

HAPPENINGS

*At the Center for
Judaic, Holocaust,
and Peace Studies*

In this issue:

MUSINGS: THE BEAUTY
OF RESILIENCE
BY AMY HUDNALL

Reflections on finding
beauty in some of the
darkest places

Page 1

THERE IS A WEIGHT
BY JEREMY BROWN

A graduate of the 2024
Martin and Doris Rosen
Summer Symposium
reflects on a particularly
difficult day of discussion

Page 4

WELCOME OUR NEW
DIRECTOR!

Learn more about Dr.
Davis Hankins

Page 6

THE CONFLICT IN THE
MIDDLE EAST

Better Understand the
Conflict in the Middle
East with These Sources

Page 7

MUSINGS: THE BEAUTY OF RESILIENCE

By Amy Hudnall
Editor

I was first in Auschwitz in 2007. It was very different from today. There were fewer crowds, less noise and, more than anything, it felt different. There was no bird song, no crickets or frogs, much of the ground was raw and bare. And the air—it felt like being in a vacuum of still, heavy air that even the animals avoided.

Pavel Friedman, a Jewish Czechoslovak poet who died in the Holocaust, wrote about his time in the Theresienstadt Ghetto,

"...ONLY I NEVER SAW ANOTHER BUTTERFLY. THAT BUTTERFLY WAS THE LAST ONE. BUTTERFLIES DON'T LIVE IN THE GHETTO."

PAVEL FRIEDMAN, CA 1944

It was as if you could feel the weight, the pain of six million lives that had died there... butterflies don't live in Auschwitz.

As we walked to Crematoria II and III with their gas chambers, destroyed on the orders of Himmler, the guide led us through a copse of pine trees called the Little Wood. This was where victims waited to be escorted into the crematoria. There I found a perfect, small bird's nest on the ground, the nest you see here. Upon further inspection, I realized, to my horror, the nest was composed of straw and ash, ash from the ground where I stood; ashes that were the remains of murdered Jews. The beautiful nest, and the pain of knowing it was composed of human remains never left me.

Later we were led through one of the last existing gas chambers, Chamber I. The headaches and chills I had been experiencing up to that point reached a crescendo. I could take no more. I swore I would never return to Auschwitz.

Twice since that visit, I lurked along the edges of the fence waiting while my guests toured. I refused to set foot in the camp; I was unable or unwilling to go in again. During that time the organization that managed

“And from our bones Wild flowers shall grow Or gulls swoop Where the ashes fall.”

FROM THE POEM “THE OCEAN OF ETERNITY” BY
HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR ANNE RANASINGHE

the camp, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, evolved and changed. Restorations continued and archeological digs brought forth more knowledge. The archives and research program grew.

In 2022, thanks to the generosity of the Greensboro Jewish Federation and Chuck and Nancy Rosenblatt, I returned yet again with a group of students. Almost twenty years after my first visit I decided I had to participate in this student tour. More changes had occurred. A new educational center was built outside the fence of Auschwitz-Birkenau. There were new parking lots and a

bus that connected the entrances of Auschwitz and Birkenau with a newly designed Disneyesque entry into the camp.

But the greatest change was how beautiful the landscape had become in twenty years. Trees dotted the camps, the Little Wood, and elsewhere. And there seemed to be an abundance of life. The Pond, which used to hold the ashes of the murdered, held huge bullfrogs boldly announcing their place. A male cuckoo bird followed us, rasping out a repetitive two-note *cuckoo* as we walked between the barracks. One student wrote in her

journal about Auschwitz, “I was angry at the birds for chirping” in this sacred and horrible place. And yet, the birds were back!

This latest trip to Auschwitz made me think about the power of time and the earth’s amazing regenerative qualities. Even at our worst, like the Holocaust and Auschwitz, the Bosnian Conflict, or the Rwandan Genocide, to name a few, time allows those who are wounded and the earth on which the violence was wrought to regenerate. And it is the process of regeneration that allows us to heal and move beyond the horror.

If we are careful, within this process are found the seeds for peace and hope. We only need to intentionally plant those seeds through respect and empathy in everything we do, for when hope is lost, all is lost. A central Jewish principle is *Tikkun Olam*, which means to repair the world in Hebrew. It charges Jews to always seek ways to improve or repair the world. We see *Tikkun Olam* being lived out at Auschwitz every day offering hope, peace, and regeneration at a site that embodies the Nazi horror against the Jews.

Addendum:

Since writing about *Tikkun Olam* and Auschwitz, parts of App State and communities across western North Carolina were hit with a 5000-year geologic event called Hurricane Helene. We are still recovering, and it will forever reshape this part of the world. Here, I again see hope and heroism manifested as neighbors help/ed neighbors. *Tikkun Olam* is being lived out in Appalachia every day in large and small ways. In

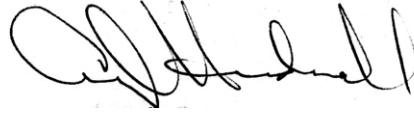


BIRD NEST AT AUSCHWITZ, 2007. MADE OF TWIG AND TWIGS

another part of the world, Israel and Gaza, it has been a little over a year since the war started. Great damage has been done to the people and the land that is Israel. Yet when we talk to our friends in Israel they stand strong in the belief that peace can be found, even as they suffer under regular bombings. As is happening in Auschwitz, we believe that space remains for the regeneration and recovery of the land and people of Israel and continue to support a peaceful conclusion for all people in the region. Here too Tikkun Olam

will live. Humans have the capacity for great evil....and for great good. Begin every day with the heroic choice of great good.

Yours in unity and peace



Amy C. Hudnall

*Where there
is heroism
there will
always be
hope.*

Winston Churchill

THE LITTLE WOOD WITH THE BLOWN-UP GAS CHAMBER IN THE BACKGROUND.



THERE IS A WEIGHT

Jeremy Brown, teacher, preacher, and graduate of the 2024 Martin and Doris Rosen Summer Symposium, wrote this poem after a difficult day of learning about the Holocaust at the Symposium. Jeremy is a coach and history teacher at Oakman High School in rural Alabama. The six-day 2024 symposium theme was America and the Holocaust. We filled all our scholarships, 35 students, with a waitlist. We are actively working on developing the 2025 Symposium; this year's theme is Rescue and the Holocaust. If you are interested in attending the 2025 Symposium please contact us at Holocaust@appstate.edu.

THERE IS A WEIGHT

*There is a weight
So heavy it blocks the light
A weight that divides, separates,
splinters
There is a weight
That sucks the oxygen from a room
and out of the body
There is a weight
The heaviness is unbearable
There is a weight
That presses upon the mind and
squeezes it to the point of non-
existence
But there is a light
A light that can break the weight
shattering it to pieces
Be the light*

This summer I was honored to have been able to attend the Martin and Doris Rosen Summer Symposium, 2024. I have made it part of my lifelong learning to educate myself and my students on the events of the Holocaust. The symposium is second to none. Amy and Lee are excellent teachers and leaders. I



2024 SYMPOSIUM GRADUATES AND DIRECTORS

learned new things that will help me better teach my students and also help me grow on a personal level. The speakers that were present in person and via Zoom all brought something new to the table. Being able to listen to experts teach the history and putting it together with survivor testimony opens up a new understanding. Being welcomed by the Jewish community was beautiful. Interacting and understanding one another leads to a greater bond between people ... Finally the interactions between teachers and sharing of ideas is something I believe every conference should include. I made many new friends and look forward to future collaborations.

Jeremy Brown

CAN YOU HELP US FIND THESE THINGS FOR THE CENTER LIBRARY?

- Television
- VCR player
- DVD player
- Cassette player
- CD player

**YOUR GENEROSITY IS EMPOWERING
DONATE HERE TODAY!**





THE WHITE ROSE STUDENT RESEARCH CONTEST

The Center has launched its first-year research contest. Thanks to the support of the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education and anonymous donors we are holding a

research and writing contest on the Holocaust for 8th-12th graders. Information about the contest has been shared across the state and other areas in the south. Through the support of App State's Reich College of Education and the Department of History's History Education Program we are reaching all History and

English teachers from these grades in North Carolina. The Summer Symposium allowed us to share this opportunity with our Symposium teachers as well. To learn more about the contest go to <https://holocaust.appstate.edu/white-rose-student-research-contest>. And spread the word!

Tentative Schedule of CJHP Events for the 2024-25 Academic Year

9/30/2024, 7:00PM	Documentary Viewing of <i>The March of the Living</i> , followed by Q&A with Director/Producer Suzanne Lasky-Gerard—Canceled due to Hurricane Helene
10/10/24, 12:00PM	Lunch Colloquium with genocide studies scholar Dr. Alex Alvarez—Canceled due to Hurricane Helene
10/10/24, 7:00PM	Lecture by Dr. Alex Alvarez—Canceled due to Hurricane Helene
11/7/24, 7:00PM	Talk by Holocaust survivor Michael Berkowicz, to mark Kristallnacht
11/20/24, 3:30PM (ZOOM)	Beyond Theater of Witness Workshop
3/18/25, 7PM	Lecture by social psychologist, Dr. James Waller, on his acclaimed book in Holocaust studies, <i>Becoming Evil</i>
SPRING 2025, DATE TBA	Presentation on Compassionate Interviewing with communication expert, Dr. Chris Patti
4/24/25, ALL DAY	Yom Ha'Shoah
4/28/25, TIME TBA	White Rose Student Research Contest Reception
JULY 2025	Doris and Martin Rosen Summer Symposium with events series
7/16/25-7/17/25	Conference: Rescue Inaction or Rescue In Action: Religion and Rescue during the Holocaust by Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, and Western Galilee College, Akko



WELCOME OUR NEW DIRECTOR!

In the midst of Hurricane Helene a new director was appointed for the Center at a moment when the hurricane was taking everyone's attention. Welcome Dr. Davis Hankins! It was especially telling that he was not to be found at a desk but out helping people in need in the first two weeks of his job. His family hosted children whose home had become inaccessible because of a landslide. He spent days sorting and helping at the Pickle Ball Court, which had become App State's collection point for donated supplies needed by the community. In one instance, he hiked five gallons of gasoline through the woods to power a generator in an area that had become inaccessible by car and was without electricity. What a start as Director!

You might say that what Dr. Hankins did was a personal choice and not related to the Center. But it appears he is a man perfectly suited to lead a Center whose core focus is on community and the ethical and kind behavior of humans towards one another. I know that Rennie Brantz, Zohara Boyd, Rosemary Horowitz, and so many of our other founders and donors wanted the Center to

exist to teach how to be better people through an understanding of the Holocaust. Dr. Hankins lives what we "preach," and we are lucky to have him leading the Center.

WHO IS DR. HANKINS?

The rest of this article is taken from the official App State announcement of Dr. Hankins' new position as Center Director. Dr. Hankins is an associate professor of religious studies in the Department of Philosophy and Religion. He holds a B.S. from North Carolina State University, an M.Div. from Columbia Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from Emory University.

Hankins' research focuses on the intersection of political economy, religion, and literature in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean world. His first book, *The Book of Job and the Immanent Genesis of Transcendence* (Northwestern University Press, 2015), received the 2017 Manfred Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological Promise. He recently submitted a book manuscript on the socioeconomic and political transformations that occurred under the Ptolemaic administration of Egypt and is currently completing research on related changes in Judaea and in Jewish intellectual history under the Ptolemies in the early Hellenistic period.

A native of North Carolina, Hankins joined Appalachian State's Department of Philosophy and Religion in 2011 and has served as an affiliate faculty member (2016), and more recently a member of the Faculty Advisory Board (2022), at CJHPS. He teaches

surveys of the Hebrew Bible, Judaism, and the New Testament, and other courses on prophecy and justice, gender, sexuality, and the Bible, and visual art and religion. In 2019, he completed the Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization at Northwestern University's Holocaust Educational Foundation.

In his new role as director of CJHPS, Hankins will oversee the Center. Amy Hudnall will continue her leadership within the Center as the newly appointed Assistant Director of Outreach and Public Relations. Please come by and welcome Dr. Hankins to his new position at the Center or email him at Holocaust@appstate.edu.

FACULTY ADVISORY BOARD

Elizabeth Bellows, *Reich College of Education*

Sarah Greenwald, *Department of Mathematics*

Davis Hankins, *Department of Philosophy and Religion*

Amy Hudnall, *Department of History*

Chris Patti, *Department of Communications*

Laurie Semmes, *Hayes School of Music*

Alexandra Sterling Hellenbrand, *Department of Languages, Literatures, and Culture*

Peter Thompson, *Department of Government and Justice Studies*

FACULTY AND STAFF

Dr. Davis Hankins, Director

Amy Hudnall, Assistant Director

Michael Berkowicz, Temple of the High Country Liaison

Lauren Walker, Librarian

BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST WITH THESE SOURCES

Understanding the history of Israel, its conflicts, and its relationship with its neighbors is complicated. Many students throw their hands up in frustration, thinking they will never truly understand it. The war that began on October 7, 2023, with the kidnapping of 251 Israelis has been perhaps the most difficult to understand. Everyone has an opinion and many of those opinions are not grounded in fact, but instead in misinformation and influenced by louder social influencers. If one wishes to participate in the debate of sides, it is critical to be informed, not just superficially and by using social media, but with thoughtful evaluation, research, and looking at all perspectives.

The following list provides relevant and rigorous sources on this topic and was collected by academics affiliated with Jewish Centers from around the country. We have not vetted all of these sources, trusting the contributors' responsibility to the subject.

IF YOU HAVE RESOURCES YOU BELIEVE WOULD BE USEFUL PLEASE EMAIL US AT HOLOCAUST@APPSTATE.EDU. IF YOU FIND PROBLEMS WITH A SOURCE LISTED HERE PLEASE EMAIL US AT HOLOCAUST@APPSTATE.EDU.

RESOURCES FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, Eyal Naveh, *Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine*, 2012.

Mika Ahuvia, *On My Right Michael, On My Left Gabriel: Angels in Ancient Jewish Culture*, 2021.

Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict*, 2001.

Jo Roberts, *Contested Land, Contested Memory: Israel's Jews and Arabs and the Ghosts of Catastrophe*, 2013.

Noah Tishby, *Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth*, 2021.

Sandy Tolan, *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East*, 2008.

Dov Waxman, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2019.

Mosab Hassan Yousef. *Son of Hamas*, 2011.

MI SHEBEIRAH A PRAYER FOR HEALING

In these times of strife consider this prayer of renewal and healing. Found in the Jewish prayer book, in Hebrew it is called *Mi shebeirah*. This prayer dates back to the 10th or 11th century CE. It has a long history as an important prayer in the Jewish faith and is used for many purposes related to healing. This prayer is but one version of many, and speaks to the heroes and those wounded in body or spirit after Hurricane Helene, during the war in Israel and, in Auschwitz.

May the source of strength,

Who blessed the ones before,

Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing.

And let us say; Amen.

Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leime

The renewal of body; the renewal of spirit.

And let us say; Amen.