



# MCHEnews

MIDWEST CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION MAKING A DIFFERENCE SINCE 1993

FALL/WINTER | 2024/2025

## Through Hell to the Midwest

NEW MAPPING PROJECT TRACES SURVIVOR JOURNEYS

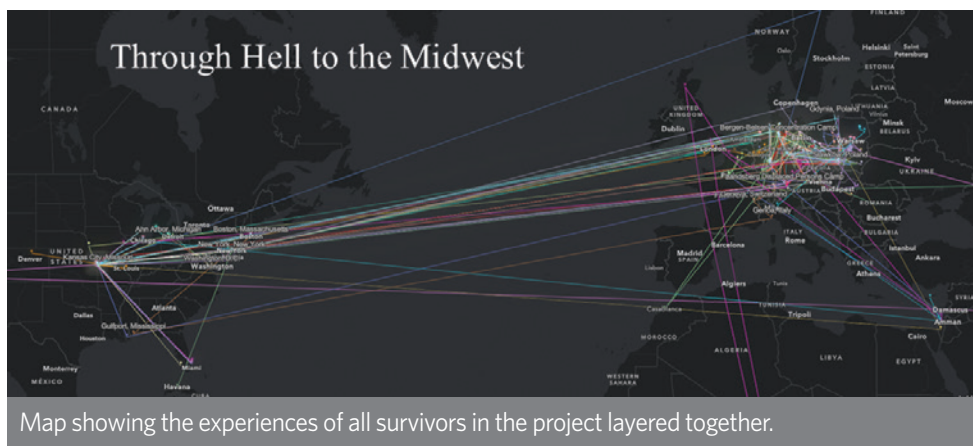
The Witnesses to the Holocaust Archive is the centerpiece of MCHE’s teaching collection. Preserving the testimony and ensuring that it is used responsibly in service of teaching the lessons of the Holocaust is the measure by which MCHE evaluates all requests to utilize the testimonies. One such request came to us from Dr. Amber Nickell and Professor Hollie Marquess in the Fort Hays State University History Department. Long-time MCHE partners, they had a vision for an innovative project utilizing the testimonies.

*Through Hell to the Midwest* is a mapping project that traces the stories of survivors who settled in the Kansas City area. Using oral history testimony collected by MCHE and dually housed in the Fortunoff Archive at Yale University, they have meticulously followed the path of each survivor in the archive, tracing their steps from their hometowns in Central and Eastern Europe, through their Holocaust experiences to their new lives in Kansas and Missouri.

### Maps, Documents and Patterns

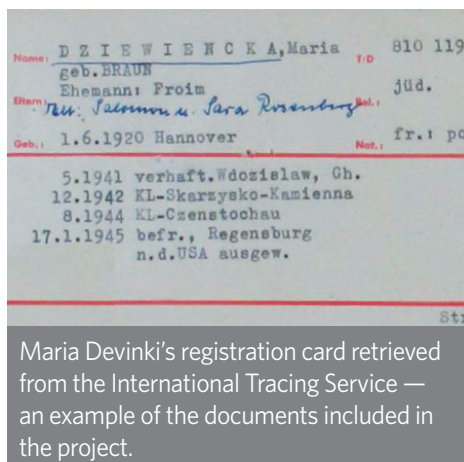
The maps allow learners to gain a sense of the movement of survivors over vast swaths of Europe and to understand how much movement was common in these experiences. By layering the maps, learners can identify patterns based on the survivor’s country of origin, shared experiences and family connections. The maps are interactive and take the user not only to well-known locations like the

Lodz Ghetto and Auschwitz, but track unique locations mentioned by survivors such as hiding places and references to being near other locations.



Map showing the experiences of all survivors in the project layered together.

In addition to highlighting the oral histories and tracing the survivors’ paths, the project has secured any available documents from the International Tracing Service — an internationally governed archive containing documents from Nazi and Displaced Persons Camps — and connected them to the survivors’ profiles.



Maria Devinkí’s registration card retrieved from the International Tracing Service — an example of the documents included in the project.

### Countering Denial

“In MCHE’s earliest years, our focus was on capturing and preserving survivor testimonies,” said MCHE Executive Director Jessica Rockhold reflecting on the impact of the project. “In the intervening years, our focus shifted to

making them accessible and, even more importantly, allowing them to live in the current moment. Access is important, but ensuring their relevance in the world today is critical.

*Continued on page 3*

*“Working on this project has been incredibly rewarding. We hope this can function as a teaching tool for future generations, and we look forward to expanding the project to trace the experiences of other midwestern survivors.”*

Hollie Marquess  
Professor of History, FHSU  
Primary Investigator and Co-Author

# A Message of Hope

REFLECTING ON A YEAR SINCE OCTOBER 7

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE | JESSICA ROCKHOLD



Under heavily armed guard on the so-called Day of Rage, October 13, 2023, we attended Shabbat dinner in Prague where we marked the first sabbath since 10/7

with people from the Czech Republic, Israel, Yemen and the United States. In the midst of singing and celebration we acknowledged the tragedy that had occurred and, for our group — people in Europe specifically to travel to sites of atrocity and to remember that victimhood — there was a profound sense of layered importance to our experience.

As I think back on those early days, I remember speaking to survivors who, because of the antisemitism that was unleashed following 10/7, did not feel comfortable in their own community. A sense of dread had revisited them, and they were not sure how to balance their sense of duty to speak with their fear. I recall vividly the news that a synagogue in Vienna experienced an arson attack within days of the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*.

## Thirst for Information

Though every member of our MCHE community has a distressing story to tell about their experiences last year, I want to share with you the hope that I see in the aftermath of 10/7.

Despite the dramatic increase in already all-time high levels of antisemitic incidents, we have seen an unprecedented number of requests for information about antisemitism. We have seen outreach from every segment of our community asking for credible information, wanting to truly learn and discuss, and voicing their steadfast commitment to not allowing antisemitism to take root where they have influence.

To meet that demand, we significantly increased both our responsive and proactive outreach — delivering programs to school groups and educators, the Jewish community, faith communities, social service groups, and general audiences including rural regions of both Kansas and Missouri. We participated in JCRB|AJC's Antisemitism Summit and are the designated presenters on this topic for the Missouri Holocaust Commission,

teaching a session about antisemitism in each of their professional development workshops in support of the Holocaust education mandate.

## Recognize, Understand, Empower

What we have learned this year is that 30+ years of Holocaust education has created a public that recognizes a problem and wants to address it. What we also know is that you cannot fight what you cannot clearly recognize and name. So our work this year has been to teach people to recognize modern antisemitism, to understand the historical continuum of which it is a part, and to empower them to intervene when they see it.

In opening the Auschwitz exhibition in 2021, Holocaust historian Dr. Michael Berenbaum said, "We who work in the Holocaust have a dream that will not be realized in my lifetime. And that's the dream to become irrelevant because we speak of a world that could not be ours."

As we work toward that dream, we are grateful to the many who have reached out in support and in the quest for knowledge to realize that goal.

## Bringing Europe Home

LEARNING FROM 2023 STUDY TOUR

In 2023 MCHE hosted its inaugural European Study Tour. To bring the learning home, MCHE will offer presentations in the year following each trip, and we invite you to join us for the remaining sessions from 2023 presented by MCHE's Dr. Shelly Cline and Jessica Rockhold.

At these sessions you will learn about the history and current state of memorialization explored when we visited Munich, Prague, Krakow, and Budapest and the Holocaust sites in and around those cities.

- October 16 - Jewish Prague and the Terezin Ghetto
- October 23 - Czech Resistance and the Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich
- October 30 - Jewish Krakow and the Płaszów Camp
- November 6 - Holocaust Memorialization in Europe Today

These sessions are free and open to the public with registration at [mchekc.org](https://mchekc.org).



Płaszów Memorial erected in 1964.

# The Time Is Now to Ensure MCHE's Future

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE | STEVEN E. COLE

As a supporter and member of your Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, please consider including a gift or sustaining membership in MCHE in your estate plan. Your assistance will be needed for years to come as MCHE sustains and expands its output and impact.

Why is providing for MCHE's future so important right now? The Holocaust occurred 80-plus years ago. While the Shoah is ever present and front of mind for MCHE followers and supporters, the Nazis' murder of six million Jews and millions of others is for many — two generations after World War II — but one historical event.

For too many, it is unfamiliar or vaguely understood as we learned from the 2018 Claims Conference survey on Holocaust knowledge among millennials. One can imagine the situation worsening as the story of the largest genocide in history is forced to "compete" with an ever-increasing body of history. MCHE is the only organization in our region working to keep the Holocaust in school curricula and relevant to students and the general community.

## Consider the Challenge

By supporting MCHE in your estate plan, you enable it to invest in tools and personnel that will ensure that knowledge of the Holocaust and its lessons remain present, have contemporary relevance, and are understood and not forgotten.

Consider the challenge. Today the volume of history that can be presented must vie for time in an overpacked academic year. Add to that nefarious activities of revisionists and deniers who seek to minimize, rewrite, or skip Holocaust subject matter. Keeping MCHE's subject matter included and accurate in school curricula and providing it through evolving methods of conveyance and teaching will take effort, resources and ingenuity.

These resources include lesson plans and supporting materials, speakers to convey the material, and increasingly e-learning/tech conveyance. MCHE provides these items and more to educators at no cost to make it easier to include the subject matter and teach it accurately. MCHE must perpetually cultivate and

refresh relationships with school districts, community groups, and teachers to gain acceptance of and an audience for our materials.



## Support to Prevent

Why support this? In a sentence, if knowledge of the Shoah is lost, how can we hope to prevent it from happening again?

Think of the future student in rural Missouri who in 20 years completes their education with an accurate and meaningful understanding of the Holocaust. That education increases the chance that they will reject hatred, bigotry and intolerance.

In the fiscal year that began in June 2024, MCHE will create a new strategic plan, building upon successes of the past with an eye on future needs. Please consider MCHE's future needs and your ability to make this work possible in the years to come. Jessica Rockhold, our Executive Director, will be happy to discuss the many ways you can help.

## Continued from page 1

"This mapping project is a remarkable achievement in terms of accessibility and relevance. It makes the survivors' experiences real and concrete in a way that only geography can and, by adding the documents, it clearly refutes any attempt at denying that this happened. We are grateful that the survivors' stories will move forward in such a dynamic and engaging way."

The project is ongoing and new testimonies are being added. An initiative is underway with the families of survivors to supplement the materials available in each profile. We invite you to visit the project at [mchekc.org](http://mchekc.org) and to check back often.

*"Through Hell to the Midwest is a remarkable project for a number of reasons. First of all, it is a model cooperative digital humanities project in which scholars, graduate students, archivists and educators are working together to reveal information about the life trajectories of survivors that are not as easily visualized or made legible without the help of these modern methods and technology.*

*But more importantly, on a collective level, since these are all survivors who landed for one reason or another, in Kansas City, it is a reminder of the fact that the Holocaust is not some history far remote in space and time, but a history that is close to home and an integral part of the American experience. These KC survivors could have been your neighbors, and thus their wartime struggle and pain, their family histories as well as their multifaceted contributions to postwar life in Kansas City, are part of our story as well."*

Stephen Naron  
Director, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies  
Yale University



# Comparing Artists' Interpretations of Sexual Violence in Ravensbrück and Auschwitz

Last May, MCHE awarded its second Ruthie Graduate Research Award to Alexandra McCarthy, a PhD candidate in Genocide and Holocaust Studies at Gratz College in Melrose Park, Pennsylvania. Alexandra, whose work focuses on artistic interpretations of sexual violence in the Holocaust, will present her research supported by this scholarship on January 16, at 6:30 p.m.

Her presentation will discuss depictions of sexual violence in the art of Ravensbrück and Auschwitz survivors, including brief overviews of the artists' experiences, backgrounds and artistic life prior to and after the Holocaust. She will also explore why considering art as a form of testimony is important in thinking about women's testimonies.

Registration for the Zoom presentation is available at [mchekc.org](https://mchekc.org).

The Ruthie Tivol Graduate Research Fund was established by Ruthie Abend Krigel Tivol and supported by her family to further graduate students' research.



Zwei Stehende (Two Women Standing) memorial stands near the crematorium of Ravensbrück concentration camp.

*"Through this study, I am looking at art through a thematic approach, working to determine if and what types of sexual violence occurred within each of the camps respectively. Additionally, I am looking at and analyzing archival oral testimonies to better understand the archival testimonial data describing the types of sexual violence that was witnessed or experienced first-hand."*

Alexandra McCarthy



Peter Newman

## SURVIVOR PROFILE

# Peter Newman

Peter Newman was born in July 1938 in Vienna, Austria, to Lisa and Karl Neumann. Since the *Anschluss* had taken place four months earlier on March 13, 1938, his birth certificate was stamped "Jewish."

Peter's parents made arrangements to move to Zagreb, Yugoslavia (Croatia), after his birth. They lived in Zagreb until Nazi troops attacked Yugoslavia in April 1941. Peter and his parents later escaped to Italy, where they were captured by Italian Fascists. They were imprisoned in Ferramonti di Tarsia, a concentration camp in the Campania Region of Italy, from July 31, 1941 until September 3, 1943.

After their liberation by Allied troops, the family made their way to Naples where they were among 982 people allowed to enter the U.S. as "guests" of the government until the end of the war. They sailed from Naples aboard the USS Henry Gibbon in July 1944. Upon arriving in the U.S. they were taken to a decommissioned army camp, the Emergency Refugee Center at Fort Ontario, on the banks of Lake Ontario outside of Oswego, New York.

While in Oswego, Peter attended school. In February 1946, Peter and his parents were notified that they could remain in the U.S., and they resettled in Kansas City, Missouri.

**To learn more about Peter's story, visit <https://mchekc.org/testimonial/peter-newman/>.**

# Survivor Memoirs

## JUDY JACOBS' *JUTKA* JOINS LOCAL SURVIVOR TESTIMONY COLLECTION

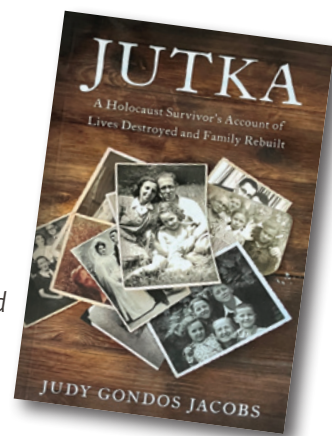
Survivor testimony has come to us in waves in the decades following the Holocaust. The earliest testimonies were recorded in the displaced persons camps in the year following liberation. Among the most prominent collections were those of psychologist David Boder, who conducted over 100 interviews in the camps in 1946. They provide raw and emotional testimony about an experience from which its witnesses had no distance or time to process.

Those were followed by the earliest memoirs — written accounts that attempted to place order and structure on a story that was experienced as chaos. Most of the earliest memoirs were written in European languages and only later translated into English. Among them were prominent pieces that would shape the genre, including Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* and the first edition of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, both published in 1947.

### *Lives Destroyed, Family Rebuilt*

Though survivors were willing to speak and testimonies were collected and preserved, many testimonies were not studied or published extensively until after the Eichmann Trial in 1961 when public interest in the Holocaust expanded exponentially. That trial, the 1978 mini-series *Holocaust*, and 1993's *Schindler's List*, which was immediately followed by the opening of Holocaust education museums and centers worldwide, each led to an explosion of public interest, testimony collection, and writings by and about survivors.

Local survivors are represented in each of these waves and the most recent publication, *Jutka: A Holocaust Survivor's Account of Lives Destroyed and Family Rebuilt*, sits amidst the current testimony collection. Its author, Judy Gondos Jacobs, survived the Hungarian occupation and imprisonment in Bergen-Belsen as a small child. A recent Claims Conference survey tells us that 95% of still-living survivors worldwide are child survivors. It is their testimony now being collected and studied.



### *I Was There*

When asked why she chose this moment to write her memoir, Judy reflected, "The number of Holocaust survivors is rapidly diminishing and soon there will be no one to provide eyewitness testimony about Hitler's atrocities. I am obligated to tell the world what actually happened because I was there."

She noted that in addition to wanting to teach the history and raise awareness she "hoped to provide my family — including those yet to be born — with insights about our past."

Judy's book follows the lives of her family members as they move from normal life in Hungary, through the Hungarian persecution of the Jews, the Nazi occupation and their incarceration in Bergen-Belsen, through their liberation and finally to building new lives in America.

## BOOKS TIED TO LOCAL SURVIVOR FAMILIES

*Jutka* joins the following books published by or about survivors with ties to Kansas City and the region. If you know of a published survivor testimony not on this list, we invite you to contact us at [info@mchekc.org](mailto:info@mchekc.org).

*Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps*  
by Andrea Warren (2001)

*Love the World*  
by Maureen Moffitt (2008)

*Growing Up In The Holocaust*  
by Ben Edelbaum (1980)

*Tapestry of Hope*  
by Alice Kern (1988)

*Standing on Their Shoulders: A Davidovitz Family History*  
by Devra Lerner (2022)



*Czech Escape*  
by John Irvin (2002)

*Voices of the Past*  
by Klaus Frank (1999)

*Needle in the Bone*  
by Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg (2013)

*Through Eva's Eyes*  
by Phoebe Eloise Unterman (2009)

*By Pure Luck*  
by Fela Igielnik (2012)

# Johnson-Reed Act of 1924

By Shelly M. Cline, PhD

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act (1924). Drafted in the years following the First World War, this legislation strictly limited the number of immigrants allowed into the United States based on a quota of national origins. The quotas, based on the 1880 national census, allowed for two percent of the total number of each nationality already living in the U.S. Immigrants from Asia were completely prohibited from immigration.

This was a change from the previous law, passed in 1921, that allowed for three percent of the total population of the foreign-born of each nationality as recorded in the 1910 census. The years between 1880 and 1910 were among the most significant years of immigration to the U.S. By benchmarking against the 1880 census instead of the 1910 census and lowering the permitted percentage, legislators significantly decreased the number of visas allowed and reshaped which countries had

access to immigration. The Act created a system which preferred individuals from Britain and Western Europe while making immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe increasingly difficult.

When Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish policies created an immigration crisis in the 1930s, the U.S. quotas remained in place. This crisis was worsened by the territorial conquest of Europe and essentially closed off American immigration to Jewish refugees. Rather than adjust the number of visas issued in response to this emergency, the U.S. held to the letter of the law and in fact rarely even issued the number of available visas in the years leading up to World War II when immigration would have been most possible and saved the most lives.

The Johnson-Reed Act was meant to preserve an ideal of U.S. homogeneity — instead it marks a profound failure to respond to a humanitarian crisis that became a genocide. Filling or raising these quotas was perhaps the single greatest

opportunity for the U.S. government to intervene on behalf of the threatened European Jewish community in the years leading up to the war. Inaction in response to the mounting threat left most Jewish refugees with few options beyond flight within continental Europe where they were eventually swept up in Nazi occupations. The Johnson-Reed Act remained in place until 1965.



Jewish refugee children are shown on the deck of the SS President Harding looking out at the lower New York skyline. June 3, 1939. Photo credit: National Archives and Records Administration, College Park. Copyright: Public Domain.

## COMMON BOOK DISCUSSION

### *The Counterfeit Countess: The Jewish Woman Who Rescued Thousands of Poles During the Holocaust* by Elizabeth B. White and Joanna Sliwa

FEBRUARY 20, 6:30 PM VIA ZOOM | DR. SHELLY CLINE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE AUTHORS

Rescue and resistance are complicated topics in the Holocaust. Though admirable, they are often disproportionately represented, allowing us to congratulate humanity on its goodness without also interrogating its failings. However, when balanced appropriately, these topics can provide unique insight into the capacity of human behavior.

In German-occupied Poland, Dr. Josephine Janina Mehlberg rescued some 10,000 Poles while posing as the Polish aristocrat

“Countess Janina Suchodolska.”

Although Jewish, Mehlberg was able to obtain false identity papers and worked as a welfare official while also serving in the Polish resistance. With guile, cajolery and steely persistence, the “Countess” persuaded SS officials to release thousands of Poles from Majdanek and won permission to deliver food and medicine for thousands more of the camp’s prisoners.

At the same time, she personally smuggled supplies and messages to resistance fighters imprisoned at

Majdanek, where 63,000 Jews were murdered in gas chambers and shooting pits. Incredibly, although the Gestapo tried to trap her, she eluded detection and the torture and execution that would have followed, ultimately surviving the war and eventually emigrating to the U.S.

The public is invited to read the book and join the discussion on February 20. Registration is available at [mchekc.org](http://mchekc.org).





# IMPACT

Annual Report | Fiscal Year 2024

MIDWEST CENTER FOR  
HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

**THE MCHE TEAM** finds themselves doing this work in difficult and unique times. It is a contentious American election year when we are called upon to address instances of Holocaust misappropriation. We are also working amidst the first long Israeli war and during all-time high levels of worldwide antisemitism. Hatred that was already creeping to the center from the fringes has been allowed into the open to flourish.

As a field, Holocaust education is facing a moment of existential crisis — grappling with questions of what has and has not been successful in the last 30 years. There is a sense that this year will have been a transformative moment in the field and also that, without the dedicated work of the last three decades, the impact of current antisemitism would have been much more devastating than it has already been.

We are also thinking collectively as professionals about how we navigate this period of time when the Holocaust moves from lived memory to history. What we know beyond doubt is that our work is more relevant and critical than ever, and our impact each year continues to grow.

Jessica Rockhold, Executive Director

**MCHE**  
maintains  
a **strong**  
**financial**  
**position**  
thanks to

**the support** of our **members**,  
which once again marks the **highest**  
**total** in our **31 years**



**a Legacy Donation Challenge**  
**Grant** from MCHE benefactors  
**Karen and Mike Herman**, who  
matched **\$50,000** in new  
memberships through 2023,



**support** from the **following grants**



White Family Supporting Foundation  
at the Jewish Community Foundation

## THIS YEAR WE ...

Delivered **79 Rosh Hashanah bags** and marked **86 survivor birthdays** including a **101st birthday for Charlotte Frank**.



Delivered **quarterly programs** for the **Missouri Holocaust Commission** in support of the **Holocaust education mandate**, taking effect in **2025**.

Completed our **30th anniversary series — I Witness —** featuring 7 conversations with **local survivors** for public audiences.

Hosted the first annual **Yom Hashoah Reception** for **survivors and their families**.

Partnered with the **Mizel Museum** in **Denver, Colorado**, to professionally record the testimony of **3 area survivors** who were not already part of the **Witnesses to the Holocaust Archive**.



## 2024 Holocaust Educator of the Year

HONORING PENNY SELLE,  
NOTRE DAME DE SION,  
KANSAS CITY, MO



Penny concluded her acceptance remarks with the following reflection on her students: "I am particularly grateful to my students for their constant curiosity, conviction and caring — who keep asking the important questions: What's the difference between genocide, war and war crimes? What responsibilities do other countries have when genocide is happening? How could the Shoah have happened? And most importantly, what can I do to make sure I am not a bystander? That nothing like the Holocaust ever happens again?"

# AWARDS & CELEBRATIONS



## Honored with the 2023 Table of Faiths Award

from The Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council recognizing MCHE's work across faith communities.

## 2024 Ruthie Research Scholar

SUPPORTING ALEXANDRA MCCARTHY,  
PH.D. CANDIDATE, GRATZ COLLEGE, MELROSE PARK, PA



Alexandra's research explores sexual violence and the artistic expression of femininity in the Holocaust. In describing her research, Alexandra had this to say, "Through this study, I am looking at art through a thematic approach, working to determine if and what types of sexual violence occurred within each of the camps respectively. Additionally, I am looking at and analyzing archival oral testimonies to better understand the archival testimonial data describing the types of sexual violence that was witnessed or experienced first-hand."

# WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ...

*"The Mizel Museum is honored to partner with the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education to record the testimonies of local survivors, as we recognize the immense importance of preserving and sharing the history of the Holocaust.*

*Together, we strive to educate and inspire individuals about the atrocities of the past, promoting tolerance, empathy and social justice in our society today. Through our collaborative efforts, we aim to create a world where the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten, fostering a future rooted in compassion and understanding."*

— MEG ROBBINS,  
ASSOCIATE EDUCATION AND SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER,  
MIZEL MUSEUM

*"The MCHE Panel Event was very moving and educational for those who attended. We're grateful that descendants of survivors of the Holocaust are moved and determined to continue to share the truths of what was experienced.*

*We must remember. We cannot forget!"*

— REV. CHERYL JEFFERSON BELL,  
PASTOR OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE,  
RESURRECTION, A UNITED METHODIST CHURCH





# MCHE REACH

July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

**Best membership year  
in our 31-year history —**

**\$193,000**

and breaking our membership record for  
the **4th year running!**



Delivered

**91**

**direct content  
presentations.**



Reached learners in  
**30 states  
and multiple  
countries.**



Over

**81,000**

**views of our online  
content on YouTube.**



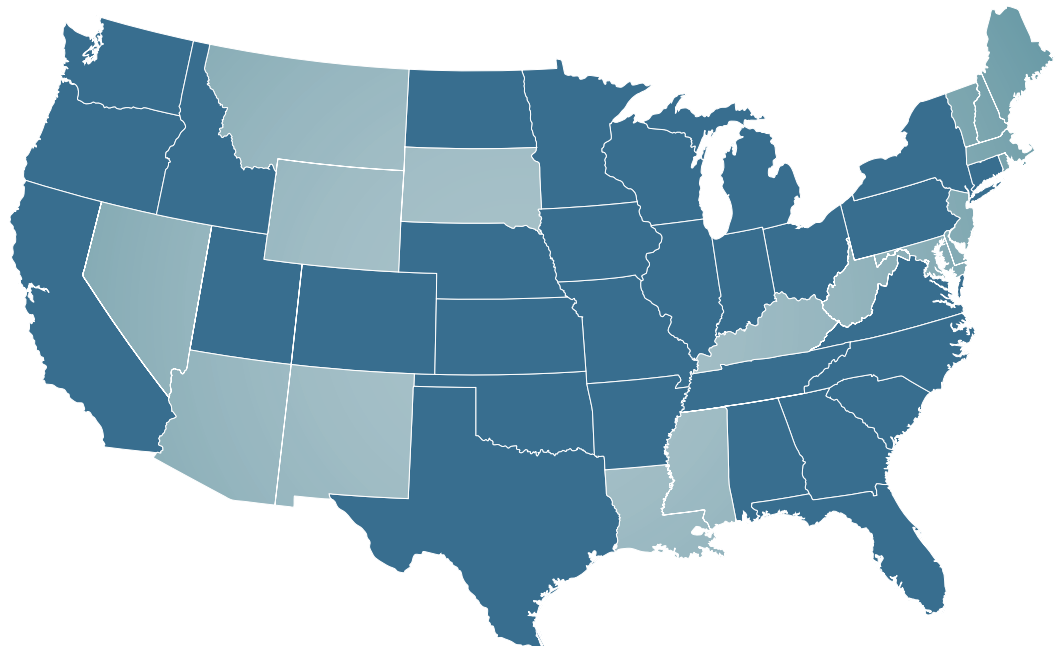
Earned MCHE's first  
**4-Star Charity Navigator Rating**  
to accompany our  
**Platinum Guidestar Rating.**



## STATES REACHED

**Direct participation** in MCHE educational programming from the **U.S.**

Alabama	Nebraska
Arkansas	New York
California	North Carolina
Colorado	North Dakota
Connecticut	Ohio
Florida	Oklahoma
Georgia	Oregon
Idaho	Pennsylvania
Illinois	South Carolina
Indiana	Tennessee
Iowa	Texas
Kansas	Utah
Michigan	Virginia
Minnesota	Washington
Missouri	Wisconsin



# PROGRAMS & MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## Yahad-In Unum Training for Educators

Hosted educators from Yahad-In Unum for a special 17-hour symposium for teachers made possible through the generous support of the family of Isak and Ann Federman, in recognition of their commitment to Holocaust education.



## Antisemitism Education in the Post 10/7 Space

MCHE significantly increased both our responsive and proactive outreach and delivered programs to school groups and educators, the Jewish community, faith communities, social service groups, and general audiences including in rural regions of Kansas and Missouri. We participated in JCRB|AJC's Antisemitism Summit and are the designated presenters on this topic for the Missouri Holocaust Commission, teaching this session in each of their professional development workshops in support of the mandate.



## Europe 2023

Traveled with 20 learners on MCHE's inaugural European Study Tour visiting Holocaust sites in and around Munich, Prague, Krakow and Budapest, including the Jewish quarters of each city, Dachau, Terezin, Płaszów and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

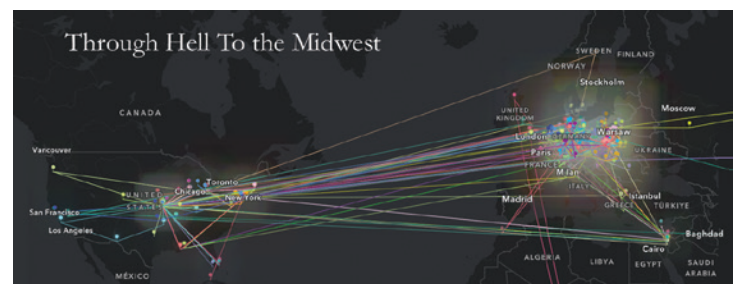


## Monument Stabilization Project

Having assumed ownership of the Memorial to the Six Million in July 2023, MCHE has begun work to stabilize the structure ahead of future conservation work.

## Through Hell to the Midwest

Announced the launch of a new project that represents a significant step forward in making our local survivor testimonies accessible and relevant to the next generation. We were pleased to grant access to two Fort Hays State University history professors to utilize our testimony collection in their innovative project *Through Hell to the Midwest*.



**Midwest Center for Holocaust Education**  
5801 West 115th Street, Suite 106  
Overland Park, Kansas 66211-1800



J.E.D.I. Award Recipient  
Justice - Equity  
Diversity - Inclusion  
Perspective Group, LLC  
Lawrence, KS



# Kristallnacht Commemoration 2024

**KRISTALLNACHT: BEYOND BROKEN GLASS**

**NOVEMBER 6, 6:30 P.M.**

**JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, THE WHITE THEATRE**

For many years the violent attack on German, Austrian and Sudetenland Jews on November 9 and 10, 1938, was referred to as *Kristallnacht*. This name conjures images of shattered windows and burned synagogues. What it does not capture is the personal violence experienced by hundreds of individuals during this period.

People were attacked and beaten in their homes and women experienced sexual assault. This was an event that went far beyond property damage. For this reason, *Kristallnacht* is now increasingly referred to as the November Pogrom. The word pogrom, which means to destroy or demolish violently, was first used to describe the attacks on Jews

living within Russian territory in the 19th century.

This year's commemoration seeks to recognize the human experience of *Kristallnacht*. *Beyond Broken Glass* is a dance performance exploring universal experiences of childhood, school, community, home, family, citizenship, race, religion and relocation shared through eyewitness testimony within the framework of *Kristallnacht*.

*Beyond Broken Glass* features the



Space memorializing *Kristallnacht* in Hamburg, Germany — the void, where the synagogue used to stand, represents the loss of Hamburg's Jewish community.

music of composer John Currey and the choreography of Suzanne Ryanstrati. This is Ryanstrati's second project presented with MCHE.

Registration is requested at [mchekc.org](http://mchekc.org).

## "Where they burn books..."

By Dr. Shelly Cline

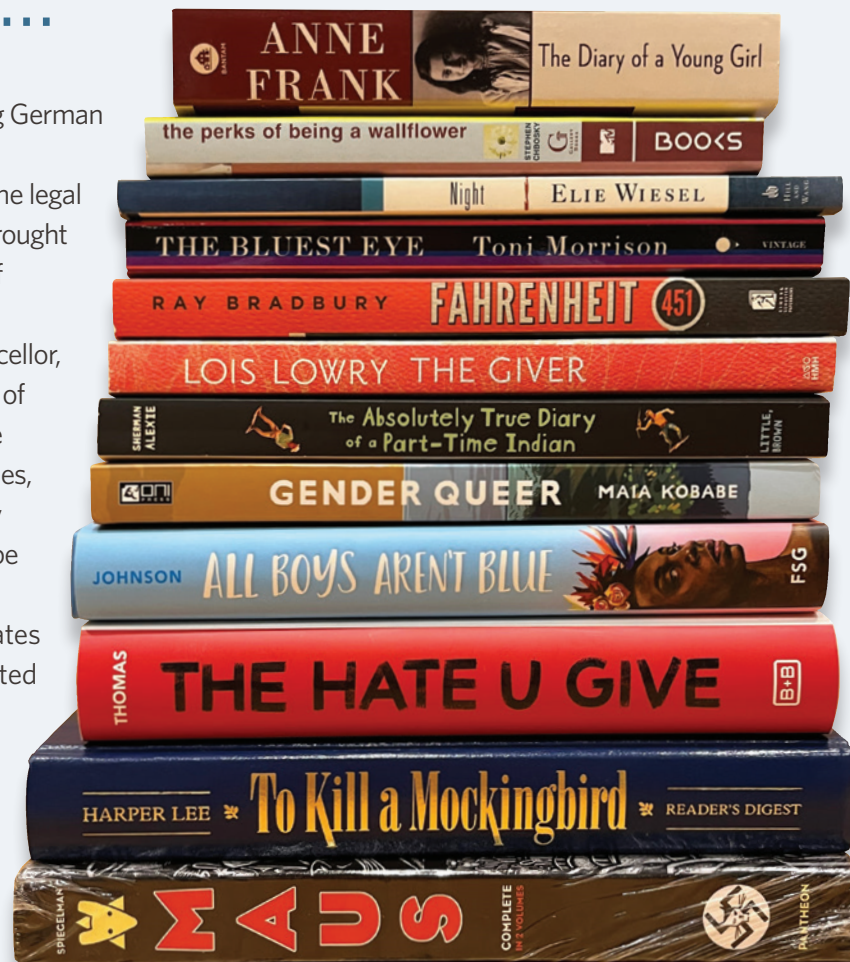
In its first months, the Nazi regime focused on rapidly dismantling German democracy and transforming German society.

During this period all Germans lost some of their civil rights and the legal and medical establishments were Nazified. Education was similarly brought under Nazi control as the Reich's Ministry of Education took control of schools and teachers and mandated Nazi curriculum.

In May of 1933, just four months after Hitler was appointed Chancellor, the government began a series of book burnings in the public squares of cities and towns throughout Germany. More than 25,000 books were thrown into bonfires during ceremonies that included torchlight parades, band music, "fire oaths," and speeches by Nazi officials and university professors. These spectacles sent a powerful message about what type of thought and whose ideas were acceptable in this new society.

A free society depends on freedom of thought. Totalitarian states always strive to control the ideas of their people. MCHE is committed to applying the lessons of the Holocaust to the world today, which includes protecting democracy and the free exchange of ideas.

MCHE marked Banned Book Month by highlighting this history and giving away 12 books currently banned or challenged in the United States. We are grateful for the gift of banned and challenged books from Monarch Books & Gifts and an anonymous donor which made this program possible.





DONATIONS RECEIVED JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

THANK YOU for your support which resulted in our largest membership year in the history of the organization. We cannot do it without you!

Please visit [mchekc.org/membership](http://mchekc.org/membership) to use the enclosed envelope to become a member, renew your membership for 2025, make a general donation, or give a gift membership.

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A special thank you to our patrons who donate anonymously. We regret any errors or omissions and would appreciate your contacting the MCHE office at [danas@mchekc.org](mailto:danas@mchekc.org) with any needed corrections.

\*Of blessed memory

# THANK YOU

We are deeply grateful to members of the MCHE community who have created a legacy gift providing ongoing support or answered our requests to support specific needs in the last year.



**Our thanks to Karen and Mike Herman** for their second year of support for the Herman Family Initiative — a challenge grant that matches the first \$50,000 brought in by new and increased memberships in 2024. We are grateful that they chose to give their planned gift during their lifetimes so they can see the legacy they are creating. We invite you to

join now or increase your current membership at year-end to **DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!**

**Our thanks to the family of Isak and Ann Federman** for their support of the summer 2024 symposium "The Holocaust By Bullets." This unique opportunity for professional educators allowed them to understand the broader history of the Holocaust in the East while examining the micro history of individual communities whose Jewish population was murdered in *Einsatzgruppen* actions.



**Our thanks to MCHE co-founder Jack Mandelbaum**, of blessed memory, and his family for the legacy gift establishing the MCHE Jack Mandelbaum Innovation Fund — a significant resource providing for the establishment and ongoing support of new and innovative educational initiatives. This gift helps to ensure that Jack's vision of

robust Holocaust education in the Midwest is carried forward in perpetuity and reaches new generations of learners.

**Our thanks to Dr. Judy Jacobs** for her generous support of our first annual reception for survivors and their families on Yom Hashoah. This gathering dovetails with our Generations Initiative and our expanded outreach to the local survivor community, supporting our goals to build community and connection.



**Our thanks to Kathy Krigel Hawley and Scott Hawley** for their generous support of the Ruthie Research Fund, expanding the capacity of MCHE to award graduate research grants to deserving young scholars. This program supports the next generation of Holocaust scholars, helping to ensure that Holocaust studies remains a current and relevant field of study.



**Our thanks to Teri and Ken Sackin** who, through the Eugene M and Marjorie E Sackin Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation, funded two of MCHE's requests submitted to JCF as a Current Community Need. Their support provided the funding necessary to purchase the archival housings to complete a reorganization of the New Americans Archive

materials, making them accessible to researchers. Their gift also supported the creation of MCHE's 2024 Rosh Hashanah gift bags delivered to our local survivors, helping them to celebrate the new year.

**Our thanks to the White Family Supporting Foundation at the Jewish Community Foundation** for their support in the establishment of our Generations of the Holocaust Initiative. This series of programs, designed for the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, seeks to help each participant find their own individual path to participating in the generational transmission of memory and to build community around their shared family history.



# Why I



## **Why I am leaving a legacy with MCHE** Dick Barr, Legacy Donor

Leaving a legacy gift to MCHE raises awareness of the atrocities of the Holocaust. MCHE educates the next generation such that we NEVER FORGET that this could happen again.

As a college student I was drawn to the history of WW2. The sheer number of people systematically murdered was appalling. Having recently become a grandparent, the thought of men, women, and especially children being erased from life is unconscionable.

As I age and reflect on my life, I would like to help contribute to a better future that places value upon human life and encourages tolerance. Supporting MCHE contributes to this. Establishing a legacy gift to MCHE is simple and painless. There are many options to choose from. For me it was as simple as specifying a percentage of my trust fund go to MCHE.



## **Why I speak for MCHE** Alice Jacks Achtenberg, Second Generation Speaker

It is a privilege to share my mother's story with students learning about the Holocaust. My mother spoke regularly. She did it because she believed that since she survived it was her obligation to make certain people know what actually happened and to prevent it from ever happening again. The gift to me is that I use a portion of my mother's MCHE video in my presentation and I feel she is there with me.



## **Why I support a program for MCHE** Art Federman representing the Families of Isak and Ann Federman

It is all too common to find people labeled and demeaned based on their race, religion, ethnicity or other personal characteristics. It is all too rare to find an organization dedicated to teaching educators best practices for countering such hatred. MCHE was created to use the history of the Holocaust to teach the ultimate consequences of labeling a group of people as "the other." That is why my parents, Isak (z"l) and Ann Federman (z"l), left a legacy bequest for MCHE. That bequest is used to support MCHE's ongoing operating expenses and, this past summer, to sponsor "The Holocaust by Bullets," a teacher training program. There, educators from Yahad-In Unum spent 17 hours over two days examining and discussing evidence of mass shootings and the role of the local population as perpetrators, collaborators, requisitioned workers, witnesses and rescuers.

Teachers from a wide variety of schools studied and discussed extensive documents and video testimonies that have been gathered by Yahad through the years. Those materials sparked discussions about the role played by the various participants in the murders and the moral and practical choices each of them may have faced. MCHE's emphasis on teaching people of all ages about the tragedy of the Holocaust and what can be learned from that tragedy continues to be necessary in our world. That is why my parents made a legacy gift to MCHE and why I will continue to support its work.



## **Why I study with MCHE** Crystal Yakel-Kunz, Educator, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Whether in-person or via Zoom, MCHE has provided me with countless opportunities to learn from and with educated, empathetic people about the world and Holocaust education. The depth of my knowledge and that of my students has grown immensely because of the experiences MCHE has provided me.

But this isn't just any kind of knowledge. The knowledge that we gain has allowed us all to become more critical of the world and of our own actions; we think and feel more deeply for those around us because of MCHE. For example, the Yahad-In Unum professional development this past summer was incredible. It allowed all of us to learn content through new perspectives and textured our understanding of what it means to be an actor in the Holocaust, in genocide. I am and always will be extremely grateful for the people at MCHE that lead all us educators.





**Why I study with MCHE** Jerry Rinaldi, Lunch and Learner and European Study Traveler

I started studying the Holocaust with MCHE through the speaker series they organized to support the Auschwitz exhibition at Union Station. Since then, via Zoom from my home in St. Louis, I've enjoyed the diversity of MCHE's offerings, including multiple Lunch-and-Learn series, community book discussions, etc. These have been expertly facilitated by MCHE Historian Dr. Shelly Cline with the aid of her complementary visuals. The pinnacle of my engagement with MCHE was going on their 2023 European Study Tour to Auschwitz, Dachau, Theresienstadt and other Holocaust sites.

Education with the help of organizations like MCHE is how to ensure that we "never forget" the horrors and lessons of the Holocaust. To that end, I've since become a volunteer at the St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum.



**Why I volunteer at MCHE** Shannon Hsu, Curator

I volunteer at MCHE processing an archive of materials relating to the New Americans Club. I am in the process of sifting through a variety of materials and organizing them by topic and type with the goal of making the archive more accessible for MCHE staff. Once the sorting is complete, the items will be stored in archival folders and boxes, ensuring that these papers are available for research well into the future.

Historians are always trying to learn more, to refine and more accurately interpret the past. Organizing the New Americans Club archival materials will make it easier for MCHE staff to conduct research, enabling them to tell different stories, learn new things, and create more context for existing programs.

Volunteering to work on this project allows me to immerse myself in history. I learn something new each time I dive into the New American Club papers. In addition, I like the idea that I'm preserving documents for future research and that I'm helping MCHE further their mission. It is a privilege to volunteer for this organization.



**Why I serve on the MCHE Board** Dr. John McKinney, Shawnee Mission School District

As a dedicated educator with 27 years in public education, I have committed my career to providing students with a comprehensive understanding of history. I believe it is crucial to equip students (and adults) with the knowledge and ability to recognize and combat hate, indifference and intolerance. Over the years, MCHE has been instrumental in supporting my efforts through its engaging and informative lessons, speakers, programs, testimonies and resources.

Understanding the Holocaust is essential not just for countering antisemitism and misinformation, but so we can continue to acknowledge and honor those who lost their lives and livelihoods. MCHE not only helps preserve the memory of those who needlessly and senselessly suffered, but also empowers educators to ensure these lessons are passed on and never forgotten. I'm honored to be part of the MCHE Board and committed to continuing my growth and education to better serve this vital cause.



**Why I serve as an MCHE Advocate** Tyra Kalman, Jewish Studies, University of Kansas

As a child of a Jewish veteran of World War II, the catastrophe of the Holocaust stood next to us like a shadow. We never spoke of the relatives lost, but we spoke at length of my father's survival and his experience as a Jewish POW in Stalag Luft I. There were whispers from my missing ancestors, the platter with the mysterious Slavic maker's mark shattered into pieces on my kitchen floor, a remnant from my grandmother's previous life, my name engraved on the walls of the old synagogue in Prague stunning me into silence, the thick German accent of my cousin Sarah, a survivor who lived with her daughter, who always squeezed my hand and wore red lipstick.

Then in August 2017, as white supremacists and neo-Nazis descended on a college town in North Carolina for a headline grabbing march that left one woman dead and many injured, in my adult bones I suddenly felt unsteady. I had never seen such blatant, organized and publicly endorsed antisemitism.

This ultimately brought me to seek out my ancestors lost to the Shoah, to take a DNA test hoping a survivor who held the stories of the disappeared would find me, and to open my father's clandestine war journal and read his manuscript for the first time. For me, the journey to advocacy has been deeply personal. It is an honor to be a part of the continuum, to hold our collective ancestral memories of loss and of survival.

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\* of blessed memory

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## FALL/WINTER PROGRAM CALENDAR

Please visit [mchekc.org](http://mchekc.org) for complete details and to register for programs.

### OCTOBER

#### October 16

Bringing Europe Home: Jewish Prague  
and the Terezin Ghetto

#### October 23

Bringing Europe Home: Czech  
Resistance and the Assassination of  
Reinhard Heydrich

#### October 30

Bringing Europe Home: Jewish Krakow  
and the Płaszów Camp

### NOVEMBER

#### November 6

Bringing Europe Home: Holocaust  
Memorialization in Europe Today

#### November 6

Annual *Kristallnacht* Commemoration

#### November 7

Second Generation Speakers Panel for  
School Groups

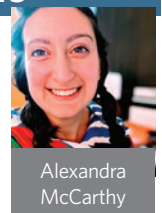
### JANUARY 2025

#### January 16

Ruthie Research Scholar  
Presentation

#### January 27

International Holocaust  
Remembrance Day Commemoration  
marking 80 years since the liberation of  
Auschwitz

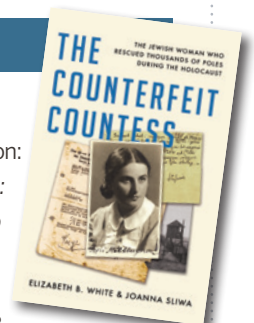


Alexandra  
McCarthy

### FEBRUARY

#### February 20

Common Book Discussion:  
*The Counterfeit Countess:  
The Jewish Woman Who  
Rescued Thousands  
of Poles During the  
Holocaust* by Elizabeth B.  
White and Joanna Sliwa



#### February 27/28

Spring Lunch and Learn begins