



MCHEnews

MIDWEST CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION MAKING A DIFFERENCE SINCE 1993

FALL/WINTER | 2026/2027

FIRST OF ITS KIND ARCHIVE

MCHE Launches Second Generation Testimony Archive

Twenty years ago, MCHE was among the first Holocaust organizations in the nation to ask the children of Holocaust survivors, the Second Generation, to take on the responsibility of speaking for their parents, pioneering a new role for 2Gs in the transmission of memory. These speakers crafted presentations that

were faithful retellings of their parents' Holocaust experiences, incorporating video testimony of the survivor when possible so the survivor's own voice was still present.

Now, after two decades of working closely with the Second Generation speakers and having important conversations with survivor families, MCHE is taking the next step. We are asking them to tell their own stories.

Each child of a Holocaust survivor carries a deeply personal story — shaped by their birth order, place of birth, the extent to which their parents' trauma influenced their lives, and their unique path through life. They also share the experiences of a distinct American generation. Most are Baby Boomers who grew up in immigrant families, came of age during the Civil Rights era, and

built careers and raised families through periods of tremendous social and cultural change.

Now Enrolling Second Cohort

The Second Generation Testimony Project captures these stories before they are lost to time. MCHE is currently recording the first 14 testimonies and enrolling participants for a second cohort. The project invites participants to reflect on the trajectory of their own lives, beginning with the known circumstances of their birth into refugee or immigrant families — and, for the oldest in many families, their own immigration journey to the United States. Interviews explore their childhoods and, for those who grew up in Kansas City, the New Americans and the found families they recreated within the survivor and the broader Jewish community.

Continued on page 3



Mary Covitz shares photos of her family from before the war which she considers her inheritance.

AUTHENTIC SITES AS WITNESSES TO HISTORY

Expanding Access to MCHE European Study Tours

As the Holocaust moves from lived memory to history, the opportunity to encounter the places where these events happened becomes increasingly important. MCHE has made it a priority to create meaningful encounters with these authentic spaces, taking learners to the European cities that were home to thriving prewar Jewish communities, standing in places that became ghettos, and walking the grounds of camps and killing sites. As we lose access to survivors giving first-hand testimony, these places increasingly become the witnesses to this history.

In response to growing interest from our membership and increased demand for these experiences, MCHE is pleased to announce the expansion of our European Study Program.

Continued on page 4

Jewish Cemetery in Prague



Keep Learning with MCHE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE | JESSICA ROCKHOLD



In a program year of more than 100 public educational events in which our small team also manages dozens of Second

Generation speaker engagements, provides curricular support to educators, manages the student research contest, answers content questions from the public, responds to antisemitic and hateful incidents, participates in partnership programs throughout the region, and manages the financial and business operations of a nonprofit, there is a vital part of our work that often goes unseen: the professional development and continuing education of our content team.

It is literally built into our personnel goals to make time to read the latest scholarship, follow evolving conversations in the field, and visit libraries and online archives to conduct in-depth research on the subjects we teach. In a world where we regularly hear about declining rates of reading and concerns about a post-literate society, you will find the MCHE team reading in the carpool line, listening to an audio book on the treadmill, and curled up on the sofa with a cat, a cup of tea, and a book for work.

How We Prepare

Our program calendar leaves room for seizing opportunities, but most of our programs are carefully planned more than a year in advance. That planning is intentional; it allows us time to prepare. Every time you hear an MCHE educator teach, you are witnessing hours of research layered onto years of knowledge.



Doing a deep dive into ghetto diaries as we prepare for significant teaching around the 85th anniversary of the destruction of the Polish Jewish community

We search for the quote that will personalize and bring to life the experience of someone who lived through the Holocaust. We identify the photographs that transport our learners to that authentic moment and space and, most importantly, reveal the faces and the humanity of the victims. We study the smallest details so that we can tell the story with accuracy and nuance in a way that engages and resonates.

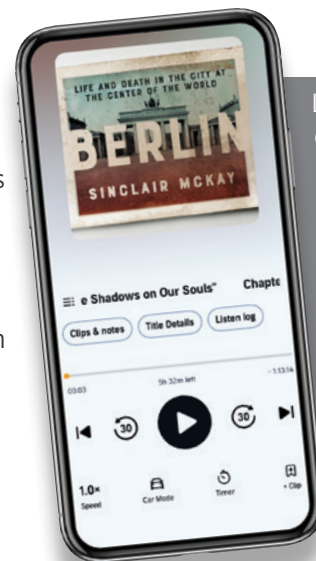
What Makes Great Educators

Sometimes we hear "I know about the Holocaust. I took a class in college."

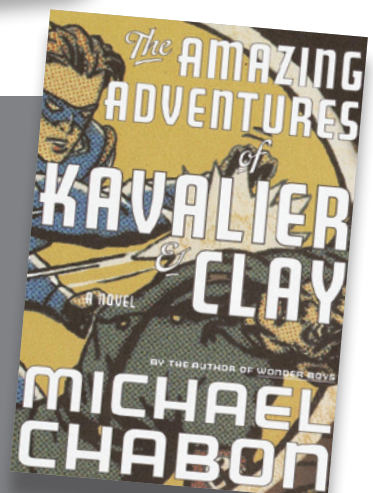
We did too.

And yet, we learn something new every time we pick up a book, closely read a document, attend a lecture by a professional colleague, and explore an archive. The field continues to evolve and new scholarship impacts our understanding. Continuing to learn is what makes our team great educators. It allows us to offer programs that are not just informed by what we already know, but enriched by what we are still learning and our excitement to share it with you.

We invite you to be curious with us. Keep reading. Keep asking questions. Keep learning.



Learning the finer details of the experiences of German Jews who were not able to emigrate and understanding the unique experiences of Berlin during the Nazi era and post-liberation



Exploring how the Holocaust has been incorporated into pop culture across the decades. From Captain America to Star Wars, Nazis and the Holocaust are layered into the literature and media we consume. "Why" and "what does this teach us" is at the heart of this exploration of media.

Relationships Are Everyone's Business

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE | STACY BENSON

Fall is upon us. Students are back in classrooms, teachers are seeking educational support, and the staff of MCHE is shifting into a higher gear. Our talented MCHE team doesn't say no to educators or community groups seeking resources to teach the lessons of the Holocaust. So, how can we, as MCHE members, support this critical work?

My answer begins with a personal story. I started my career as a teacher and later shifted into what we today call a "a nonprofit development professional." Over time, the vernacular changed from "fundraiser" to "development." And I want you to know, I never, ever, in my life imagined myself as a fundraiser. What changed for me was not the work, but how I understood it.

I came to see this work as transformational rather than transactional. It's not about asking for something. It's about inviting others into something meaningful. As members

of MCHE, this is our important work. I always tell Jessica and our board, "fundraising is everyone's business," but I should probably change that to "relationships are everyone's business." I felt more comfortable when I shifted my thinking from strict donations to the equally significant equation of time, creativity, and networks of relationships. When this shift occurs, we expand the mission of MCHE in powerful ways.

So, I invite you to take a simple step.

- Bring a friend to a program.
- Forward an email and follow up personally.
- Fill a seat at an event.
- Introduce a teacher, colleague, neighbor, or community leader to our work.
- Start a conversation about why Holocaust education matters now.

As MCHE's founders Jack and Isak knew, remembrance alone was not enough. They envisioned an organization

wholly devoted to education and outreach, grounded in the shared values of education, faith, wisdom and social justice. Collectively, these values and the accomplishments of MCHE over thirty-three years, have contributed to making MCHE a leading educational institution shaping Holocaust scholarship and instruction across the Midwest.

So, let's grow this impact. Start a conversation. Extend an invitation. If you are not comfortable in a deeper conversation on your own, bring Jessica, me, or another board member along to reaffirm our founding promise. Together, we can ensure that this history is not just remembered but taught, and that its lessons continue to confront indifference, intolerance, and genocide.



MCHE Launches ... Continued from page 1

Participants are asked to reflect on how they experienced their survivor parents within the context of family life and how they knew them as complete individuals, rather than solely as Holocaust survivors. As older adults with grandchildren, these reflections take on new meaning. The project offers the opportunity to preserve memories and insights they may want to impart to their own children and grandchildren.

Holocaust Legacy and Midwest History

The lived experiences of the Second Generation are part of the legacy of the Holocaust and part of local and Midwest

history. The archive created by this project is, to the best of our knowledge, the first of its kind in the nation. It will provide an important resource for researchers, educators, and future generations seeking to understand the legacy of the Holocaust and the lives shaped in its aftermath.

We are grateful to the White Family Supporting Foundation at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City, which provided generous funding for this project. Priority enrollment is based on providing the opportunity for each family to record one testimony, then sibling groups will be accommodated. Interviews are



Joyce Hess reflects on her life and how it has been impacted by being the child of a survivor.

conducted in person in the Kansas City area. To learn more or apply, please visit mchekc.org/generations-initiative/.

Two-Week Multi-Country Tour 2027

In 2023 MCHE launched a biennial study tour that travels to multiple countries and cities over two weeks. Organized in odd-numbered years, these tours are preceded by six-to-seven months of education and preparation during which participants meet in a hybrid format to learn from MCHE educators about the Jewish and Holocaust history of the locations they will visit.

MCHE is preparing to begin these educational sessions in support of our 2027 tour visiting Berlin and the House of the Wannsee Conference, Łódź, Lublin and Majdanek, Zamość and Bełżec, and Warsaw and Treblinka. This tour commemorates the experiences of the Polish Jewish communities destroyed in the course of Operation Reinhard 85 years ago.

One-Week Location-Intensive Tour 2028

Beginning in 2028, MCHE will add a new opportunity – a week-long,

location-intensive study tour offered in even-numbered years. Centered on a major city or small geographic area, these excursions allow participants to explore one location in greater depth while also making it possible to reach places that can be difficult to incorporate into a longer, multi-country tour.

The inaugural location-intensive tour is based in Berlin. Participants will explore the city's rich Jewish history and the Holocaust while also examining resistance to Nazism and the impact of the post-liberation years leading up to the Cold War and the division created by the Berlin Wall.

MCHE Executive Director Jessica Rockhold explains, "This alternating schedule lowers the barriers to access on this program. We have filled every tour and maintained waiting lists while also hearing from people who want to learn in this way but have concerns about the physical demands of the longer tour or cannot be away from work for that length of time. We hope that the addition of the location-intensive experience opens this opportunity to new audiences."



Reconstructed wooden synagogue ceiling in the POLIN Museum in Warsaw

Register Now!

Through these expanded offerings, MCHE is creating more opportunities for learners to engage deeply with the history of the Holocaust — through study and preparation and by encountering the places that bear witness to it.

There are currently three openings left on the 2027 tour and the 2028 Berlin tour has just opened for registration. Please contact Shelly Cline at scline@mchekc.org for information.



Memorial to the local Jewish and Roma community killed in mass shooting actions in Zvolen, Slovakia



Gate at Sachsenhausen



SURVIVOR PROFILE

Ann Jacobson

OF BLESSED MEMORY 1926-2014

Anni Reisner was born in 1926 in Berlin, Germany. Her father was fired from his management position during Aryanization and, sensing the danger posed by the Nazis, her family emigrated to Vienna, where they lived comfortably until the Anschluss in March 1938.

After the annexation of Austria, Ann's family was forced to vacate their apartment twice and her parents were regularly called to Gestapo headquarters where they were interrogated about their emigration status. Ann was in school on November 10, 1938, when the children were gradually sent home as information about *Kristallnacht* reached families. On that day, Ann remembers her older brother being rounded up and Nazis appearing at their apartment seeking money and valuables. As they stole from the family, her mother asked about when she would get the items back and was told, "Lady, you should be glad we didn't throw your children out the window."

In February 1939, her parents were preparing Ann and her younger brother to travel on a Kindertransport to England when they received word that they may have a path to emigrate to America. Her parents took the risk and held the children off the transport, working instead to emigrate together as a family. They navigated the difficult American immigration system, securing financial sponsorship and completing the multiple steps to finalize paperwork and physical exams before finally receiving approval from the American consulate. The family chose to travel on an American ship, boarding the SS President Roosevelt in Hamburg in April 1939. They arrived first in New York and eventually settled in Kansas City.

Ann earned a degree in Modern Languages and taught German at Kansas City University. She raised her family in Kansas City. In later life, Ann relocated to Naples, Florida, where she was instrumental in the creation of the Holocaust Museum and Education Center of Southwest Florida.

In her letter to children of the future, Ann gives us this critical lesson: "From studying the Holocaust, you should learn the importance of not being a bystander but to stand up for justice and oppose discrimination against any class of people. My message for you, our future generation, is treasure freedom, seek peace, and make sure that all people have equal opportunities to become the best they can be."

"From studying the Holocaust, you should learn the importance of not being a bystander but to stand up for justice and oppose discrimination against any class of people. My message for you, our future generation, is treasure freedom, seek peace, and make sure that all people have equal opportunities to become the best they can be."

—Ann Jacobson

To view Ann's testimony and learn more about her experiences, visit mchekc.org/survivors/ or visit her map in the "Through Hell to the Midwest" project at mchekc.org.



Ann Jacobson in New York after her high school graduation

Why I ...

GRANDCHILDREN OF SURVIVORS FIND POINTS OF CONNECTION

The grandchildren of survivors are diverse in every way.

Regardless of where and how their grandparents experienced the Holocaust, there is one universal point of connection: that their grandparents suffered a tragedy in Europe in the middle of the last century and that, somehow, the legacy of that story will become theirs in the middle of America in this century.

As MCHE continues to develop programs informed by and built for the Third Generation, we asked some of them to tell us why they have chosen to make connecting with MCHE's work an important part of how they express their 3G identity.



Jason Kort

Jason Kort — Grandson of Sonia and John Warshawski **Why I Joined the Speakers Bureau**

My grandmother, Sonia Warshawski, is a Holocaust survivor who has become a local treasure with tremendous impact in the Kansas City area via her past speaking engagements and the documentary *Big Sonia*. My mother, Regina Kort, started to shadow Sonia 20 years ago and became a solo speaker as Sonia's health deteriorated. This family tradition of telling her story motivated me to join the MCHE speakers bureau.

If you told me 30 years ago that antisemitism would be rising in this country and around the world, I would not have believed it, but that is the sad reality. Speaking for MCHE gives me a chance to not only share my grandmother's testimony, but it also provides a way to teach tolerance that resonates with current genocides around the world. This is a tremendous responsibility, and I look forward to carrying this family tradition forward.



Danielle, Eliana, and Noah Schwartzbard lighting a candle of remembrance during the 2026 Yom Hashoah Commemoration

Kaley Wajcman Schwartzbard — Granddaughter of Miriam and Kisel Wajcman **Why I Engage my 4G Kids in MCHE's Work**

Growing up as the grandchild of Holocaust survivors meant that the retelling of stories and teachings of the past happened both formally and informally. Formally, I'd learn about the horrors of the Holocaust in school and throughout my studies as a teenager, and then eventually got to visit many of these places on the March of the Living my senior year of high school.

Informally, sitting with my grandmother around the Shabbat table and while spending time at her home when she would babysit me, snippets from the past and her experiences would be sprinkled throughout conversations.

"When I was a young girl" she would always start the sentence ... immediately taking me on a colorful time travel to Łódź, Poland, through her stories. These informal moments of learning about the Holocaust directly from a survivor shaped my visits to Poland and still to this day. Walking paths through the camps that held stories from my family and relatives cements these stories in my mind and in my body.

For my children (and many kids in 2026), connecting their generation and future generations to the Holocaust will happen through traditional formats — through textbooks,

video testimonies and stories, and eventually through visits to these horrific sites. Learning about the Holocaust is so personal to our family that connecting my kids to it outside of textbooks and through our family's stories is crucial. We emphasize learning but also the connecting and retelling of our family's stories in order for them to know these stories belong to *them* and *their* past. We do this through hands-on opportunities to connect with learning about the Holocaust and antisemitism, and we participate in giving back because supporting the institution that supports the legacy and preservation of these stories means they'll have the opportunity to continue the retelling of these stories to their children and grandchildren.



Alex Hess with Tilly

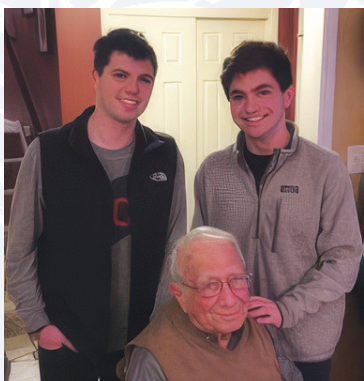
INTERESTED? This is your invitation to find your way to get involved.
Contact MCHE at info@mcchec.org to connect or for more information.

Alexandra Hess — Granddaughter of Sonia Golad **Why I Travel with MCHE**

As a small business owner, it is not easy to take off any amount of time. I never expected to take advantage of an opportunity to spend two weeks in Europe; however, something about this trip felt important.

My grandmother, Sonia Golad, was a Holocaust survivor and a very active speaker with MCHE. Throughout my childhood, it was not unusual for my Nana to be approached in public by high school students who had heard her speak. I have always known my Nana's account of her experiences during the Holocaust, but it always seemed so long ago and so far away. During the 2023 European Study Tour, I was immersed in the history and the reality that the Holocaust was not long ago and not far away.

Traveling with MCHE was truly a life-changing experience. Since the trip, I have felt a closer connection to my Jewish heritage, my late family members who survived the Holocaust, and to those who did not. I also have a deeper understanding of the message I heard so many times as a child: "Never forget."



Matthew (right) with his grandfather, Rudy Green, and brother Alex

Matthew Kaplan — Grandson of Rudy Green **Why I Joined the Board of MCHE**

I joined the board of the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education due to the mission of lifelong education that the organization was founded on. This organization touches me on a deeply personal level for many reasons. My grandfather was a child of Germany who was forced to flee his country before the worst of the Holocaust's atrocities took place. Unlike my grandfather, much of his family was not as lucky as he was.

My grandfather's strength, dignity, and outlook on life have profoundly shaped the person I am today. He taught me that remembering the past is not a passive act; instead it is a responsibility to future generations. He believed that we must learn from history with honesty and humility, while also keeping our eyes firmly on the future and doing our part to build a more compassionate, informed, and resilient world.

Just as meaningful as the lessons he shared was the way he lived and embodied them on a daily basis. My grandfather instilled in me, my siblings, and my cousins a strong work ethic rooted in perseverance, gratitude, discipline, and service to others — while also ensuring that we must not let the mistakes of the past continue to permeate society today. Serving on this board is one meaningful way I can honor his extraordinary legacy — not only by remembering what he endured, but by helping carry forward the values he embodied and supporting the education that ensures future generations never lose sight of the lessons he lived.



Debbie Coe

Debbie Coe — Granddaughter of Leon and Helen Katzberg **Why I Invite MCHE to Speak**

I invite MCHE to speak to educate, to open minds, and to bring communities together. There is tremendous value in learning from experts who can provide factual, historically-grounded information, especially in today's environment when so much misinformation and distortion of historical facts is all over social media, the one source where youth get their news.

Bringing people together to learn and have meaningful conversations in a comfortable setting is invaluable; sometimes a living room can be more impactful than a classroom. When people who come from different backgrounds with different experiences and points of view are willing to listen to one another and engage in hard conversations, it helps all of us open our minds and better understand our history and how that shapes our future.

For me, it's also personal. My grandparents survived the Holocaust while most of their families and friends perished. I feel it's my duty to share the lessons of the Holocaust and MCHE makes it so easy to do.

Leopoldstadt at The White Theatre

MCHE PROVIDES SPONSORSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Leopoldstadt, Tom Stoppard's celebrated final play, chronicles the life of the Jewish community in Vienna from 1899 to 1955, a community that was devastated during the Holocaust. The play will be performed at The White Theatre in Spring 2027.

MCHE is pleased to announce its sponsorship of the local production through the MCHE Jack Mandelbaum Innovation Fund and our plans to provide extensive educational support leading up to and throughout the run of the play.

Stoppard Family Story

Stoppard was one of the most celebrated playwrights of the last century. His works have won Tony and Olivier Awards and are much beloved among theatregoers and readers alike. In an interview when *Leopoldstadt* opened on Broadway, Stoppard said that this play includes tiny moments from his own life. His family had a unique experience during World War II; first they narrowly escaped

the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, and they later had to flee their new home in Singapore when the Japanese invaded.

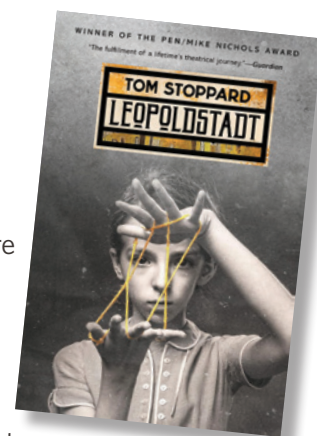
Though based on a fictional family in Vienna, this play contains reminders of Stoppard's experiences of multiple exiles and of his father who was killed in a Japanese bombing. Stoppard was moved when he returned to his hometown much later in life, and a woman showed him a scar on her hand from stitches that his father had given her when he was the town's doctor. Stoppard wrote a similar scar, which he described as the only thing he had left of his father, into the play. When asked about what it meant to give new life to that memory in the play, he said, "Life gives you these gifts [...] but you don't transmit it in the same form."

Blending Theatre and History

MCHE encourages the public to read the play and to join us for a discussion on March 4, 2027. The discussion will be led by MCHE's

Dr. Melissa Karp, a literature expert who will address literary as well as historical aspects of the play.

By interacting with this play in multiple forms, MCHE will facilitate a richer discussion of the history and how theatre communicates particular messages about history, memory, and loss.



Leopoldstadt
THE WHITE THEATRE AT THE J
MARCH 20-APRIL 4, 2027

Purchase tickets at
TheWhiteTheatre.org.

Facilitated Discussion
March 4, 2027

For more information as it becomes
available, follow "Programs" at mchekc.org.

FALL/WINTER PROGRAM CALENDAR

Please visit mchekc.org for program information and registration.

OCTOBER

October 5

National Coming Out Day Program

Beginning October 8/9

Fall Lunch and Learn – From Enemy to Ally: Berlin in the 20th Century

October 14

AI and Holocaust Education Workshop

NOVEMBER

Weekly November 2-30

Bringing Europe Home

- Berlin and Sachsenhausen
- Kraków and Płaszów
- Warsaw
- Treblinka and Auschwitz
- Vilnius and Ponar

NOVEMBER cont.

November 5

A Conversation with Survivor
Judy Jacobs

November 9

Kristallnacht Commemoration

November 10

Second Generation Panel for Students

November 12

Seward County Community College in
Liberal, Kansas

- The Failure of American Immigration Policies
- America Responds to *Kristallnacht*

November 18

Preview the Contest
Educator Workshop



JANUARY 2027

January 7

Ruthie Research Scholars Panel

January 12

MCHE Common Book
Discussion

January 27

International Holocaust
Remembrance Day

MARCH

March 4

Leopoldstadt Play Common Book Discussion

Beginning March 20

Leopoldstadt Performances at
The White Theatre



IMPACT

Annual Report | Fiscal Year 2026

MIDWEST CENTER FOR
HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

WHAT IS IMPACT

Funders and lay leaders rightly focus on measurable impact: the numbers of people who engage with MCHE programming, the knowledge they gain, and whether our programs attract new learners while providing lasting value to those who return.

But the impact of Holocaust education cannot be fully captured in numbers. We can measure participation and learning, but true *impact* goes deeper. It is about how people internalize the lessons of history and how those lessons shape who they are and how they understand and interact with the world they live in. That kind of impact is not quantifiable, but it can be felt.

In the last year, everyone connected with MCHE has felt that impact. There is a renewed sense of urgency and commitment to this work. As we confront rising antisemitism and Holocaust denial, and as the passage of time moves us from lived memory to history, our team embraces its responsibility to ensure a careful transmission of both the history and the lessons entrusted to us by the survivors.

We are deeply grateful to the MCHE community for making this work possible. The measurable impact of the past year is remarkable, but we know that the most meaningful measure of our success lies in the intangibles. Memory is not passive. It is a responsibility. To remember is not only to look back, but to act to confront hatred, to defend human dignity, and to ensure that the future is shaped by the lessons of the past. This is the most important impact of MCHE's work.

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

the sustaining support of our members who helped us achieve the most successful membership year in our 33 year history

&

earning the match for the **Herman Family Initiative - matching \$50,000** in new

and increased memberships for the year.



&

support from the following grants



JEWISH COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
OF GREATER KANSAS CITY



Jewish Federation
OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

THIS YEAR WITH OUR SURVIVORS WE ...



Delivered **52**
Rosh Hashanah
bags

Marked **67** **survivor birthdays**, including a **100th birthday** for **Sonia Warshawski**

Hosted our third annual **Yom Hashoah Reception** for **survivors and their families**



AWARDS & CELEBRATIONS

2026 Holocaust Educator of the Year

Honoring Jenny Buchanan, Lee's Summit North High School

In her nomination, Lauren H. noted that Jenny "intentionally moves Holocaust education beyond historical study and into moral reflection and civic responsibility. She helps students examine not only what happened, but why it happened — and what responsibilities individuals hold in the face of injustice. Through careful analysis of choices made by perpetrators, bystanders, rescuers, and victims, students come to understand the power of individual agency and the consequences of silence."

To learn more about MCHE's honorees, please visit mchekc.org/educator-of-the-year/.



Jenny Buchanan receiving the 2026 HEDY award from MCHE's Laura Patton.



2026 Ruthie Research Scholars

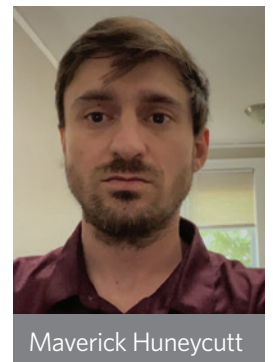
Supporting Danielle Lucksted, Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Stony Brook University, and Maverick Huneycutt, Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of South Carolina

Lucksted's research explores public history and memorialization of both the Holocaust and racial violence in the United States. Huneycutt's project examines complicit figures of "coerced internal authority" in the Holocaust and slavery in the American South.

These projects offer a unique opportunity to think about the Holocaust through comparative research. Rather than suggest a competitive model that relativizes suffering, their research asks us to consider the patterns that exist between incidents of mass violence, genocide, fascism, and memorialization across different historical and geographic contexts.



Danielle Lucksted



Maverick Huneycutt

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ...

"The guided self-study assignment MCHE built for us was, honestly, one of the most demanding and most valuable pieces of professional development I have completed in 20 years in education. I found myself relearning history I thought I already knew, this time without the comfort of hindsight. I was pushed to sit with the choiceless choices faced by victims, to resist the urge to romanticize resistance or rescue, and to hold onto precision of language even when a simpler, less accurate word would have been easier to reach for. Those are not abstract academic habits for me; they are now the lens I will use every time I stand in front of a classroom and teach this history."

JOHN C.

LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATOR AND KC TO DC PARTICIPANT

"The first realization came from observing the eerie voids across the landscapes which resulted from the deaths of so many people. We saw this at the Weißensee Cemetery in Berlin with its abandoned graves, at the emptiness of Kazimierz and the ghetto in Cracow, the abandoned landscape in the wet forest at the Ponar site outside Vilnius, and the emptiness in the architecture of Berlin's Jewish Museum. The second realization came from the stories of families. Several of our co-travelers told stories of their families who survived, from his birth in a displaced persons camp, to looking up a mother's former address in Vilnius. I'll also never forget seeing a gold locket found in the dirt at the Treblinka camp. It once belonged to a real person. Focusing on individual experience makes all the difference."

MARK S.

2025 EUROPEAN STUDY TRAVELER

MCHE LEGACY SOCIETY

We are grateful for the vision and trust of our Legacy Society Donors — those individuals who have provided for a planned gift in support of MCHE's mission. These gifts serve to ensure that the critical work of MCHE continues in perpetuity.

Richard & Shari Barr
Christopher Beal & Tim Van Zandt
Marcia & Eliot Berkley
Marion & Henry Bloch
Family Foundation
Donna Gould Cohen
Sheldon Eisenberg
Arthur & Diane Federman
Isak & Ann Federman, z"l
Eddie Feinstein
Beatrice & Steve Fine
David R. Goodman
Evelyn Gorton
Allen & Gail Gutovitz

Winn Halverhout in honor of
Nancy Halverhout
Karen & Mike Herman
Ernest & Vera Isenberg
John & Jenny Isenberg
Family of Helen & Leon Katzberg
J. Gordon Kingsley
Suzanne Kingsley
William B. & Regina M. Kort
Gayle Price Krigel
Janek "Jack" Mandelbaum
& Family
Florence & Abraham E. Margolin
Mitchell | Tufts Foundation

Marcy Latenser Nelson
Norman & Elaine Polsky Family
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Judy & Steve Sherry
Vivian & Hymie J. Sosland
Charitable Trust
Lowell & Evy Tilzer
Ruthie Abend Krigel Tivol
Nancy Todd
Jean Grossman Zeldin
Julie & Joe Zwillenberg

LEGACY GIFTS

Make Holocaust education part of your enduring legacy. Contact Jessica Rockhold at 913-327-8191 or jrockhold@mchekc.org to discuss your planned gift and become a legacy donor.

We offer a special thank you to our Legacy Donors who have chosen to remain anonymous. We regret any errors or omissions. If you have made such a commitment and are not included on this list, please contact MCHE at jrockhold@mchekc.org.

DONATIONS RECEIVED

JULY 1, 2025 – JUNE 30, 2026

THANK YOU for your support. We cannot do it without you!

Please visit mchekc.org/membership or use the enclosed envelope to become a member, renew your membership for 2027, make a general donation, or give a gift membership.

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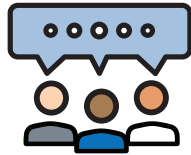
**Of blessed memory*

MCHE REACH

July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026



Delivered
113 content
presentations + dozens
of **Second Generation**
Presentations



Worked with over
700 educators
offering **programs** and
curricular support
throughout the Midwest



Reached over
3,400 students
with **direct**
programming



Logged over
173,000
engagements
with our **online**
educational content



478 memberships totaling
\$227,000
in support for our mission



DIRECT PARTICIPATION

9,000 learners in **all 50 states** and **multiple countries**



International participation

Argentina
Australia
Canada
England
France
Germany
Malaysia
New Zealand
Northern Ireland
Scotland
Spain
Switzerland
Trinidad and Tobago
Wales

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

European Study Program 2025

Traveled with 21 learners to Berlin, Kraków, Warsaw, and Vilnius with important visits to Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Ponar. The tour included visits to the home communities of 9 survivor family members traveling with the group.



The travelers on day 1 in Berlin with the Ampelmann



Locating the building that was once home to survivor Sonia Golad in Vilnius



Educators Anita Grant, Jordan Broxterman, and Angela Lea on the Auschwitz Legacy Fellowship with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation

DC/Poland/New York

Provided wraparound educational support for educators traveling on the KC to DC program to the USHMM, nominated 3 area educators to travel to Poland with the Auschwitz Legacy Fellowship with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation, and sponsored the participation of 2 educators attending the Lerner Fellowship Program with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous.

Generations Initiative



11 individuals participated in the Generations Choir at Yom Hashoah — performing the traditional songs which held deep meaning for the survivors



Worked with students at HBHA to share personal stories of Holocaust survivors ahead of the choir's participation in Yom Hashoah



Supported writers in the first cohort of the Second Generation Writing Project and hosted an exploratory session for Third Generation writers



Third Generation social event — gathered the grandchildren of survivors together in community



- Delivered 4 presentations of *Legal Ethics and the Holocaust* for ethics credit for the Kansas and Missouri Bar Associations reaching over 400 attorneys
- Provided supportive educational programming in Ellinwood, Kansas, for the USHMM exhibit *Americans and the Holocaust* — including a multipart Lunch and Learn Series and a professional development workshop for educators

Current Issues in Holocaust Denial

AI IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION: MISINFORMATION, DOCTORED IMAGES, AND HOW THEY FEED HOLOCAUST DENIAL



In response to requests for more information from the public, this section, Current Issues in Holocaust Denial, seeks to provide concise information about the manifestations of denial today.

By providing historical context and defining these elements of denial, MCHE aims to empower our community to recognize them as expressions of hate and antisemitism and to name them for what they are. Our reactions matter.

In this issue, we focus on how artificial intelligence feeds Holocaust denial by amplifying the volume and reach of misinformation and doctored images online.

Beware of AI Summaries

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the way people consume information, and it is having an outsized effect on educators and learners. As AI-generated images and text mix into authentic and vetted sources on internet searches, and as people increasingly request information on Holocaust history from AI tools, a heightened misinformation environment is forming. The spread of this material does harm beyond just misleading the public — it gives tools and proof points to Holocaust deniers and antisemites looking to undermine the history.

Large Language Models (LLMs) draw from available information online. This includes reliable Holocaust history as well as deliberate misinformation from antisemitic posters and distorted or unnuanced historical summaries spread without the intent to deceive.

As such, AI summaries often disseminate inaccurate information, making it important to search within trusted sources and institutions like MCHE and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The misinformation gleaned from inaccurate summaries and social media accounts with antisemitic positions is often republished online and fed back into AI learning models, further obscuring the facts. This puts the impetus on learners to sift through information carefully before we repost or publish anything ourselves.

How to Spot AI-Generated Images

The most prolific source for Holocaust misinformation is currently AI-generated photographs. When fake images circulate, deniers observe and highlight their flaws.

- One easy way to tell that a Holocaust image is AI generated is to pay attention to **uncanny order or neatness**. People imprisoned and starving in concentration camps would not appear clean and tidy with perfect airbrushed skin, but this is the case in many AI-generated images. A denier might see the image and use it to support their claim that life in the camps was not as severe as survivors and historians report.
- Photographs from the mid-20th century are not as clear or polished as digital photography today, though these false images often are. AI-generated images sometimes have additional irregularities including **impossible physics, objects missing shadows or casting extra shadows, people with extra hands or arms, modern**

AI technology is reshaping the way people consume information, and it is having an outsized effect on educators and learners. As AI-generated images and text mix into authentic and vetted sources on internet searches, and as people increasingly request information on Holocaust history from AI tools, a heightened misinformation environment is forming.

cameras or technology that was not yet in use, and more.

- These are obvious signs but are not always present in AI-generated images, especially as technology evolves and improves. The best training against these distortions is to **familiarize yourself with real photographs**, which has the added benefit of restoring the humanity of the real people involved.

Trust your instincts. If something doesn't sound right or look right, double check your sources. Only repost trusted sources. Remove generative AI from your internet searches. We each have a responsibility to protect the truth to ensure that accurate Holocaust information is accessible to all learners.

Watch for information about a public workshop on this topic led by MCHE's Drs. Shelly Cline and Melissa Karp at mchekc.org

The Deportation of Germany's Jews

THE DIRE FATE OF THOSE UNABLE TO LEAVE

Next year will mark 85 years since the Wannsee Conference and the implementation of the "Final Solution." It will be a year of commemorations remembering those murdered in the killing centers of Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka, which all became operational in 1942.

Before Deportations Began

Before the Nazis began the deportations of Polish Jews that year, they launched the effort to remove the remaining Jewish population from within the borders of Greater Germany. Over half of Germany's Jewish population had already fled the country as a result of eight years of legal restrictions intended to make life in Germany untenable so that Jews would self-deport.

This is often what people know about Germany's relatively small Jewish population. But what of those who were unable to emigrate, or those in Austria and the Czech lands who had very little time to leave the country in the short window between occupation and total war?

Hitler hastily ordered the deportation of the Jews still living in

Greater Germany in September 1941, a time when the ghettos of Poland were overcrowded and before the killing centers were functional. Their solution was to send these transports to destinations in the Baltics or to the Łódź Ghetto.

What Deportation Looked Like

After receiving a notice to report for transport, German Jewish residents were given a window of time to arrive at the designated assembly point in their community. Sometimes a large restaurant or city building was used; other times a temporary transit camp was established. Upon arrival, they were subject to a search and all valuables were confiscated. They would wait overnight, in uncomfortable, makeshift conditions until they were taken to a railway station. These early transports did not leave from the city's main station, but rather stations on the outskirts of town or freight depots.

With the "Final Solution" and killing centers not yet operational, German Jews found themselves subjected to both intermediary "solutions" — ghettoization and mass shooting

actions. After at least two days on the train, they arrived in locations like Minsk, Kovno, or Riga where they were shot, or were sent to the Łódź, Warsaw, or Terezin ghettos where they were later deported again to be gassed at Chelmno or Auschwitz.

While the majority of German Jews found a way to leave the country, the fate of those who could not was particularly dire, and their chances for survival very low. This fall, 85 years after the deportation of German Jews began, we remember their oft forgotten experience.



The Gleis 17 memorial in the Grünewald train station commemorates the thousands deported from Berlin.



Memorial at the Jewish Cemetery at Große Hamburger St. in Berlin where Jews from the community were assembled for deportation.



Stolpersteine of Dr. Kurt Wieruszowski outside his Berlin workplace. He was deported to Riga in October 1942.

MCHE Adapts Educator Programs to New Needs

As education continues to settle from the disruptions of 2020 and a new generation of educators come into the field, MCHE is adapting to new needs in teaching the Holocaust.

Among the most pressing are the need to address the relevance of this history in the 21st century and to help

educators and students navigate the increasingly difficult media environment in which students consume information. To that end, MCHE's educator workshops in 2026 focused on appropriate points of analysis across 20th century genocides and an examination of Holocaust media online.

The Holocaust and Rwanda

The Rwandan Genocide resulted in the murder of 800,000 to one million people in 100 days between April and July 1994. Occurring less than 50 years after the Holocaust, and in full view of the world, the event called into question the responsibilities of neutral nations and government and international bodies to respond to the crisis.

Last March, MCHE offered a workshop for educators exploring the origins of the Rwandan Genocide and analyzing its policy and implementation. Designed for educators, it was co-taught by MCHE's Dr. Melissa Karp and Jenny Buchanan, a member of the Isak Federman Holocaust Teaching Cadre, who traveled to Rwanda the summer prior.

"Traveling to Rwanda," said Jenny, "deepened my understanding of the genocide that unfolded in 1994. The experience introduced me and my fellow educators to survivors, children of survivors, and perpetrators, who openly shared their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Their stories gave me a deeper, more personal understanding of the atrocities. It was incredibly rewarding to bring home



Belgian Peacekeepers Memorial at Camp Kigali in Rwanda

relevant details, firsthand accounts, and resources that have enriched my teaching of the Rwandan Genocide as well as the stages of genocide."

In addition to historical background provided by Dr. Karp, Jenny offered reflections and observations on Rwanda today — more than 30 years after the genocide. Teachers were exposed to curated resources and curriculum material for teaching about the Rwandan Genocide on its own or as a counterpoint to the way genocide unfolded during the Holocaust.

AI in Holocaust Education

MCHE typically teaches media literacy, a key lesson of the Holocaust, using Nazi propaganda as a lens for critical analysis. As artificial intelligence continues to emerge as a force in the media environment, MCHE has identified AI in Holocaust education as a primary concern to be addressed in our future work.

Dr. Melissa Karp led a workshop designed to help educators navigate the increasing appearance of AI content

in online Holocaust resources. The workshop aimed to identify, and explain problems in relying on AI to generate information about the Holocaust, which pulls from both accurate and inaccurate sources available online.

Teachers completed hands-on activities to help them identify and teach students to avoid AI images. They also discussed the ways Holocaust denial is fueled by the circulation of these doctored images.



Call for Nominations

2027 HOLOCAUST EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

MCHE is seeking nominations for the 2027 Holocaust Educator of the Year, recognizing excellence in Holocaust education.

The winner is recognized at MCHE's Academic Awards Ceremony in May 2027. Nominations are due by March 5 at mchekc.org/educator-of-the-year.

To register for professional development opportunities, please visit mchekc.org.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Milkcan used to bury part of the Oneg Shabbat Archive in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Bringing Europe Home

Though we can only travel with a small group to these sites in Europe, we can bring the learning home. To that end, we invite you to join us for this series of presentations by MCHE's Dr. Shelly Cline and Jessica Rockhold as they share the history and the current state of memorialization that was explored in MCHE's 2025 European Study Tour.

Sessions include:

November 2 – Berlin and Sachsenhausen

November 9 – Kraków and Płaszów

November 16 – Warsaw

November 23 – Treblinka and Auschwitz

November 30 – Vilnius and Ponar

These Zoom presentations are free and open to the public with registration at mchekc.org.

Promise and Destruction: The Duality of November 9th in German History

ANNUAL KRISTALLNACHT COMMEMORATION

NOVEMBER 9, 2026 | 6:30 P.M.

STILWELL ROOM AT UNION STATION KANSAS CITY

30 WEST PERSHING ROAD, KANSAS CITY, MO 64108

Each year we pause to remember the events of November 9-10, 1938. On that night in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland, Jewish homes were invaded and ransacked, their residents beaten and assaulted. Over a thousand synagogues were burned and countless Jewish businesses were vandalized and looted. This state-sponsored attack on Jewish people and their property signaled that Jews were not welcome and those who remained should self-deport or face such violence.

We remember this as the *Kristallnacht* Pogrom, yet the events of this single day mark some of the most consequential turning points of the 20th century.

This year's annual *Kristallnacht* commemoration, presented by Dr. Shelly Cline, explores the history of a date — from empire to republic, to *Kristallnacht*, and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This program is offered in partnership with Union Station Kansas City in support of their exhibition *Berlin Wall: A World Divided*. Admission is free but reservations are requested at mchekc.org.



The Abandoned Room (Der Verlassene Raum) memorial in Berlin depicting the violence that occurred in Jewish homes during the November Pogrom.



2027 MCHE Common Book — *Hotel Exile: Paris in the Shadow of War*

On Paris's Left Bank stands the Lutetia Hotel, an extraordinary witness to the Nazi occupation of the city. Before the war, it was a gathering place for exiles fleeing Nazi Germany. During the occupation, it was requisitioned by German military intelligence. After liberation, it became a place of return for Holocaust survivors.

In *Hotel Exile*, author Jane Rogoyska tells the human stories of those who sought refuge, faced danger, resisted oppression, and fought to survive.

The public is invited to read the book and join MCHE's Drs. Shelly Cline and Melissa Karp in discussion on Zoom on January 12, 2027. Registration is available at mchekc.org.

Reflecting on One Year at MCHE

By Dr. Melissa Karp

One year into my time as the Content Specialist at MCHE, I thought I'd take a moment to reintroduce myself and what I do here to those of you I haven't had a chance to meet yet. I started working with MCHE last August, fresh out of my Ph.D. program with a doctorate in Literature, a newly finished dissertation about WWII collaborators, and a mix of research and site experience working around museum and memory projects that commemorate the Holocaust and other mass violence events.

When I joined this team, we were excited to figure out how my expertise in literature and media would fit in with the rest of the work here. Literature doctorates can be somewhat of a mystery — most people assume that we spend the better part of a decade in a quiet library with our faces in a book all day. It's not all together untrue, and one of the things I love about working for MCHE is that I still get to keep up with the latest developments in Holocaust literature, fiction and nonfiction both, to bring you innovative programming that incorporates new insights and directions in the field.



Melissa announcing the 2026 Ruthie Research Scholars and speaking about their work as a fellow comparatist.

Stories and How We Tell Them

What being a literature and culture scholar means at its core is that I am interested in two things: stories and representation. I am curious about the ways that people tell stories and the means and media they use to do it, which makes the public history work I now do at MCHE a natural extension.

That means if you attend one of my programs on a Holocaust film, you might hear me talk about how the film was made and the history it contains, *and* the style of the camera shots, the way the script works with the music to evoke a particular feeling, and how these details shape your perception of the film's narrative.

By paying attention to the way these objects are constructed, we learn not only about history itself but about the ways in which that story is produced through collective memory. At this moment of transition in Holocaust studies, understanding how cultural memory operates is a crucial component of our work.

From Pop Culture to Memory Writing

Some of my programs in the works include a pop culture series that will examine how the Holocaust has affected popular media, from comic books to Star Wars, presentations about collaborators, about the way the Holocaust was experienced in places like France and

North Africa, and about atrocities and memory across both theaters of WWII.

As always, our work at MCHE is grounded in the history of the Holocaust and in our local community's experiences.

In addition to my work in public programs and with teachers, this year has included a chance to work with members of the Second and Third Generations on their own memory writing. I have been struck by the way the local survivors built a found family for one another after the Holocaust. The pictures of this world that the Second Generation captures in their writing have helped me better understand what makes the Kansas City community so special and unique.

Shaping Our Fragile Present

There is so much enthusiasm for the work we're doing. The folks who interact with our programming are deeply engaged and the security of that support allows us to continue to expand. Working to educate people about the Holocaust in this particularly fraught moment can be difficult, but it is so rewarding to get to work every day on projects that help people make sense of the past and how it shapes our fragile present. Because the community remains so invested, it makes the work of remembering feel very alive and urgent.



Melissa leading the first cohort of Second Generation writers.

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to your faith community, social service group, company, organization or friend group.

The Midwest Center for Holocaust Education offers the following programs to community groups. In addition to these topics, MCHE can work in consultation with your group to develop a program of interest. Please send requests to info@mchekc.org.

- Path to Genocide: A Holocaust Overview
- Antisemitism: Evolution and Escalation
- Democracy Destroyed
- Ethics and the Holocaust
- Americans and the Holocaust
- Facing Fascism: Lessons of Resistance from Nazi Germany
- Manipulating the People: Nazi Propaganda and Media Literacy
- Belzec to Auschwitz: Developing a Death Camp
- The Midwest Center for Holocaust Education and the Legacy of the New Americans

