



## Winter Newsletter 2020-21

### Online Center Database Gives Public Access to Survivor and Scholarly Voices



Holocaust survivor Anny Lerman during her pre-Pandemic interview with Center affiliate Prof. Chris Patti

The Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies has recently launched an online collection of testimonies and presentations by survivors of twentieth-century genocides as well as scholars in

the fields of the Holocaust and twentieth-century European-Jewish history who were part of our past programs in the U.S. and abroad. The growing collection encompasses some of the most

prominent voices in these fields, including Prof. Dan Michman, the head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, and Prof. emeritus Christopher R. Browning of Tacoma, WA. The survivor testimony collection encompasses interviews conducted by affiliated faculty members as well as recordings of Center-organized presentations, ranging from Eugenie Mukeshimana, who – eight-months pregnant – survived the Rwanda genocide hiding in the home of a Hutu genocidaire, to Anita Lasker Wallfisch, one of the last survivors of the Women's Orchestra at Auschwitz, and Anny Lerman, who managed

to escape Nazi Vienna with her family. The collection is freely accessible and intended for current and future students and faculty, teachers, researchers, the broader public and supporters in the state, country, and abroad. The ongoing pandemic that has already claimed the lives of so many survivors only demonstrates the urgency to preserve their testimonies and make them available in an easily-accessible manner that does not endanger anyone's health. To view the collection, go to: <https://holocaust.appstate.edu/library/center-lectures-and-testimonies>

### A Word From the Center Director: Running the Center Amidst a Pandemic, Confronting the Rise of Far-Right Extremism

Nobody at the Center anticipated last spring's lockdowns as needed attempts to reduce the spread of a virus that, by now, has killed some 400,000 Americans. Yet, while we were postponing core Center events such as an international March conference with the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung at Berlin's Technical University and the inaugural Senior Center Fellow, the various committees swiftly began to adjust the Center's work. Everyone quickly saw new opportunities, formats and audiences that would directly advance the Center's mission and commitment to provide high-quality programs and support for educators, researchers, students, and the general public. In fact, beginning

with our first program with Holocaust educator Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff, the response has often been overwhelming. The online programming connected us to other Jewish communities, attracted researchers from across the U.S. and beyond, provided opportunities to touch base with summer symposium graduates in Europe, and allowed Center supporters to log in from wherever they were. The once-smaller campus-based research colloquia turned into veritable international events with participants from Israel and Australia to Poland and Canada. Additionally, the Center committees have reached out to numerous partners in the U.S. and abroad to launch new collaborative projects, including a

much-sought-after opportunity for students to take an online class at a college in Israel. Faced with the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6 that marked a grave escalation in far-right extremism, the Center will, finally, step up its anti-racist programming.

We hope that the readers of this newsletter will take advantage of our upcoming online programming. A huge thank-you to all of our generous supporters who keep us going even amidst a pandemic!



Center Director Prof. Pegelow Kaplan during a ZOOM program. Prof. Pegelow Kaplan can be reached at [thomaspegelowkaplan@appstate.edu](mailto:thomaspegelowkaplan@appstate.edu)

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#### Forthcoming Center Events

To prevent community spread and keep everyone safe, we will hold all the programs below online. ZOOM registrations links will be made available via the Center website and various e-mailings. For more information, contact the Center at 828.262.2311 or [holocaust@appstate.edu](mailto:holocaust@appstate.edu).

**January 26, 7:00 pm EST. Lecture by Prof. Jim Waller**, the Cohen Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College (New Hampshire). Prof. Waller will speak on "Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Murder," also the title of

one of his most influential and pathbreaking studies. The event also marks and commemorates the 76th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camps (co-organized with Queens University's Greenspon Center for Peace and Social Justice and UNCC's Center for Holocaust, Genocide & Human Rights Studies).

**February 8, 11:00 am EST. Center Research Colloquium with Dr. Omer Bartov**, John P. Birkelund Distinguished Professor of European History (Brown University). The Israeli-born, British-trained and U.S.-based world-renowned Holocaust scholar will discuss his important research projects from the Holocaust in Eastern Europe

to the Jewish-Palestinian conflict (co-organized with the Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University of Berlin, Germany, and Appalachian's DLLC). At **7:00 pm EST** on the same day, Prof. Bartov will also give a **lecture** that reflects on his path-breaking work on the unfolding of the Holocaust in the Galician town of Buczacz.

**March 18-19, 8:30 am-1:30 pm EST. Thirteenth Annual Workshop of the Southeast German Studies (SEGS) Consortium** with 50 scholars from across the Southeastern U.S. and Berlin, Germany. The workshops panels this year focus on "New Approaches in German-Jewish Studies,"

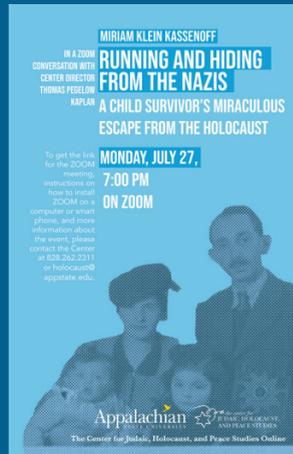
"Refugee and Migration Studies," and "Public Representations of German and/or German-Jewish History and Culture." Co-organized by the SEGS Steering and Org Committees with the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies.

**March 18, 11:00 am EST. Lecture by Prof. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum** (Technical University of Berlin, Germany). Prof. Schüler-Springorum, the director of the TUB's prestigious **Center for Research on Antisemitism**, will discuss the topic of "Gender, Sex and Violence: Race Defilement in Nazi Germany." The talk by the eminent German scholar also serves as keynote

lecture of the Thirteenth Workshop of the Southeast German Studies Consortium. Co-organized by the SEGS Steering and Org Committees with the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies.

**April 9.** The Center marks **Yom HaShoah** (Holocaust Memorial Day) with a commemoration that includes a reading of the names of European Jews murdered by the Germans and their allies during the Holocaust and a **public lecture by Prof. Noah Shenker** (Monash University, Australia) on the future of Holocaust testimonies.

## Rethinking the Summer Symposium in Times of a Pandemic



Since 2002, the Martin and Doris Rosen Summer Symposia on Remembering the Holocaust have brought together secondary school teachers to familiarize

them with the most current research on the Holocaust and anti-Semitism and provide successful teaching strategies that can be taken to everyone's classroom. The program that started out with local schoolteachers has grown into an international undertaking with participants from all across the U.S., Europe, and Israel. In 2020, the pandemic necessitated the first cancellation of the annual event in its nineteen-year history. The Center's priority has always been to keep everyone safe. After all, many of the speakers and community audience members belong to high-risk groups. Thus, we will build on our successful recent ZOOM programs and move the 2021 symposium

online. In fact, this necessary shift in "venues" offers exciting new opportunities. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Belfer Educators Conference in July 2020 went virtual and increased its enrollment by 50 percent to more than 600 teachers. Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff, who played a pivotal role in starting the Symposia here, reported a similar trend for the virtual version of her Holocaust Teacher Institute in Miami. Yet, there are more advantages. Appalachian State's Center will also be able to provide participants with an array of electronic resources both during and after the program. For the 2021 symposium on children in

the Holocaust, the Center will work closely with its national and international partners, including the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, and prominent Holocaust scholars such as Debórah Dwork. We have also invited a group of child survivors who will give testimony about the challenges the youngest members of the Jewish communities had to endure. Dr. Klein Kassenoff's testimony of her escape to the U.S. in her July ZOOM program prompted great discussions of Holocaust education that continued long after everyone had logged out.

## Research by the Center Affiliated Faculty

In October, **Prof. Joseph Bathanti (IDS/JHP)** gave a talk on Alma Stone Williams for Asheville's Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center. Williams was the College's first African American student, and arguably the first African American student to attend (in 1944) an all-white college in the Jim Crow South. Bathanti completed a chapter entitled "Outside Inside: The Prison Writing and Teaching of Fielding Dawson" for a forthcoming volume by Clemson UP and published "Di Bo Chet" in the journal *War, Literature & the Arts*. One of his poems was selected for the Poetry in Plain Sight initiative and will soon be on public display in street-visible locations throughout several NC cities. Finally, Bathanti was nominated for a 2020 Pushcart Award in short fiction.

**Prof. Rosemary Horowitz**

(**English/JHP**) participated in two panels at the Association for Jewish Studies 2020 annual conference: "Women's Holocaust Testimonies Across Media and Over Time" and "Uses and Abuses of Art in Representations of Holocaust Violence." Her article "Jewish Undercurrents in the Jean-Pierre Melville's films *La Silence de de la Mer*; *Leon Morin, Prêtre*; and *L'Armée des Ombres*" is currently under review.

Together with several other German-born directors of North American Holocaust studies centers, **Prof. Thomas Pegelow Kaplan (JHP/History)** published an op-ed entitled "It is not too late for American Democracy-yet" in the American-Jewish periodical *The Forward* in September. He gave several talks about his co-edited volume, *Resisting Persecution: Jews and their Petitions during the Holocaust*,

that appeared earlier this year and has been nominated for the National Jewish Book Awards. He also co-published a contribution entitled "Do Petitions matter? Rethinking Jewish Petitioning during the Holocaust" on Berghahn Book's blog. Pegelow Kaplan co-organized (with Prof. Norm Goda) a conference panel on "Holocaust Studies and Theory" for this fall's (virtual) annual meeting of the German Studies Association and gave a paper on "A Transnational Turn in Holocaust Studies?" In addition, Pegelow Kaplan participated in the (virtual) 2020 "Jewish Refugees In Global Transit: Spaces – Temporalities – Interactions" workshop at the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., and as a panel commentator, in the annual conference of the Association for Jewish Studies. Finally, he submitted a book manuscript

entitled *Taking the Transnational Turn: The German Jewish Press and Journalism Beyond Borders, 1933-1943* to be published in Hebrew by Yad Vashem.

**Prof. Dana Powell (Anthropology/JHP)** completed a year-long fellowship at the Cornell Society for the Humanities and launched a new project on Socio-Ecological Harm and Resilience in eastern North Carolina with a \$10,000 Chancellor's Innovation Scholar's Award (with co-PI Dr. Rebecca Witter, Sustainable Development). Prof. Powell also co-published an article entitled "Making It Home: Solidarity and Belonging in the #NoDAPL/Standing Rock Encampments" in *Collaborative Anthropologies*.

## Center Fall Programming Goes Global during the "Zoom Age"



**Prof. Amos Goldberg speaking "live" during a Center colloquium from Jerusalem**

After a promising test phase with three online events in April, the Center moved its entire Fall'20 program of eleven lectures, survivor testimonies, and colloquia to a ZOOM platform. Back in 2015, the Center had launched a new research colloquium series designed to introduce faculty and students to the latest research and to provide

them with an opportunity to get feed-back on their own projects from leading scholars. The online platform enabled us to connect with a range of colleagues from Prof. Amos Goldberg (The Hebrew University, Jerusalem), a prominent cultural historian of the Shoah, to Prof. Hank Greenspan (U of Michigan—Ann Arbor), a leading expert on

Holocaust survivor retellings. The five colloquia, including a program with Appalachian State's Russianist Prof. Irina Barclay on her edited memoir of a Staliner Gulag survivor, were not only well attended. They also attracted scholars from various universities across the U.S. and abroad, who, normally, would not have been able to come to the NC mountains.

The public presentations for a mixed academic and non-academic audience replicated these dynamics and again connected the participants to intellectuals, scholars, and survivors from Warsaw, Poland, to Jerusalem, Israel, and New York City. As intended, our guests did not shy away from controversial topics, ranging from a conversation about trauma and suffering in the Holocaust and Nakba, the memory politics

of PiS, the right-wing populist governing party in Poland to the politics of Christian Evangelicals towards Israel. The security precautions taken by the Center prevented deniers and white supremacists from disrupting the events (as was the case with some of our partner institutions) and ensured that a string of charged questions by conservative Polish expats remained within the realm of a productive exchange with Prof. Kostek Gebert, a prominent voice of the small Polish-Jewish community. These online programs indeed provided many insights and thought-provoking discussions. We are looking forward to continuing this online programming with national and global reach in Spring '21.

## Center Commemorates "Kristallnacht" Amidst Increasing Antisemitism and Attacks on Synagogues



**Prof. Atina Grossmann lecturing from her home office in New York City**

The deadly attack on the synagogue of the Tree of Life – Or L'Simcha Congregation in Pittsburgh in 2018, which sent shockwaves through American-Jewish communities, has been far from the only act of violence directed against synagogues in the U.S. in recent years. Others

like the shooting attack on the Chabad of Poway synagogue on Passover in 2019 were also deadly. These ongoing assaults are not limited to the U.S. There have been a series of attacks on synagogues in Germany, for example. In Ukraine this past July, an axe-wielding attacker tried to

enter the synagogue at Mariupol on the eve of Tisha B'Av. And the list continues...

Faced with these crimes, the Center organized a commemoration of the 82nd anniversary of Kristallnacht, the nationwide pogroms in Hitler Germany that began on November 9, 1938, and marked the prewar turning point in the Nazi regime's anti-Jewish policies. As part of the pogroms, the regime destroyed close to 300 synagogues throughout the Reich.

The Center-hosted program was designed to raise awareness not just of one of the many mass crimes of the Nazi regime, but also the ongoing discrimination and violence perpetrated against Jews in Europe, North America and beyond.

Kurt Love, the President of the local synagogue, helped to welcome the audience. Our guest of honor, Prof. Atina Grossmann, Cooper Union, NYC, movingly illuminated the rescue of Jewish Refugees in the Soviet Union, Iran, and India. The connections to today's refugee crises and mass detentions were not lost.



**Kurt Love (Temple of the High Country) during the commemoration**



To make a donation in support of the Center's work, please contact the CAS Director of Development Carey Fissel at (828) 262-7622 or [fisselcm@appstate.edu](mailto:fisselcm@appstate.edu).

