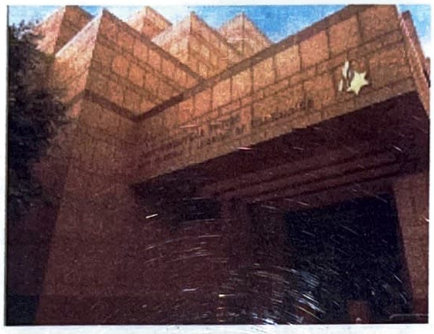
Teaching Tolerance? Holocaust Education in Contemporary American Museums



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ABSTRACT

Teaching Tolerance? Holocaust Education in Contemporary American Museums
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Since the late 1970s, Holocaust museums and education centers have emerged across the United States. These museums quickly became a vehicle for both teachers and students to learn about the Holocaust and they have helped to shape the ways that the Holocaust is taught throughout the U.S. This project examines the education programs offered by two Holocaust museums in the United States, the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance and the Holocaust Museum Houston. It evaluates their efforts in teaching middle and high school students. Despite criticism from scholars, I argue that one does not need to teach only the history of the Holocaust in order for students to learn about the event. The Holocaust Museum Houston exemplifies that a middle ground between teaching history and promoting tolerance education can be achieved. The Museum of Tolerance, on the other hand, also attempts to focus on teaching history and teaching tolerance, but unfortunately, it sacrifices crucial aspects of Holocaust history in the process.

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Introduction

The Holocaust through American eyes

On a humid Houston morning, a yellow school bus filled with high school students makes its way to the museum district of the city. As they pull up to their destination point, the students gaze out the bus window and notice how it does not look like most museums they have seen before. A building with a black cylindrical structure and six steel poles emerging from a slanted, wedge-shaped edifice interests some students in what they are about to experience. A friendly staff person meets them at the entrance to welcome them to the Holocaust Museum Houston, and then escorts them into the building, walking past the entrance desk and into a classroom. They know they will be learning about the Holocaust, since their teacher discussed the upcoming field trip, but few realize that they will learn much more than just the history. Their emotions will be incited and they will take away lessons beyond the history they expected to learn. For these students, the museum will help bring the Holocaust closer to home.

Fifteen hundred miles away, on a sunny southern California day, a similar group of students arrives at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. Their teacher hurries them off the bus in order to make the scheduled arrival time. The students arrange themselves in a single file line outside a brick building, standing eight stories in the air, in the busy Pico Boulevard neighborhood of Los Angeles. They enter the museum through tinted glass doors and are told to turn off all cell phones and remove everything from their pockets. As the security guards pass each student through metal detectors and check all belongings, the students begin to realize this is not like other museums they have visited. They too know why they are at this museum—to learn about the Holocaust—but they are also aware that the issue of tolerance will be addressed.

Some students will leave feeling empowered to take action against injustices, while others will be incited to seek out additional knowledge. They will remember some information about the Holocaust and will relish the experiences of playing with the computers and other technology. For these students, the Holocaust is just one thing they will learn about during a full day of field trip excitement.

The Holocaust is one of the most horrific crimes of the twentieth century, and historians have spent much time analyzing the causes, nature, and consequences of this gruesome event. Over the past three decades, many institutions, like the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Tolerance, have emerged with the goal of trying to teach how and why over 11 million individuals, 6 million of them Jewish, could be savagely murdered. These facilities also provide a place of solace for people remembering the lives lost. While serving as both a place of remembrance and learning, Holocaust museums in the United States have undertaken a complicated task in educating both students and adults about an event that is difficult to comprehend. As many young people learn about the Shoah from history books or popular mainstream movies like *Schindler's List*, or more recently, *The Pianist*, Holocaust museums remain places that teachers are relying upon to further their student's knowledge.[1]

The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles and the Holocaust Museum Houston opened their doors in 1993 and 1996, respectively, while interest and growing Holocaust awareness in the United States was blossoming. As state governments began to pass legislation in the 1990s requiring that teachers add the Holocaust to their social studies lesson plans, instructors turned to various outlets, including museums, for information on how to approach these difficult issues.

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[1] The term Shoah is used in Hebrew as an equivalent to the word Holocaust. I will use the two terms interchangeably throughout the paper.

Museum educators planned teacher in-service trainings, created guidebooks and teacher resources, and brought classrooms into the museum setting. The educational mission of these museums quickly came to include the goals of combating intolerance, prejudice, and anti-Semitism as lessons that can be learned from studying the Holocaust. While teachers often rely on museums to educate their students on the Holocaust, the museums depend heavily on teachers to prepare the students before the visit to their facility. These museums quickly became vehicles for both teachers and students to learn about the Holocaust, and they began to shape the ways that the Holocaust was taught across the U.S.

In this study, I examine how the education programs offered by two urban Holocaust museums, the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance, teach middle and high school students about the history of the Holocaust and the lessons that can be learned. Despite different approaches to learning, these two museums' education programs emphasize themes of tolerance, personal responsibility, and personal choice, in some cases at the expense of teaching and learning about the Holocaust itself. Regardless of scholarly criticism, I argue that one does not need to teach only the history of the Holocaust in order for students to learn about the event. The Holocaust Museum Houston exemplifies that a middle ground between teaching history and promoting tolerance education can be achieved. The Museum of Tolerance, on the other hand, also attempts to focus on teaching history and teaching tolerance, but unfortunately, it sacrifices crucial aspects of Holocaust history in the process.

This thesis explores the Holocaust Museum Houston and Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles as institutions committed to educating youth. I begin with a discussion of each museum's background, goals, and other distinguishing factors that led me to choose these institutions as case studies. Next, the literature review examines current work in the field of

Holocaust commemoration in the United States and its implications for museums today. I also provide a short survey of the role of museum educators and museum education in teaching youth. The section, *History in the Museum*, begins by evaluating the materials developed by museum educators for teachers to help prepare students before a visit to the museum. I also explore the physical space of the museums and its role in the student's visit. Next, I evaluate the main exhibition halls in Houston and Los Angeles and explore how each teaches students about the history of the Shoah and the lessons that can be learned. By examining how each museum portrays certain events, such as the Nuremberg Laws and acts of Jewish and non-Jewish resistance, I am able to observe the methods, successes, and shortcomings of these institutions. The final section, *Lessons Learned*, explores how the debates discussed in the literature review, such as the notion of uniqueness, are played out in the exhibits. I also evaluate what learning went on in the museums, by examining letters written by students following their visit. This helps to illuminate what students experienced and how their visit to a Holocaust museum affected them.

Why these museums?

When Ellen Trachtenberg and other members of the Holocaust Museum Houston Permanent Exhibit Committee met with exhibit designers for the first time, they conveyed their three wishes for the museum's permanent exhibition. They wanted to discuss life before the Holocaust, highlight the children who were savagely murdered by the Nazi regime and its collaborators, and focus of the oral histories provided by Holocaust survivors now living in Houston.[2] Comprising the committee were two Holocaust survivors, constituents of the Jewish

[2] Ellen Trachtenberg, interview by author, 13 February 2003.

community, and staff members of the museum. They hired Dr. John K. Roth, a Professor of Philosophy at Claremont McKenna College and a noted scholar in the field of Holocaust studies, to write the text panels that would fill the museum. He recalls that two major themes were kept in mind when they created the main exhibit:

> We wanted to tell as much of the history of the Holocaust as possible, and we wanted to link that history to the local Houston context as much as we could. We also felt that it was important to do more than many museums do with the earlier history of the Jewish people.[3]

To continue this focus on personalizing the story, they began to research locally and listen to the oral histories of survivors. At one point, upwards of 900 survivors were living in Houston, and provided a remarkable resource and inspiration for the creation of this museum. Because space was limited, the exhibit designers told the committee they should choose seven of the survivors' stories to be highlighted throughout the exhibit hall. While this proved to be a difficult challenge, they eventually decided on seven stories which displayed a variety of experiences. Their stories are carried throughout the exhibit, beginning with a family tree that indicates those who perished in black ink and those who survived in white ink. As the exhibition progresses, panels provide updates of what the local survivors were facing at that time. This emphasis on the lives of survivors who made Houston their home after the war makes this exhibit especially unique and personal.

By March of 1996, the museum had welcomed its first visitors and had crafted a mission statement emphasizing its main objectives:

> The mission of Holocaust Museum Houston is to promote awareness of the dangers of prejudice, hatred, and violence against the backdrop of the Holocaust, which claimed the lives of millions of Jews and other innocent victims. By fostering Holocaust remembrance, understanding, and education, the Museum will educate students as well as the general population about the

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[3] John K. Roth, john.roth@claremontmckenna.edu "RE: Senior Honors Thesis—Holocaust Museum Houston," 11 March 2003. Personal e-mail (11 March 2003).

> uniqueness of that event and its ongoing lesson: that humankind must learn to live together in peace and harmony.[4]

Ellen Trachtenberg recalls, "We did not know if people would come when we opened the doors."[5] Their worries were unfounded. From 1996-2002, the museum welcomed nearly 550,000 visitors.[6]

The Houston museum's emphasis on educating students is in the mission statement itself and is reinforced by the fact that no admission fee is charged to visit the facility. In 2002 alone, over 30,000 students toured the museum with a trained docent. The Education Department reached another 338,000 students through their curriculum trunk outreach program.[7] This program provides a comprehensive curriculum for teachers to utilize in elementary, middle, and high school language arts and social studies classrooms throughout the world. The museum has sent these trunks to such countries as Afghanistan, Belgium, Bosnia, Germany, and Italy.[8] The Education Department provides age-appropriate lesson plans and materials, including multimedia tools, at no cost to the schools and teachers. They also provide annual teacher trainings for those interested. The Holocaust Museum Houston staff believes very strongly that lessons can be drawn from studying the Holocaust and they direct great efforts to teaching these lessons to young people so that the memory of the Holocaust will survive. While this museum is modest in size, its goals are lofty. Presently, the museum staff is working to create a statewide Holocaust Education Mandate to ensure that "every Texas child will be educated in the lessons of the Holocaust."[9] This museum's dedication to education, especially that of today's youth,

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[4] Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH), "Visitor Guide Brochure" (Houston: Holocaust Museum Houston, n.d.).
[5] Trachtenberg, interview by author, 13 February 2003.
[6] Susan Llanes-Meyers and David Bell, "Community Impact Report" (Houston: Holocaust Museum Houston, 2001-2002).
[7] Llanes-Meyers and Bell, "Community Impact Report".
[8] Llanes-Meyers and Bell, "Community Impact Report".
[9] Susan Llanes-Meyers, "From the Executive Director..." *Bearing Witness (Holocaust Museum Houston Newsletter)* 6, no. 1 (2002): 2.

makes it an excellent case study for an analysis of youth Holocaust education in the United States.

In several ways, the Museum of Tolerance is the direct antithesis of the museum in Houston. Located in Los Angeles, California, not far from the Hollywood Hills and Rodeo Drive, this museum has adopted a high tech format to teach students about the Holocaust. Originally, the museum was affiliated with Yeshiva University. When the State of California appropriated $5 million for the museum in 1985, the ACLU filed suit against the state for violating the separation between church and state. Once the two institutions formally separated, the court rejected the ACLU's plea and awarded the $5 million grant to the museum.[10] With these funds and many other private donations, the museum began its construction. Its enormous 165,000 square foot building houses two large exhibition halls, a separate artifact room, a multimedia center, and spaces for rotating exhibits.[11] The Holocaust Museum Houston is quite modest in comparison, utilizing all 18,000 square feet of its floor space for the main exhibit hall, rotating exhibit hall, theater, classrooms, and library and archives.[12]

Since its opening in 1993, many stars and high profile politicians have been seen at fundraisers for the L.A. museum and events promoting one of its main themes, eradicating racism and prejudice in the U.S. and worldwide. They see nearly five times as many students per year as the Houston museum, but also charge $6 per student. Programs, such as Investing in Diversity, help fund Title 1 schools' field trips to the facility, and the museum is committed to the idea that they will not turn anyone away.[13] Considering itself as the educational arm of the

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[10] Jon Wiener, "The Other Holocaust Museum (Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance)," *Tikkun* 10, no. 3 (1995): 24.

[11] Liebe Geft, Museum of Tolerance (MOT) membership recruitment letter (Los Angeles: Museum of Tolerance, c. 2002), 1.

[12] Reed Kroloff, "Dark Remembrance," *Architecture* 85, no. 11 (1996): 115.

[13] Elana Samuels, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

Simon Wiesenthal Center, which is firmly committed to promoting human rights, the Museum of Tolerance is dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust while promoting human dignity.[14] This is conveyed in the museum's mission statement:

> The Museum of Tolerance is a high-tech, hands-on experience that focuses on two themes through interactive exhibits: the dynamics of racism and prejudice in America and worldwide, and the history of the Holocaust—the ultimate example of man's inhumanity to man.[15]

The directors of the museum are forthcoming in their objectives and do not shy away from their focus on "racism and prejudice." However, this has led scholars to present a number of critical assessments of the museum.[16] Since its inception, the Museum of Tolerance has received mixed reception from academics who see this emphasis on tolerance rather than history as detrimental to the study of the Holocaust and the propagation of its memory. Since the museum opened, exhibit designers modified some exhibits and completely eliminated and replaced others. While the Associate Director of the Museum states that these changes were made because of their "commitment to making it more relevant to current situations," one wonders whether any of these changes were made in response to the numerous critical reviews.[17] The name of the museum itself was another of the changes made. While it used to be referred to as the "Beit HaShoah-Museum of Tolerance," which means "house of the Holocaust" in Hebrew, any reference to the Holocaust itself has been dropped from the museum's name. Despite

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[14] Samuels, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

[15] MOT, "Museum Brochure" (Los Angeles: Museum of Tolerance, n.d.).

[16] Several authors have provided a critical assessment of the museum for its approach to teaching about the Holocaust. See Harold Marcuse, "Experiencing the Jewish Holocaust in Los Angeles: The Beit Hashoah- Museum of Tolerance," *Other Voices, The (e)Journal of Cultural Criticism* 2, no. 1 (2000); Wiener, "The Other Holocaust Museum."; Omer Bartov, "Chambers of Horror: Holocaust Museums in Israel and the United States," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2 (1997); Anson Rabinbach, "From Explosion to Erosion: Holocaust Memorialization in America since Bitburg," *History & Memory* 9, no. 1/2 (1997); Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," *Commentary* 99, no. 6 (1995); N. A. Lisus and R. V. Ericson, "Misplacing Memory: The Effect of Television Format on Holocaust Remembrance," *British Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 1 (1995); Judith Miller, *One, by One, by One: Facing the Holocaust* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

[17] Samuels, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

negative views of this museum among scholars, the majority of the general public and press have had wonderful things to say. Even *The Oprah Winfrey Show* recently featured and praised the museum for its work.

The Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Tolerance are two very different institutions, not only in their physical appearance, but in their methodology as well. The media-centered approach in Los Angeles differs greatly to the more artifact-focused exhibits in Houston. Regional differences are apparent in the exhibits and programs at both museums. The Houston museum's emphasis on local survivors creates a community-based atmosphere for visitors. The visitors from the Houston area feel a type of shared memory, realizing that their neighbors went through the events they are learning about. The Museum of Tolerance's substantial use of technology throughout the exhibition halls seems appropriate for a museum located so close to the Hollywood Hills. The abundance of media that is reminiscent of Hollywood—cell phones, computers, television—is reiterated by the high-tech exhibits. In addition to the regional differences, the L.A. museum has received a great amount of attention, while the Holocaust Museum Houston has not received the same interest among academics and the press.

Despite all differences, one can discern some similarities. They have similar goals as evident by the focus on teaching lessons maintained in their mission statements. Both museums highlight certain themes, such as prejudice and racism, throughout the exhibits and programs. These non-profit museums both sit in the center of very large metropolitan areas and place a great emphasis on their education programs for young people. Many Jewish students attend these museums on class field trips, but both museums aim especially to bring non-Jewish students into their institutions. They have also placed an age requirement for student tours,

discouraging groups of students below grade six from visiting the exhibits, although they do provide alternative programs for these younger students. While their style and methodology are very different, the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Tolerance aspire to achieve similar goals by teaching the history of the Holocaust and its lessons.

Literature Review

The memorialization and commemoration of the Holocaust in the United States did not emerge immediately after the concentration camps were liberated in 1945. Decades passed before the horrific atrocities that took place under the Nazi regime entered into the collective memory of the American public. By the 1970s, silence gave way to an intense interest. This Holocaust consciousness led to and was inspired by the creation of numerous Holocaust memorials, museums, and education centers across the United States. In San Francisco, survivors of Nazi Germany and Jewish community members founded the Holocaust Library and Research Center in 1979, which was later renamed the Holocaust Center of Northern California.[18] In 1984, the Holocaust Memorial Center in West Bloomfield, Michigan opened its doors as the first freestanding Holocaust museum in the U.S.[19] The growing interest in remembering the Holocaust has also been paired with an interest in studying and teaching the Holocaust. Scholars have explored three central questions: Why has the Holocaust become central in American consciousness in recent years? How has the Holocaust been interpreted in relation to the larger historical context? How have American ideals shaped the ways that the Holocaust has been taught?[20]

There has been a plethora of studies examining the emergence of this "Holocaust consciousness," not only in the countries in which the events took place, but in the United States as well. Once the general public became interested and began to discuss the Holocaust in popular culture, through movies, television, literature, and museums, a new field of Holocaust

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[18] See Holocaust Center of Northern California web site, <http://www.holocaust-sf.org> (15 January 2003).
[19] Holocaust Memorial Center, "Museum Brochure" (West Bloomfield, Mich.: Holocaust Memorial Center, n.d.).
[20] For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to American values as those found in United States culture and not any other North American country.

studies appeared. Scholars began to analyze not only the Holocaust itself, but also the emergence of Holocaust consciousness itself and its place in American society. They grappled with the question of why intense interest in the Shoah became so prevalent here so suddenly in the 1960s, especially since the vast majority of America's population was not directly, or even indirectly affected by the events. Historian Omer Bartov emphasizes that one result of having Holocaust memorials and museums in the United States, is a greater potential to universalize the Holocaust as an event from which a variety of lessons can be drawn.[21] Is the Holocaust a universal event that can be taught in a broad historical context, or is it a unique event, without any comparison and any lessons? These debates have shaped the ways in which the history, causes, and circumstances leading up to the Holocaust have been taught in schools and museums.

The historical facts of the Holocaust are not the only topic, or even primary issue, emphasized within museum and school curricula. Holocaust educators also emphasize the lessons that can be learned from this event. The lessons found in Holocaust museums in the U.S. often reflect core ideals of American society—liberty, freedom, and pluralism—revealing the trend to "Americanize" the Holocaust. The idea that lessons can be extracted from the Holocaust has led to some criticism, on the grounds that lessons are not usually found in extreme cases of events or situations, but instead are found in more normal situations to which normal people can relate.[22] Regardless of these criticisms, the Shoah is being taught in schools and museums across the nation and many efforts are made to draw lessons from these horrifying events. Many believe that a future holocaust could be prevented if proper education on the dangers of intolerance, racism, and prejudice is administered across the U.S.

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[21] Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 178.

[22] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1999), 13.

While scholars have contributed extensive research to the field of historical memory and Holocaust studies, they have given little attention to the role that historical memory plays in museum education. The surveys of curricula have been brief and sporadic in Canada and England, and even less has been done in America.[23] A survey of American textbooks by Lucy Dawidowicz is over a decade old, and as new curricula are developed and old ones are improved, there is a manifest need for additional exploration of these texts.[24]

Breaking the Silence: 1945-1980s

Scholars have developed three main arguments to explain why the Holocaust was not discussed immediately after the liberation of the camps in either public or private contexts. Some scholars see the silence as a result of the trauma and subsequent repression that stemmed from the horrific images and events of the concentration camps.[25] Others agree that the survivors themselves kept quiet because of the trauma of their experiences, but do not see the collective silence of both American Jews and non-Jews as a result of this trauma. Peter Novick, a leading scholar in the field of Holocaust commemoration, argues that while most Americans were probably shocked, dismayed, and saddened, there are other explanations for their silence.[26] Edward Linenthal, another scholar in the field, attributes the silence to underlying guilt among American Jews for not doing more to help as Europe's Jews were perishing in the concentration

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[23] Geoffrey Short, "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource: A View from New York City," *The Journal of Holocaust Education* 9, no. 1 (2000): 5.

[24] Lucy Dawidowicz examined 25 American textbooks, published mostly in the 1980s, and provided a scathing critique of their historical inaccuracies and political biases. Lucy Dawidowicz, "How They Teach the Holocaust," *Commentary* 90, no. 6 (1992).

[25] Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 2. See also Leon A. Jick, "The Holocaust: Its Use and Abuse within the American Public," *Yad Vashem Studies* 14 (1981).

[26] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 9.

and extermination camps.[27] Other scholars claim the desire to focus on seizing personal and financial opportunities in post-war America came to be the driving force in evading public discourse on the atrocities of the Holocaust.[28] Survivors who immigrated to the U.S. especially wanted to rebuild their lives and turn their attention towards the future instead of dwelling on the past. A feeling of success spread throughout American culture after the war ended, and the nation wanted to focus on the Allied victory and the bright future that lay ahead.

Although there were many reasons to remain quiet about the traumatic events of the Shoah, an accumulation of events and circumstances eventually broke this continued silence. Just as debate continues today over the causes of the silence, discussion is also present regarding the breaking of this silence. Most agree that the political climate in the U.S. was a major contributing factor. Peter Novick argues that many circumstances in the 1960s and 1970s that affected American politics and society, such as changing attitudes towards victimhood, shifting positions towards the acceptance of ethnic differences, and the Middle East conflicts, greatly contributed to the emergence of interest in the Holocaust. The Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement helped to combat the notion that victimhood equaled weakness. Novick argues that a more sympathetic outlook developed that accepted and even celebrated victimhood. A new spotlight on spousal and child abuse also emerged at this time, revealing this shift in attitude towards victims.[29]

Just as the idea of victimhood came to be acceptable in American society, a greater toleration of ethnic differences also developed. The decline of an "integrationist" agenda in the

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[27] Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 7.

[28] Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 7. See also, Franklin Littell, "Holocaust Education after '40 Years in the Wilderness," in *The Holocaust Forty Years After*, ed. Marcia Littell, Richard Libowitz, and Evelyn Bodek Rosen (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 1-6.

[29] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 189-91.

U.S., and the rise of a "particularist ethos" which emphasizes the differences between Americans, contributed to the notion that is was acceptable to embrace one's ethnic differences and display them proudly.[30] American Jews no longer felt the pressure to assimilate into their surrounding culture, and began to incorporate the Holocaust as a defining factor of their collective Jewish identity. This also helped to strengthen Jewish continuity in America, at a time when intermarriage was rising and religiosity was declining. American Jewish identity became intertwined with Holocaust memory and many Jews began to see it as their duty to commemorate and memorialize the Shoah in mainstream America.

In addition to these factors, nearly all scholars agree that the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann greatly increased awareness and popular interest in the U.S. In 1961, Hannah Arendt's articles in the *New Yorker* and in her subsequent book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* provided gripping accounts of the trial, making it front-page news in America.[31] She helped to bring the horrors of the genocide back into the public eye, and these issues could no longer be avoided. For Americans, Eichmann symbolized more than a Nazi perpetrator. Even after his trial ended and throughout the 1960s, Eichmann's role in the genocide remained in the American conscience. Later in the decade when anti-Vietnam War sentiment was increasing, protestors put his name on banners since his story embodied the current conflict of individual conscience versus obedience to authority.[32]

The fate of Holocaust consciousness was imprinted into the minds of Americans during a short span of six days in 1967. Scholars have marked the Six Day War as one of the defining

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[30] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 5. On Jewish attempts to assimilate into American society by avoiding recognition in relation to the Holocaust, see Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 7; Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 8-9.
[31] David M. Crowe, "The Holocaust, Historiography, and History," in *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*, ed. Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 26-27.
[32] Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, 9.

moments of Holocaust awareness and interest.[33] On May 26, 1967, after mobilizing his army, Egyptian President Gamul Abdel Nassar stated that the destruction of Israel was his main goal.[34] The fear that the Jewish people would be faced with another holocaust, struck deep into the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in America. People began to think that by remembering the Shoah and attempting to understand why and how it happened, history could be prevented from repeating itself.

Throughout the 1970s, Holocaust consciousness continued to increase across America. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the fears of Israel's possible destruction resurfaced, and concern with commemorating the Holocaust became manifest.[35] Then in 1978, two landmark events took place, which brought the Holocaust to the forefront of American popular culture and politics. The airing of the NBC miniseries *Holocaust* brought the horrifying events into the living rooms of all Americans and broadened the scope of consciousness to non-Jews as well. In addition, during that year, President Carter formed a commission to recommend the creation of a national memorial to the Holocaust.[36] This initiative ultimately resulted in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, located on the Mall in Washington, D.C. The location of this memorial to Europe's murdered Jews is very symbolic as it indicates that the Holocaust has been incorporated into American history and identity.

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[33] For a complete discussion of various scholars' views on the impact of the Six Day War, see Rochelle G. Saidell, *Never Too Late to Remember: The Politics Behind New York City's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1996), 23-34.

[34] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 9.

[35] Saidell, *Never Too Late to Remember*, 34. See also, Stephen Haynes, *Holocaust Education and the Church-Related College* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997).

[36] For an in depth look at the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from the beginning discussions in the President's Commission, see Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*.

Controversial Issues: Uniqueness and Americanization

As the public began to discuss the Holocaust in many arenas, including the media, universities, museums, and popular culture, the events were analyzed, and debates emerged regarding how the facts should be interpreted. Is the Shoah a unique and unmatched occurrence, without any comparison, or is it a universal event with implications throughout history and for today's society? Are there lessons or messages that can be taken from the senseless murder of 11 million human beings? This issue of defining the Holocaust as either a unique or universal event in history becomes especially important in regard to Holocaust education.[37] The ways that the events are perceived shape how the story is told.

Many survivors tend to argue for the uniqueness of their experiences, setting it apart from other historical events entirely. However, in the process of historicization, the mass murder of millions of Jews is inevitably subject to comparisons with other genocides in history. Might such comparisons deny the uniqueness of the event and trivialize the crime? In their article "Two Kinds of Uniqueness," Professors Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg argue that the uniqueness of the Holocaust can only be recognized through comparisons with other genocides.[38] This can be a problem in Holocaust curricula, as teachers often place the Shoah into the larger framework of human rights violations, racism, and intolerance, but often neglect to focus on the role of anti-Semitism. While this emphasizes that lessons can be drawn from the Holocaust, it

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[37] Alan Mintz devised two opposing models, exceptionalist and constructivist, to expand this debate. The exceptionalist model, an extensive of the uniqueness argument, contends that the Holocaust is in a "dimension beyond comparison" which calls for an unflinching account of how it really was. The constructivist model argues that parallels can be drawn and lessons can be learned. Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, 38-39.

[38] Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, "Two Kinds of Uniqueness: The Universal Aspects of the Holocaust," in *New Perspectives on the Holocaust: A Guide for Teachers and Scholars*, ed. Rochelle L. Millen (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), 6-18.

negates the important notion that this genocide was very different from other genocides throughout history. Many people believe strongly that the Holocaust was either a unique *or* a universal event. However, some scholars are now bridging this gap and stating that neither is entirely correct. The Shoah can neither be "marginalized as an aberration" nor "contextualized as a part of human progress."[39] Milchman and Rosenberg use the term "caesura" to explain the events as neither universal nor unique, but instead as an interruption in human history that must be studied. Regardless of which view is accepted, the presence of competing views makes the narrative even more complex for educators, who have to create an account that will be accepted and understood by many.

Also adding complexity to the role of educators in Holocaust museums is the notion of the "Americanization of the Holocaust." This phrase is used in almost all of the scholarly works on the commemoration and representation of the Shoah mentioned above and refers to the aspects of American society that have influenced how the Holocaust is taught.[40] In his study of Holocaust memory and memorials, James Young argues that memorials remember the past according to the "national myths, ideals, and political needs," and therefore, U.S. memorials remember the past according to specific American ideals and values.[41]

This is evident in museums, as well as memorials. Both have shaped the story of the Holocaust to incorporate the ideals of "pluralism, tolerance, liberty, and human rights."[42] Many museums put forth this agenda, in particular the Beit HaShoah-Museum of Tolerance. The

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[39] Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 10.

[40] Among the many scholars who use this term are, Franklin Bialystok, "Americanizing the Holocaust: Beyond the Limit of the Universal," in *New Perspectives on the Holocaust: A Guide for Teachers and Scholars*, ed. Rochelle L. Millen (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), 122-30; Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, 14, 26, 146-51; Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, 3-35; Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust."

[41] James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1.

[42] Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, 14.

name of the museum itself illustrates how American values are being incorporated into the museum narrative. Michael Berenbaum, the former deputy director of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, has even stated:

> [T]hroughout the United States, instruction in the Holocaust has become an instrument for teaching the professed values of American society: democracy, pluralism, respect for differences, individual responsibility, freedom from prejudice and an abhorrence of racism.[43]

This helps to create an atmosphere that will resonate with all the different types of people in America who visit the various Holocaust museums across the U.S. While this process of "Americanization" has received some criticism for trivializing a sacred event, it is mostly the mass media, literature, and tourism that have received the greatest critical assessments, while most critics have spared museums. The museums, for the most part, have been created as places of remembrance and learning, while also retaining this very "Americanized" focus towards ideals of liberty and pluralism.[44] President Carter reiterated this notion at the first "Days of Remembrance" ceremony when he gave three reasons for the justification of a national memorial to the Holocaust here in the U.S.:

> Although the Holocaust took place in Europe, the event is of fundamental significance to Americans for three reasons. First, it was American troops who liberated many of the death camps, and who helped explore the horrible truth of what had been done there. Also, the United States became a homeland for many of those who were able to survive. Secondly, however, we must share the responsibility for not being willing to acknowledge forty years ago that this horrible event was occurring. Finally, because we are humane people, concerned with the human rights of all peoples, we feel compelled to study the systematic destruction of the Jews so that we may seek to learn how to prevent such enormities from occurring in the future.[45]

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[43] Michael Berenbaum, "The Nativization of the Holocaust," *Judaism* 35, no. 4 (1986):453-54, quoted in Short, "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource," 11. Michael Berenbaum resigned from his position as deputy director in 1980, but later rejoined the museum's staff in 1987 as project director. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 37. Berenbaum now works as a historical consultant for films, museums, and educational materials related to the Holocaust. For information on his current projects, see www.berenbaumgroup.com.

[44] Short, "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource," 13.

[45] Quoted in Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 336.

President Carter projected the notion of the United States as a haven for the oppressed and a land of "humane people" who see it as our duty to uphold the freedoms of others for future generations. He also indicated that by studying about the Nazi genocide, we could learn how to prevent future atrocities from occurring. It is for this reason that many museums and education centers have been created, with the goal of remembering the Holocaust as well as preventing another genocide from happening.

The Role of Museums in Youth Education

Just as Holocaust consciousness in the U.S. was growing in the 1970s, the role of education in museums was expanding tremendously. The American Association of Museums (AAM) recognized the need to establish specific minimum standards for all museums. In 1975, the AAM broadened its definition of a museum with two main goals in mind—to entrust those institutions in educating the public, and to create a greater level of professionalism among museums.[46] The importance of education in museums continued to grow and by the early 1980s, exhibition development teams began to include museum educators. By 1992, the AAM published the first major work identifying the educational role of museums, entitled *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums.* This report argues that a museum's commitment to education should be central in its mission and pivotal to all its activities.[47] Practitioners began to gather and discuss the new role of museum educators. A clear definition of the collective role of a museum educator soon emerged:

> The educator establishes the link between the content of the exhibit and the museum audience. The educator is a communication specialist who understands

[46] Jeanette Hauck Booth, Gerald H. Krockover, and Paula R. Woods, *Creative Museum Methods and Educational Techniques* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1982), 4-5.

[47] American Association of Museums, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1992).

> the ways people learn, the needs that museum audiences have and the relationship between the museum's programme and the activities of other educational institutions including schools. The educator plans evaluation activities that will examine the exhibit's success in meeting its intended objectives and communicating with visitors.[48]

Traditionally, schools and museums have established close relationships. Teachers see museums as a place to expand upon their in-class lesson plans and to fill in areas they left out. The students relate their museum experience closely with school, however it is a new venue for them to explore, making a museum field trip even more interesting and full of possibility.[49] If the museum educator is able to establish the connection between the exhibit and the student, as the above description states, class visits to a museum can entice students to expand upon the knowledge they acquired in their museum visit. Serving as a catalyst to increase students' knowledge and interest in a subject, museums can become a central part of youth education.[50]

Because Holocaust museums have taken on the task of educating America's youth about the Holocaust and the lessons that can be learned from the history, museum educators are left with a difficult job. How much can museums be expected to teach, and students expected to learn, in a short several-hour visit? Practitioners and scholars in the field of museum education have grappled with this issue extensively. Scholars argue that for visitors to learn in museums, they must encounter topics and displays relevant to their own personal lives and interests.[51] Thus, for students to connect during their short visit to the museum, they must see the information being conveyed as important for their own lives. Michael Berenbaum, former project director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, has often stated that the

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[48] Lisa Roberts, "Educators on Exhibit Teams: a New Role, a New Era," in *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, ed. Gail Durbin (London: The Stationary Office, 1996), 11.

[49] Hagit Allon, "Working with Children and Young People," in *Museum and Gallery Education: A Manual of Good Practice*, ed. Hazel Moffat and Vicky Woollard (Walnut Creek, California: Altamira Press, 1999), 79.

[50] Bonnie Pitman-Gelles, "United States of America," in *Museums and Children*, ed. Ulla Keding Olofsson (Paris: United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1979), 166.

[51] Jean-Mark Blais, "Creating Exhibitions for Learning," in *Museum and Gallery Education: A Manual of Good Practice*, ed. Hazel Moffat and Vicky Woollard (Walnut Creek, California: Altamira Press, 1999), 34.

message these museums are telling must resonate with its audience so they can relate.[52] By situating the Holocaust in a historical context that Americans can relate to, Holocaust museums can reach its audience and establish a connection that will promote learning. Some scholars have taken issue with this notion, as Alvin Rosenfeld argues that American social problems are not genocidal in nature and do not resemble the persecution and systematic genocide that was the Holocaust.[53] Regardless of criticism by scholars, museums have accepted the idea put forth in the museum education field—for students to learn in the museum, they must be able to relate. Educators in Holocaust museums apply this idea not only to the education programs they create, but also in the exhibitions themselves. The growing importance of educators to these museums has influenced the ways that students are now being taught about the Holocaust.

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[52] Quoted in Rabinbach, "From Explosion to Erosion," 5; Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," 2; Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 337.

[53] Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," 2.

History in the Museum

Preparing for Understanding

Before visiting museums, packets of information are sent to teachers to help prepare for their visit and also supplement their pre- and post-visit lesson plans. At the Holocaust Museum Houston, the teacher packet provides a general list of guidelines, vocabulary terms, timelines, maps, quotations, and a suggested reading list. In addition to these resources, one page is dedicated to the question, "Why teach the Holocaust?"[54] Teachers must address this question and develop a solid rationale for teaching the Holocaust long before the lessons or field trips begin. Holocaust educators Samuel Totten, Stephen Feinberg, and William Fernekes argue that without strong underlying principles, the lessons and units lack an appropriate historical focus and concentrate solely on the "whats" of the history, instead of the "whys."[55] The Houston museum's teachers' guide continues to ask, "How can we not teach it?" It goes on to argue that the study of the Holocaust will be extremely pertinent to the students' lives, as they make connections between history and current moral decisions they will be faced with. The guide also emphasizes that this history should not solely be studied by Jews, but rather is relatable to all students and will promote a more positive approach to different cultures.[56] However, the guide does little to further this notion of fostering more positive attitudes towards other minorities. In response to its question, "How can we not teach it?" the guide states that by "studying the past… [the students] become aware of the importance of making choices and come to realize that one

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[54] HMH Education Department, "Teacher Packet" (Houston: Holocaust Museum Houston, 2002), 6.
[55] Samuel Totten, Stephen Feinberg, and William Fernekes, "The Significance of Rationale Statements in Developing a Sound Holocaust Education Program," in *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*, ed. Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 2-4.
[56] HMH Education Department, "Teacher Packet," 6.

person *can* make a difference."[57] The educators and docents carry this theme throughout the students' visit and strongly emphasize the importance of individual choice and free will throughout their museum experience. The educators argue that students should view themselves as active individuals, not bystanders, who possess the ability to control their actions and the choices they make. Despite the devastating and incomprehensible nature of the Holocaust, lessons can be learned by studying it and students can take away ideas that might help them live better lives.

To further provide historical context for students, a vocabulary list of general Holocaust terms, as well as terms about Judaism, helps to familiarize the students with the Jewish religion and people and places involved with the Holocaust.[58] The focus on Jewish religious terms provides students, the vast majority of whom are not Jewish, with a general background so they can recognize certain artifacts at the beginning of the permanent exhibit and understand terms used by the docent. In the early planning stages of the museum, the Holocaust Museum Houston Permanent Exhibition Committee decided that attention must be directed to the pre-Holocaust history of the Jews, to show how rich their culture was and to highlight how much was truly lost.[59] This helps to place the long history of Judaism and anti-Semitism into a historical context. Also provided are prejudice terms—stereotype, prejudice, racism, discrimination, anti-Semitism, genocide—and related questions for discussion on these topics. While they list only six general prejudice terms, 64 Holocaust- and Judaism-related vocabulary words are provided.

A comprehensive timeline ranging from 1933-1945 includes not only events directly related to the Holocaust, but also events that students may have already been aware of, such as the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Allied invasion of Normandy. Issues also included are the

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[57] HMH Education Department, "Teacher Packet," 6.
[58] HMH Education Department, "Teacher Packet," 9-16.
[59] Roth, personal e-mail, 11 March 2003.

revolt of inmates at Auschwitz, the attempt to assassinate Hitler, and the Warsaw ghetto uprising, in addition to armed resistance in other various ghettos, and the Sobibor extermination camp. The guide also discusses the Jewish partisan movement. To expand upon the theme of resistance, a detailed map indicates all Jewish revolts between 1942 and 1945 and highlights that "[d]espite the overwhelming military strength of the German forces, many Jews… rose in revolt against their fate" (fig. 1).[60] Again, the educators are able to incorporate the theme of individual choice.

They also stress the importance of including a comprehensive look at resistance to the Holocaust prior to the students' visit, in order to debunk prejudices that the "Jews went like sheep to the slaughter." Geoffrey Short argues this point, stating that teachers should address any and all misconceptions students might have about Jews or the Holocaust before their visit. By providing materials to study and discuss in the classroom, this goal can be achieved.[61] The timeline also illustrates the progression of Hitler's

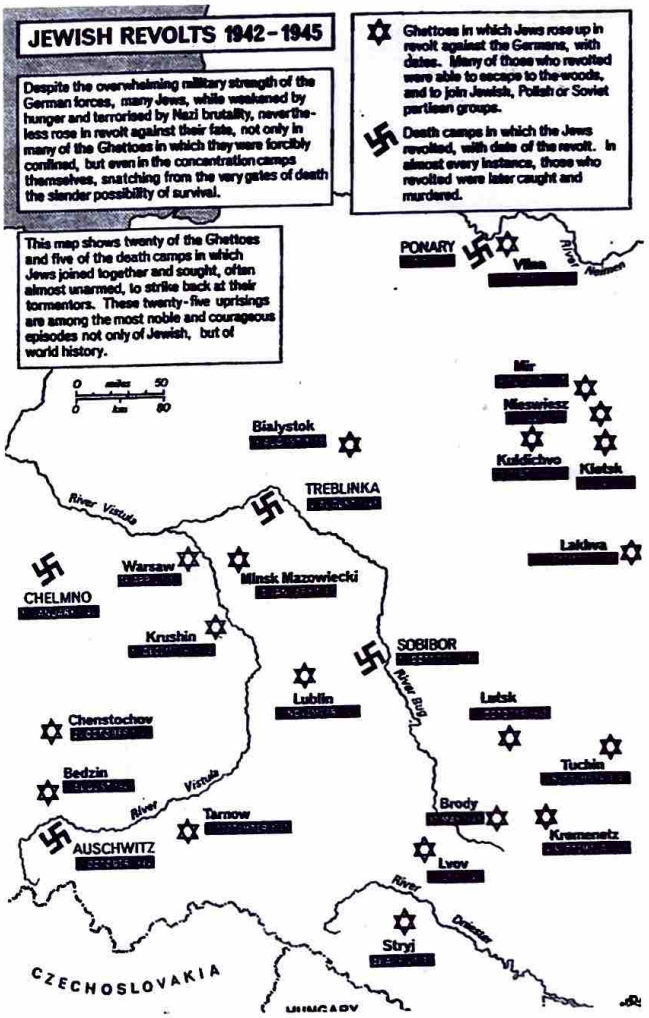

Figure 1. Map of Jewish revolts in the Holocaust Museum Houston Teacher Packet.

[60] HMH Education Department, "Teacher Packet," 41.
[61] Geoffrey Short, "The Holocaust in the National Curriculum--a Survey of Teachers' Attitudes and Practices," *The Journal of Holocaust Education* 4, no. 2 (1995).

policies that deprived Jews of their rights, their dignity, their freedom, and ultimately their lives. The timeline was taken in part from the book, *Genocide: Critical Issues of the Holocaust*, which is a Simon Wiesenthal Center publication. The Holocaust Museum Houston teachers' guide also utilizes the list of frequently asked questions about the Holocaust compiled by the Simon Wiesenthal Center. However, the Houston guide abbreviates the list of 36 questions to twelve selections that address very broad concepts that docents expand upon during the tour. Even though Houston educators utilized information from Simon Wiesenthal publications, they saw the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a greater influence in the development of their education programs.[62]

The Museum of Tolerance educators recommend that teachers begin preparation for their visit by discussing the vocabulary and concepts they will encounter in the museum. Few of the vocabulary terms they provide for teachers relate directly to the Holocaust. The majority of terms relate to racism, intolerance, and genocide in general (fig. 2).[63]

	Museum of Tolerance		Holocaust Museum Houston	
	Number of Terms	% of Total	Number of Terms	% of Total
Judaism Terms	2	15.4%	15	21.4%
Holocaust History Terms	1	7.7%	49	70.0%
Prejudice Terms	10	76.9%	6	8.6%

Figure 2. Analysis of vocabulary words provided in both museums' teachers' guides.

[62] Christina Vasquez, interview by author, 13 February 2003.

[63] MOT Education Department, "Teachers' Guide," (Los Angeles: Museum of Tolerance, 2002), 8-9. All teachers' resources are also available online. <http://teachers.museumoftolerance.com/>

In a pre-visit lesson plan provided to teachers entitled, "Essential Vocabulary and Concepts," thirteen terms are discussed and only one is Holocaust history-related. The lesson plan consists of a word match and a column of scenarios that refer to the vocabulary terms provided—prejudice, racism, genocide, stereotype, and discrimination. Only one scenario deals directly with the Shoah stating, "Nazis try to kill all Jews," which matches with the term, genocide. The other scenarios refer to instances that students might commonly identify with, such as people blaming innocent Arab Americans for terrorist attacks.[64] While the educators hope that students can put these terms in the framework of their modern lives, the lesson plans and teachers' guide do not discuss how such terms as prejudice, stereotype, discrimination, and racism relate to the Holocaust. They might understand what racism is, but not in the context of Nazi Germany or the Shoah.

The Museum of Tolerance educators developed thirty-six frequently asked questions and answers, in which more terms relating specifically to the Holocaust can be explored. This comprehensive list of questions provides a great deal of information and would be most appropriate for teachers and students to explore prior to the visit. This guide focuses on certain topics, such as when the first concentration camp was established, why Jews were singled out for extermination, how much Jews in Europe realized what was going to occur, how much the German people knew about what was happening to their Jewish neighbors, how much the Allies knew about what was happening in Nazi Europe, and what the attitude of the church was towards the Nazi regime.[65] Unfortunately, the main exhibit in the Los Angeles museum does not reinforce much of the information presented in these questions. In some cases, the exhibits skip over entire questions and in other parts, the questions are briefly discussed. It is therefore up to

[64] The terms used with this scenario are stereotype, discrimination, or prejudice.

[65] MOT Education Department, "36 Questions About the Holocaust," *Museum of Tolerance*, 2002, <http://teachers.museumoftolerance.com/mainjs.htm?s=2&p=5> (20 January 2003).

the teachers to teach their students all the history of the Holocaust before they step into the museum.

The Museum of Tolerance also developed four themes and learning objectives that students see throughout the museum—the power of words and images, the dynamics of discrimination, the pursuit of democracy and diversity, and personal responsibility. The museum illustrates how their themes relate to the California State Frameworks and Content Standards.[66] Throughout the year, teachers must achieve certain goals set by the state, and the museum is careful to show that the students will not fall behind if they add a lesson on the Holocaust and tolerance to the curriculum. Again, the teacher is supposed to contextualize the history and prepare his/her students. As the Associate Director of the Museum of Tolerance pointed out in an interview, the materials provided for teachers are seen as "trigger lessons," meant to be stepping-stones for further research and learning on the teacher's part.[67] To facilitate further learning among teachers, the museum maintains an interactive web site in which teachers can post messages and share ideas for teaching about the Holocaust. The Museum provides workshops to better prepare teachers to provide appropriate lessons for their students. These workshops, however, focus mainly on tolerance-related issues.[68] While the museum provides what seems to be a vast array of resources for teachers, it still relies on teachers to prepare students for the visit. Once they enter the museum, the students are in the hands of the museum educators.

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[66] MOT Education Department, "Teachers' Guide," 6-7.
[67] Samuels, interview by author, 3 February 2003.
[68] MOT Education Department, "Tools for Tolerance for Educators (pamphlet)" (Los Angeles: Museum of Tolerance, n.d.).

The Learning Environment

Despite all the preparation, the ultimate question is how this translates into learning and understanding once in the museum. At the Holocaust Museum Houston, students are immediately escorted to a classroom and met by a staff visitor coordinator. This staff person provides an orientation to the museum and introduces the docent(s) who will be guiding the students through the museum.[69] The staff person begins by directing students' attention towards a diagram fixed to the front center of the classroom. Students look at a triangle, with the words rescuers, bystanders, perpetrators affixed to each corner and victims inscribed in the center (fig. 3). They begin to discuss how each of these groups participated in the Holocaust, and how only one group had no choice—the victims. The staff person emphasizes that the rescuers and perpetrators were very small groups while the bystanders constituted the vast majority of people. "We all have a choice, and this is why you are here" is the last phrase left in the minds of these young students before they begin the tour. The students will revisit this theme throughout their visit, not only in the context of Nazi Germany, but in their own lives as well. As the students go off with a docent, the staff person reiterates that the museum is also a memorial, and therefore needs to be treated with the respect that a church, temple, or synagogue would.

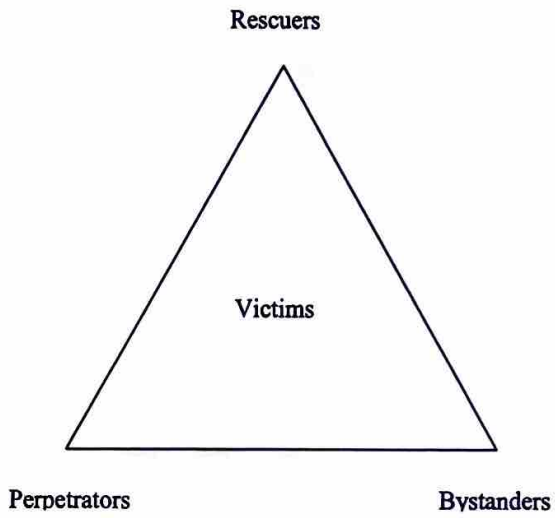

Figure 3. Museum staff utilize this diagram to begin discussion about the Holocaust.

[69] Shari Farrice, interview by author, 13 February 2003. Each tour I followed began in the classroom with this brief orientation.

As the groups move into the exhibit hall, the docent notes how the design of the space evokes a certain emotion and symbolizes some part of the Holocaust. The materials used in the construction of both the interior and exterior—steel, brick, concrete—suggest a feeling of somberness and the industrialization of the camps.[70] While standing in the lobby and gazing down the hall towards the memorial garden, the students see steel beams over-head slowly becoming narrower. The hallway itself also becomes more narrow and the image of a railroad track leading to Auschwitz is immediately conjured up. For the students who do not immediately notice the metaphorical nature of the architecture, the docent spends a few minutes discussing the structure. He/She also tells students to notice the shape of the room they are about to enter.

The permanent exhibit hall, which is the wedge-shaped building visitors see as they arrive, begins with a high and open ceiling when telling the history of Jewish culture in Europe, but it progressively becomes lower as the story shifts to the slaughter of the Jewish people. The exhibit designers incorporated multiple forms of media to tell the story of the Holocaust. A combination of enlarged black and white images, text panels, artifacts, reproductions, maps, and television screens are utilized throughout the hall. The exhibit designers incorporated five television screens at different points in the story; however, the only one in sound is film footage of Nazi rallies and propaganda. During the planning phase, the Permanent Exhibit Committee felt that it was very important for visitors to hear Hitler's charisma when he spoke and the "war-like" quality to his voice.[71] Because this is the only video clip with sound, the role of Nazi propaganda takes on a greater importance. If a visitor recognizes this video as the only one with sound, it conveys the message that Nazi propaganda must have played a very important role in

[70] Kroloff, "Dark Remembrance," 120.
[71] Trachtenberg, interview by author, 13 February 2003.

Hitler's rise to power and his continued popularity among the German people, even as he led them to war. Even though monitors were not originally planned for, a few were included that show archival images of the Warsaw ghetto, concentration camps, and the liberation of the camps.

Unlike the mixed media approach presented in Houston, the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles utilizes an abundance of television screens to reach its goals of teaching about the Holocaust and fostering tolerance. In justification for the excessive use of TV images, founder Rabbi Marvin Hier asks, "Where are your kids now?" He goes on to answer, "[t]hey're at the computer and after that they're going to watch television. That's the kids of America. This museum wants to speak to that generation. We have to use the medium of the age."[72] In its attempt to create an environment that appeals to the youth of America, the Museum of Tolerance has subscribed to a view of today's adolescence as unable and/or unwilling to listen and learn unless material is presented in the form of television images. The museum even hired media experts to create an environment in which the viewer is constantly stimulated and never bored.[73] Unlike most museums, it rarely employs text panels as a method of communicating with visitors. Besides the plethora of television screens, in its architectural style and appearance, the museum building lacks metaphorical symbolism. This is quite different from most Holocaust museums and memorials, with their striking visual impact and structural significance.[74] From the outside, the structure stands as a tall eight-story building comprised of blank stone and glass and is "nothing special architecturally," as one critics points out.[75] Once inside, an unusual structural feature is a Guggenheim-like spiral ramp that leads to the exhibit halls. While docents and other

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[72] Quoted in Lisus and Ericson, "Misplacing Memory," 5.

[73] Lisus and Ericson, "Misplacing Memory," 7.

[74] See Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* and Saidell, *Never Too Late to Remember* on the symbolic nature of the museum buildings in Washington, D.C. and New York City, respectively.

[75] Edward Norden, "Yes and No to the Holocaust Museums," *Commentary* 96, no. 2 (1993): 27.

museum staff do not allude to any significance of this spiral structure, I would argue that the architecture is symbolic. Visitors descend down the staircase into a hell-like experience—the Holocaust—and then reemerge, arising with the knowledge after learning in the exhibits.

Among the exhibit halls is the museum's Multimedia Learning Center, which contains over thirty computer workstations for visitors to explore the history of World War II and the Holocaust in greater depth. Once again, the museum utilizes a technologically focused approach to learning. However, most class tours are pressed for time and rarely have the opportunity to visit this exhibit, unless the teacher makes special arrangements. Docents often encourage students to return with their parents at another time to explore the museum and all the sections they were unable to discuss due to time constraints. The classes that sign up for a special program called "Steps to Tolerance" have the opportunity to spend time in the Multimedia Learning Center. This program is solely for fifth and sixth grade students, and they spend their 2-½ hour visit solely in the Center learning about the Holocaust and contemporary issues of tolerance and diversity in an age-appropriate way for younger students.[76] These students do not visit the main exhibit hall.

Adjacent to the Center is the museum's collection of artifacts and documents (fig. 4). Tucked away from the abundance of technology, this room provides a more conventional approach to museum learning. This is the only place in the museum where visitors find actual artifacts. Unfortunately, many students do not have the opportunity to view these during their tours, once again due to time constraints. Students spend the majority of their museum field trip in the Tolerancenter. There are many different stations in this part of the exhibit, and if

Figure 4. If time permits, students explore such items as Anne Frank's diary pages and a concentration camp bunk bed (courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance).

[76] MOT Education Department, "Steps to Tolerance (pamphlet)" (Los Angeles: Museum of Tolerance, n.d.).

the docent does not hurry students through certain stations, they have little to no time to explore the artifact room.

The separation of mediums—television screens, photographs, artifacts—in the Museum of Tolerance is very different than the balanced mix of mediums found throughout the Holocaust Museum Houston. The balance that is found in Houston can be seen not only in the physical space of the museum, but in the teaching of the history and its lessons as well. The history of the Holocaust and the lessons that can be learned are balanced throughout the exhibit hall. In contrast to this balance, the Museum of Tolerance has allotted the majority of space and time to television screens and other technological accoutrements. Because the museum designers incorporated this abundance of technology in the main exhibit hall, they had to sacrifice the use of artifacts. Many students are unable to ever experience real artifacts because there is not time during their tour. This is one of the first things that the Museum of Tolerance sacrifices to reach its goal of providing a "high tech, hands-on experience."[77] Even though each museum utilizes different approaches to their exhibits, the main issue that must be examined is the content of the exhibits themselves.

Europe before Nazism

The visitors' lack of knowledge about the Shoah before visiting these museums provides a major concern for Holocaust educators and exhibit designers who work with limited time and space. James Young expressed such concerns in response to the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

> I did not want all that non-Jewish America knew about Jewish history to be the Holocaust. And I did not want all that Jewish America knew about Jewish

[77] MOT, "Museum Brochure."

> history to be the Holocaust. A thousand years of European Jewish life is reduced to 12 terrible years—I think that's the great danger.[78]

Placing the Holocaust in a historical context has proven to be an important facet of Holocaust education and can help to minimize the concerns raised by Young. By learning about the history of the Jewish people and the history of anti-Semitism, the student will be better equipped to learn about the emergence of Nazism, Hitler's racist ideology, and the Nazi party's new anti-Semitism. It also helps to counter arguments raised by historian Lucy Dawidowicz that Holocaust educators spend more time on teaching what happened, instead of on why it happened.[79] Educator Mark Weitzman provides several guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust, including the notion that it is crucial to "explore the context within which the Holocaust occurred" and to "explore Jewish life and culture before the Holocaust to gain a sense of the living community which was destroyed."[80] Doing this helps to eliminate misconceptions that somehow the Jews were guilty of something and deserved separation from society. Another scholar rightly argues that students must understand that the Jewish people were more than objects of genocide.[81]

The Holocaust Museum Houston's teachers' guide highlights this issue and has a guideline stating, "[t]he teacher should contextualize the history they are teaching… so that students may begin to comprehend the specific circumstances that encouraged or discouraged these atrocities."[82] As students enter the main exhibition hall in Houston, the docent begins by pointing out a variety of religious artifacts that survived the war, as well as some that belonged to survivors. Directing students' attention towards a salvaged Torah scroll, the docent provides a

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[78] Quoted in Judy Oppenheimer, "Structures of Memory: An Exhibit at the Jewish Museum of New York Explores the Way the Holocaust Is Memorialized Throughout the World," *Baltimore Jewish Times* 1994.

[79] Totten, Feinberg, and Fernekes, "The Significance of Rationale Statements," 10.

[80] Mark Weitzman, "Coming to Grips with Teaching the Holocaust," *Momentum: Journal of the National Catholic Educational Association,* February 1988, quoted in Museum of Tolerance Online Multimedia Learning Center, <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/resources/education/teacherintro/index.html> (14 January 2003).

[81] Paul Wieser, "Instructional Issues/Strategies in Teaching the Holocaust," in *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*, ed. Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 68.

[82] HMH Education Department, "Teacher Packet," 7.

brief background into the Jewish religion and the Hebrew Bible. This helps to emphasize the differences between race and religion. This issue is discussed further as the docent highlights differences between Nazi racism and previous forms of anti-Semitism. He/She reiterates that Hitler did not invent anti-Semitism, nor did the German people, but that it stems from a long history. On one side of the entrance corridor, the students examine a large map of the world, which highlights various occasions of discrimination against Jews (fig. 5). Among the many examples is a 306 AD edict from a church council in Spain stating that intermarriage and intercourse between Jews and Christians was prohibited. This serves as a reminder to students that the roots of the Holocaust were embedded in centuries of religious anti-Semitism and political inequality.[83] It is important, however, to emphasize that Hitler's anti-Semitism evolved from such previous forms, but was based on racial and not religious terms. Despite critiques that a focus on religion could obscure the notion that the Nazis defined Jews by racial factors, it is central to the history of the Holocaust to understand how the events came to take place.[84]

Figure 5. Various instances of anti-Semitism throughout history are highlighted on this map of the world (courtesy of Holocaust Museum Houston).

Next, students examine a wall of photographs, and the docent explains that these are family photos of Holocaust survivors who moved to Houston. The images portray Jews with a

[83] Crowe, "The Holocaust, Historiography, and History," 24.
[84] Short, "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource," 8.

variety of religious, geographical, and economic backgrounds. This helps to show that not all Jews fit into the stereotypical categories presented by the Nazi propaganda they are about to encounter in the museum. Pictures show well-fed, healthy Jews before the war, and serve as a comparison to the images that are associated with the victims of the Holocaust—emaciated, weaken bodies barely holding on to life. By focusing on these photos and emphasizing that these individuals could be their next-door neighbors, the museum helps students connect and see those who lived during the Holocaust not just as victims, but also as normal people who faced unimaginable circumstances. The docent also points out an enlarged photograph of students standing in rows with their teacher behind them. This photo is reminiscent of the class pictures that students today take with their classmates and teachers on picture day. Again, the students are able to relate to the various people the museum presents in the exhibit.

Adapting parts of Mark Weitzman's article for its own use, the Museum of Tolerance's website also highlights the importance of exploring the context of the Holocaust and the Jewish life before the Holocaust. Therefore, one should expect that visitors would receive a proper introduction into the historical context in both these museums. While the Holocaust Museum Houston provides a thorough background on the history of the Jewish people, Germany, and anti-Semitism, the Museum of Tolerance's discussion is much more limited.

In contrast to the Houston museum's exploration of Jewish life before the war through photographs, religious artifacts, and discussion with the tour guide, the Museum of Tolerance employs a short video to describe "The Jewish World That Was." Students watch this video as they wait for their tour to begin in the computer-controlled main exhibit hall of the Holocaust section. Prior to watching this video, they receive a "photo passport" of a victim of the Holocaust to take through the exhibit. Each student receives a driver's-license-sized card with a

photo on it. Students insert their card into a computer at a station at the beginning, middle, and end of the exhibit, which displays information about "their person." In some instances, the card is of a survivor; however, the majority of the cards update the students with dismal information. The short video that students are supposed to be watching at this time is eclipsed by the excitement of their new interactive tool, as students whisper to each other about "who they got." The few students who do pay attention to this film hear myriad Jewish and Yiddish terms, most of which were probably not discussed in class prior to their visit, since they were not included in the teachers' guide. The narrator talks about major European cities and the centers of Jewish learning and culture that developed within each. Multiple images of Jews celebrating various religious holidays and occasions reveal a narrow view of Eastern European religious Jews, who wear black hats, long beards, and sidelocks. The story briefly shifts to focus on the pogroms Jews faced, and how they still managed to go on with their lives. While this film presents Jewish culture as rich and fruitful, like the exhibit in Houston, it does little to dispel any preconceived misconceptions about Jews and Jewish life. While the majority of the Jews affected by the Holocaust were from Eastern Europe, not all dressed this way and were religious.[85] "The Jewish World That Was" does not begin to discuss how many Jews assimilated into their surrounding societies and often felt a greater devotion to the country they lived in than their religious heritage. An attempt to display other types of Jews spawns a collage of famous Jewish faces, such as Felix Frankfurter, Albert Einstein, Golda Meir, and of course the namesake of the museum, Simon Wiesenthal.

Although it is the explicit goal of the Museum of Tolerance's teachers' guide to place the events in a historical context, the exhibit does little to do this. In referring to why there is such

[85] Short, "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource," 14. Short cites this misconception as a critical problem, also not resolved at the Holocaust museum in New York.

little background prior to the 1920s, the Associate Director of the Museum stated that they rely on the teachers to contextualize.[86] Regardless of whether students are properly prepared, many of the images shown in this introductory video do little to dispel, and may possibly even reinforce, stereotypes of Jews as aliens. Aiming to rid such stereotypes is one of the claims the museum placed on its website as a guideline for teaching about the Holocaust. However, it does not discuss the complex history of Jewish persecution and anti-Semitism in this film. The short video does display a facet of Jewish life before the war, but because of time constraints, it discusses Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries only very briefly. After the screening is over, doors open automatically and visitors quickly move into the main exhibit hall to begin their journey "back in time to become witnesses to events in Nazi-dominated Europe during World War II," as the teachers' guide puts it.[87] The tour is just beginning and will subsequently discuss many events that took place during the Holocaust. As Lucy Dawidowicz pointed out, while the "whats" are incredibly important in studying the Shoah, it is crucial to explore why and how those events happened as well.[88]

By providing information about Europe before Hitler came to power, the Holocaust Museum Houston places the Holocaust in a broader historical context. Many scholars have pointed to this as one of the most important guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust, because then students will be able to understand the history that contributed to the mindset of those living during the Holocaust. When deciding what events to include in the Holocaust section at the Museum of Tolerance, exhibit designers decided to begin discussion in the 1920s. They had to select certain events, and because time and space were minimal, specific aspects of the history were either discussed briefly, or not discussed at all. The video, "The Jewish World That Was,"

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[86] Samuels, interview by author, 3 February 2003.
[87] MOT Education Department, "Teachers' Guide," 3.
[88] Totten, Feinberg, and Fernekes, "The Significance of Rationale Statements," 10.

was their attempt to provide some historical context behind the history of the Jewish people in the years before Hitler's rise to power. This is another instance where the Holocaust Museum Houston found a balance, and the Museum of Tolerance made sacrifices to the teaching the history of the Holocaust.

Origins & Intentions: 1933-1941

Just as scholars have grappled with the question of origins, museum educators have had to as well. While a contextualization of Jewish history is crucial, museums must also explore how Hitler came to power and how he was able to initiate his state-sponsored program of genocide. The power of Hitler as an orator, as argued by both academic scholars and museum educators, played a very important role in his ascent to power. In addition, many other factors contributed to Hitler's rise to power, such as the economic conditions in Germany, its emergence as an industrial center, and the previous years of history that shaped German society.

The Holocaust Museum Houston provides a straightforward and factual account of Hitler's ascent to power, highlighting his early anti-Semitic beliefs as propounded in *Mein Kampf*. It employs text panels, artifacts, and docent instruction to detail the development of Hitler's anti-Semitism, from that of eliminationist to exterminationist. The Holocaust Museum Houston effectively displays the economic and emotional turmoil within Germany following World War I and the Treaty of Versailles. However, little attention is paid to other influencing factors. There is little to no background information provided on the history of Germany, which would help to explain how so many Germans came to accept Hitler and support his regime. By understanding the culture of militarism and obedience to authority, which had been a long

tradition in Germany, one can better understand the variety of contributing factors that made the Holocaust possible.[89]

The Houston museum subscribes to the functionalist view claiming that the Holocaust was not inevitable and was a process of decisions that eventually led to the genocide. Houston's visitor guide brochure states:

> The Holocaust was not inevitable. Human decisions created it and people like us allowed it to happen. The Holocaust reminds us vividly that each one of us is personally responsible for being on guard, at all times, against such evil.[90]

In reference to the museum's approach, the Director of Education pointed to parts of the exhibit that illustrate how the Nazis first attempted to make life unbearable for Jews in Germany, then how they tried to make Jews leave and through the various racial laws put into place.[91] The Nuremberg Laws, passed in September 1935, officially defined a Jew in strictly racial terms. Nazis began to consider anyone with three or more Jewish grandparents to be a Jew. The laws also deprived all Jews of their citizenship and prohibited marriage and sexual relations between a Jew and a non-Jew.[92] This view clearly reinforces the idea that the events of the Holocaust were part of a process. This helps to convey the importance of personal responsibility, a reoccurring theme in the exhibit. Because the events of the Shoah were part of a process that culminated because of individuals' actions and decisions, if students accept personal responsibility for the events happening around them, they can help prevent history from repeating itself. The Houston museum takes this opportunity to make sure the student has a lucid understanding of what was happening in Germany in 1935. The docent points out an artifact—a family tree class assignment—and discusses how students in Germany were supposed to document their family's

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[89] Ronnie S. Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1992), 75-93.
[90] HMH, "Visitor Guide Brochure."
[91] Vasquez, interview by author, 13 February 2003.
[92] Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, 127-28.

racial and religious background. Furthering the functionalist view, the museum highlights the influence Hitler's words had on the German people.

Docents assert repeatedly that Hitler was a charismatic speaker and the visitors are able to witness this through archival footage of Hitler speaking at a rally, the only video with sound used in the main hall. Previously, when discussing Hitler's early legislation, the docent explains his actions as a suspension of civil rights. Again, when discussing the Nuremberg Laws, he/she describes them as anti-civil rights laws. The museum uses terms that the students will understand, as most have learned about America's civil rights movement throughout their elementary and secondary educations. The student groups I toured with in Houston felt a special appreciation for the plight of the Jews, as the school was predominantly African American. They took their own understanding of discrimination and racism against African Americans in this country and applied it to their understanding of the progressive discrimination against the Jews in Germany.[93]

The docent continues to relate to student visitors by discussing the events of 1936. Highlighting the Olympics, docents ask students if they know who Jesse Owens was. They all respond, "yes, of course." In the process of explaining how Germany had "cleaned up its act" for the world to see in 1936, the docent also tells an anecdote, explaining the story is more of a legend than reality. When Owens set a new record, becoming the first American to win four gold medals in Track and Field in a single Olympics, he went to shake Hitler's hand, a formality for the host country and gold medal winners. As the story goes, Hitler refused to shake Owens' hand because of his race. While this story may or may not be true, and the docent clearly states that, it serves to bring history closer to home for these students. It also clarifies the differences

[93] These assessments are based upon my experience touring the exhibit with these students and informal conversations with their teacher.

between Hitler's racial anti-Semitism and the religious anti-Semitism they previously learned about at the beginning of the exhibit. Also helping to explain the events in terms these students could relate to, the docent called the process of Jews being moved to ghettos, "segregation like we've never seen it."

The exhibit especially provides a clear explanation of the Evian Conference, which helps to eliminate the obvious question of why the Jews did not leave Germany. In July 1938, representatives of thirty-two governments met in Evian, France to discuss the plight of Jews who were trying to flee Nazi Germany. At this conference, many countries, including the U.S. and Great Britain, refused to alter their immigration policies to let in any Jews.[94] By conveying to students that Jews had few options at that time, students begin to realize that Jews did not in fact "go like sheep to the slaughter." The exhibit designers included a quote that underscores the United States' role in allowing the Holocaust to occur. A U.S. delegate at the conference promised that "many millions" would be aided. The exhibit helps to remind students that his promise was never kept. While explaining the history of the event itself, this well-thought out portion of the museum also explores the implications of each event.

The Museum of Tolerance, although in different ways than the Houston museum, conveys a variety of information to the visitor exploring Hitler's ascent to power and the years leading up to the Holocaust. To discuss Hitler's background and the beginnings of his anti-Semitic views, the L.A. museum employs a mock scene of a German bookstore with *Mein Kampf* in the window. The exhibit briefly discusses the industrialization that occurred in Germany and how this made Berlin a "modern city." However, the narrator does not go into greater depth. When discussing the economic distress facing the country and its government throughout the 1920s, the narrator quickly voices the various problems with inflation in the early

[94] Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, 137-39.

twenties and a depression at the end of that decade. As in both museums, the short length of the student's visit prevents a thorough examination of all contributing factors. And as a historian of modern German history explained about this part of the exhibit's inaccuracies and brevity, the economic status of Germany during that time was complex and would require substantial class discussion to really begin to understand it.[95] Although science and technology also played a crucial role in the Holocaust, both museums neglect this as a contributing force in the development of the genocide. In fact, several historians have cited this as failure in evaluating the causal factors of the Holocaust.[96]

The Museum of Tolerance also addresses the divisive debate between intentionalists and functionalists, which it reinforces by one of the "Frequently Asked Questions" provided on the Museum of Tolerance web site:

> Question: Did the Nazis plan to murder Jews from the beginning of their regime?
> Answer: This question is one of the most difficult to answer. While Hitler made several references to killing Jews, both in his early writings (*Mein Kampf)* and in various speeches during the 1930s, it is fairly certain that the Nazis had no operative plan for the systematic annihilation of the Jews before 1941.[97]

While the educators clearly display the difficulty of this question and debate, their view of the development of the destruction of the Jews is clear. They employ the functionalist agenda in the exhibit, as it describes the many factors and decisions that led to the Holocaust. At the Museum of Tolerance, the theme—"power of words"—plays well into the tolerance premise they aim to

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[95] Marcuse, "Experiencing the Jewish Holocaust."

[96] In his evaluation of Holocaust museums, Omer Bartov notes that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum also fails to fully discuss the role of science. Bartov, "Chambers of Horror," 70; Marcuse, "Experiencing the Jewish Holocaust." Milchman and Rosenberg also discuss the links between the development of science and modern technology and the emergence of the mass murder and genocide, in Milchman and Rosenberg, "Two Kinds of Uniqueness," 13.

[97] MOT Education Department, "36 Questions About the Holocaust." <http://teachers.museumoftolerance.com/mainjs.htm?s=2&p=5>

promote and the functionalist approach to the Shoah they employ.[98] The pre-recorded voices that carry you through the exhibit claim, "[i]f you repeat a line often enough, people will believe it." This is the power of words that the museum warns students about in the Holocaust Section and in the "Tolerancenter."[99] Moreover, while the museum talks about how Hitler's words fed on existing prejudices, it does not explain from where these prejudices originate. It is at this point where additional background information would help the students understand why there were existing prejudices in Germany and its surrounding areas at that time.

In discussing the Nuremberg Laws, the Museum of Tolerance exhibit provides a factual account of the event, but does not elaborate further. This discussion comes within the diorama describing anti-Semitism (fig. 6). The narrators describe a list of events, including the boycotts of Jewish stores, book burnings, and the Nuremberg Laws, as evidence of the growing anti-Semitism within Germany. Again, the exhibit designers reiterate the idea that if you repeat a line often enough, people begin to believe it. While this notion does convey the important role of propaganda under the Third Reich, this outlook can give the impression that all Germans were weak and susceptible to this type of influence. This part of the exhibit does not highlight the failure of the first boycotts of Jewish stores. Thus, students are left

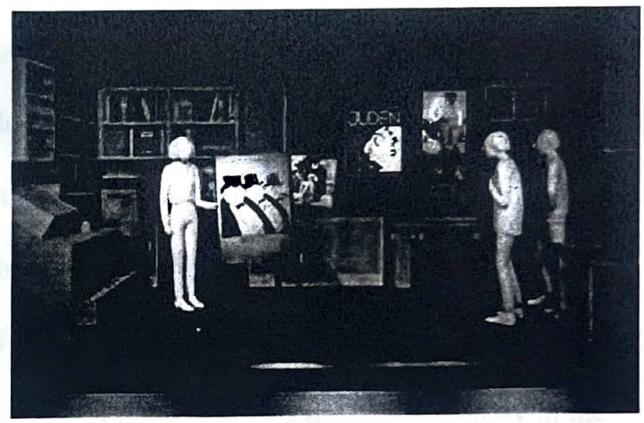

Figure 6. Dioramas throughout the exhibit tell the story of the Holocaust (courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance).

[98] This theme of "The Power of Words" is one of the four main themes focused on in the teachers' guide. The museum was also careful to relate this theme to California State Frameworks and Content Standards.

[99] The Museum of Tolerance exhibit hall is divided into two sections, the Holocaust Section and the "Tolerancenter." It is in the Tolerancenter that other and more contemporary issues of racism, genocide, and injustice are discussed.

without a full understanding that not all Germans succumbed to Nazi influence. The later exhibits discussing resistance also lack proper information to combat this problem.

Continuing the discussion of events leading to the Holocaust, the L.A. museum uses an interesting quote by Australian authorities at the Evian Conference. "We don't have a Jewish problem and we don't want to import one either," says a recording with an Australian accent. This elucidates the problems Jews faced even before the war and the genocide began. Unlike Houston's exhibit which explores the role of the United States and its failure to help Germany and Austria's Jews, the emphasis on the Australian delegate's quote removes some of the culpability of the United States for its inaction during the Evian conference and the years following.

In discussing the immediate factors that led to Hitler's accession to power, the museums lacked crucial information. They both emphasize the economic hardships following World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, but do not provide information about the affects of science and technology. Despite these shortcomings, both museums accurately portray most aspects of the history between 1933-1939. It is in this area where the educators begin to intermingle lessons with the history the exhibit is teaching. In most instances, the exhibits teach the history and lessons without making any sacrifices. The functionalist argument both museums employ in their exhibits helps to promote the idea that individual actions truly make a difference. Here, they utilize the history to teach moral responsibilities.

Exploring the Perpetrators

While these museums both provide excellent accounts of specific events leading up to the Holocaust, explaining how the perpetrators could have done the horrific things they did and how

the bystanders could just sit back, proved to be a more difficult task. Employing artifacts, photos, and images from German archives, the Holocaust Museum Houston presents an effective display of Nazi attempts to brainwash young Germans. Through extensive propaganda tools such as children's primers, school supplies branded with the Nazi swastika, and various Hitler youth paraphernalia, the museum reflects how young Germans, around the same age as the student, learned about the world (fig. 7). The government promoted this skewed view, which was apparent throughout German society.

Figure 7. This children's book is among the many artifacts displaying Nazi propaganda (courtesy of the Holocaust Museum Houston).

The Museum of Tolerance discusses Nazi propaganda in print, focusing on the short publication entitled *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. While written in Russia before Hitler even came to power, the Nazis utilized this publication, which claimed that an international Jewish conspiracy existed aimed at world domination.[100] *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was translated into many languages and was even distributed in the United States by automobile magnate Henry Ford, the narrator tells the students. The students continue along the automated tour, briefly distracted by the second group that enters the exhibit, a perfect eleven minutes from the time they entered. They arrive at a café scene and listen as mock characters discuss Hitler and the Nazi party. Students see a variety of views held by average Germans in this part of the exhibit. One voice contends that the "good German people won't let it happen." However, another voice then says in response to Hitler and his Nazi party's rise to power, "if you can't beat them, join

[100] Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, 60.

them" (fig. 8).

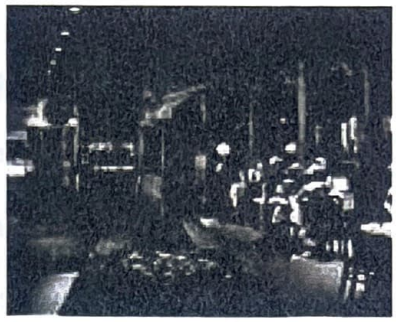

Figure 8. The Berlin Café diorama explores public views of the rising Nazi party (courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance).

An intense debate among scholars erupted over this very issue. Commonly known as the Browning/Goldhagen debate, the main issue at the center of this recent argument is whether the perpetrators were "ordinary men" or "Hitler's willing executioners."[101] By exploring these two opposing views, one can better understand the various reasons the perpetrators could have done the things they did. Unfortunately, this is one area where the Holocaust Museum Houston lacks sufficient information. The docents emphasize that educated individuals were the ones involved in the euthanasia programs.[102] However, neither the exhibit nor the docent explains why these educated individuals became involved. The Director of Visitor and Volunteer Services attributes this lack of information to a limitation of time and space.[103]

The Museum of Tolerance's approach to this dichotomy is evident in a video clip shown in the exhibit. After talking about Germany's taking of the Sudetenland and *Kristallnacht*, the narrator begins discussion about the *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile killing squads. The men who were part of these mobile killing squads are repeatedly referred to as "ordinary men." By taking the position that these men were in fact ordinary, the museum must provide information explaining why these ordinary men did such things. This question is left unanswered in the visitor's mind. The museum argues that since these were ordinary men involved in such horrible acts, we too are

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[101] This debate stems from the book written by Christopher Browning and the subsequent book written by Daniel Goldhagen, which argues adamantly against Browning's thesis. Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1996); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

[102] As part of Hitler's plans to create a pure Aryan race, euthanasia programs exterminated the elderly, handicapped, mentally ill, and other " 'social defective'" people. It was in these programs that Nazi doctors began to experiment with using gas, at the time mainly carbon monoxide, to commit mass murder. Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, 167.

[103] Suzanne Sutherland, interview by author, 30 April 2003.

susceptible to such actions. By learning to tolerate others, the museum argues, such a thing will never happen again. And while the museum explains that the Nazis and their supporters were not "inhumane monsters," as one critic of the Museum of Tolerance writes, it does not do enough to help students understand the circumstances that led these ordinary Germans to become involved in murdering their neighbors.[104] The museum continues to convey the idea that these men were not inhumane monsters. In a short video, a voice representing a Nazi officer asserts that even some of his men were repulsed by the actions of Lithuanian police against Jews. While on the surface this reflects that anti-Semitism was rampant throughout Eastern Europe and not just centered in Germany, it also lends itself to instigate feelings of sympathy for these Nazis. The so-called "repulsion" these Nazis felt should not diminish their culpability in any way or incite feelings of sympathy. Regardless of whether the perpetrators are ordinary people swept up in a horrible situation or willing to murder at a moment's notice, unless these different ways of evaluating their actions are understood in the context of Hitler's accession to power and his eliminationist and later exterminationist policies, the learning process will be incomplete.

Reevaluating Resistance

Scholars are now recognizing the many instances and types of resistance against the Nazis during the Holocaust. In doing so, museums have an opportunity to utilize this new research to fully convey that Jews did not "go like sheep to the slaughter." And while Jewish and non-Jewish resistance was limited in its scope and effectiveness, it is now recognized that there were many more occurrences of rebellion than previously thought.[105] Individuals and groups resisted in many different ways. Some came together in the ghettos or camps and staged

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[104] Wiener, "The Other Holocaust Museum," 7.
[105] Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, 193.

uprisings. Both in museums and in popular culture, these instances of resistance are most frequently discussed. The popular made-for-TV movie *Uprising* tells the story of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which was the first civilian armed resistance in occupied Europe and was the most successful attempt at rebellion.[106] Scholars now discuss other types of resistance, such as Jews retaining a semblance of normalcy in their daily lives, non-Jews hiding and aiding Jews, acts of civil disobedience, student acts of protest, and partisan efforts to sabotage German efforts.

The Holocaust Museum Houston portrays well-known examples of resistance and also explores those that are more obscure. Vertical freestanding panels describing the types of resistance continue to tell the stories of local Houston Holocaust survivors and their experiences (fig. 9). One panel focuses on "Operation Texas." Through local research, those involved with the creation of the permanent exhibit found documentation of Lyndon B. Johnson and his colleagues' efforts to rescue Jews from Europe during the late 1930s and early 1940s.[107] They were able to smuggle hundreds of Jews through Galveston, Houston's port city, by both legal and illegal means. While many parties first denied this story, one of LBJ's colleagues made the story public at a 1963 synagogue dedication in Austin. Figuring he would not face prosecution for any of the crimes he may have committed, LBJ admitted his involvement at this dedication ceremony. In her White House diary, Lady Bird Johnson recalled that at this event, survivors tugged on her sleeve and gratefully

Figure 9. Students explore various panels describing types of resistance (courtesy of Holocaust Museum Houston).

[106] Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, 199.
[107] Roth, personal e-mail, 11 March 2003. Trachtenberg, interview by author, 13 February 2003.

stated that if it were not for her husband, they probably would not be alive today.[108] This little known story helps to give students an idea of the wide range of resistance that took place under the Third Reich. Docents approach this section of the museum differently, as they have many options of which stories of resistance they can highlight. Students have the opportunity to explore these panels themselves. Docents allow a few minutes to look at the various stories after highlighting one or two panels.

The Museum of Tolerance addresses issues of resistance through a mock scene of the Warsaw Ghetto. The narrator invites visitors to "sit amongst the ruins," as the voice discusses how groups formed and tried to resist the Nazis. In each country, the narrator reminds us, someone resisted. However, they were outnumbered and poorly armed. This scene also depicts the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and clearly provides the facts. After years of starvation, persecution, and random killings, the Jews of Warsaw rebelled, holding off the Germans for one month. This story of Jewish struggle is indeed a powerful one. However, there is little time for reflection. Immediately after the narrator finishes the story, the students must hurry to the next part of the exhibit. Because of the nature of the Holocaust section at the Museum of Tolerance, students have little time to process the information they are receiving. The perfectly timed stations guide the visitors through the entire exhibit in sixty-five minutes. While they are supposed to become witnesses to the events, as the teachers' guide proclaims, they in fact have little time to witness and comprehend the enormity of the Holocaust.[109] And while the narrator correctly points out that acts of resistance occurred everywhere, the voice does not elaborate on other types of resistance. At the end of the entire Holocaust section, students pass by a wall

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[108] While this story is unknown to many scholars, the Institute of Texan Cultures published an in-depth article on its website describing "Operation Texas." James Smallwood, "Operation Texas: Lyndon B. Johnson's Attempt to Save Jews from the German Nazi Holocaust," *Institute of Texan Cultures presents the Hidden Histories of Texas,* September 2001, http://www.texancultures.utsa.edu/hiddenhistory/Pages8/SmallwoodLBJ.htm (15 February 2003).

[109] MOT Education Department, "Teachers' Guide," 3.

describing various acts of resistance by righteous gentiles. This thoughtfully put together part of the exhibit highlights the sacrifices made by non-Jews to help their Jewish neighbors. While a discussion of these instances would be helpful in expanding this notion of resistance, the tours I followed passed right by without even noticing the wall. Thus, students miss out on a lesson that could promote the museum's goal of learning "from the past, to engage in the present and assume responsibility for the future."[110]

Treatment of other Nazi victims

Because Holocaust museums in the U.S. are primarily created and funded by members of the Jewish community, the narrative of these museums highlight the Jewish Holocaust, instead of discussing all victims of the Nazi regime equally. The members of the President's Commission on the Holocaust grappled with this very issue in deciding how to discuss other victims of the Nazi regime in the D.C. Holocaust memorial, which eventually caused great internal conflict among the members.[111] Because of this heated debate, it is important to look at how museums portray the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish victims.

The Holocaust Museum Houston's mission statement clearly singles out Jews as the primary victims of the Nazi genocide, but also includes the "other innocent victims" that perished at Nazi hands.[112] While highlighting Jews as the main victims, there is an attempt to include Gypsies, homosexuals, mentally ill, Jehovah's witnesses, Soviet POWs, and political enemies in the main exhibit. One wall of the exhibit shows the various symbols for the different

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[110] MOT Education Department, "Teachers' Guide," 3.

[111] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 38-51. This conflict ultimately contributed to Michael Berenbaum's resignation from the President's Commission on the Holocaust. After disagreements among members of the commission, particularly between Berenbaum and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, regarding how other victims of the Nazi genocide would be treated, Berenbaum tendered his resignation.

[112] HMH, "Visitor Guide Brochure."

prisoners and emphasizes that millions of non-Jews became victims as well (fig. 10). The exhibit designers stressed that the fate of Gypsies closely paralleled that of Jews. Historians have also noted the parallels between Nazi genocidal policies towards Jews and Gypsies, since Nazis considered both groups as racially alien and dangerous to Hitler's goal of creating a pure Aryan race.[113] The teachers' guide also states that Jews were singled out for extermination, but includes a list of other groups in Germany who were persecuted by the Nazis as well.[114] Houston educators again used part of the Museum of Tolerance's frequently asked questions for their teacher packet.[115]

Figure 10. The "other innocent victims" are highlighted in this portion of the exhibit (courtesy of Holocaust Museum Houston).

The Museum of Tolerance's thirty-six frequently asked questions provide information for teachers about a variety of Holocaust-related topics, but as the Holocaust Museum Houston found, certain answers provide great insight for teachers regarding non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The Museum of Tolerance asks what the difference was between the persecution of Jews and the persecution of other Nazi victims. It goes on to state:

> Jews were the only group singled out for total systematic annihilation by the Nazis…Every single Jew was to be killed according to the Nazis' plan. In the case of other criminals or enemies of the Third Reich, their families were usually not held accountable. Thus, if a person were executed or sent to a concentration camp, it did not mean that each member of his family would meet the same fate.[116]

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[113] Crowe, "The Holocaust, Historiography, and History," 34.
[114] HMH Education Department, "Teacher Packet," 19.
[115] Of the thirty-six questions that the Museum of Tolerance created, the Holocaust Museum Houston educators chose eleven they saw as important for teachers to focus on.
[116] MOT Education Department, "36 Questions About the Holocaust." <http://teachers.museumoftolerance.com/mainjs.htm?s=2&p=5>

This approach clearly emphasizes the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish victims and takes the position that the Jewish experience was unique among all victims of the Nazi regime. In the exhibit, the narrator reinforces this notion, telling students that the Jews were the only group singled out for total annihilation. The narrator also lists other victims quickly—homosexuals, Gypsies, communists, Jehovah's Witnesses, mentally ill—and then students move on to the next part of the exhibit. At this point, students can begin to discern the museum's approach towards the importance and uniqueness of the Jewish story. Here, it is not the museum's focus on teaching tolerance that prevents students from gaining a broad perspective about the Holocaust, but the politics involved in the creation of the exhibit. Undoubtedly, Jewish financial and volunteer support for the museum, as well as the early partnership with Yeshiva University, played a role in shaping what narrative would be told in the museum. The quick passing mention of the other victims of the Holocaust promotes the notion that the Jewish Holocaust was more important that the genocide of other Nazi victims. Unless teachers spend time with their students discussing the Nazi persecution of Slavs, Jehovah's witnesses, homosexuals and others, the students will miss other parts of the story.

Redemption and Hope: Meeting Expectations?

In the concluding portion of Holocaust museums, the exhibit designers have many options. They can end on an uplifting note, they can conclude with an emphasis on the destruction and devastation caused by the Holocaust, or they can find a middle ground between the two. In American popular culture, stories about the Holocaust have typically ended on a

positive note.[117] Some scholars see this phenomenon as an attempt to meet the needs of their American audience and to promote themes of hope, renewal, and optimism. For example, the Holocaust museum in New York dedicates an entire floor of the three-story building to "Jewish renewal," including the creation of the State of Israel and the American Jewish experience.[118] Both the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Tolerance also subscribe to the belief that the visitor should be uplifted in some way following their tour through the exhibit.

The final section of the Holocaust Museum Houston exhibit emphasizes the varied experiences of Jews following liberation. At first, the docent points out pictures and video images of American troops liberating the camps. Newspaper clippings from a local newspaper, *The Houston Chronicle*, highlight the liberation of Nazi prisoners. It also tells the story of how the managing editor of the newspaper was one of seventeen newsmen to be flown directly to Germany to cover this unfolding story in April of 1945. Again, the museum exhibit makes connections between the Holocaust and Houston. The exhibit also describes the Nuremberg Trials in twelve panels, which display the names of the accused, the verdict, their sentence, and the eventual outcome. The Nuremberg trials teach students that many of the perpetrators were condemned for their actions.

In contrast to this discussion of the Nazi war criminals, the opposite wall discusses the fate of liberated Jews through photographs and text panels, which highlight the various places Jews ended up following their liberation. The exhibit explains that in displaced persons camps, Jews continued to face anti-Semitism. In Poland also, anti-Semitism was still rampant. Many Jews made their way to Palestine despite British immigration quotas. There, they were given a

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[117] Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," 5-7. *Schindler's List, Sophie's Choice*, the NBC miniseries *Holocaust*, to name a few, end on a positive note.

[118] Jeffrey Shandler, "Heritage and Holocaust on Display: New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage- a Living Memorial to the Holocaust," *The Public Historian* 21, no. 1 (1999): 77-79; Short, "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource," 12-13.

chance to rebuild their lives. It is at this point that the tone of the museum shifts to feelings of hope and redemption. Docents emphasize the courage and determination of Jews in rebuilding their lives after the war. The final panel focuses on those Jews who came to the U.S. And while America was not totally free from anti-Semitism then, and still is not today, the docent reminds students that survivors came here in pursuit of the American ideals of life, liberty, and happiness. This panel also includes a picture of the Statue of Liberty in the background and a quote, which conveys the idea that having survivors here in the U.S., is truly a gift because it makes all Americans remember how precious our rights really are. The final portion of the exhibit lists the names of survivors who at some point have lived in Houston and asks what the world has learned from the Holocaust. Ultimately, the docent answers, not enough. The original theme of personal responsibility is again reinforced, as students learn that the responsibility to prevent further atrocities lies with them. "The responsibility begins with each of us today," is the final statement that students are left with.

At the Museum of Tolerance, students spend time in a darkly lit gas chamber-like room watching and listening to dramatic stories about the victims of Nazi camps. Following this display, they exit through double doors, not before passing a sign that states "[h]ope lives when people remember." This message of hope continues as students enter a lit room to watch TV screens depicting images of the liberation of the camps. The video explains that American and Soviet troops stumbled upon the camps to find the inmates who did not even "look human." This helps to show students that the end of the Holocaust came because of the Allied troops happened upon the camps, instead of actively seeking to free the prisoners. On a more positive note, this video clip ends by discussing Israel. Here, the narrator describes Israel as a place where survivors could put their past behind them and have a bright future. Much like the

Houston museum, the Museum of Tolerance shows Israel as one answer to the persecution of Jews. Also contributing to the optimistic focus at the end of the exhibit, students pass by the righteous gentiles wall, mentioned earlier. If a docent were to discuss this section, they could utilize these acts of goodness as a counterweight to what is mostly a very depressing subject.[119] Instead of stating that everyone is intolerant and prejudiced, the museum could highlight these few acts of kindness as a type of role model for these students.

Because visitors have just been faced with some of the most horrific images and ideas imaginable, the museums end their discussion of the Shoah with a positive outlook. While the Holocaust was of course devastating and disastrous for so many, educators show that the survivors were resilient and were able to rebuild their lives, in countries like Israel and the United States. While most students leave the museums stunned at what they just learned, the emphasis on hope helps to uplift these students and encourage them that they can make a difference if they exercise their moral responsibilities.

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[119] Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," 8.

Lessons Learned

Through Students' Eyes

A Holocaust museum is undoubtedly going to have some affect on its visitor. Museum educators hope to teach students about the history of the Holocaust through their exhibits. They also aim to teach lessons that students will take away with them. Because a class visit to a museum is confined to the timetable of both the school and the museum, the exhibit must make its point clear in a concise manner so that the students are able to understand and process the information.

In Houston, students overwhelmingly recognized the importance of personal responsibility, one theme the museum educators continuously promote. In letters that students wrote to the Holocaust Museum Houston after their visit, they repeatedly referred to the many people who were bystanders. Several students vowed to "never be a bystander," not act on their prejudices, and stand up for victims in their everyday lives.[120] One student made a list of changes he/she intended to make in his/her life. "Using the word 'gay' will change…poking fun at others because of their size…will change…giving people a second chance will be a motive."[121] This sixteen year old clearly realized that the lessons being taught in the museum had implications for his/her own life. Another student wrote that he would like to come back to the museum and show his parents and brother "what happens when you just stand by."[122] Most educators hope their museum will serve as a catalyst to a new interest or idea, as this student

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[120] Holocaust Museum Houston, Student Letters to the Museum, n.d. While most of the students' letters did not have dates listed on them, one can assume that most were written in the past two years since they were found in the same archive as letters dated 2001 and 2002.

[121] HMH, Student Letters to the Museum, n.d.

[122] HMH, Student Letters to the Museum, n.d.

experienced. His visit to the museum led him to want to teach his family about the Holocaust and the lessons he learned from his visit. Many students had no personal connection to the Holocaust before their visit to the museum. Once they realized that there were and are survivors living in their community, they felt that studying the events was in fact relevant to their own lives. One student remarked that "to actually know that even people here in Houston were effected by the Holocaust...brings the whole thing closer to home."[123] As educator Samuel Totten argues, it is the power and emotion of an individual story that can best engage students.[124] The Houston museum's emphasis on the local narratives of survivors utilizes the museum-learning theory that students need to relate to understand the material.

In many letters to the Houston museum, it becomes obvious that the students did learn a great deal about the Shoah. Some simply write that in their letters, while others refer to certain issues they learned about. One ninth grade student wrote, "My condolences to the millions of Jews and other minorities killed and descriminated."[125] He clearly understood that Jews were not the only victims of the Nazi regime. However, not all students will understand all the history and lessons being conveyed. While the exhibit made several attempts to enforce the idea that many Jews did resist, one letter stated, "if I were a jew I probably would at leest tried to fight back or something."[126] While it could be assumed by the student's spelling and grammatical errors that he/she might be younger or not that bright, it is still important that the museum reach its goal of teaching all students, regardless of their age or intelligence level.

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[123] HMH, Student Letters to the Museum, n.d.

[124] Samuel Totten, "Incorporating First-Person Accounts into a Study of the Holocaust," in *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*, ed. Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 111.

[125] HMH, Student Letters to the Museum, n.d. I quoted the students directly from their letters, leaving their spelling errors as is.

[126] HMH, Student Letters to the Museum, 4 March 2002.

The letters students have written to the Museum of Tolerance repeatedly convey their gratitude for the opportunity to attend the museum. They all stated that they learned a lot; however, they do not elaborate further. One student's experience has led him to "[check] out all these things on the Holocaust and geneside."[127] While no student so dramatically listed ways to change his/her attitude, as in the Houston letters, it is apparent that several students' interests had been aroused. One student remarked that while many people already know about the Holocaust, the Museum of Tolerance teaches much more than just the history.[128] A high school student carries this notion even further in a letter that was ultimately quoted on the museum's membership recruitment form. She writes, "[t]he day I visited your Museum I learned more about love and hate than I have in my whole life."[129] The variety of lessons and information being taught in the museum leads to a multitude of responses from students. There is no cohesive agreement among students, as seen in their letters to the museum, regarding what about their visit made the most impact on their lives. However, many of the students did seem to recognize that they were learning more than just about the Holocaust. They were aware that the many things they learned on their class trip have implications for their lives today.

Uniqueness and Universality: Reconciled in Practice

One of the major factors determining how museum educators teach the lessons of the Holocaust is whether they subscribe to the idea that the Shoah was a unique event in history or if

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[127] Museum of Tolerance (MOT), Student Letters to the Museum, n.d.
[128] MOT, Student Letters to the Museum, n.d.
[129] Patty Chaves, MOT membership recruitment letter, c. 2002

it was a universal occurrence.[130] While many survivors have argued for the uniqueness of the circumstances they faced, other scholars have attempted to draw parallels between the Holocaust and other genocides throughout history. This begs the question: Can a unique Holocaust have universal implications? The Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Tolerance merge these two arguments. Instead of taking one position or the other, they argue that the Holocaust is unique, but that lessons and parallels can be drawn, proving that indeed these two arguments can be reconciled.

The Holocaust Museum Houston takes this hotly contested debate and attempts to teach both sides of the argument. In its mission statement, the museum claims to "educate students…about the uniqueness of that event and its ongoing lesson: that humankind must learn to live together in peace and harmony."[131] The Director of Education reiterates this point as she explains that the Holocaust was unique, but not more horrific than the murders and genocide of other people.[132] Universal lessons do in fact apply. However, the different elements in society that came together to create and allow the murder of six million Jews and five million others truly make the Holocaust unique. In addition, the Director of Education argues, the Nazis targeted an entire culture for elimination, not just individuals. The Board of Directors also feels very strongly about achieving balance between these two dichotomies. Chairman David Bell comments, "[w]e must be constantly vigilant to ensure that in our public programs, our changing exhibits, and our educational outreach, we achieve a balance between the particular and the

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[130] Among the many scholars who discuss this debate are Milchman and Rosenberg, "Two Kinds of Uniqueness," 6-19; Alan Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001); Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflection on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13, no. 1 (1999).

[131] HMH, "Visitor Guide Brochure."

[132] Vasquez, interview with author, 13 February 2003.

universal."[133] To teach students that a unique Holocaust can in fact have universal implications, museum educators discuss at teacher trainings various hate crimes and international crimes against humanity, while relating them to the historical background of the time.[134] In addition, the Director of Visitor and Volunteer Services trains docents equally on the historical facts of the Holocaust and other tolerance-related issues.[135]

The Museum of Tolerance approaches the debate between the uniqueness and universality of the Shoah in very similar ways. In explaining the museum's attitude towards this subject, the Associate Director of the Museum argues, "[w]e present the Holocaust as an extreme unique event in history. This is imperative. While it is unique, you must draw lessons to be learned. There are some parallels to the extreme example of man's inhumanity to man."[136] Both in theory and in practice, the museum employs this approach towards interpreting the Holocaust. The phrase, "*ultimate* example of man's inhumanity to man" (emphasis added), repeatedly surfaces throughout the museum's brochures and tours. Thus, the museum argues that the Holocaust was the worst example of any crime against man, but emphasizes that there have been other examples so that lessons can be drawn. However, in these comparisons, the other events being contrasted could be trivialized. If the museum argues that the Holocaust is the worst example, then this means that there are other examples that are not as bad. This could open the museum to intense criticism. Those who claim ownership of the memory of those murdered in the Armenian genocide of the early 20th century, for instance, could argue that the Museum of Tolerance is claiming that the Jewish suffering is worse than the suffering of Armenians. This could be seen as extremely degrading to those other victims of genocide.

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[133] David Bell, "The Chairman's View..." *Bearing Witness (Holocaust Museum Houston Newsletter)* 6, no. 4 (2003): 2.

[134] Vasquez, interview with author, 13 February 2003.

[135] Sutherland, interview with author, 30 April 2003.

[136] Samuels, interview with author, 3 February 2003.

Despite this problematic issue, the museum employs these ideals to extract lessons from the events. At the beginning of the Holocaust section, the narrators state, "it could have happened anywhere to anyone." Because history repeats itself, as the museum argues, we as individuals must take action to prevent such horrific events from happening ever again. At several points through the Holocaust section, the narrators refer to those involved in the Holocaust—the perpetrators, the liberators, the resistors, the victims—as "ordinary people." This notion helps to reinforce the idea that it could have happened anywhere. The exhibit also conveys the idea that the Jewish persecution was different from the suffering faced by other victims of the Nazi regime, and therefore, a unique experience.

Finding a balance between portraying the Holocaust as either a unique or a universal experience proves to be a difficult challenge. By not subscribing to one view or another, the museums are able to appease both survivors who argue for the uniqueness of their experiences and those who argue that lessons must be learned and applied to the world today. By teaching students that other issues of genocide have occurred in history and instances of hate and discrimination still occur today, they can realize that it could easily happen again. This would influence students to take responsibility to help prevent further atrocities.

Teaching Tolerance?

At the Holocaust Museum Houston, the staff and board members are "committed to using the lessons of the Holocaust to teach a set of very precious values."[137] Among the values David Bell suggests are tolerance, justice, faith, appreciation of differences, moral courage, and the sanctity of life. From learning about the history of the Holocaust, many students recognize the

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[137] David Bell, "The Chairman's View..." *Bearing Witness (Holocaust Museum Houston Newsletter)* 6, no. 1 (2002): 1.

importance of being tolerant of others and accepting of people's differences.[138] The students also have a greater appreciation for the freedom they enjoy by living in the United States. The notion of America as a land of freedom is amplified by the museum brochure's claim that the Holocaust teaches us "to take no good thing for granted, especially the values of America: liberty and justice for all."[139] The final exhibit panel of the museum highlights those survivors who came to America to rebuild their lives. Because the museum has a local focus, concentrating on the experiences of survivors now living in Houston, America is represented as a haven for the oppressed. Some students may think that since the museum portrays America as such a wonderful place full of freedom and opportunity, the prejudices and intolerance that contributed to the Holocaust could never happen here. The Houston museum could take greater care in teaching students that it could happen again, anywhere.[140]

To teach students another precious lesson of the Holocaust, the docents discuss moral courage. Throughout their tour, students learn how bystanders did nothing while the Nazis committed genocide. Docents teach them to take personal responsibility and not be a bystander in their own lives. Throughout students' tours to the Holocaust Museum Houston, they learn the history of the Holocaust and the many lessons that can be extracted. However, the Director of Education makes it clear that first they teach the history, and then its lessons.[141]

The Museum of Tolerance, apparent by its name, makes teaching tolerance one of its main goals. Utilizing studies that show by age 12, children have "already developed stereotypes about other ethnic, racial and religious groups…and nearly half of our country's hate crimes are

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[138] HMH, Student Letter to the Museum, n.d. This student noted that since 9/11, he/she might be prejudice against "Afghanistan people" and recognized that feeling that way was wrong.

[139] HMH, "Museum Brochure" (Houston: Holocaust Museum Houston, n.d.).

[140] One student did recognize that the Holocaust could happen anywhere. In her letter to the museum, she wrote "I am Jewish and I am scared…scared that it might happen again."

[141] Vasquez, interview by author, 13 February 2003.

committed by men under 20 years old," the museum staff focuses on teaching young people about the dangers of prejudice.[142] On the Museum of Tolerance website, the educators cite from an article which claims that the most important lesson is to show students that the Holocaust is not only important to Jews. The author argues that "any society can descend to that level unless safeguards are put in place."[143] In the Holocaust section of the museum, the exhibits teach students that the events they are hearing about could have happened anywhere to anyone. In the Tolerancenter, they learn about instances of prejudice and discrimination occurring throughout the world. Focusing on the civil rights movement in the 1960s, current hate crimes in the United States, human rights abuses and acts of genocide throughout the world, the museum educators ask the question, what were we supposed to remember? Images of atrocities in Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo fill the screen, showing that still today government-sponsored genocide is still occurring. In both the Holocaust and Tolerance sections, students learn that they need to remember the lessons of the Holocaust and help stop prejudice and intolerance before it leads to any more violence. Therefore, studying the Holocaust is important to all people, not just Jews, because of the lessons it teaches and its relevance for today's world.

By showing these other horrific examples of injustice and inhumanity, the Museum of Tolerance teaches students that if their actions are contrary to everything they just witnessed, then the world will begin to be a better place. Believing that students learn best through interaction and being involved in the learning process, the museum educators employ the hands-on media-centered exhibit to teach these lessons.[144] The museum uses the Holocaust as a tool to

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[142] Geft, MOT membership recruitment letter, 3.
[143] Weitzman, "Coming to Grips with Teaching the Holocaust." <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/resources/education/teacherintro/index.html>
[144] Samuels, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

show what happens when prejudice and hate overwhelm a society. Aiming to promote social and personal responsibility, the museum teaches students to be tolerant of one another in their classrooms and in the world.

The goal of promoting personal responsibility, which is found in both museums, leads students to recognize the similarities between their own lives and those of the bystanders and the perpetrators. In some ways, this helps students relate to the story they are learning about, a very important factor in their learning, as museum educators have pointed out. While this educational tactic can be useful at times, having students relate their own lives to those of Nazis can also be disconcerting. Many students, especially younger ones, might not be open to this type of reasoning and will not understand the message educators are trying to convey. In further attempts to connect to students, these museums imbue American values of tolerance, freedom, pluralism, liberty, and individual responsibility into the lessons they teach. By teaching tolerance, students learn to fight for these values, to prevent events like the Holocaust from happening in the future.

Conclusion

Throughout the United States, educators are using the Holocaust to teach lessons to today's youth. Just recently, the Holocaust, Genocide, Human Rights, and Tolerance Education Act of 2003 passed through the California legislature. The author of this bill, Assemblymember Paul Koretz, notes that California is now "poised to become a model state in using the Holocaust and genocide education to teach about human rights and other issues of intolerance and bigotry.[145] In the United States today, the Holocaust has become intertwined with teaching tolerance. While museums are not to blame nor credit for this occurrence, they do subscribe to this approach to teaching about the Shoah. While teaching tolerance can have many positive affects on students, museum educators must ensure that they are also teaching the history. Without solid understanding of the history of the Holocaust, students will be unable to recognize the importance and significance of the lessons they are learning. In the bill itself, Section 2c states that

> in order to create an awareness of the enormity of the crimes of prejudice, bigotry, inhumanity, and intolerance and to foster responsibility by future generations to confront these crimes, it is crucial that we teach the lessons of the Holocaust and genocide.[146]

While the bill emphasizes that the lessons of the Holocaust should be taught, it neglects to focus on the history of the Holocaust itself. The interest in teaching lessons to America's youth has overwhelmed the need to teach why this event has lessons in the first place. In museums, movies, television shows, education materials, and other various places across the U.S., the

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[145] Scott Svonkin, "Koretz's Holocaust, Genocide Education Bill Becomes Law," *Assemblymember Paul Koretz, 42nd Assembly District*, 19 September 2002, <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a42/press/p422002010.htm> (20 January 2003). Koretz is a Democrat Assemblyman for the West Hollywood 42nd Assembly District.

[146] California State Legislature, *Holocaust, Genocide, Human Rights, and Tolerance Education Act of 2003*, AB 2003, 19 September 2002.

Holocaust is being used to teach lessons. As Michael Berenbaum has stated, the Holocaust has become an instrument for teaching values and morals.[147] And while his statement was not meant to be taken as a negative fact about American culture, I argue that it is not appropriate for the Holocaust to be used. The memory of 11 million murdered individuals, over 1.5 million of them children, is being used to teach lessons. As this thesis has contended, there are methods to teach the history of the Holocaust, maintain the memory of those persecuted, and teach the lessons that emerge from the events.

The exhibit designers at the Holocaust Museum Houston aim to relate the events of the Holocaust to the lives of the student visitors. Through various methods, such as storytelling and local survivor exhibit panels, the Houston museum achieves its stated mission to "promote awareness of the dangers of prejudice…against the backdrop of the Holocaust." This message, the lesson of personal responsibility, and an understanding of the history, truly become engrained in the students' minds, as evident through their letters to the museum. The Holocaust Museum Houston has managed to find a balance between teaching the history and teaching tolerance, as well as emphasizing the uniqueness and the universality of the events. Achieving balance, one of the Board Chairman's main stated goals, has proven quite effective for influencing and affecting their student visitors.

The Museum of Tolerance's second stated objective is to focus on the "history of the Holocaust." Just as this theme comes second in the mission statement, it too takes a back seat to the museum's emphasis on teaching tolerance. Despite attempts to discuss various aspects of Holocaust history, the lack of sufficient time prevents students from gaining a well-balanced education of the Holocaust and its lessons. Moreover, there is also little time for reflection. The

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[147] Berenbaum, "The Nativization of the Holocaust," 453-54, quoted in Short, "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource," 11.

focus on racism and teaching tolerance, as found in the "Tolerancenter," eclipses the objective to teach the history. However, the museum does make a connection with their student visitors and effectively conveys the message that another Holocaust could happen again.

Holocaust museums have taken the controversial issues that have been debated among scholars, particularly the Americanization of the Holocaust and the uniqueness vs. universality of the events, and have employed these debates for their own advantage. By including this "Americanized" focus in their programs and exhibits, museum educators are better equipped to connect with their student visitors. Students can relate to American ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Museums have also transcended this debate between advocates of uniqueness and advocates of universality. While showing the Holocaust to be a unique event in history, educators and exhibit designers also find universal lessons among the tragedy that students can relate to their lives today. Teachers are continually signing up their classes for visits to a Holocaust museum nearby their schools. Some teachers are even raising funds to send their students to Washington, D.C. to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.[148] Because teachers are seeking out these museums to teach their students about the Holocaust, it is important that the museum is sending the right message.

With Holocaust museums attracting a broader audience each day, one wonders: what is the future of Holocaust education in American museums? I would argue that museum educators must continue to develop and expand their resources for students and teachers alike. They should not be completely satisfied with their current state and should always strive for precision. There are many improvements that the Holocaust Museum Houston and Museum of Tolerance educators could do to better reach their student audience. Students should be well versed on the historical context that contributed to the events, including a background on Jewish history, anti-

[148] Anonymous teacher, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

Semitism, and modern German history.[149] By studying these historical forces, students will recognize these as precursors to the development of Nazi Germany, Hitler's ideology, and the genocide. It is also crucial to understand the various factors that allowed the Holocaust to happen. Educators must highlight the role of economics, science, the international situation, and the psychological conditions within Germany and its neighboring countries. Moreover, a comprehensive discussion of the Holocaust should begin not at the museum, but within the classroom. Museum educators should help train teachers in ways to best utilize the teachers' guide and begin teaching their students about the Holocaust. Increasingly, education departments at the Holocaust museums are offering teacher in-service trainings, but this must continue to expand with greater frequency. In addition, the end of the museum tour should not be the end of the students' learning. The teachers' guides should provide post-visit lesson plans as well, that must be utilized in the classroom. Because of the importance of continuing education beyond the museum experience, museum educators and teachers should develop a rapport to promote learning amongst the students.

As this thesis has shown, the education programs for youth at the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles both provide an effective discussion of personal responsibility, tolerance, and understanding. Unfortunately, this focus has overwhelmingly become the centerpiece of the L.A. museum. The Holocaust Museum Houston should serve as a model for Holocaust educators throughout the U.S. They have achieved a balance between addressing historical debates, as well as current issues and lessons. While there is always room for improvement, this museum's few weaknesses could easily be resurrected. Through more in-depth docent training and teachers' resources, certain issues, such as the role of science in allowing the Holocaust to happen, could be dealt with more effectively. Teachers

[149] For an in depth exploration of these factors, see Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*.

could discuss all the contributing factors before their class visit, and docents could reinforce these issues as they tour the main exhibit.

Teaching about the Holocaust is an extremely difficult subject because of the complexity of the events and the debates that have emerged regarding its interpretation. Despite these difficulties, museum educators and teachers throughout the U.S. have accepted the challenge to teach America's youth about the events that devastated the lives of millions. As scholars continue to uncover new information about the Holocaust, museums must be willing to adapt to new research and continuously revisit their methodology in teaching students. The Holocaust Museum Houston and the Museum of Tolerance play an important role in teaching America's youth about the Shoah. Since they both sit in the centers of the second and fourth largest cities in the U.S., they have the opportunity to reach hundreds of thousands of students. As long as the focus on teaching tolerance does not overshadow the teaching of the history itself, these museums can serve as centers of learning for years to come.

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