UNION STATION KANSAS CITY TO HOST BEGINNING JUNE 2021—FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO SEE IN NORTH AMERICA

As the most recognizable symbol of the Holocaust, Auschwitz represents the peak of efficiency in the Nazi killing process. It also represents the evolution of Nazi policy toward the Jews of Europe—what historian Raul Hilberg referred to as a process that began with mild measures and ended with drastic action. Featuring hundreds of original objects and photographs, the exhibition takes visitors through that cycle of radicalization, personalizing the impact of the Holocaust with the presentation of personal items brought to Auschwitz by those destined never to leave it.

Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away. is curated by Musealia and a prestigious international panel of experts, including Dr. Robert Jan van Pelt, Dr. Michael Berenbaum and Paul Salmons, in collaboration with historians and curators at the Research Center at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, led by Dr. Piotr Setkiewicz.

The Midwest Center for Holocaust Education is pleased to announce our partnership with Union Station in offering this educational opportunity to the Kansas City community. Information about tours, professional development for educators, speakers and other programming will be available in January 2021.

MCHE To Host Local Teacher Workshop with USHMM

This February, in her new role as Director of Education, Shelly Cline traveled to Washington D.C. to participate in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Conference for Holocaust Education Centers (CHEC).

This four-day conference brought together education directors from Holocaust centers across the country as well as USHMM teaching fellows. Participants learned from Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, Dr. Rebecca Erbelding and numerous museum staff members.

The conference was designed to facilitate partnerships between centers and teaching fellows. The resulting product will be a local teacher workshop, now hosted virtually, in partnership with USHMM. The workshop will take place in October and focus on America and the Holocaust. Visit mchekc.org for developing details and registration.

“This conference was an exciting opportunity to connect with other education directors,” said Cline. “And it was one of the very last in-person conferences I was able to attend before the pandemic.

“Thankfully, the robust online resources offered by the museum and its social media presence has made it possible to maintain the connections fostered at CHEC.”
The MCHE team entered 2020 with big plans to expand our regional outreach through e-learning and technology. Just two months into our new roles and responsibilities, facing our busiest time of year, we realized that achieving this goal within the year was now an immediate necessity. As schools shifted to remote, as speakers were unable to travel, as we counted down to the 75th anniversary of the liberation of our survivors and to Yom HaShoah, MCHE made the transition over the course of one month.

Our first-ever virtual Yom HaShoah, with the intimacy of the candle lighting ceremony and reflections by Mary Covitz on her parents’ experiences, left a lasting impression. Despite schools completing the White Rose Essay Contest remotely, we received more entries than the previous year and were able to gather for a virtual reception to honor the students and their accomplishments.

MCHE has continued to teach throughout the intervening months, all while formulating a digital-first approach to the next year of programming in anticipation of prolonged closures and limitations on in-person gatherings.

Current Events
As we celebrate these successes, challenges remain along with many opportunities to expand the reach and impact of our programs. With election season upon us, we know that we will be called on to address instances of Holocaust obfuscation and misappropriation as it relates to Germany’s November 1932 election, which saw the ascendency of the Nazi Party. This provides an opportunity for education. Shelly Cline’s historical summary, “The Long Shadow of Propaganda,” proactively provides clarity on this issue (see page 7).

As America grapples with its history of ethnic and racial intolerance and violence, we see an opportunity to discuss foundational principles of racism and the intersection of American and German history through a discussion of the references to American Jim Crow laws made in Nazi anti-Jewish racial laws. This will be specifically addressed in our Fall Common Book and facilitated discussions (see page 6).

No Geographic Limits
As educators, students and families struggle to adapt to new educational conditions in which the only certainty is remote learning, we see an opportunity to share the messages of our local survivors and the lessons of the Holocaust with learners in our backyard and throughout the country.

The incorporation of remote access to trainings and classes is now a permanent feature of our educational offerings and available to participants anywhere with internet access.

This was demonstrated in the spring and summer when our courses and programs drew participation from New York, Colorado, North Carolina and more. Whether it be a program for adult community members or 7th graders, our ability to educate and create an impact is no longer limited by geography.

Technology Project
Educational systems are being revolutionized before our eyes. To address these changes, MCHE is pursuing a two-phased technology project. Phase 1 includes a full-scale redesign of our website. Among the enhancements will be increased visibility of our Witnesses to the Holocaust Archive, the launch of the flipped classroom lecture series, and, for the first time, full access to the MCHE catalogue of historical documentaries. Phase 2 of the project, still in research and development, involves implementation of a learning management system with access to MCHE-written learning modules for school use.

2020 has shown us that our mission remains pressing and relevant. Technology is giving us the 21st century tools to meet that need and increase our impact.
In my message this spring, I called 2020 a year of “transition and opportunity” for MCHE. That turned out to be quite an understatement, given the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest that now dominates our lives. Remarkably, the flexibility and imagination of our staff have permitted MCHE to fulfill its mission.

Our transition from in-person to virtual and the opportunities we are pursuing through technology have enabled MCHE’s work to continue full force.

All of our educational sessions are being conducted remotely to protect the safety of everyone. As described elsewhere in the newsletter, Executive Director Jessica Rockhold and Director of Education Dr. Shelly Cline have worked with extraordinary determination to maintain and enhance our programs.

If you attended the virtual session of the White Rose Student Essay Contest in May, it was truly inspirational. Jessica and Vice President of Education Rita Sudhalter did a marvelous job hosting the event. The featured students recited their essays with intelligence and vigor.

At our Annual Meeting in June we elected three new members to serve on the Board of Directors: Debbie Coe, Reggie Fink and Dr. Allen Gutovitz. Their dedication and commitment to MCHE is most welcome. We also give thanks to Alice Jacks Achtenberg and Kerry Kuluva for their many contributions to MCHE as they completed their board service, and to Tom Isenberg, Adele Levi and John Sharp who are leaving the Council of Advocates.

The eminent scholar Dr. Yehuda Bauer called the Holocaust a combination of the unique and the universal in his essay, “A Past That Will Not Go Away.” We should all be proud that our collective support has enabled MCHE to ensure that the memory of the Holocaust will never go away.

The unique and universal aspects of the Holocaust also drive our mission to apply its lessons to counter indifference, intolerance and genocide. Let us take those lessons, apply them to our daily experiences, and do our best to fight antisemitism, racism, injustice and genocide so that the world will become a better place.

Karl Zobrist is a partner in the Kansas City law office of Dentons US LLP, where he specializes in energy law and corporate governance issues. He is also vice chairman of the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission and a member of the board of trustees of Augustana College. He is president of the Truman Good Neighbor Award Foundation, his father, Dr. Benedict Zobrist having served as director of the Harry S. Truman Library from 1971 until 1994. He is also a former Chairman of the Missouri Public Service Commission (1996-97) and chaired the Missouri Energy Policy Task Force in 2001-02.

Kristallnacht 2020

Monday, November 9, 2020
6:30 p.m. via Zoom

This year’s community-wide Kristallnacht commemoration in partnership with Congregation Kol Ami will feature a lecture, “Kristallnacht on Film: From Reportage to Reenactments, 1938-1988,” presented by Dr. Lawrence Baron.

In the absence of firsthand footage of Kristallnacht, newsreels, documentaries and feature films employed a range of approaches to depict it in the ensuing decade. Dr. Baron will trace the evolution of these cinematic images within chronological and national contexts until home movies of the event surfaced in the 1980s. Clips of these portrayals of Kristallnacht will be screened.

Dr. Baron held the Nasatir Chair in Modern Jewish History at San Diego State University from 1988 until 2012. He is the author of Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema.

Registration required at www.mchekc.org/kristallnacht. Dr. Baron’s presentation is supported by the MCHE Jack Mandelbaum Holocaust Education Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City.
Thank you to the generous donors who supported the work of MCHE during our last fiscal year. We cannot do it without you!

Please use the envelope enclosed to become an MCHE member, renew your membership, or to make a general donation.

FALL LUNCH AND LEARN

Americans and the Holocaust

Holocaust history raises important questions about what Europeans, the United States and the international community could have done to stop the rise of Nazism in Germany and its assault on Europe’s Jews.

This five-week course will be presented by Dr. Shelly Cline, MCHE Historian and Director of Education, virtually on Zoom, beginning Wednesday, September 23, noon to 1:15 p.m. Participants will examine the motives, pressures and fears that shaped Americans’ responses to Nazism, war and genocide. Registration is FREE for MCHE members and $25 for non-members. Visit mchekc.org/lunchandlearn for registration details.

September 23 – The United States and the Nazi Threat

Though some individuals protested, the American response to Nazi Germany’s persecution of German Jews in the 1930s was limited. This session explores the reasons including the impact of the Great Depression and the aftermath of World War I.

September 30 – The United States and the Refugee Crisis

Between 1938 and 1941, Nazi Germany invaded and occupied much of Europe, bringing millions of Jews under its control while the United States remained neutral. This session explores the attitudes of Americans regarding immigration and entry into the war.

October 7 – The United States and the Holocaust

Throughout the war, Allied governments prioritized the military defeat of Germany. By 1943, the American press carried reports about the ongoing mass murder of Jews. This session explores what was known and what interventions were viable by that time.

October 14 – Winning the War and Shaping the Aftermath

In the final days of World War II, Allied forces liberated concentration camps, freeing thousands of Holocaust survivors. American magazines covered military victories and printed the first widely circulated photographs from concentration camps.

Between 1945 and the last Displaced Persons camp closure in 1957, approximately 140,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors immigrated to the United States. This session explores American policy in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

October 21 – Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law by James Q. Whitman

This session features a discussion of the MCHE Common Book (see page 6).

FALL/WINTER PROGRAM CALENDAR

All MCHE Fall programming will take place via Zoom for your safety. Full information and registration is available on our website at www.mchekc.org.

SEPTEMBER

Sept 23, 30
Lunch and Learn: America and the Holocaust

OCTOBER

October 7, 14, 21
Lunch and Learn: America and the Holocaust

October (TBD)
America and the Holocaust Teacher Workshop offered in cooperation with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

NOVEMBER

November 3
Election Day

November 9
Second Generation Speakers Panel student program

November 9
Annual Kristallnacht Commemoration featuring Dr. Lawrence Baron speaking on Kristallnacht on Film: From Reportage to Reenactments, 1938-1988

November 17
Exploring the Essay event for Educators

DECEMBER

December 1
Discussion of Fall 2020 Common Book Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law

JANUARY 2021

January 27
International Holocaust Remembrance Day Observance

info@mchekc.org   |   mchekc.org   |
In Hitler’s American Model, James Whitman presents a detailed investigation of the American impact on the notorious Nuremberg Laws, the centerpiece anti-Jewish legislation of the Nazi regime. Contrary to those who have insisted that there was no meaningful connection between American and German racial repression, Whitman demonstrates that the Nazis took a real, sustained and significant interest in American race policies.

As Whitman shows, the Nuremberg Laws were crafted in an atmosphere of considerable attention to the precedents American race laws had to offer. German praise for American practices, already found in Hitler’s Mein Kampf, continued throughout the early 1930s, and the most ideological Nazi lawyers were eager advocates of American models. While Jim Crow segregation appealed to Nazi radicals, it was not the most consequential influence. Rather, American citizenship and anti-miscegenation laws proved directly relevant to the two principal Nuremberg Laws—the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor. Whitman looks at the ultimate irony that when Nazis rejected American practices, it was not because they found them too enlightened but too harsh.

Indelibly linking American race laws to the shaping of Nazi policies in Germany, Hitler’s American Model upends understandings of America’s influence on racist practices in the wider world.

Survivor Profile
TOM LEWINSOHN

Tom Lewinsohn and his family lived comfortably among their non-Jewish neighbors in Berlin. Throughout the 1930s Tom experienced early Nazi persecution of the Jews. He was forced to attend an all-Jewish school, his father was only allowed to treat Jewish patients, and in 1938, the family hid through Kristallnacht.

Though his parents considered sending their children on a Kindertransport, the family chose to stay together and remained in Germany until January 1941, when a police official informed his father that the family was about to be deported. Boarding a train in the middle of the night, they fled to Shanghai—the only place then open to Jews—where they lived in a ghetto of 17,000 Jewish refugees. In 1948, Tom emigrated to the United States. Learn more about Tom and other Kansas City survivors at www.mchekc.org/survivors.

Common Book Recommendation

Join the MCHE community in reading Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law by James Q. Whitman and for a facilitated discussion of the book on Tuesday, December 1, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

In Hitler’s American Model, James Whitman presents a detailed investigation of the American impact on the notorious Nuremberg Laws, the centerpiece anti-Jewish legislation of the Nazi regime. Contrary to those who have insisted that there was no meaningful connection between American and German racial repression, Whitman demonstrates that the Nazis took a real, sustained and significant interest in American race policies.

About the author:
James Q. Whitman is an American lawyer and Ford Foundation Professor of Comparative and Foreign Law at Yale University. He graduated from Yale University with a B.A. and a J.D., from Columbia University with a M.A., and from the University of Chicago with a Ph.D. He was a Guggenheim Fellow.
The Long Shadow of Propaganda
LESSONS FROM THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC
DR. SHELLY CLINE

Economic despair, political turmoil, shaken national identity...failure.

These are the descriptors often associated with the Weimar Republic (1918-1932). This government was born amid the chaos of Germany's loss of the First World War and the paradigm shift that this great conflict produced. In its first years of existence, the new government battled hyperinflation and attempted coups from fringe parties but eventually found its footing. Due in large part to loans from the United States, economic and social stability returned.

Weimar's Golden Age
During the golden age of Weimar (1923-1929) there was much to celebrate. The constitution of the Weimar Republic ended censorship, established universal voting rights for men and women, guaranteed equal pay for women, and protected freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of religion. Under this government, universal education for children was guaranteed, welfare programs were expanded to combat homelessness, living standards for the working class improved, women entered the workforce, and the university education system served record numbers, especially in the fields of science, law and medicine.

Politics saw a similar influx of women, with Germany electing six times as many female officials as the United States. During the Weimar period, Germans won 20 Nobel Prizes, Berlin rivaled Hollywood as the center of the cinematic world, and Bauhaus and New Objectivity drove artistic movements. The Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin was the first of its kind and pioneered the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

Why Weimar Failed
The Weimar Republic was the most liberal democratic government the world had seen. Art, science, music and literature flourished during this period, and yet for most people its name is synonymous with failure. This failure is often cited as the reason for the rise of Nazism. Weimar did not fail because it was destined to do so, or because it represented too much change too fast. Rather, it failed because the U.S. economy crashed. The loans given to Germany were called in and the German economy followed the American economy into depression. The end of Weimar was as chaotic as its beginning, and in this atmosphere of economic loss and uncertainly, the Nazi Party gained a foothold.

In 1928 the Nazi Party gained only 2% of the national vote. In 1930 it received 18%, and in the election of November 1932 the Nazi Party secured only 37% of the national vote—the largest it would ever receive in a free election. The Nazi Party ran on a platform of job creation, national security, law and order, anti-immigration, remilitarization, and a return to “traditional” German values. All of this is represented in the electioneering posters from the early 1930s. This propaganda showed Hitler as a strong leader who could save Germany from foreign influence, who would put people back to work, who would protect the German family, and who would restore Germany to its former status.

Freedom Once Won
This early propaganda minimized the virulent antisemitic messaging that would come to define later years and dominate actual policy under the Nazi government. No doubt some of those 37% voted for the Nazi Party because of its stance on Jews and other persecuted groups. Still others cast their vote for the Nazis in spite of it. Many were willing to tolerate the unsavory politics of the Nazi Party in favor of the benefits they perceived they would gain from its ascendancy. Those who voted in the election of 1932 did not know it would be the last free election a united Germany would see for over half a century.

The image of the Weimar Republic as a failure is also part of the long shadow cast by Nazi propaganda. It was the Nazis who first so effectively marketed this idea and who erased Weimar's many achievements. The lesson of the Weimar Republic is not that the rise of the Nazi Party was an inevitable outcome of a failed state. Rather, it is a reminder that once won, freedoms and progress must be jealously guarded and protected.
International Holocaust Remembrance Day

ICONS OF THE HOLOCAUST: SYMBOLIZING THE SHOAH IN HISTORY AND MEMORY

Wednesday, January 27, 2021, 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

The railway cars, the Arbeit Macht Frei signs, the number six million—all have become enduring icons of the Holocaust. Jewish Studies scholar Oren Stier will discuss how and why these icons—an object, a phrase and a number—have come to stand in for the Holocaust. He will explore their origins, how they have been used and reproduced, how they are under threat, and what the future holds for Holocaust memory.

Professor Stier received a Ph.D. and an M.A. in religious studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara and a B.A. with Honors in religion from Princeton University. He was Museum Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2003-2004. He is the Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Judaic Studies Program at Florida International University, and Co-Chair of the Religion, Holocaust and Genocide Group at the American Academy of Religion.

Professor Stier’s presentation is supported by the MCHE Jack Mandelbaum Holocaust Education Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City.