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Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies  (828) 262-2311 Appalachian State University, Boone North Carolina 28608

Fall Newsletter 2019

500 public school teachers. From that, the number of students taught by those teachers is probably over 250,000. Moreover, some of those students may have their own classrooms now, so they are reaching another generation of pupils. Recognizing the long-term accomplishments of the symposium, the Center wants to wish a hearty Shalom to all our program participants, to our colleagues at Appalachian, to our community friends, and to all others who have shown an unwavering belief in our mission. We could not do our work without you.

Thank you.

Warm regards,

Rosemary Horowitz
Acting Director

A Letter From the Acting Director

Chat "חי" is the Hebrew word that means “life,” and according to the tradition that assigns a numeric value to Hebrew letters, the letters, chi and yud add up to 18, which represents the concept of a good life.

At weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, and other events, Jewish often give gifts of money in multiples of 18, symbolically wishing the recipient a life or luck. In that spirit, I want to point out that during the summer of 2019, the Center held its 18th Annual Martin and Doris Rosen Summer Symposium on “Remembering the Holocaust.” The statewide, regional, national, and international range of our symposium special. In addition to the distance participants traced, the number of teachers and students influenced by our program is also exceptional. For example, a quick calculation reveals that over the years the symposium has provided instruction to approximately 250,000. Moreover, some of those students may have their own classrooms now, so they are reaching another generation of pupils. Recognizing the long-term accomplishments of the symposium, the Center wants to wish a hearty Shalom to all our program participants, to our colleagues at Appalachian, to our community friends, and to all others who have shown an unwavering belief in our mission. We could not do our work without you.

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The Center welcomes members of the Advancement Council.

The Center received much praise regarding the 18th Annual Martin and Doris Rosen Summer Symposium on Remembering the Holocaust, which took place on the campus of Appalachian State University this past July. This year’s symposium highlighted the role of education. At the start, the teacher participants visited the Temple of the High Country for several lectures, including one by Rabbi Roberts. They also had lunch with members of the local area Jewish community. Over the next four days, the teacher participants learned about a wide range of topics. For example, Lii Balski from Yad Vashem/Echoes and Reflections spoke about the role of education in the ghettos.

Teachers at Holocaust Education Summer Symposium 2019

Two Keynote Speakers: Kathy Kacer (left) and Susan Warsinger, Child Survivor of the Holocaust (right)

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In Honor of Primo Levi

Along with Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi is one of the most important writers of Holocaust literature. In honor of his birth in 1919, I want to introduce him to those who are unfamiliar with his life and work, as well as to acknowledge his place in literary history to all readers. Born in Turin, Italy, Levi was a chemist, partisan, Holocaust survivor, and writer. He was raised in a middle-class assimilated Jewish family. Although he was a bar mitzvah, his upbringing was mostly secular. Despite the Italian racial laws of 1935, he completed a university degree in chemistry, with the help of a sympathetic professor, but after graduation, Levi had difficulty finding a permanent job as a result of the anti-Semitism in his country. In 1943, he joined an Italian resistance movement and was arrested by the Fascist militia in December 1943. On February 1944, he was transported to Auschwitz, one of the three main camps in the Auschwitz complex. As a consequence of staying relatively healthy, having a useful skill, befriending helpful prisoners, and possessing linguistic facility, along with a great deal of luck, Levi survived his incarceration. He was released from Auschwitz on January 1945 by the Red Army and returned to Turin, Italy in October 1945. He lived and worked there until his death in 1987. During that period, he authored several books, novels, collections of short stories, essays, and poems. To learn more about him, pick up one of his works and judge yourself.

Primo Levi’s work is a reminder that before the Holocaust, there were 11-13 million speakers of Yiddish among 17 million Jews worldwide and that the vast majority of the approximately 5 million Jews who lived in the Holocaust were Yiddish speakers. Afterwards, assimilation and immigration further decreased the use of Yiddish. At present, though, the number of speakers is dwindling in Handle communities. Overall, Dr. Isaacs connects us to the world of Ashkenazi Jewry, part of our legacy.

Reading List of Primo Levi’s work
If This is A Man, also known as: Survival in Auschwitz. The work is a memoir of Levi’s time in the camp from February 1944 until January 1945. The volume was published in Italian in 1947 and in English in 1958. An English translation was published in 1959.
The Reawakening, also known as: The Days. A memoir of Levi’s journey, starting with his release from Auschwitz in January 1945 by the Red Army to his arrival home in Turin, Italy in October 1945. The book was published in 1963 in Italian and in English in 1965. The Periodic Table. Levi links his experiences during the Fascist regime and afterwards to various chemical elements. An Italian edition was published in 1975; an English edition was issued in 1984.

Learning About Yiddish with Miriam Isaacs

On Thursday, October 17 and Friday, October 18, the Center hosted the scholar Dr. Miriam Isaacs, a retired affiliate visiting associate professor of Yiddish language and culture at the University of Maryland College Park and an independent scholar in the fields of Yiddish language and culture, Yiddish-speaking, and translation. On Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Dr. Isaacs led a workshop on language and culture. She discussed the history of Yiddish, taking the participants on a journey through its richness. She spoke about linguistics, education, music, food, and a host of related matters. The evening program that was free and open to the public, held from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Dr. Isaacs started with a focus on the writings of Richard Korn, a Yiddish poet whose work Isaacs has translated into English. Following that, she discussed the songs of Holocaust survivors collected by Ben Stechshil, who, in 1948, recorded more than 1,000 songs, mostly sung in Yiddish. On Friday, Dr. Isaacs spoke to students in Dr. Helenbrand’s German language class.

On Sunday, October 27, the Appalachian chapter of AEPi organized a dye-long event against hate. Along with other activities, there were two main speakers: TM Garret, a former muav and Hussein Akebaleh, a political prisoner from Egypt. Other sponsors of the event included Hallefeld, the Academic Engagement Network, SuadWhelv, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies, Appalachian’s Office of Diversity, the English department, the History department; the Languages, Literatures, and Cultures department; and the Sociology department.

On Monday, November 4, the Religious Studies Club invited Dr. Barry Trachtenberg, director of Wake Forest University’s Jewish Studies Program, to campus to present a lecture. He spoke about his experiences teaching the history of Zionism.

At the 2019 Association for Jewish Studies Conference to be held in San Diego, California on December 16th to 17th, Dr. Rosemary Horowitz will present a talk entitled “Primo Levi as Linguist.” Also, her chapter “Gendered Behavior in Un Oved’s and Kathy Racer’s Literature about the Holocaust for Children” has been accepted for publication.

In Memoriam
The Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies mourns the passing of Dr. Susan Cernyak-Spatz ’z”l, a professor emeritus of German literature at UNC Charlotte and frequent participant and speaker at Center events. She was a forceful advocate against the rise of anti-Semitism and white supremacy in North America and beyond. To commemorate her life and struggles, the Center is cooperating with Apple TV+ to broadcast the recording of her last public event at Appalachian State in October 2018. May her memory be a blessing.

Photo from Miriam Isaacs Event

A Day with Dr. Miriam Isaacs

Dr. Susan Cernyak-Spatz ’z”l (1922-2019)

To make a donation in support of the Center’s work, please contact the CSA Director of Development Carey Fissel at (828) 262-7622 or fisselcm@appstate.edu.

Upcoming Events 2020

April
Hollywood survivor Zev Harel will speak about his suffering at the hands of the Germans. Belk Library and Information Commons, April 2020 (also part of the Yadi Vashem exhibit program).

Yom HaShoah Readings on the Appalachian campus, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., April 21, 2020, in between Belk Library and PSU. Rain location: Estrimere Rotunda of Belk Library, followed by a ceremony at the Temple of the High Country.

March 26
Dr. Agnes Muller, professor of German and Comparative Literature, will discuss the works of the Wiesenthal, director, Program in Global Studies at the University of South Carolina, who will lecture on “Holocaust Migration: Israel in Contemporary German Fiction,” location TBA.

March 26-27
Southeast German Studies Workshop on “New Approaches to German Jewish Studies,” “Re-Migration and Migration Studies,” and “Public Representations of German and/or German-Jewish History and Culture will be held on March 26-27, 2020 at Belk Library. The event is organized in partnership with the Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University of Berlin, Germany. Director, Dr. Stefanie Schäfer-Spinnewin will deliver the keynote on the topic of “Gender, Sex, and Violence: Race Delimiting in Nazi Germany.” For the full schedule, see https://holocaust.appstate.edu/conferences/southeast-german-studies-workshop-20/ program.

March 17 - April 17
Traveling exhibit entitled “The Shoah: How Was It Humanly Possible?” (Compiled by Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Jerusalem) on display at Belk Library and Information Commons and 1st Floors, March 17th - April 17th, 2020.