

Leora Kahn (PROOF: Media for Social Justice), a former photo editor, curator, activist, and educator, combines visual storytelling with testimony in pursuit of social change. Her book of portraits of Holocaust survivors, co-published in the 1990s, initiated her into recording survivor testimonies. Inspired to study peace building and conflict transformation, Kahn pivoted to interviewing rescuers. In Rwanda, she interviewed Hutus who saved Tutsis during the 1994 Genocide in order to understand what motivated these ordinary citizens. Seeking role models for prosocial behavior, she compared the testimonies of rescuers from the Holocaust, Bosnia, Cambodia, Iraq and Sri Lanka. Today, she focuses on refugees and their experiences of forced migration.

Working at a think tank, Noha Aboueldahab (Brookings Doha Center) examines issues of justice and accountability in the Middle East and North Africa. She interviews activists, lawyers, and civil society professionals who have survived human rights abuses. Many of her interviewees are pursuing justice while living in the Arab diaspora. Having grown up in Egypt, Aboueldahab is conscious of



Murad Subay “Children of Graves - Displacement Camp in Amoron Govern”

the systemic human rights abuses that are endemic to dictatorships while mindful of the responsibility of foreign governments who support such regimes. She seeks to expand the “accountability gaze” beyond the domestic, post-colonial, authoritarian context to address external actors complicit in these atrocities. Her belief that transitional justice complicates the boundaries between past, present, and future informs her conversations with diplomats, policy makers and civil servants.

Considering the role of testimony in the framework of activism, the panelists acknowledged a common approach, despite disciplinary and contextual differences. Aleksion highlighted the search for justice in her description of the Central Jewish Historical Commission, established in Lublin shortly after the city’s liberation and located near the Majdanek death camp. Survivors drafted protocols for documenting atrocities using discarded Nazi materials. They collected the names of German perpetrators and local collaborators in order to hold them accountable.

For Kahn, testimonies empower activists and victims in ways that can lead to positive change. She described an exhibition documenting gender-based violence in Bogotá, Colombia that afforded victims the opportunity to testify about their experiences to UN officials, government figures, and health officials. Previously, they had found it difficult to get their stories heard but the exhibition, which included testimonies, helped to initiate changes in health policy that led to the delivery of mental health and medical services to survivors.

In pursuing justice for past and ongoing atrocities, Aboueldahab aims to unsettle stubborn narratives. Her efforts foreground the work of activists, giving them credence at conservative organizations that might otherwise dismiss them for belonging to the streets. She lamented that activism is often a long and heart-breaking process in places controlled by authoritarian rule and armed violence where lives are lost or ruined because of the serious risks involved. In this case, as in all of those presented, survivors document the past in order to build a new future.

Mary Jane Rein

SIMONE SCHWEBER, “HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IN DESPERATE TIMES”

20 November 2020

Simone Schweber, Goodman Professor of Education and Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, has dedicated her academic career to researching how we teach and learn about the Holocaust. With the expansion of its academic agenda to include issues of Holocaust education, the Strassler Center invited Schweber to discuss some of the challenges that pertain to teaching in our current complicated times. In her virtual lecture, sponsored by the Legacy Heritage Fund, Schweber reasoned that Holocaust education is essentially malleable. In carefully calibrated language, Schweber described how education is open to the imprints of those who teach it, reflecting current political needs and goals.

The question of Holocaust exceptionalism has emerged as a matter of controversy, especially after Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez described detention centers for immigrants at the US-Mexico border as concentration camps. Schweber pondered whether we can analogize the Holocaust, asking whether it is as an example of a distinct event unique in its scale, yet similar and comparable to other genocidal events in its features. Schweber demonstrated these distinct attitudes by summarizing the teaching approaches of two leading organizations whose origin stories reflect their political and educational orientations. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) pointedly serves a dual purpose of commemoration as well as education. In keeping with the ideology of Elie Wiesel, the USHMM presents the Holocaust as a unique historical event that should not be compared to other events. Their widely distributed teaching materials clearly reflect this point of view in contrast to the stance of the museum’s research arm. The more open, multifaceted approach to Holocaust education of Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) reflects founder Margot Stern Strom’s experience in pre-civil rights era Memphis. Moreover, as a teacher, Strom was more concerned with applicability and impact. FHAO emphasizes that current racism, antisemitism, and bigotry are legacies of past injustices that society must still confront. Thus, they emphasize collective history and its effect on current societal ills, without awarding the Holocaust or any other historical event, a unique position.

While the USHMM has broadened its historical research to include other genocides, according to Schweber, the “commemorative” rather than “research” sector determines its educational aims. As a result, the Holocaust remains in the incomparable realm in their teaching and learning practices. The discrepancy within the USHMM between the comparative historical research and the particularistic educational approach is a symptom of a wider societal problem, according to Schweber, namely the issue of undervaluing education as a field. She suggested that Holocaust education, as an applied rather than a purely theoretical field (such as history or mathematics, for instance), can be understood as the “undervalued



Simone Schweber

wife of Holocaust history,” and is thus classified as a “pink,” feminized field. As such, Holocaust education is generally overlaid with responsibilities to address an unrealistic range of topics from antisemitism to democratic participation and critical thinking. Such overly broad goals and expectations, in turn, undermine the overall effectiveness of Holocaust education.

Ultimately, Schweber reasoned that teaching the Holocaust as an exclusive event is not only erroneous but largely incongruous with teaching itself. Exceptionalism in Holocaust education is not only very difficult to maintain and justify, but according to Schweber, it might have always been a fantasy, as sacralization is an enemy of inquiry and as such defies education. In the process of educating it is essential that students have the ability to openly question, challenge, and take risks. Compare and contrast is a standard teaching method and, in the context of Holocaust education, this comparative approach promotes solidarity without eliding difference.

In conclusion, Schweber underscored the difference between Holocaust commemoration and education, acknowledging the possibility of overlaps between them. She called for restoring teaching as a profession and for continuing to do really important work in slightly different ways through Holocaust teaching. During our current “desperate” times, Schweber remains optimistic and calls for us to rethink teaching practices in order to achieve education that is holistic, comparative, and socially esteemed.

Sandra Grudic

JAMES WALLER, “THE ESCALATING RISK OF MASS VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES”

3 March 2021

Escalating political violence in the United States raises red flags regarding the erosion of democratic ideals and reveals growing distrust in political and governmental processes. Had these symptoms developed elsewhere, risk analysts would have instituted precautions and the international community would have increased surveillance of the situation. Governance in the US has become increasingly fragile and, while not yet a failing state, its democratic institutions are in decline according to James Waller, an expert on genocide prevention and Cohen Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College. Invited to deliver the annual Asher Family Lecture, Waller addressed the causes and factors for mass violence.

Waller identified four major categories for assessing risk: governance, memory, economic conditions, and social fragmentation. Governance assesses regime type (democracies tend to be the most stable form of governance), determines whether there is a state legitimacy deficit (the belief, positive or negative, that the citizenry acknowledges the authenticity of governing agencies), and evaluates weaknesses in state structures that include infrastructure, education systems, and government institutions. Democracies around the globe are in the midst of a steady, albeit slow moving, decline. The gap between those who believe in government and those who do not in conjunction with the decline and breakdown of infrastructural systems can predict the likelihood for mass violence to escalate in a given country.

Waller’s second risk category encompasses memory and identity. History education, especially in regions where violent conflicts remain unresolved, influences how states and their citizens act in times of uncertainty and crisis. Identity tensions can further threaten governments that are already at risk. Past genocides, as well as sociocultural trauma, are often a significant predictor of future genocidal conflicts. As an example, Waller cited the “soul trauma” experienced by Native Americans caused by, among other things, the US government’s forcible removal of children and the concentration of Natives onto reservations. Waller also highlighted the digital shaping of memory and its exponential reach, as well as the advent of social media and the ways in which it lowers trust in community and can incite violence (as was proven at the U.S. Capitol on 6 January). In these instances, memory is weaponized by using the past to intrude on the present.

Economic uncertainty triggers the third risk category. The lack of macroeconomic stability can weaken societies, as is seen in states that rely heavily on one major source of capital to support their economies. The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the economy across many sectors but played a major role in curbing the hospitality and tourism industries. Yet, the financial consequences are not equally distributed and the impact has widened existing societal



James Waller

divides. In the United States, economic inequality has often sparked violence, whether as a response to inequality or in an effort to reinforce it. Social fragmentation, the fourth category, addresses unequal access to basic goods and services and the centrality of social identity. Inequality sharpens social and cultural differences, especially during crises, further deepening the divide between various members of society.

Waller concluded by stressing the importance of acknowledging that “this is who we are.” Instances of violence in the United States, such as occurred during the 6 January storming of the capitol, are symptoms of a larger societal problem. Rising polarization in the US population will continue until we recognize and acknowledge its ever-growing presence. There was a certain naivety in thinking that political violence would never happen in the United States and we can no longer ignore the ongoing threat. It is imperative to understand the risk factors and to take steps designed to improve the political, economic, and social conditions in the United States and beyond.

Jessa Sinnott

SABRINEH ARDALAN, “STORIES FROM THE GROUND: PERSPECTIVES ON REFUGEE LAW AND POLICY”

17 March 2021

Following World War II, nations recognized the need to establish protections for vulnerable people who were endangered in their home countries, as had occurred on such a vast scale during the Holocaust. The resulting multilateral treaty and its protocols, known as the Refugee Convention (or the 1951 Geneva Convention), defined refugee status and the rights of asylum seekers. Signing the refugee convention created the responsibility for each signatory to safeguard vulnerable individuals and provided the basis for nations to establish systems to manage such cases. Sabrineh Ardalan, a Clinical Professor at Harvard Law School and Director of the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program, explained her work teaching and training law students on the legal processes for seeking asylum and humanitarian protections. Sponsored by the Strassler Center as part of its Especially for Students series, in partnership with the Interdisciplinary Program in Law and Society and the Pre-law Society, her Zoom talk offered a practical overview of legal procedures involved in navigating the immigration system on behalf of clients who have come to the US from around the globe.

Ardalan began by describing what drew her to this important field of law. As a child of Iranians who sought asylum in the United States following the 1979 Revolution, she recalled early memories of waiting in line at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the agency that handled such cases at that time. Given her family history, she was drawn to activism and human rights initiatives at a young age. These experiences led her to law school and eventually to providing pro bono legal assistance to immigrants in the aftermath of 9/11. Her satisfaction in helping refugees gain status in the US pointed her toward clinical teaching at Harvard Law School, where she has mentored law students and taught courses about immigration law, as well as on trauma, refugees, and international labor migration.

Ardalan trains students to become lawyers, human rights advocates, and policy experts. Participants in her clinic learn how to conduct client interviews, often amounting to hundreds of hours of conversation, which result in a declaration documenting the client's life story. Students corroborate these testimonies by consulting experts to show that what they claim to have experienced really happened to them and that they are justified in fearing a return to their home countries.

Immigration clinics and non-profit legal aid organizations provide essential assistance to desperate asylum seekers. These services are clearly effective as the success rate is 80% for people with legal representation while only 3% of those without legal counsel receive asylum. These free services have become even more important as anti-immigrant voices have fueled a public discourse vilifying immigrants and refugees. In addition, the pandemic has exacerbated the already overburdened and broken immigration system. Deten-



Sabrineh Ardalan

tion centers holding immigrants who entered the country without legal documentation confine them in unsafe conditions as they await their court dates. At present, there is a backlog of more than a million cases pending, which keeps anxious asylum seekers in a prolonged state of uncertainty. Lawsuits across the country have challenged these detentions with mixed results.

Students moved by the plight of vulnerable people fleeing violence, trauma, and persecution learned how they might make a difference. Ardalan described specific ways to get involved as volunteers, donors, and advocates. She urged the audience to pressure the Biden administration to adopt more inclusive policies and to repeal those that are used to unjustly expel individuals deserving protection. Congressional bills that provide paths to citizenship, including the Dream and Promise Bill and the Farm Workforce Modernization Bill, need public support. Volunteers are desperately needed on the ground to help unaccompanied minors who have crossed the border due to steadily worsening crises. Ardalan presented these and other concrete ways to show that refugees and immigrants are human beings who deserve our care and attention.

Mary Jane Rein

BASHIR BASHIR AND AMOS GOLDBERG, “THE HOLOCAUST AND THE NAKBA: A NEW GRAMMAR OF TRAUMA AND HISTORY”

6 April 2021

Professors Bashir Bashir (Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication at the Open University of Israel and Senior Research Fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute) and Amos Goldberg (Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) are co-editors of a volume that explores the fraught relationship between the Holocaust and the Nakba. Their book challenges the dichotomous approach to these national traumas and proposes the construction of a new narrative that recognizes the foundational importance of these events to both Jewish and Palestinian history: the near total extermination of European Jewry during the Holocaust followed by the expulsion of the Palestinian population upon the creation of the state of Israel during the Nakba (the catastrophe).

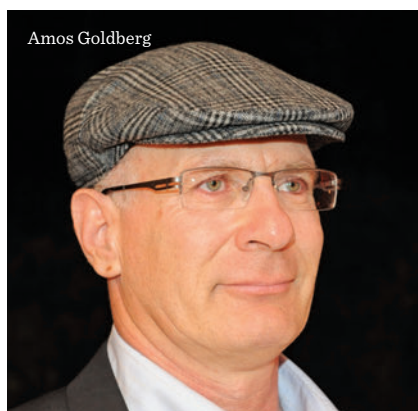
Every national trauma is unique and there is no gradation for suffering, nonetheless societies must find ways to promote peace in order to create a violence-free world. The narratives of the Holocaust and the Nakba share salient features such as a binary opposition that is characteristic of structuralist semiotics. Both events are relevant to the struggle against racism and can be situated in a broader postcolonial context in which the Holocaust is in tension with Palestinian anticolonialism. The foundational stories of the Jews and Palestinians are fundamentally in opposition, but they also serve as a focal point for the global clash between two metanarratives. Bashir and Goldberg propose a totally different syntax and grammar of history and memory, in which the combination of “Holocaust and Nakba” or “Nakba and Holocaust” makes historical, cultural and political sense.

Borrowing from the theoretical works of Dominic La Carpa, the authors apply the concept of “empathic unsettlement,” which they revise and apply to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Bashir and Goldberg argue that this approach could be pivotal for a new ethical-political grammar that helps Jews and Palestinians to recognize and understand the traumatic and seminal suffering of the other and at the same time brings awareness of their radical and unsettling otherness. This task is ambitious and challenging, as both the Holocaust and the Nakba continue to be deeply

traumatic for both groups. While the Holocaust gives credence to the importance of Jewish self-determination, many Palestinians, in and outside of Israel, continue to live in terrible conditions, as a result of the Nakba and subsequent removals. Bashir and Goldberg argue that there is an “asymmetrical context” for the conflict as Palestinians share no responsibility for the Holocaust, but the 1948 War of Independence resulted in the Nakba. Trying to put these dichotomous narratives into dialogue, they propose “three different registers”, cultural, historical, and ethico-political. A potential historical reconciliation may open communication between the two narratives and offer a place to begin walking towards each other.

Bashir and Goldberg propose bi-nationalism as a way to recognize the right of national self-determination for both national groups. They maintain that this might not be realized in the form of an exclusive ethnic state rather bi-nationalism could be achieved by various forms of governing politics, including federation or confederation of a parallel state structure and/or a cooperative, overlapping, inter-linked two-state structure. By recommending a new grammar for understanding and discussing the Holocaust and Nakba, which is a pioneering concept in narratives surrounding national traumas, they take an important step forward. Although their work does not introduce immediate practical solutions, they establish the groundwork for scholars and policy makers to move toward a peaceful future.

Diana Hayrapetyan



PAMELA STEINER, “COLLECTIVE TRAUMA AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE: ARMENIAN, TURKISH AND AZERBAIJANI RELATIONS SINCE 1839.”

29 April 2021

Dr. Pamela Steiner, a Senior Fellow at the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health, is a practitioner whose research is dedicated to promoting reconciliation between opposing sides in conflict situations. At the invitation of Professor Taner Akçam, she discussed her timely new book, released in the aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as President Biden’s April 2021 statement acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. In her book, *Collective Trauma and the Armenian Genocide*, Steiner argues that a major obstacle to building a stable future in the region is the collective historical trauma that remains unresolved among Armenians, Turks, and Azerbaijanis. A peaceful outcome to the entrenched ethno-political tensions requires cooperation by people of conflicting sides, despite ongoing sensitivities and difficulties. Drawing on practices from her work in psychotherapy, Steiner promotes conflict resolution based on historical analysis and psychological research.

Traumatic events elicit a range of responses, which include fight, flee, or freeze that are geared toward individual self-preservation. These are instantaneous responses of the human brain to the fear of death, which is experienced in body, emotion, and thought. On the collective level, the last phase of trauma is a frozen conflict and a situation of mutual destruction. Traumatized groups experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress and certain triggers remind them of painful historical events, but in a post-traumatic situation, as people acquire more power, they do not flee or freeze, but instead choose to *fight*. Such processes have contributed to ongoing political tensions and outbreaks of violence.

The psychological dimensions of the Armenian Genocide continue to resonate in the South Caucasus region, where an intractable conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan persists. Armenians experience this territorial dispute as an existential threat and a continuing consequence of Turkish impunity for the 1915 Genocide. Unsurprisingly, Turkey has allied itself with Azerbaijan and provides material and geo-political support against Armenia, which views these actions in the context of Turkey’s ongoing policy of genocide denial. For the Turkish people, on the other hand, a major symptom of their collective trauma is an ongoing sense of humiliation and moral injury. The modern Turkish Republic, established in 1923 in the aftermath of the Genocide, constructed a foundational narrative that claims the civilian Armenian population posed a security threat to that Ottoman Empire. Thus, genocide denial is a pillar of Turkish foreign policy as well as an essential element of the national origin story. Steiner sees the upcoming centennial anniversary of the Turkish Republic as a potential opportunity for Turks to come to terms with this version of history.



Pamela Steiner

If people on all sides can enter into a dialogue that is geared toward building mutual trust, the region can avoid repeating the murderous ethnic cleansing that contributes toward generating mutual hatred. Steiner remains optimistic that a peaceful future may be brought about through the mobilization of a large number of people who demand accountability for the violent past at the same time as they insist upon the values and principles of human rights.

Hasmik Grigoryan

DIRK MOSES, “THE PROBLEMS OF GENOCIDE”

11 May 2021

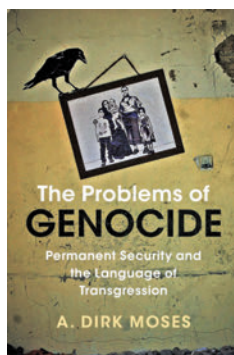
Genocide scholar Dirk Moses (Frank Porter Graham Distinguished Professor of Global Human Rights at the University of North Carolina) outlined the case for why genocide is a problematic concept in international law. As an Australian who pondered whether to define the victimization of its indigenous population as genocide, he found the concept too narrow to fit the crimes of its colonial government. Given the Holocaust as the paradigmatic case, very few events actually meet the genocidal standard despite many episodes of civilian destruction on a mass scale. To illustrate the point, Moses highlighted the fate of a Yemeni family killed by a Saudi missile attack. According to legal rationales, the members of this Yemeni family were collateral damage of a military objective and not genocide victims because the intent was to defeat rather than to destroy their community.

In his book, *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression*, Moses shifts the analysis of mass violence to favor the perspective of civilian victims. International law and security logic deem innocent victims killed in a political context, such as a civil war or rebellion, as legitimate even if their deaths occur on a vast scale. In contrast genocidal logic sees victims persecuted on the basis of their identity, like the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as exemplary. While Germany targeted Jews on the basis of Nazi ideology and not because they were involved in a political struggle, the Yemeni family is viewed as “vicariously guilty” because they are connected in some way to an armed insurgency. Global opinion not only tolerates deadly attacks but normalizes conditions of permanent warfare that are unlike the concentrated time frame of genocidal events.

While genocide is a relatively new idea within international law, it builds on language that dates back to the period of European conquest in the 1500s. Massacres and the brutal exploitation of Indigenous People in the context of colonization were said to “shock the conscience of mankind.” In coining the term genocide, Raphael Lemkin simplified phrasing that had developed over centuries to condemn state sponsored slaughter and coercive labor. As a Polish Jew seeking to deploy international law to punish Nazi crimes, Lemkin formulated the term genocide quite specifically as a legal response



Dirk Moses



to ethnic hatred and the plight of internal minorities. The Nuremberg Trials preferred crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes to prosecute senior Nazis. Unfortunately, these proved imperfect as legal remedies since they failed to address Nazi crimes that occurred before 1939, which led the UN General Assembly to introduce a resolution calling for a Genocide Convention.

The 1948 Genocide Convention raised the threshold for “what shocks the conscience of mankind” as the Holocaust came to dominate the language of transgression. Adopting a narrow definition of genocide, closely tied to the Holocaust, was in the interest of the allies as they were eager to avoid criminalizing an array of state behaviors that were taking place in the post-war period. These included

ethnic cleansing, cultural destruction, putting down colonial rebellions, and suppressing uprisings. American diplomats were also extremely conscious of the danger of bringing attention to Jim Crow laws and lynching.

Moses concluded by arguing to replace the term genocide with wording that has a more expansive framework. Such a change would better address the “forever wars” that have normalized the constant killing of civilians. In his view, the logic for these endless conflicts is the idea of permanent security that leads states to rationalize actions that imperil innocent populations such as the Rohingya in Burma or

the Uighurs in China. Governments that use preemption and state excess to ensure absolute security are guilty of a crime that Moses identifies as “illiberal permanent security.” International law, in his view, should punish “liberal permanent security” that permits actions carried out in the name of humanity and by means of international law, such as blockades, bombings, and sanctions that result in civilian deaths. The terminology Moses proposed provoked a lively discussion from a large zoom audience that included students, scholars, and individuals from around the world.

Mary Jane Rein

ARCHIVES: KALMAR FAMILY DIARIES

A series of diaries documenting the life of the Viennese Jewish artist George Otto Kalmar entered the archives of the Strassler Center from the estate of his daughter Madeline “Mady” (Kalmar) Harvey. The diaries fill a series of notebooks from 1913, the year of George’s birth, until 1942 and include entries for almost every day. Margarethe (Pollak) Kalmar (b. 5 December 1881 in Vienna, Austria; d. 16 May 1944 in Auschwitz) authored the first 26 notebooks from 1913 to 1932. Her son George (b. 16 November 1913 in Vienna, Austria; d. 12 November 1994 in Copake, NY) filled 16 notebooks documenting the years 1941 until 1993. A grant from the William J. McKee Jr. Charitable Foundation funded the digitization of the diaries and collateral material in order to make them available for student research. The collection, catalogued with the help of CHGS concentrator Lamisa Muksitu ’22 and history major Tara O’Donnell ’23, is accessible through Clark University’s Digital Commons.

Margarethe and Karl Kalmar (b. 17 September 1871 in Vienna, Austria; d. 26 December 1942 in Theresienstadt) were parents to Paul (b. 31 May 1908 in Vienna, Austria; d. 3 August 1977 in Scotland, UK) and George. Margarethe, an avid diarist, documented her family life in prosaic notebooks using old German script. Written in an elegant hand and illustrated with photographs and drawings, her diaries are objects of beauty as well as intriguing historical documents. Her detailed entries demonstrate that George was interested in drawing from an early age. Each diary contains several pages displaying his artwork. The family nurtured his talents and George studied painting at the Kunstgewerbschule (now the University of Applied Arts) in Vienna. He married fellow artist Vera Rosa Kalmar (Raschkas) (b. 24 August 1914 in Vienna, Austria; d. 24 August 1988 in Acton, Massachusetts) on 10 July 1938 in Vienna following the Anschluss. They sought to flee but as immigration to the United States required a financial affidavit from an American citizen, which generally took some time, the newlyweds left for the Netherlands on the morning after their wedding. While there, George worked at a lace factory for a year while they awaited the necessary documentation. Fortunately, they booked passage on the last available boat, just as the Nazis invaded Holland.

George and Vera arrived at Ellis Island on 16 May 1940 and settled in New York City, whereupon George resumed writing his diaries in a mix of German and English. Tragically, George’s parents perished in the Holocaust, but the couple was able to help bring Vera’s parents and George’s brother, Paul, out of Europe. Working in advertising and graphic design, the Kalmars used their talents to establish themselves in America. Vera designed greeting cards for many years, and George was art director at a pharmaceutical advertising company, while continuing to paint and exhibit.

Upon the invitation of Carlo Pietzner, a fellow artist from Vienna, the Kalmars joined the new Camphill Village established in 1961 in Copake, NY. Founded in Scotland in 1940 by the Viennese Jewish pediatrician Karl König, the Camphill Movement sponsored com-



Paul, Karl, Margarethe, and George Kalmar



George Kalmar

munities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and other needs. George worked in various capacities but especially as “painter-in-residence” as he continued exhibiting his work in Massachusetts, Salzburg, and in group shows in New York City. Today, Camphill remains a major repository for his paintings.

Training students to work with original artifacts is a hallmark of a history education. Strassler Center faculty and staff are well positioned to make excellent use of these diaries and to bring the story of the Kalmars to the attention of the wider public.

Robyn Conroy



FACULTY

TANER AKÇAM

Accustomed to regular global travel to promote research about the Armenian Genocide, Taner Akçam found plenty of time to advance new projects during the pandemic. At the invitation of Cambridge University Press, he wrote a chapter on the Armenian Genocide for their forthcoming *Encyclopedia on Genocide*. The challenge of summarizing the events of 1915 to 1918 in a brief encyclopedia entry inspired him to write a book offering a concise account of its history, *Ermeni Soykırımı'nın Kısa Bir Tarihi* (A Short History of the Armenian Genocide, 2021).

Beginning with the 1878 Congress of Berlin that resolved the Russo-Turkish War and ending with the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Akçam documents the Ottoman project of annihilation. Aras, an Armenian publishing house based in Istanbul, released the book, intended for a Turkish audience that is not well informed about this basic history in the hope of inspiring readers to face history as part of a move toward great democratization. Structured in three parts, the first chapter adopts a theoretical perspective on the macro history of Christian Genocide that presents the genocide as a process that unfolded over several decades. Chapter two offers a detailed history from 1915 to 1918, describing the genocide as an event. The final chapter provides an historiographic overview on an array of issues including property rights, Christian assimilation, post-war trials, and the violence perpetrated against Assyrian Christians.

To promote his book, Akçam gave interviews to Turkish media outlets that, given his high profile in Turkey, drew audiences with as many as 30,000 people. Interest was heightened in light of the April 24 statement by President Biden that commemorated the start of the Armenian Genocide, the first time that a US president officially recognized the massacre of Armenians under the Ottoman Empire as a genocide. In one interview, describing the context in which intolerance created an inhospitable environment for Christian minorities, Akçam enumerated examples of Armenian grievances against the Kurdish population. Among other things, he described the onerous taxes Armenians paid to Kurdish landlords and the right of Kurdish aghas to demand the first night with Armenian brides (otherwise known as *jus primae noctis* or *droit de seigneur*). A group of Kurdish intellectuals objected, denying the role of Kurds as perpetrators or even accomplices in persecuting the Armenian population. A campaign of hate resulted in unbridled attacks on Akçam that politicized the discussion of historical facts.

Criticism that evidence for the right of the first night was insufficient prompted Akçam to pursue a new line of research into sexual violence against Armenian women and girls. He published a piece in Turkish in the Armenian journal *Agos* that silenced his critics by



Taner Akçam

referencing sources in Russian, Armenian, English and Turkish, which document the custom not as *de jure* but as praxis. Armenian priests wrote regular reports to the Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin or to the Patriarchate in Istanbul. European travelers also describe the practice in terms that are consistent with the widely cited observation of a Russian Armenian anthropologist. Akçam is collaborating with doctoral student Anna Aleksanyan who is researching handwritten books, letters, and religious petitions in the Armenian archives that reference the right of the first night. They are co-authoring an article that will also draw on her dissertation's findings regarding gendered aspects of the genocide.

Before the uproar over the right of the first night, Akçam had intended to continue work on a book about Cemal Pasha, one of the three architects of the genocide who ruled the Ottoman Empire. In a fall zoom presentation organized by the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute, as part of their distinguished lecture series, Akçam presented a reassessment of Cemal's role based on research conducted in the Ottoman archives. With pandemic travel restrictions lifting, audiences around the world can look forward to learning more about this important project as Akçam returns to lecture podiums. Beginning in fall 2022, Akçam will become the inaugural director at the Promise Institute after a rich and productive tenure as Kaloosdian Mugar Professor; his impact on the Strassler Center program has been significant and he will be greatly missed.

Mary Jane Rein

THOMAS KÜHNE

Growing and strengthening the Strassler Center's academic program are the top priorities of its director Thomas Kühne who holds the Strassler Colin Flug Chair in Holocaust History. During the 2020-21 academic year, he was able to advance these efforts significantly as he prepared and secured the university's support to establish a new and innovative interdisciplinary PhD in Genocide Studies. Beginning in fall 2021, this new program, a complement to the existing PhD in History, began to address important international trends in the field. Genocide studies has adopted a broad definition of its subject that addresses large scale human rights abuses (including slavery and anti-black discrimination) and events of mass violence (such as the civil war in Syria). As a historian, Kühne has deep epistemological and methodological commitments, yet he recognizes that inter- and multidisciplinary approaches are essential to addressing the consequences of the traumatic past and to preventing further mass violence and human rights violations around the globe.

In establishing the interdisciplinary PhD program, Kühne envisions preparing graduates who are conversant in multiple disciplines and able to "translate" across these differences. Recruiting non-historians with expertise in genocides not covered by current Strassler Center faculty is key to training students who can work across multiple disciplines to understand and address the multi-faceted problems facing us today. Thus, Kühne chaired searches that resulted in hiring non-historians for two visiting junior appointments. Chris Davey, trained as a political scientist and a historian, is the Charles E. Scheidt Professor in Genocide Studies and Genocide Prevention and Sultan Doughan, an anthropologist, is the Thomas E. Zand Professor in Holocaust Pedagogy and Antisemitism Studies.

These appointments will help illuminate the political and pedagogical applications of academic knowledge about the Holocaust, genocides in Africa, and other atrocity crimes. The effectiveness of Holocaust education in the face of rising antisemitism, racism, and xenophobia was the subject of an October 2020 workshop that Kühne convened, with the support of the Legacy Heritage Fund, in partnership with Simone Schweber (Goodman Professor of Education and Jewish Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison). A select group of invited experts from around the globe discussed (on zoom) the rationale of Holocaust education and whether it has succeeded in its highly ambitious goals to spread tolerance, diversity, and inclusion, and what to expect from Holocaust pedagogy in terms of the political education of citizens of different ages, different social and cultural backgrounds, and different countries.

As the Strassler Center expands the scope of its teaching and research, Kühne finds himself mentoring students who bring new research interests. He worked intensely with two first-year advisees whose doctoral projects contribute to broadening the Center's research agenda. Lauren Ashley Bradford's dissertation compares female perpetrators in Nazi Germany and Jim Crow America. Sandra Grudic is working toward a microhistory of the genocide in for-



Thomas Kühne

mer Yugoslavia. Much of Kühne's advising occurred over zoom as did his work chairing the comprehensive exams and prospectus defenses for third year students Hana Green (*Passing as Aryan: Female Jewish Identity during the Holocaust*) and Ellen Johnson (*Jewish Identity Groups in the Nazi Ghettos*).

In addition to administrative and mentoring responsibilities, Kühne maintained his busy schedule of teaching, publication, and zoom presentations. He gave virtual talks on the genocidal fabric of Nazi society, masculinities during the Holocaust, and the role of gender in 20th century total wars at Dartmouth College, the University College London, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, the University of Dresden in Germany, and the United States Military Academy at West Point. His volume honoring founding Strassler Center Director Debórah Dwork, edited together with Mary Jane Rein, assembled essays from twelve PhD graduates (*Agency and the Holocaust. Essays in Honor of Deborah Dwork*, 2020). He produced a deeply personal piece, "A Father, a Perpetrator, a Son. Autobiographical Thoughts on Mystery and Curiosity," for the volume *On Being Adjacent to Historical Violence* (ed. Irene Kacandes 2022). He has begun research for a new book project tentatively titled *Rethinking Holocaust Perpetrators* that will cement his reputation as a leading scholar in the field of perpetrator studies.

Mary Jane Rein

KEN MACLEAN

Ken MacLean has enthusiastically served the Strassler Center community for the past decade. As a core faculty member, he has contributed intellectual vitality, chaired doctoral committees, mentored students, and organized events related to his scholarly interests on transitional justice and mass violence in SE Asia. His rich contributions have been unstinting despite holding an appointment in the Department of International Development and Social Change (IDCE) where he has provided his primary departmental service since his arrival at Clark University in 2007. Promoted to full professor in spring 2021, MacLean has also transitioned to another role. Since fall 2021, he holds a joint appointment in both IDCE and the Strassler Center. Trained as an anthropologist and experienced in the field of human rights, MacLean will continue to contribute valuable teaching and expertise that will be essential to launching the new multidisciplinary PhD in Genocide Studies. His first order of business is to design a course on methods that will be a program requirement.

MacLean's teaching and research interests focus on state theory, critical humanitarianism, human rights documentation, and legal regimes. His work on these topics underlie the ideas in his forthcoming book, *Crimes in Archival Form: Human Rights, Fact Production, and Myanmar*, to be published by the University of California Press in 2022. In addition to this book project, over the past year, MacLean has published and lectured widely on the current genocidal violence unfolding against the Rohingya minority in Myanmar. His co-authored chapter, written with Nickey Diamond, "Dangerous Speech Cloaked in Saffron Robes: Race, Religion, and Anti-Muslim Violence in Myanmar" will appear in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Mass Atrocity, and Genocide* (eds. Stephen Smith and Sara Brown). He contributed another chapter, "Genocidal Violence Against the Rohingya in Myanmar" to *Centuries of Genocide* (ed. Samuel Totten), also currently in press.

As a senior advisor to the Bangkok-based NGO Fortify Rights, MacLean has collaborated on a number of important projects related to human rights violations in Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, and Bangladesh. He is currently working on a report they are publishing on the coup in Myanmar. Fortify Rights will also publish his recently completed report, *Genocide and Identity Documents: The Rohingya Case in Comparative Perspective*, which examines the use of identity cards in three cases of genocide: the Rohingya in Myanmar, the Tutsis in Rwanda, and the Jews in Nazi occupied Europe. His plan to deepen his work with Fortify Rights during a fall 2021 sabbatical unfortunately did not materialize due to Covid.

Long interested in knowledge production and the formation of archives, MacLean is at work on three articles related to the use of digital evidence for documenting cultural destruction and mass atrocities. One article will examine the International Criminal Court's (ICC) ruling against Islamist extremists who destroyed a World Heritage Site in Timbuktu, Mali. Prosecutors used a digital



Ken MacLean

platform in order to help the judges visualize what was destroyed and how. Another article focuses on the use of satellite imagery in documenting crimes against the Rohingya, which will be used in cases at the ICC and the International Court of Justice at the United Nations. In a third article, MacLean will examine the growing use of block chain technology to create digital identities for stateless people such as Syrian and Rohingya refugees and he will highlight the challenges of digitizing highly sensitive personal data.

MacLean chairs doctoral committees for students working on a wide range of topics that encompass Asia and Africa and he will advise the first ever PhD student in the interdisciplinary PhD in Genocide Studies. His research and coursework, once more peripheral to the main focus of the Strassler Center program, now move to center stage. Thus, he is developing new courses that will strengthen offerings on the practice of human rights and the history of genocide in Asia, which are certain to be in demand with undergraduate and PhD students.

Mary Jane Rein

FRANCES TANZER

The Strassler Center's newly installed Rose Professor, Frances Tanzer, brings a unique perspective to the Strassler Center as a historian who maintains an active artistic practice. Trained as a painter, she works through theoretical issues related to memory in her artwork and her scholarship informs themes in her painting. In addition, a keen interest in visual culture and performance provides a through line across research projects that examine the aftermath of the Holocaust in Central Europe.

Migration and experiences of displacement are essential themes in Tanzer's forthcoming book, *Vanishing Vienna: Jewish Absence in Postwar Central Europe*. Her work considers the impact of Jewish artists on pre-Nazi Vienna and how their absence after the Holocaust profoundly changed the city. Liberals may understand the fascination with Vienna's Jewish past as an appreciation of cosmopolitanism and tolerance for diversity, but others recognize the contradiction at the heart of this longing for Jewish culture without the presence of actual Jews. Moreover, she highlights nostalgia for the city's Jewish past in relationship to discussions about European integration and debates about the current refugee crisis.

The nexus of Jewish cultural history, migration, and the Holocaust are also at the forefront of Tanzer's second book project. In spring 2021, she received a Sosland Fellowship from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum to begin research on *Klezmer Dynasty: An Intimate History of Modern Jewish Culture, 1880-2019*. Tanzer's own family, the Brandwein klezmer musicians of Hapsburg Galicia, is at the center of this research. Drawing on family documents as well as the archives of the USHMM and other materials, such as performance ephemera, she will describe the evolution of klezmer music as it developed through processes of migration, modernity, and genocide. Among other things, she will interrogate the way klezmer came to represent shtetl life in the post-Holocaust imagination rather than the sophisticated urban settings where it was also performed.

Tanzer took special pleasure in participating in the USHMM Fellowship program despite the online format necessitated by the pandemic. Strassler Center alumna Elizabeth Anthony PhD '16 is director of the USHMM Visiting Scholars program and a fellow historian of post-war Vienna. Anthony ran the program virtually and made it possible for fellows to access the museum archives electronically. In addition to listening to klezmer music extensively, Tanzer began researching who made klezmer, the spaces in which it was performed, and how collaborations with other ethnic groups including Poles, Ukrainians, Sinti and Roma, contributed to its distinctive form. Tanzer will show that internal European displacement as well as transnational migration and the Holocaust were key elements in the development of klezmer just as they were part of the large-scale transformations that characterize European Jewish life more broadly.



Frances Tanzer

Refugee experiences are central to Tanzer's book projects and they preoccupy her teaching and the public discussions she convenes. In fall 2020, she partnered with Professor Anita Fábos, who researches refugees and forced migration, to present a webinar "Testimony as Activism: Archives of Displacement" that recruited scholars and activists to think about the nexus of refugees, archives, and testimony. The participants examined the testimonies of victims of mass violence and their efforts to achieve justice through activism and the construction of archives, which we usually think of as having a solid presence but need not always. Tanzer planned a workshop, scheduled for spring 2022, titled "Refugees and Representations of Absence." The presenters will examine art and literature in light of refugee experiences of displacement as well as how absence impacts communities once targeted populations flee in response to persecution. In these workshops, as well as generally in her teaching and research, Tanzer seeks to bring the past into conversation with our present world by using art, literature, music, and performance as sources that reveal different aspects of the past.

Given her talents and interests it is not surprising that historian Nitzan Lebovic invited Tanzer to illustrate an article on Martin Buber. This unique assignment offered her the opportunity to deploy her artistic sensibility in service to scholarship and to perhaps reveal new insights about history in the process. Look for the results in the online journal *Political Theology*.

Mary Jane Rein

PROGRAM FACULTY

We are grateful to the following faculty for their contributions of scholarship, expertise, and teaching.

Taner Akçam,

PhD, History Department
Kaloosdian Mugar Professor of Armenian
Genocide Studies and Modern Armenian History

Debórah Dwork,

PhD, History Department
Senior Research Scholar
Founding Director and Inaugural Rose
Professor of Holocaust History

Anita Fábos,

PhD, Department of International Development,
Community, and Environment
Associate Professor of International
Development and Social Change

Everett Fox,

PhD, Department of Language, Literature and Culture
Director, Jewish Studies Concentration
Allen M. Glick Chair in Judaic and Biblical Studies

Elizabeth Imber,

PhD, History Department
Michael and Lisa Leffell Professor of Modern Jewish History

Benjamin Korstvedt,

PhD, Visual and Performing Arts
Professor of Music

Thomas Kühne,

PhD, History Department
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Strassler Colin Flug Professor of Holocaust History

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Robert Deam Tobin,

PhD, Department of Languages, Literature and Culture
Henry J. Leir Professor in Foreign Languages and Cultures

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Associate Professor of Psychology

Kristen Williams,

Political Science Department
Professor of Political Science



STUDENT

**STUDENT
NEWS**

NEWS

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

The Strassler Center's PhD students endured the ups and downs of conducting research during a pandemic with continued focus and determination. Their offices in the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing were a haven that allowed those in residence to work productively and within a supportive community of fellow students. Travel to archives remained limited and zoom continued to be the preferred mode for conference participation and even for intense language study. Nonetheless, they advanced their research and doctoral projects in meaningful ways. Prestigious fellowship awards, new research discoveries, opportunities to publish and present scholarship and even to visit historic sites and archives were highlights of the 2020-21 academic year.

Albert M. Tapper Fellow **Ali Avery** researches the roots and drivers of genocide, focusing on Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region (GLR) of Africa. Avery's dissertation project, *A Sociohistorical Analysis of the Interahamwe Militia*, focuses on Rwanda as a case study to explore how militias are formed and used in genocide. Specifically, she examines the micro-dynamics that shaped the formation, organization, and evolution of the Interahamwe militia as well as the mindset of the perpetrators who participated in their murderous activities.

Through a combination of archival data and open-ended interviews with former perpetrators, as well as friends and family of former Interahamwe members, Avery's research will expand our historical understanding of the preparation and execution of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda. In addition, this study will speak to the broader problem of regional instability due to armed militias in the Great Lakes Region. Avery's findings will thus help us to rethink our understanding of group perpetrator violence in genocide studies writ large.

Employing relevant concepts from political science, anthropology, and social psychology, Avery has outlined a theoretical framework to explain the recruitment, mobilization, grooming and participation of the Interahamwe via four interrelated thematic categories: 1) political processes including democratization, and redefining nationalism as loyalty via propaganda from political elites, 2) context of civil war and instability, 3) economic factors such as resource competition and scarcity, 4) social psychological factors, including social identity theory, group formation, and power relations. To analyze the connections between these factors, her research relies on archival document review of court case materials and first-hand testimonies of former Interahamwe members and others who witnessed their recruitment and actions during the genocide. Source materials include original documents from the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda available in an online archival database. Among the relevant documents are 180 testimonies from 91 witnesses who were former Interahamwe members at the elite as well as rank-and-file levels. Additional primary resources include public speeches, songs, manifestos, newspapers, radio broadcasts, letters and communiqués that show the ideological and tactical motivations behind the pre-genocidal Rwandan government as they recruited militia members and found ways for them to stay once the movement became violent.

For her first year of doctoral study **Lauren Ashley Bradford** held the Albert M. Tapper Fellowship and the Ference and Ilona (Schulhoff) Czigler research award. Prior to embarking on her doctoral studies, Bradford earned an MA in European History, Politics, and Society from Columbia University where she focused on the experiences of Jewish Displaced Persons in post-war Berlin. For her doctoral project, Bradford researches violent white women, both those engaged in direct physical violence and those who promoted it, in Nazi Germany and Jim Crow America. She will employ gender analysis to compare them in addition to exploring the history surrounding these violent women. She intends to center the perceptions that victims and bystanders had of these female perpetrators.

Over the summer months, Bradford embarked on preliminary research at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture at the College of Charleston. Among her findings was a Tuskegee newspaper collection at the Alabama Department of History and Archives containing thousands of newspaper articles and photographs documenting lynchings that ranged from the period of reconstruction to the 1950s and 60s. Oral testimony and memory videos at the Equal Justice Initiative at the Montgomery Legacy Museum capture survivors and their descendants discussing racial terror and lynchings during Jim Crow.

For her next research trip, Bradford will focus on the Nazi portion of her dissertation. She will visit Munich and Berlin, with additional visits to archives at the concentration camps Ravensbrück and Buchenwald. Already adept at reading German documents, she began studying Yiddish remotely in the summer program offered by the Naomi Praver Kadar International Yiddish Program through Tel-Aviv University.

Bradford is the recipient of the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fellowship for the 2021-22 academic year.

Claims Conference Fellow **Daan de Leeuw** received research support from the Hilda and Al Kirsch award to pursue his doctoral project, *The Geography of Slave Labor: Dutch Jews and the Third Reich, 1942-1945*. He investigates how Dutch Jewish slave laborers experienced the frequent relocations through the concentration camp system, following them through time and space. The move-



Lauren Ashley Bradford

ment of Jewish slave laborers from camp to camp was a central feature of the Holocaust, as the Germans moved prisoners to places where the war industry needed them. Each relocation shattered the prisoners' networks and social structure as it affected the bonds that inmates created among themselves.

De Leeuw focuses on 9 of the 103 trains that ran between the Netherlands and German concentration and death camps between July 1942 and September 1944. Drawing on survivor testimonies and administrative records such as ITS (International Tracing Service) documents, he maps the routes of individual deportees and follows their journeys through the concentration camp system. He applies geographic information system (GIS) and manual cartography to visualize the paths of individuals and groups of deportees to open a fresh perspective on the plight of Dutch Jewish slave laborers, social dynamics of concentration camp inmates, and the German effort to win the war through the ruthless exploitation of prisoners.

De Leeuw has utilized Holocaust survivor video testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive and the Freie Universität in Berlin. These witness accounts shed light on the lives of Jewish slave laborers and reveal why and how Jews were relocated from camp to camp. In fall 2021, de Leeuw began a Junior Fellowship at the Center for Holocaust Studies at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, Germany. He conducts research in the institute's archive, focusing in particular on the Nazi bureaucracy that drove forced and slave labor in the concentration



Daan deLeeuw

camps and beyond. After Munich, de Leeuw travelled to the Netherlands to conduct research at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies and the Dutch National Archives with additional support from a Conny Kristel Fellowship granted by the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI). In spring 2022, he will begin a fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Burçin Gerçek, recipient of the Agnes Manoogian Hausrath fellowship and the Charlotte Calfaian research award, spent her fifth year of doctoral study in Ankara, Turkey where she collected material on Armenian genocide perpetrators as well as the social and economic life in the Ankara province before the genocide. A diverse array of sources, including memoirs, newspaper interviews, articles, and oral and written depositions from trials, reveal the dynamics of the violence from the perspective of bystanders, observers and some righteous figures. One focus of her research was the collections held at the Vekam Library and Archive (Koç University Ankara Studies Research Center). She also began writing dissertation chapters exploring the mindset of Armenian genocide perpetrators in the Ankara Province.

In addition to her dissertation, Gerçek worked with the director Serge Avédikian on the documentary *Back to Sölöz* focusing on the memory of the Armenian genocide in a town in Western Turkey. She wrote a book chapter on Emin Bey, one of the middle rank perpetrators from Ankara Province whose memoirs present situations where he displayed envy and resentment toward Armenians. His memoirs show how informal relations advanced his radicalization and contributed to his nationalistic and anti-Armenian discourse.

Gerçek also conducted research for an article on Turkey's use of



Jessa Sinnott, Diana Hayrepetyan, Hana Green, Hasmik Grigoryan, Ellen Johnson, Sandra Grudic, Lauren Ashley Bradford

Holocaust memory as a strategy to further the politics of Armenian genocide denial. Her research uncovered documents related to Maria Bauer, a Jewish woman with a Yugoslav background, who lived in Istanbul and played a central role in helping Jewish refugees from the Balkans. Her story is erased from Turkish collective memory as the current official discourse privileges the role of Turkish diplomats and a Vatican representative in rescuing Jews from the countries under Nazi domination. This approach obfuscates the actions organized by the Jewish community in the face of the Turkish authorities' hostile approach. *Gerçek* seeks to shed a light on Maria Bauer's actions and to challenge the erasure of Jewish communal efforts in favor of promoting Turkey as a "rescuer" nation.

In October 2021, *Gerçek's* book *Against the Current: Rescuers, Resisters and those who Opposed the orders during the Armenian Genocide* had a third edition in Turkey, a sign that despite the oppressive political atmosphere, Turkish readers continue to show an interest in publications on the Armenian Genocide.

Hana Green, recipient of a Claims Conference Fellowship and research funding from Jacob Nyman '01, explores the experiences of Jewish women who passed as Aryan gentiles during the Holocaust. Centering the experiences and identity transformations of Jewish female passers, Green considers the deeper implications of the broader phenomenon of passing during the Holocaust and explores what it meant to pass under the guise of a false identity *in extremis*.

The project evaluates diverse cases of Jewish women passing in various regions and settings across Europe during the Holocaust and assesses the ways they navigated survival on a day-to-day basis in this context.

Green's early research shows the centrality of movement amongst passers and suggests that imposing national or even regional frameworks on the study of passing neglects the fluidity and necessarily ambulatory nature of survival by passing. Her project offers a truly singular *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday history), and the unique perspective of Jewish witnessing from "the Aryan side." Her research uncovered several unpublished testimonies, letters, and musings of German-Jewish women who lived 'underground' lives. These materials provide astonishing insights into the day-to-day life of Jewish passers in Germany and underscore several critical themes including the important role of contingency, social networks, and gender identity.

Green began her archival research remotely studying oral histories from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, as well as several digitized collections from the Wiener Holocaust Library, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Center for Jewish History. In fall she began in-person archival research with research trips to the Center for Jewish History in New York, the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute in Austria, and the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History's Center for Holocaust Studies in

Munich. A Conny Kristel Fellowship from the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) funded her three-week residency as a fellow at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute and the Bundesarchiv in Berlin. A one-year research grant from the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) supported an extended research stay in Germany. Awarded the 2021 Fritz Halbers Fellowship, Green plans to conduct research in the Leo Baeck Institute in New York City in fall 2022.

Agnes Manoogian Hausrath Fellow **Hasmik Grigoryan** held the Asbed B. Zakarian and Margaret M. Zakarian research award during her first year of doctoral study. Her dissertation project is a micro-historical study that focuses on the Van and Bitlis provinces of the Ottoman Empire during the pre-genocidal period from 1913 to 1914. She explores the tensions between the ethno-religious communities in this region as negotiations on Armenian reforms unfolded between the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire. Looking at Armenian socio-political developments in the immediate pre-genocidal period, both within the Ottoman Empire and abroad, she aims to understand the extent to which these developments were related to the Armenian Genocide.

During summer, Grigoryan conducted preliminary research in the Armenian National Archive in Yerevan, Armenia that will help to shed light on the situation in the Van and Bitlis provinces from 1912 to 1914. These materials include letters that describe the murder and plundering of Armenians by the Muslim population of those provinces sent from the Van and Bitlis Prelacies to the Catholicos of All Armenians, the chief bishop and spiritual leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Additionally, she found materials on the 1914 Kurdish uprising in Bitlis that researchers have not yet studied.

Issues of land ownership and disputes with the Kurdish population are central to Grigoryan's research. Over the summer months, she concluded work on a paper, "Kurdo-Armenian Land Disputes in 1908-1914: The Province of Bitlis," that includes a historical review of land ownership in the Ottoman Empire, "land policy" under the Young Turk regime, and the confiscation of Armenian lands. There has been limited research, up to now, on how land policy and the laws adopted after the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution affected Armenian-Kurdish relations, and this will be an important aspect of her doctoral project. Another resource for her project are the memories of members of the Armenian ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation).

Shirley and Ralph Rose Fellow **Sandra Grudić** is conducting a micro-historical study of events in a small town in northwestern Bosnia, Bosanski Novi, during the Bosnian Genocide. The 1990s conflict in Bosnia was characterized by inter-ethnic neighborhood violence between Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. Throughout Bosnia, but especially within its smaller localities, the violence that led to mass detention, murder, and expulsion of unwanted ethnic groups that was organized and perpetrated by local actors, who, before the war, generally had cordial relations with their neighbors of different



Hasmik Grigoryan

ethnicities. One such place is Bosanski Novi (Novi Grad), whose population was evenly split between Serbs and non-Serbs (mostly Muslims and some Croats) before the war, but by 1995, most local non-Serbs were expelled or murdered. The conflict transformed the town from a highly ethnically integrated space to an ethnically homogenous one.

This micro-historical study will examine interethnic relations in Bosanski Novi before and during the episodes of neighborhood violence perpetrated by local Serbs against local Muslims and Croats in 1992-1995. The chief aim is to understand how, why, and to what extent amicable neighborly relations between Bosnians of different ethnic backgrounds before the war turned violent. The project will address ethnic socialization before and after 1990, the role of social identity and social relations in both the perpetrators' motives and methods of aggression, and prosocial behaviors of some bystanders. Grudić will also investigate Serbs who chose to help their neighbors rather than attack them that may reveal additional details regarding the dynamics of neighborhood violence.

Grudić will work on expanding her primary source database for the research into Bosanski Novi. This will include reading existing testimonies, sifting through court records (international as well as local) relevant to the regional and local study of this conflict, as well as investigating some archives in Banja Luka and Sarajevo to locate more preserved records.



Sandra Grudic

During her first year of doctoral study **Diana Hayrapetyan** held the Howard Fromson Fellowship as she began researching the founding of the Turkish Republic and the issue of Armenian returnees during the period of 1918 to 1938. Her research concentrates on the difficulties facing the new nation state including the problem of minorities, the nationalist movement, the liberation war, the abolition of the sultanate and caliphate and the secularization of the state. On October 30, 1918, Ottoman Turkey and Great Britain signed the Mudros armistice, which ended the Great War in the Middle East. However, the war wasn't truly over and continued under the veil of strong nationalism and jihadi rhetoric. In the context of "the sacred fatherland," anti-Christian and later anti-Kurdish propaganda gradually became pervasive. While anti-minority messages differed for international and domestic audiences, Turkish President Mustafa Kemal blamed Armenians and Greeks for events that he never clearly defined.

Hayrapetyan examines how Armenian survivors who returned from the deportations were able to integrate into this new post-genocide reality. Approximately 250,000 Armenians returned to Turkey although many passed as Turks, Kurds and even Greeks. The implementation of a law requiring Turkish surnames meant Armenians were forced to obscure their identity. In addition, they experienced new waves of deportation due to ethnic cleansing. Even those who remained and rebuilt their lives lost their social identity and were sentenced to social death. Research in the Guerguerian archive, available electronically thanks to the efforts of Taner Akçam, yielded 150 files documenting the situation of Armenians, reports from various provinces, complaints about misdeeds and

atrocities towards returnee Armenians.

Mildred Suesser Fellow **Ellen Johnson**, recipient of the Hannah and Roman Kent Research Award, investigates identity transformations vis-à-vis group interactions among Jewish inhabitants in the Riga ghetto. Her dissertation, *Encountering Others: Jewish Social Identity and Intergroup Relations in the Riga Ghetto*, draws on testimonies of German- and Yiddish-speaking Jews. The Riga ghetto was one of four ghettos where the Nazis deported Jews from the occupied parts of Europe into the same spaces as local Jews. In studying the effects of these deportations, Johnson considers the range of responses to ghettoization across cultures and societies, thus complicating commentaries on the relationships between Jews from Eastern and Western Europe.

The primary source material on identity and intergroup relations comes from diaries, memoirs, oral, and video testimonies. Johnson has gathered testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive and Yale's Fortunoff Video Archive. Additional documentation from ghetto newspapers and the publications of social groups reveal how various organizations and their members perceived themselves and others. The National Library of Israel maintains a database of Jewish newspapers published during the Second World War, which show that accurate reports on developments in the Riga ghetto reached Jewish news outlets all over the globe in real time. Johnson is continuing to plumb these reports for names of eyewitnesses who successfully smuggled information out of the ghetto. In addition, the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio contain wartime testimonies from Riga ghetto escapees compiled by the World Jewish Congress, which they disseminated to Jewish newspapers. Documents from Nazi ghetto administrations – such as censuses, deportation lists, and housing records – provide valuable demographic data.

Documents from the Riga ghetto can be found in the US, Germany, Latvia, and Poland. A grant from the American Academy for Jewish Research funded a research trip to the USHMM to consult unpublished accounts. A Conny Kristel Fellowship from the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure funded a fall research trip. At the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde, Johnson compiled Nazi documentation of ghettoization orders, property appropriation, deportations, and references to the mass killings of Latvian Jews. A visit to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw to examine materials in the Central Historical Commission and a trip to the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich are planned as well.

Hanne and Howard Kulin Fellow **Emil Kjerte** researches Jasenovac, the largest concentration camp in the fascist Independent State of Croatia for his dissertation, *Ustaša Killing Specialists*. The only regime that organized and ran concentration camps independent of the Nazis, the Ustaša, implemented destructive policies against Jews, Roma, and Serbs. Yet, compared to the rich historiography on Nazi perpetrators, they remain much less explored. Kjerte researches the lifepaths and prior careers of the Jasenovac person-

nel, their war-time activities, and postwar trajectories. He considers the group dynamics and sense of community that existed among the guards as well as their conflicts. Inspired by micro-sociological approaches, Kjerte also examines the dynamics of perpetrator-prisoner interactions and analyzes the situations that tended to generate or amplify physical violence. While violence was integral to their activities, his research considers whether some guards acted less cruel when not observed by peers and superiors.

During winter 2021, Kjerte located documents at the Croatian State Archive in Zagreb that shed light on the behavior of the Jasenovac perpetrators. The testimonies of survivors who worked in the camp's administration detail how officers often flouted directives and regulations issued by the central police authorities in Zagreb. An unexpected finding was that orders for the release of specific prisoners commonly resulted in their execution, which reveals the wide autonomy of the Jasenovac camp leadership vis-à-vis the police apparatus in the Independent State of Croatia.

In the postwar period, Yugoslav authorities tracked down and prosecuted numerous former Jasenovac guards. A grant from the Holocaust Educational Foundation funded Kjerte's research in the towns of Karlovac, Osijek, and Slavonski Brod where he culled cases from the criminal investigations and legal proceedings. The Jasenovac perpetrators are often portrayed as depraved sadists or fanatical ideological zealots, yet some investigation and trial records suggest more complex characteristics. For instance, a former guard who did not hesitate to shoot escaping prisoners but protested when ordered to participate in a mass killing. Kjerte also discovered that Bruno Divić, an infamous Jasenovac officer, had a Serb fiancée who had converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism. Despite the assurances of the Ustaša regime, conversion rarely offered protection against persecution, and Divić's fiancée was arrested and incarcerated in Jasenovac in September 1944 together with the other Serb citizens of Novska. Although Divić managed to secure her release, she was later captured and murdered.

Besides his dissertation research, Kjerte co-authored a report about the 24th Workshop on the History and Memory of National Socialist Camps and Killing Sites that took place in Salzburg. He continues research and writing during academic year 2021-22 with a Fellowship from the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah.

Claims Conference Fellow **Alexandra Kramen** holds the Marlene and David Persky Research Award for her dissertation on Jewish survivors living in Föhrenwald, the longest-running Jewish displaced persons camp in postwar Europe. She investigates how Jewish DPs conceived of justice and revenge in postwar Germany and how ideas of, and actions toward, justice evolved over time in response to shifting political, social, and economic conditions. Her research elucidates an area of Jewish life during and after the Holocaust that has received scant attention, offering a new perspective on how Jews coped with the trauma they experienced under the Nazi regime and reestablished a sense of justice in the process. In addition, her project seeks to contribute more broadly to the study of



Ellen Johnson

transitional justice processes in the wake of mass violence beyond formal international criminal tribunals. For instance, Kramen observed a pattern in the Yiddish newspapers she gathered as a 2018 Summer Graduate Student Research Fellow at the USHMM. In the Föhrenwald newspaper *Bamidbar*, articles by various authors identify the establishment of the state of Israel as a form of justice for the Holocaust.

Kramen has secured significant outside support for her research. In the 2020-2021 academic year, she held a Fred and Ellen Lewis Fellowship that supported her research in the JDC Archives. That fellowship culminated with a well-attended webinar presentation focused on her archival findings. During summer 2021, she was a Junior Fellow at the Center for Holocaust Studies at the Institute for Contemporary History (Munich). While at the Stadtarchiv-Wolfratshausen, Kramen unearthed a trove of unpublished interviews with former Jewish residents of the DP camp which she looks forward to analyzing more deeply in the coming months. She also discovered a series of German social aid files while at the Staatsarchiv-Muenchen that she plans to consult during an upcoming research trip, which will yield information on the backgrounds and wartime experiences of a number of survivors who have provided oral history testimonies relating to their DP experiences.

In January 2022 she will be at the Center for Jewish History to complete a 2020-2021 David Baumgardt Memorial Fellowship at the Leo Baeck Institute-New York, and will return to the Center for Jewish History in June 2022 for a ten-month residency as the Dr. Sophie Bookhalter Graduate Research Fellow.



Jessa Sinnott

Ani Garabed Ohanian is the recipient of generous support from the Armenian community including the Nishan and Margrit Atinizian Family Foundation. Her dissertation project, *Bolshevik-Kemalist Reconfigurations of the Caucasus, 1917-1923*, examines Bolshevik-Kemalist relations through the lens of the Armenian Genocide. The triangular relationship between Turkey, Russia, and the South Caucasus reflects the effects of imperial decline and the rise of nationalist ambition in the aftermath of the Great War. To date, no major scholarly work looks at Bolshevik-Kemalist relations through the lens of the Armenian Genocide, nor through the tumultuous period of 1917 to 1921 as the Transcaucasian states struggled for independence. Ohanian's dissertation aims to shed light on the entangled histories of Bolsheviks and Kemalists in the region, which continues to experience consequences in terms of ongoing interethnic conflict and instability.

With the support of a short-term research grant from the New York Public Library, Ohanian gained access to collections that pertain to the South Caucasus. She discovered the Jacques Kayaloff collection, which contains original documents and reports focusing on Armenia and its bordering nations. This collection provides insights into the historical circumstances during the tumultuous period of 1917 to 1921 and further elucidates the relations between Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan vis-à-vis the larger struggles among Bolshevik, Kemalist, British, French, and German forces. Additionally, she was able to read unique first-person sources, including memoirs of soldiers and missionaries such as Zareh Melik-Shahnazarov's *Sketches of a Karabakh Soldier, Memoirs of a participant in the events of 1918-1920 in Nagorno Karabakh*, and L.

Dartigue's *La Mission sanitaire chirurgicale française du Caucase* (premier juillet 1917 – 13 juillet 1918).

As Unionist-Bolshevik relations are central to her dissertation, the Turkish Communist Party's correspondence, in Russian, will be very useful for the assessment and understanding of these relations. During a research trip to Istanbul, she plans to access other Russian-language materials from the Turkish Communist Party archives and from the Social History Research Foundation of Turkey (TÜSTAV – Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı), which operated in Baku.

Sidney and Rosalie Rose Fellow **Jessa Sinnott** enjoyed the support of a Shahun Parish research award for her dissertation project on neighborhood and pogrom violence in Nazi (and Soviet) occupied Poland. The chief objective of her research is to create a fluid snapshot of a local sociocultural reality in which the murder of Polish Jewry took place. This project will consider three overarching categories of analysis to develop a narrative of the perpetration of mass violence: the identification of actors and methods of aggression, ethnic and/or national socialization and shifting moralities, and the economic incentives for committing intra-communal violence. This microhistory will provide a framework in which to examine the broader themes of interethnic relations in Poland, Polish antisemitism, and the national identity and culture that allowed for attitudes of indifference and violence in the face of Jewish suffering; demonstrating the ways in which anti-Jewish, neighborhood aggression fit into the totality of occupational violence.

Sinnott plans to draw on a variety of primary source materials. These include police and military records, documentation of post-war trials for "crimes against the Polish nation," held by the Soviet-imposed Polish authorities and collected by the Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, which would later become the Institute of National Remembrance, as well as oral histories and written testimonies to be accessed through the Pilecki Institute in Warsaw, the USHMM, and Yad Vashem.

Sinnott has successfully narrowed her research locality, and will be conducting a micro-historical study on the historic Powiat Szczuczynski, in the present-day county of Grajewo. Over the summer Sinnott conducted archival research at the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in Warsaw, under the guidance of Dr. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir.

LIFE AFTER THE CENTER: MORGAN BLUM SCHNEIDER '02

As a child growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, Morgan Blum Schneider '02 was deeply moved by stories of the Holocaust. By fifth grade, she had checked out every Holocaust book from her school library, prompting a worried call to her mother.

Schneider's early interest was a precursor to her career trajectory. Today, as director of the JFCS Holocaust Center, a program of Jewish Family and Children's Services, her job is to inspire remembrance, research, documentation and education. And it was her experience at Clark University that motivated her to channel her calling into a profession. "Clark shaped who I am," she says.

Schneider chose Clark after a high school guidance counselor informed her about the newly established Strassler Center. The program was a perfect fit as she had recently participated in The March for the Living, a Holocaust educational program that included a visit to Auschwitz. Her senior project included lecturing about the experience, which elicited a powerful comment from a middle school student: "My father says that the Holocaust is a lie, but after seeing your photos from Poland and hearing your stories, I know it really happened."

At Clark, Schneider was inspired by Strassler Center founder Debórah Dwork's course, "Rescue and Resistance", co-taught with the Dutch resistance hero Marion Pritchard, and a course taught by Israeli Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer in which his storytelling about the Holocaust in the Ukraine was the primary resource because no appropriate academic text was available in English. She learned about the Armenian Genocide under visiting professor Henry Theriault, who went on to advise her senior thesis about the process of dehumanization.

Rounding out her Clark career, Schneider interned at the Anti-Defamation League and Facing History and Ourselves. She also taught religious school at a local synagogue, transforming the outdated curriculum with lessons drawn straight from her Clark seminars.

After earning her master's degree in 2005 from Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, Schneider joined the Holocaust Center of Northern California, eventually moving into the role of director of education. By 2008, the Center was floundering due to the financial crisis and she was part of the team that merged the program with JFCS.

Today as director, Schneider continues to advise school districts, California legislators, and civic leaders on Holocaust and genocide education, instances of antisemitism, and best teaching practices. Her education workshops reach more than 28,000 annually in the Bay Area community where she lectured as a high school student. She also testified before the state senate as an expert witness advocating for legislation raising awareness and establishing a Governor's Council on Holocaust and genocide education. Recently awarded a substantial state grant, her team is developing new strategies for using lessons from the Holocaust to encourage California



Morgan Blum Schneider

youth to be morally courageous and socially responsible.

"We are at a crucial intersection in time, with the survivor generation rapidly aging and antisemitism surging. Our call to action is to become ambassadors of this history. It is our responsibility to bring the voices of the survivor into the classrooms of the future. I am proud to be part of the progress being made in California," Schneider said.

Throughout her career, Schneider's Clark network has been a source of continued support. She often seeks advice from her mentor, Debórah Dwork, and Strassler Center doctoral students she meets at conferences and workshops. New challenges and opportunities lie ahead as she charts a course that keeps her focus on her abiding passion for genocide education and history.

"Education continues to be our greatest tool in fighting hate and confronting antisemitism," she says. "We must invest in the future of our society, work together, and use our voices. The next generation is watching us."

Mary Jane Rein

LIFE AFTER THE CENTER

Strassler Center alumni are affiliated with a range of institutions. A select list of appointments follows:

Kim Allar PhD '19, Associate, Booz Allen Hamilton

Elizabeth Anthony PhD '16, Director, Visiting Scholar Programs, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Sara Elise Brown PhD '16, Executive Director, Center for Holocaust, Human Rights, and Genocide Education (Chhange) at Brookdale Community College

Beth Cohen PhD '03, Lecturer, California State University, Northridge

Sarah Cushman PhD '10, Director, Holocaust Educational Foundation, Northwestern University

Asya Darbinyan PhD '19, Postdoctoral Scholar, Martin-Springer Institute, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, Northern Arizona University

Tiberiu Galis Ph.D. '15, Executive Director, Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation

Michael Geheran PhD '16, Deputy Director, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, United States Military Academy at West Point

Adara Goldberg, Ph.D. '12, Director, Resource Center and Diversity Council on Global Education and Citizenship, Kean University

Simon Goldberg (ABD), Saul Kagan Fellow, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Gabrielle Hauth (ABD), Editorial Assistant, *Der Spiegel*

Naama Haviv MA '06, Vice President of Community Engagement, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Alexis Herr PhD '14, Lecturer, University of San Francisco

Stefan Ionescu PhD '13, Theodore Zev and Alice R. Weiss-Holocaust Educational Foundation Visiting Associate Professor in Holocaust Studies, Department of History, Northwestern University

Jeffrey Koerber PhD '15, Assistant Professor of Holocaust History, Chapman University

Ümit Kurt PhD '16, Australian Research Council Fellow, University of Newcastle

Samantha Lakin PhD '21, Senior Consultant, Guidehouse

Natalya Lazar (ABD), Program Manager, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Beth Lilach (ABD), Director of Education Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, Toronto

Jody Russell Manning (ABD), Lecturer and Director of Programming, Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights, Rowan University

Khatchig Mouradian PhD '16, Armenian/Georgian Specialist Librarian, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress and Lecturer, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University

Iana F. Offenberger PhD '10, Lecturer, Department of History, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Mike Phoenix PhD '18 Postdoctoral Research Associate, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency

Alicja Podbielska PhD '21, Hartman Postdoctoral Fellow (2021-2023), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University

Christine Schmidt PhD '03, Deputy Director and Head of Research, Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London

Raz Segal PhD '13, Associate Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Endowed Professor in the Study of Modern Genocide and Director, Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Stockton University

Joanna Sliwa PhD '16, Historian, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Lotta Stone PhD '10, Historian and Research Associate, Middleton Place Foundation, Charleston, South Carolina

Jason Tingler PhD '19, Lecturer, Department of Arts and Sciences, Marion Technical College

COLIN-FLUG WING

Situated next to Cohen-Lasry House and the Rose Library but free-standing, the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing provides both proximity and privacy to students engaged in PhD research. In the airy brightness of the new wing, students pursue their challenging work examining the traumatic past. The 2019 opening was a significant milestone in the history of the Strassler Center but what takes place inside the walls of the new wing represents true success: important research that sheds light on mass violence, atrocities, and genocide.

The layout of shared offices and common space promotes intellectual camaraderie that contributes to incubating ideas. Our PhD students come from around the globe to pursue diverse research

questions that range across different cases, depend on scholarship in diverse languages, and draw on various methodologies. Nonetheless, their doctoral projects benefit from the perspectives they share by working together so closely. Conducting their research side by side, students are engaged in comparative analysis among and between different cases of genocide, thus promoting greater and more nuanced understanding of this global problem. And, we trust, fresh solutions.



UNDERGRADUATE NEWS: STUDENTS WORK TO AMPLIFY PLIGHT OF PENOBSCOT TRIBE IN COLONIAL MASSACHUSETTS

In 1755, Spencer Phips, lieutenant governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, issued a proclamation that declared the Penobscot people enemies, rebels, and traitors to King George II, and called on all “his Majesty’s Subjects of this Province to Embrace all opportunities of pursuing, captivating, killing, and Destroying all and every of the aforesaid Indians.” The colonial government promised to pay a bounty for every Penobscot captured (or killed) and brought to Boston.

During an internship with the Boston-based nonprofit Upstander Project, Lamisa Muksitu ’22 and Penelope Kogan ’22 — both of whom concentrate in Holocaust and Genocide Studies — helped prepare a teacher’s guide to accompany “Bounty,” a short documentary film that focuses on the plight of the Penobscot people after the government offered a reward for their scalps or bodies.

Under the joint mentorship of Mishy Lesser, learning director of the Upstander Project, and Professor Shelly Tenenbaum, coordinator of undergraduate activities for the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Muksitu and Kogan researched and edited supporting documents to help create a guide that educators, students, and the general public can use to deepen their understanding of the issues raised in the film.

“Lamisa and Penelope were exceptionally motivated to assist with this task,” wrote Lesser. “They watched, and then we discussed, a rough cut of ‘Bounty.’ Together, we unpacked the message of the film in light of the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and we talked about different ways this material could be taught to a variety of grade levels.”

Muksitu said her work on “Bounty” strengthened her desire to pursue research as a future career path as the field “still has a long way to go in terms of inclusivity and accessibility.”

“While I have a deep attachment to academia, I believe that academia must be reconstructed to make well-deserved space for indigenous people and people of color,” she wrote. Muksitu also said projects like the one she worked on “serve as important first steps.”

For Kogan, who is majoring in Psychology with a minor in International Development and Social Change, working on the project reemphasized the importance of historical context when studying areas of conflict.

Kogan wrote that her internship at the Upstander Project not only taught her “how to dig deep within a history” but also “to look



Lamisa Muksitu and Penelope Kogan

for stories of resistance — even into the present day.” She plans to pursue her master’s in international development and social change after earning her bachelor’s in political science, with a minor in English.

“I am impressed by Lamisa and Penelope’s emphasis on unlearning and relearning Native American history,” wrote Professor Tenenbaum. “Because of their efforts, students will benefit from this powerful teaching tool by gaining a deeper understanding of genocide perpetrated against indigenous peoples.”

Muksitu and Kogan’s internships were funded by the Doris Tager Summer Stipend Fund and the Ina R. and Haskell R. Gordon Fund, respectively. The students presented their research at Fall Fest, and joined Lesser on November 10 for “Indian Scalps for Money: A Hidden History of Colonial Times,” a presentation that was part of the HGS Especially for Students Lecture Series and co-sponsored by the Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies program, the Education Department, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Zoe Wright



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GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Strassler Center continued to make serious progress toward realizing its ambitious goals during the 2020-21 academic year. The pandemic may have disrupted the usual ways that we engage with the public, including in-person meetings, lectures, conferences, and face-to-face discussions, but generous donors including alumni, friends, and foundation leaders did not neglect to support our vision for advancing scholarship about the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and other genocidal events.

With the completion of the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing, we were fortunate to secure funds to renovate the top floor of the Center's original home in Cohen-Lasry House. This physical expansion reflects the growth of our academic program, which entails strengthening knowledge about individual genocides as we forge dynamic connections between academia, pedagogy, and activism through teaching and research about human rights. In fall 2021, thanks to generous financial support from the Charles E. Scheidt Family Foundation and the Estate of Dr. Thomas Zand, we welcomed two professors for three-year appointments and these positions will be responsible for introducing vital new areas of teaching and research.

In the coming years we will inaugurate the David P. Angel Chair, funded by an endowment established by a group of loyal Clark alumni and Strassler Center supporters. The importance of confronting the threat of growing antisemitism inspired many donors to answer the call for funding permanent teaching and research on the topic. The new professorship will foster research about what constitutes effective education about the Holocaust and other genocides. As assaults on truth and memory have surged around the globe, the need for research and scholarship about the scope, conduct, and consequences of the Holocaust and other genocides remain vitally important.

Gifts, large and small, are essential to the growth and development of the Strassler Center program. We acknowledge with gratitude the many donors listed here whose contributions sponsored the activities of Strassler Center students and faculty during the academic year 2020-21. Our printed thanks will have to suffice until we can gather in person to engage in fruitful discussions, share meals, opportunities for learning, and the lively exchange of ideas.



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IN MEMORIAM: ROMAN KENT



Founding Director Debórah Dwork, Roman Kent, Hannah Kent, and Professor Edward Kissi

Roman Kent, an advocate for Holocaust survivors and a long-time friend of the Strassler Center, died on 21 May 2021. Shortly before his passing, he endowed the Hannah and Roman Kent Research Award to serve as a lasting legacy of his commitment to the memory of the Holocaust. He and his wife are remembered in a wall label outside the Kent Seminar Room reprinted here:

The Kent Seminar Room honors Holocaust survivors Roman and Hannah Kent, both born in Łódź, Poland. Roman's father owned a textile factory and the family lived a comfortable life with older sisters, Dasza and Renia, and younger brother, Leon. Forced from their home following the German invasion and imprisoned in the Łódź Ghetto, they struggled to survive. Roman's father died of malnutrition in 1943. In 1944, the Germans deported the remaining residents of the ghetto, including Roman and his family, to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Upon arrival, Roman and his brother were separated from their mother and sisters. Roman and Leon survived multiple concentration camps. On a death march to Dachau in April 1945, the US Army liberated them.

Hannah, her mother, and older brother Heniek fled east to Radom in 1939. Her father and younger sister were supposed to follow, but were unable to escape before the Germans sealed the Łódź ghetto and the family never reunited. In Radom, which also established a sealed ghetto soon after their arrival, Hannah's mother secured a job

in an SS military camp, which provided the family with a small degree of protection and the meager amount of food needed to survive. In summer 1944, they were deported to Auschwitz where all three passed the initial selection. Hannah was devoted to caring for her mother, who nonetheless deteriorated under the inhuman camp conditions. Following a forced march to Bergen-Belsen in early 1945, Hannah's mother died, just two months before liberation.

Following the war, Roman and Leon discovered that their mother had perished. Both sisters survived and were in Sweden, but shortly after arriving there, Dasza passed away from illness and malnutrition. Renia married and remained in Sweden; Roman and Leon emigrated to the United States in June 1946. Roman attended Emory University and studied business. After college, he met Hannah in New York. They married in 1957 and had two children, Jeffery and Susan. Hannah and Roman were active and influential in the survivor community. Roman served on the board of the Conference of Jewish Material Claims against Germany, as a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, and as President of the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. Hannah and Roman gave their testimonies to the USC Shoah Foundation. In 2008, Roman published *Courage Was My Only Option: The Autobiography of Roman Kent*. Hannah passed away in December 2017 at the age of 88.

Spencer Cronin '18

IN MEMORIAM: LORNA STRASSLER



Lorna Strassler

Music, dance, theater, photography, travel, and education were all deeply important areas of interest to Lorna Strassler, who passed away on 28 March 2021. A Great Barrington resident for nearly 50 years, Lorna devoted her talents and assistance to numerous institutions in the Berkshires that relate to the arts and education. Among the many cultural organizations that she supported, the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, where she was a long serving trustee, stands out as her greatest passion. In 2004, in celebration of a milestone birthday and anniversary, her husband David established the Lorna Strassler Award to honor her dedication to dance education. Recipients of the annual award receive a cash prize and scholarship to study at the School at Jacob's Pillow where they prepare for professional careers. Given to a dance student who exhibits "performance excellence and exemplary dedication to the field," it has become a prestigious honor in the dance world.

David and Lorna were teenage sweethearts who were married for 67 years. Over their long marriage, they distinguished themselves as philanthropists on behalf of numerous causes both jointly and individually. While Lorna's primary interests tended toward culture and the arts rather than the political, she championed David's projects especially as they related to educating young people. She single-handedly arranged for all Berkshire county high school students in the 11th grade to see the movie *Schindler's List*, organizing all

the details to ensure the success of these private showings in movie theaters. When the ADL, during David's tenure as national chair, launched a foundation to assist aging Christian rescuers who had saved Jews during the Holocaust, she took great pride and interest in the initiative. Above all, she was pleased to see how the Strassler Center developed into an internationally renowned institute for training future Holocaust historians and genocide scholars.

Having earned a degree in music education from Boston University, Lorna had a career teaching elementary music and she enjoyed singing in choral groups. The picture above shows her on a trip to Prague when she sang Verdi's Requiem at the Terezín camp with the Berkshire Choral. It is no surprise that she transmitted her love of music, theater, art, and the outdoors to her children, Abbie, Gary, and Alan and to her grandchildren. The Strassler siblings carry on their mother's passions in their own lives: Abbie is a general manager for Broadway theater productions, Gary is a potter in Carbondale, CO, and Alan runs the Berkshire Fishing Club. Yet, the legacy they and David most cherish is the loving kindness that Lorna showed to family and friends. According to Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "Acts of kindness never die. They linger in the memory, giving life to other acts in return." May Lorna's memory be a blessing that inspires kindness and leads to a world filled with music and beauty.

Mary Jane Rein

DONOR PROFILE: R. MIHRAN MA '58 AND OVSANNA Y. MOORADIAN '58

A newly established fund to support doctoral student research on the Armenian Genocide, the R. Mihran and Ovsanna Y. Mooradian Research Award, is the fruit of a romance that sparked between two Clark students in the 1950's. Ovsanna Mooradian was born in Beirut, Lebanon to genocide survivors and raised in a sheltered environment. Her decision to attend Clark University was a bold choice for a young woman who had never left home before. Once on campus, she was determined to do well as many international students at that time did not succeed. Dean Hazel Hughes took a special interest in her and provided the encouragement she needed to excel in her studies.

Dating was not high on Ovsanna's list of priorities. Nonetheless, she attended a meeting of the Armenian Student Association one Sunday evening with a young man. And there she met Mihran (Mike) who joined the table where she was sitting with her date. Clearly smitten, Mihran surprised her the next morning when he sought her out on her way to class in Jonas Clark Hall. He entered up the main stairs on the south side of the building and met up with her as she entered at ground level from the north. He invited her to lunch or at the very least for a coffee, which was the start to a romance that lasted for more than six decades. They married a week after graduation: she with a BS in Biology and he with an MA in international relations. His plan to enter the foreign service did not materialize as foreign-born brides were discouraged. Instead, the newlyweds returned to Mihran's hometown of Troy, NY and he entered the family furniture business.

Ovsanna and Mihran raised four children in Troy where they were active in their community. Armenian politics, history, and culture remained abiding interests in their shared life. The development of the Strassler Center's Armenian Genocide Studies program captured their attention and, despite the distance, they cheerfully attended many events and lectures on campus. As Mihran's health declined, they wanted to establish a legacy at Clark that would support the Armenian Genocide Studies program in perpetuity. Shortly before he passed away in July 2021, Mihran and Ovsanna jointly pledged to establish a fund on behalf of doctoral student research. Clark held a special place in their hearts and this fund ensures that students who share their interest in the history of the Armenian Genocide will know their names for generations to come.



Top: Mihran and Ovsanna Mooradian; Below: Ovsanna Mooradian



Income from the following endowed funds provide a permanent source of support for the ongoing activities and operation of the Strassler Center.

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Albert M. Tapper Distinguished Lecture Series

Asbed B. Zakarian & Margaret M. Zakarian Fund for Graduate Student Support in Armenian Genocide Studies

Your support lights the way to a brighter future!

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Or you may send a contribution by check, made payable to Clark University. Please specify the Strassler Center in the memo line and mail to:

Office of University Advancement
Clark University
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GRATITUDE



Garden donated in memory of Betsy Corman by Stephen Corman


A year of teaching, research, and work conducted, for the most part, away from Clark's campus and the gracious and comfortable spaces we enjoy in Cohen-Lasry House and the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing challenged our community of faculty, students and staff to stay connected. Zoom was convenient but no substitute for working in a shared and mutually supportive environment. Thus, more than ever, I am moved to express gratitude to those who made possible our activities and accomplishments during the academic year 2020-21.

The simplicity of Gertrude Stein's observation that "Silent gratitude isn't very much to anyone" compels me to print this statement of appreciation recognizing the remarkable staff who manage the Strassler Center. Robyn Conroy who, as an archivist and librarian, values the printed word more than most people, nevertheless shifted her attention to the virtual world. She expertly managed our many zoom webinars and readily facilitated a busy schedule of electronic

events in her capacity as program manager. Alissa Duke whose smiling face and cheerful demeanor make the Strassler Center an especially welcoming place brought her positive energy to the small screen. She made certain that our PhD students felt connected to their colleagues and to our staff. Kim Vance carried on in her quiet but effective way helping students, faculty, and staff to navigate the financial impacts that the pandemic presented.

While most members of the Clark community labored from home, a small group of dedicated employees continued to work across campus. They made it possible for the university and the Strassler Center to maintain its mission largely through remote activities. Special gratitude is owed to Paul Millionis in University Advancement, Jim Cormier in Media Services, and Joanne Dolan, Director of Academic Technology Services.

Mary Jane Rein



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