

# EXILE AND COMMUNITY

## THE LIFE OF CAROLA DOMAR

TEACHER'S GUIDE

## **EXILE AND COMMUNITY: THE LIFE OF CAROLA DOMAR**

### **Comments from sponsors:**

*"We chose to co-sponsor the documentary Exile and Community: The Life of Carola Domar because it offers a view of a story of struggle in a human way that resonates with struggles today. This documentary does a wonderful job of raising questions of identity and belonging and the human need to be connected. Seeing it would benefit students no matter where they live."*

**—Judi Bohn, Facing History, Special Projects Coordinator, New England, May 2019**

*"I have organized a number of forums here at the Concord Museum and in my two decades at the Kennedy Library—but none have been more satisfying and touching than the screening of Exile and Community and the ensuing discussion. I hope the film gets the wide viewership it deserves, especially among students since the scenes that are so poignant are those of Carola as a young girl in Germany and then the manner in which she was welcomed home by students at the school she once attended."*

**—Tom Putman, Concord Museum, Edward W. Kane Executive Director, Concord, MA**

### **Comments from viewers:**

*"I am so glad I got the chance to get to know Carola Domar."*

*"This story of a Holocaust survivor is different than any that I have ever viewed before. The theme of forgiveness is very strong and is a good way to carry on discussion with students."*

*"Very informative documentary about the life of one Holocaust survivor. Excellent, found myself wanting more."*

*"Carola's life and experiences were fascinating and inspiring. As an educator, I can foresee a number of ways to introduce this material into the curriculum. I am eager to integrate the film and any accompanying materials in my classes. I know it will be of great interest to my students. Thank you all so much for working on this project and bringing it to the public arena."*

*"Well-done! The film was so moving and well-conceived—loved the music and how the chapters of Carola's life were organized. What an inspiration she was! I watched with my 97-year-old mom—born and raised in the US—but very much Carola's contemporary which made the history portrayed through Carola's individual autobiography all the more meaningful to both of us. My mom said it represented a perspective on the Holocaust that she had not known about before."*

### **Comments about the guide:**

*"The guide is exceptionally well researched, designed, and written. A thoughtfully prepared and rich resource for teachers and students, it will be of good use in any classroom where historical depth, lived experience, and reflection on our own times are valued. I look forward to using parts of it in my own teaching, and I am deeply honored that I could contribute to its production in some small ways."*

**—Sebastian Wogenstein, UConn, Associate Professor of German and Comparative Literature**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE:**  
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>SECTION 1: AN OVERVIEW OF THE HOLOCAUST WITH TIMELINE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SECTION 2: CAROLA'S LIFE</b> Provides a specific context for Carola's experience, including a summary of what it was like to be a Jewish child of school age under Hitler's rule. This section prompts students to consider the power of community ties and the impact of social exclusion.	<b>8</b>
<b>SECTION 3: CAROLA'S STORY IN TODAY'S WORLD</b> Examines Germany's humanitarian response to the Syrian immigration crisis.	<b>32</b>
<b>SECTION 4: THE POWER OF COMMEMORATIVE ART</b> Examines commemorative art as related to the imagery in the film, prompting discussion of how we remember the past.	<b>39</b>
<b>SECTION 5: THE STUDENT AS HISTORIAN</b> Considers the usefulness of oral histories and documentaries as historical tools.	<b>77</b>

*An annotated bibliography is included in Sections 2-5.*

Cover illustration: *Gross Breesen Barn*. Photo courtesy of Steve Strauss.

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*This guide was produced with funding from Mass Humanities. Additional funding came from individual contributors, and from the following Concord, MA organizations: the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council, Kerem Shalom, and the Women's Parish Association of First Parish.*

*The film is supported by the Concord Cultural Council and Concord-Carlisle Television. The project is endorsed by Facing History and Ourselves and the Concord Museum, Concord, MA, and sponsored by the Center for Independent Documentary.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to James E. Young for his careful guidance and willingness to share his expertise on commemorative art. Many thanks, as well, to the secondary school teachers and Holocaust scholars involved in the writing and editing of this guide, who were so thoughtful, and generous with their time. I am very grateful to Derek J. Penslar for his support and commitment to the project. Marion A. Kaplan provided some much appreciated, invaluable advice. Her work on the everyday life of Jewish children under Hitler serves as the backbone for much of Section 2. Linda Shopes' scholarship helped shape the discussion of oral histories. The voice of Tom Angress, Carola's friend and fellow Gross Breesener, shines through many of the passages on Gross Breesen and childhood experiences. I am very grateful to Jennifer Hall-Witt at Mass Humanities, and to Mira Simon and Susi Walsh at the Center for Independent Documentary for their help and enthusiasm for this project. Special thanks to those who brought this guide to its final form, particularly our skillful copy editor and graphic designers. Lastly, a quick but wholehearted thanks to Chris Cavanagh, Will Cavanagh, Sam Krueger, and Dori Hale for their staunch backing. It is most gratifying to have found a way to make Carola's experience accessible to young people.

Susan Orleans Rieder,  
Producer and Director of *Exile and Community: The Life of Carola Domar*

## INTRODUCTION

*"The Holocaust? . . . Only those who were there know what it was; the others will never know. It was easier for Auschwitz inmates to imagine themselves free than for free persons to imagine themselves in Auschwitz. What then is the answer? How is one to tell a tale that cannot be—but must be told? How is one to protect the memory of the victims? . . ."—Elie Wiesel<sup>1</sup>*

### ***The purpose of this film and guide:***

*Exile and Community: The Life of Carola Domar* is designed for middle and high school students, to supplement a basic understanding of the Holocaust with the perspective of a young person who lived in Frankfurt, Germany during Hitler's rule and was persecuted on the basis of her religion. This story is largely that of a young girl, set in the familiar context of school and sports. Carola's story speaks to the fears of social exclusion that most teens experience, making the past both accessible and personal for young people.

The film and guide aim to provide an age-appropriate account of Holocaust-related events, to demonstrate the power of reconciliation, and to consider the Holocaust's current relevance. Carola's narrative illustrates the profound and ugly effect of Hitler's policies on children's daily life during the 1930s. However, it is also a story about optimism and idealism. Carola's consistent search for community, in the face of social ostracism and exile, is relevant to current issues of antisemitism and mass migration.

### ***About Carola:***

Carola Domar was a high-spirited, resourceful individual with generous instincts, caught in a tumultuous time. As a young Jew in Nazi Germany, Carola yearned for social acceptance and for the German identity she once took for granted. She escaped in her teens and came to the U.S. on her own. Carola spent much of her life searching for a specific kind of community—one connected to nature and guided by modernist ideals. She ultimately found that community in Concord, Massachusetts, a New England town outside Boston. Carola's account is all the more remarkable because of her spirit of forgiveness, which ultimately allowed her to come to terms with her past and reconnect with her former homeland.

### ***About the film:***

The film presents Carola's experience as two interwoven narratives drawn from a 1998 USC Shoah Foundation Institute interview of Carola Domar and a more recent interview, conducted by the filmmaker, of her daughter Alice Domar. Images of children emphasize Carola's youthful perspective and make the account both age-appropriate and identifiable to students. The film also incorporates commemorative imagery for its symbolic power and as a means of exploring the



*Carola Domar.  
Courtesy of Alice Domar.*

ideas of reconciliation and remembrance that are present in the narrative.

This film is more than a Holocaust story. Carola Domar went on to live a joyful life, with deliberation and grace, in an idealistic community she helped forge. And her compassion extended beyond her immediate sphere. She ultimately embraced the place and people that had once ostracized her, reconciling with perpetrators of the Holocaust through the organization One by One, and giving talks in Germany. In a final gesture, Carola returned to the Frankfurt school where she had flourished as a leader and athlete before she was expelled for being Jewish. During this visit, the school honored her at a ceremony of forgiveness and remembrance.

***About the guide:***

The teacher's guide is designed to promote meaningful discussion. The guide places Carola's narrative in a historical context and connects her experience to issues relevant today: current events, the ways we evaluate information, and how we remember and commemorate the past. Because the guide is meant for both middle and high school levels, prompts and activities are, in some sections, presented in two tiers based on the complexity of the concepts and language. High school teachers may want to consider the middle school prompts as stepping stones to the more sophisticated ones. The guide also includes background information, references, and a timeline.

Teachers should determine what kinds of activities and discussion formats will work best in their classrooms and for their students. Individual journaling, small group discussions, full class conversations, silent discussions on big paper, and online discussion forums are all valuable tools for promoting student engagement. There are many online discussion tools available and more that will inevitably be created. Depending on the schools' Learning Management System, teachers may find [Padlet](#), [Flipgrid](#), [Formative](#), [Poll Everywhere](#), and [G Suite](#) to all be useful online tools, particularly in a virtual environment.

This interdisciplinary guide can serve as either a standalone unit or as a supplement to other educational materials on the Holocaust. It is composed of five discrete units for teachers to select from as they plan their curriculum. Sections are ordered roughly according to the complexity of concepts presented. The first two units serve as basic supplements to the film; the last three sections, on current events, art, and historical sources, widen the conversation. Much of the information in each section need not be shared with students, unless specific questions arise in class discussion. However, the material is presented in terms students should understand, allowing teachers the option of sharing the guide, or parts thereof, directly with their classes.

## **NOTES**

1. Elie Wiesel, "TV View: Trivializing the Holocaust: Semi-Fact and Semi-Fiction," *New York Times*, April 16, 1978, 75, 103.

## SECTION 1: AN OVERVIEW OF THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust refers to the murder of nearly six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies during World War II. People often approach this period with questions and confusion. How did the Nazi regime come to power in Germany? Why did the Nazis target the Jews? How could they have killed so many? Why didn't people do more to stop the genocide? In the aftermath of the Holocaust, some commentators have suggested that there is no "why": the Holocaust was pure evil, beyond our capacities for rational explanation. But this cannot be the last word on the Holocaust. If we are to see the warning signs of genocide, we must seek to explain the Holocaust's historical causes. A historical approach means viewing the Holocaust not in isolation, but instead as a set of events that took place within broader political, social, and military contexts. Within these unprecedented circumstances, tens of thousands of seemingly ordinary individuals became perpetrators of mass murder, and millions more witnesses and bystanders to atrocity. While history never repeats itself exactly, understanding the circumstances in which the Holocaust occurred provides a first step toward stopping genocide in our own times.

Genocidal regimes often come to power in times of instability and crisis, and the National Socialists (Nazis) in Germany were no exception. The Nazis rose to power amidst the chaos that followed Germany's defeat in World War I, in November 1918. Germany had lost 2.5 million men in that war, and millions more were injured. Both during and after the war, Germans suffered shortages of food and fuel, and the economy was in shambles. In the peace treaty that followed, Germany surrendered 10 percent of its territory and was forced to pay reparations to victorious Britain and France. Many Germans resented these terms and identified the Weimar Republic—formed after the war, marking the first time in German history that Germany had a democratic government—with weakness and humiliation. Radical paramilitary groups, often made up of unemployed war veterans, blamed Jews and socialists for Germany's defeat and attempted to overthrow democracy. One of these was the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, or the Nazis), led by the charismatic veteran Adolf Hitler. Hitler's party promised to restore traditional moral values, return Germany to its status as a global power, and combat the threat of Communist subversion. Yet it also had a more radical agenda. Hitler and the Nazis believed that Germans belonged to a white, "Aryan" race, whose strength and purity were threatened by Jews as well as people with disabilities or hereditary illnesses. Jews had long served as scapegoats for economic or social instability in Europe, but earlier forms of antisemitism focused on Jews' religion; Jews could shed their outsider status by converting to Christianity. By defining Jews as a "race," the Nazis claimed an essential, biological difference between Jews and "Aryans."

Hitler's movement grew over the course of the 1920s. The Nazis recruited especially among lower middle-class shopkeepers and artisans, who feared the growing Communist movement and resented the modernist popular culture and relaxed gender hierarchies associated with the Weimar Republic. Germany's large population of unemployed men formed another key source of recruits. Those facing economic insecurity were more vulnerable to conspiracy theories that blamed a "Jewish cabal" for Germany's economic and political problems. By July 1932, with unemployment spiraling amidst the global Great Depression, the Nazis became the largest party in the German Parliament (*Reichstag*) with 37 percent of the vote. In January 1933, Germany's conservative elites invited Hitler to form a coalition government as chancellor. They believed they

could contain his movement. Instead, Hitler crushed them and the struggling Weimar Republic.

Upon being appointed chancellor, Hitler quickly moved to consolidate the Nazi Party's rule. Paramilitary stormtrooper units linked to the NSDAP, also known as "brownshirts," raided the homes and meeting places of political opponents, especially Communists and Social Democrats, and imprisoned their leaders in makeshift concentration camps. New laws expelled Jews from the German civil service and mandated the sterilization of disabled people. Yet, Hitler did not have absolute power. During these early months, Germans still could have raised their voices in protest or refused to comply with Nazi directives, but most did not. Many middle-class Germans, who may have been wary of Nazi violence, focused on the "positive" side of the regime. Most celebrated the seeming onset of economic recovery and welcomed the suppression of a perceived Communist threat. Germans could take pride in the fact that their country was now respected and feared on the international stage, with Nazi leaders refusing to pay the reparations owed to Britain and France. Laws that excluded Jews from public life were implemented rapidly, but not all at once. The earliest antisemitic legislation made exceptions for German Jews who had served in the First World War, and Hitler even contained the violence of the brownshirts after his first months in office. Ordinary Germans—and even some Jews—could convince themselves that the repression would quickly subside.

In the following years, however, the Nazis' grip on the German state grew ever stronger, and Hitler amassed dictatorial powers. Concentration camps constructed throughout Germany served as sites of forced labor, torture, and often death for the regime's suspected opponents—above all Communists and Socialists, but also Roma and Sinti (groups sometimes referred to as "Gypsies"), gay men, and dissident clergy. Yet the Nazis believed Jews to be Germany's greatest enemy, locked in a permanent conflict where victory for one side would spell extinction for the other. In 1935, the Nazis took their most drastic step yet. The Nuremberg Laws stripped German Jews of their citizenship, leaving them without political rights. By this time, public protest against the regime had become nearly impossible. But many Jews did not give up hope and sought to remain in Germany. Jewish families like Carola's still identified strongly with being German. Their families, jobs, and social connections were in Germany; where else would they go?

For the Nazis, simply forcing Jews out of public life was not enough. Hitler and his conspirators dreamed of a Germany, and Europe, that would be *judenrein*—free of Jews, and other racial "undesirables." Hitler foresaw a race war against the Soviet Union that would destroy the Jews, enslave the Slavic population, and turn Eastern Europe into an agricultural colony. By 1935, the Nazis began to rapidly increase Germany's production of armaments and introduced military conscription, violating international law.

For brief moments, the Nazi regime attempted to present a peaceful face to the world. During the Berlin Summer Olympics of 1936, in particular, antisemitic propaganda and anti-Jewish persecution were temporarily suspended. Some German-Jewish athletes were even compelled to compete on German teams, to quell criticisms of the Nazi regime from abroad. But by the end of 1936, the Nazis abandoned pretensions toward international cooperation and embarked on an aggressive program of military buildup and territorial expansion. Germany annexed Austria in April 1938, immediately subjecting Austrian Jews to the racial legislation and threats of violence that German Jews had faced since 1933. Then, Hitler convinced the British and French governments to award

him the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia that bordered Germany. The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared that the concession would mean “peace for our time.” This was an extraordinary miscalculation.

A new phase of antisemitic persecution began on the evening of November 9, 1938, as the Nazis prepared for war. On the orders of Hitler and his deputy, Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, paramilitary bands throughout Germany raided Jewish homes, destroyed Jewish shops and synagogues, summarily arrested thirty thousand Jewish men—including Carola’s father—and forced these men into concentration camps. Over one hundred Jews were murdered that night. These events have become known as *Kristallnacht*, or the “night of broken glass,” named after the broken windows of Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues. Such a label, however, downplays the severity of the attacks, which targeted not only property, but people. For many German Jews, it was the final straw. They saw that they could no longer survive, culturally and perhaps even physically, in Nazi Germany. Emigration accelerated rapidly, and by the beginning of World War II, half of Germany’s Jewish population had fled the country. Still, Jews who sought to emigrate faced significant challenges. Jews were forced to turn over their property and possessions to the Nazi state before emigrating, and many countries, including the United States, refused to raise the quotas for German-Jewish immigrants. For Carola, escape came just in time.

After years of preparation, the German army invaded Poland on September 1, 1939; Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later, launching World War II. Within a month, the Polish capital of Warsaw capitulated, and Germans occupied the western half of the country. In the minds of Nazi planners, occupied Poland would form the basis for a German colony in Eastern Europe. The occupation introduced a new problem, however: Poland’s Jewish population numbered three million, 10 percent of the country and far higher than that of Germany. The Nazi victory was immediately followed by a massive program to confine Polish Jews in ghettos, with the intent of eventually expelling them from Poland altogether. Thriving Jewish communities in the Polish cities of Warsaw, Łódź, and Lublin were crammed into filthy ghettos in squalid neighborhoods. Food shortages and deplorable conditions led to high rates of death, especially among the young and old. In the spring of 1940, the German army invaded and quickly conquered Western Europe: France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Norway. In France, where Carola’s parents had fled, the German army occupied the north, while establishing a puppet collaborationist state in the southern city of Vichy. The dream of total European domination seemed near.

On June 21, 1941, three million German troops launched the largest land invasion in history, crossing the border from Poland into the Soviet Union. The invasion marked the beginning of the bloodiest phase of World War II—indeed, the bloodiest conflict in world history. In the first year alone, over 2.5 million Soviet troops, and 1.3 million Germans, were killed or wounded. The invasion of the Soviet Union marked a transformation in Nazi policies toward Jews. Until the middle of 1941, mass emigration had been the Nazis’ preferred “solution” to creating a Europe free of Jews. Hitler’s subordinates considered a number of possibilities, including expelling the Jews of Europe to the island of Madagascar off the southeast coast of Africa. With the collapse of these plans and the invasion of the western Soviet Union—also a site of large-scale Jewish settlement—the Nazis turned to a new “final solution” to the “Jewish question”: mass murder. So-called “special operations” troops, or *Einsatzgruppen*, followed the German military into the

Soviet Union, fanning out behind the front lines to massacre entire Jewish populations. The most deadly massacre occurred on September 29–30, 1941. In the course of two days, the entire Jewish population of Kiev—some thirty thousand men, women, and children—were shot into a ravine on the outskirts of the city. Historians estimate that 1.3 million Jews were killed in mass shootings in the two years after the invasion of the Soviet Union.

However, Nazi leaders quickly came to believe that mass shootings created too many problems—not moral, but technical. They left witnesses among the surrounding populations, who might one day turn against the occupying Germans, and Nazi officers worried about the psychological impact of the shootings on their men. By early 1942, Nazi administrators settled on a different method of killing, adopted from another program of mass murder. Since 1939, Hitler’s Chancellery had orchestrated the murder of tens of thousands of physically and mentally disabled individuals throughout Germany, a program known as “Aktion T-4.” Patients were transported from hospitals and asylums to newly constructed killing centers, to be asphyxiated in gas chambers. When they sought an alternative to the mass shooting of Jews, Hitler’s subordinates recruited technicians from “Aktion T-4” to implement a similar program of annihilation by poison gas across occupied Poland. Six killing centers would be constructed for this purpose, each equipped with gas chambers. The first Jewish victims of these deadly sites were murdered in December 1941.

The names of the killing centers are well-known to students of the Holocaust: Auschwitz, Belzec, Chełmno, Sobibór, Majdanek, and Treblinka. A vast bureaucracy coordinated the transport of Jews from the ghettos of Eastern Europe, and the cities and towns of Western Europe, to the killing centers. At Treblinka alone, an estimated 925,000 Jews were murdered between July 1942 and September 1943. Some scholars have argued that the industrialized process of killing relied more on indifference and an eagerness to follow orders than on the active malice of the perpetrators—the “banality of evil,” in the famous phrase of the philosopher Hannah Arendt. But killing was often up close and personal. Jews who were too weak to board the cattle cars that would transport them to their deaths were shot outside their homes during roundups. At the killing centers, Jews were beaten and tormented on the way to the gas chambers. By the end of the war, nine in ten of Poland’s prewar Jewish population had been murdered; in the Netherlands, three in four; in Hungary, seven in ten.

Although the Nazi persecution of the Jews was the most sweeping, other groups were targeted for transport to the concentration camps and killing centers as well. Roma and Sinti living in Germany were deprived of their citizenship under the Nuremberg Laws, and some were later deported to ghettos and killing centers. Like Jews, Roma and Sinti were considered a racial threat to the pure “Aryan” nation envisioned by the Nazis. Historians estimate that approximately 250,000 Roma were murdered during World War II, including at least nineteen thousand at Auschwitz (though some estimates are much higher). Approximately five thousand to fifteen thousand homosexual men were sent to the concentration camps as well.

These staggering numbers are difficult to comprehend. People tend to raise common questions about the Holocaust: Why didn’t more Jews resist? Why didn’t anybody intervene to stop the killings?

The first question often betrays a lack of understanding of what the Jews were up against. The

Jews of Eastern Europe were virtually powerless against the German military machine: they were fewer in number, fragmented, and without weapons, against the most powerful mechanized army in modern history. Nevertheless, there were instances of rebellion. Sobibór and Treblinka saw revolts by the Jews working in the “special commandos,” forcing the Nazis to shut down those camps entirely. During the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in April 1943 and the Vilna Ghetto in September 1943, Jews valiantly took up arms against German guards. Many Jews escaped from ghettos to join partisan bands that unleashed guerilla warfare against the Nazis in the mountains and forests of Eastern Europe. Jews resisted in more symbolic ways as well—by observing Jewish religious holidays in concentration camp barracks, for instance, or escaping from ghettos to obtain food or clothing for a loved one. Just maintaining Jewish culture in the ghettos or concentration camps—indeed, simply remaining alive against the Nazis’ will to destroy every last Jew of Europe—was an act of resistance.

The question of outside help is a complex one. In part, the problems were simply logistical. Until the spring of 1944, the German army occupied the entirety of continental Europe; the British did not possess airplanes with sufficient capacity to fly to Auschwitz, bomb the camp, and then return on a single tank of fuel. But calculations of domestic public opinion mattered as well. Political leaders such as U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill presented the war as a struggle for the freedom of Europe from Nazi tyranny, not a campaign to halt the murder of Jews. To foreground the plight of the Jews would have been to risk losing domestic support for the war effort, given that antisemitic views remained widespread in the Allied countries as well. Many Jews served in the U.S. military, welcoming the opportunity to fight against the Nazis. Some German Jews, like Carola’s classmates from Gross Breesen, worked for the American military as spies behind German lines. Still, Jews were a small minority in the U.S., and had little influence over the direction of policy. Soviet leaders also framed the war as one for the Russian “fatherland,” not for the liberation of the Jews. As a result, the killing of Jews continued until the end of the war. The gas chambers of Auschwitz operated through November 1944, while in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, tens of thousands of inmates died in the early months of 1945.

The total number of Jews murdered by the Nazi regime and its collaborators during World War II was nearly six million, about two-thirds of Europe’s total Jewish population.

The war slowly drew to a close following the Allied landing at Normandy on June 6, 1944. As they advanced into German-occupied territories during the winter and spring of 1945, Soviet, American, and British soldiers “liberated” the Nazi concentration camps. By the end of April 1945, Soviet troops closed in on Berlin. Hitler and his deputy Josef Goebbels committed suicide on April 30. On May 8, the rump of the Nazi leadership surrendered to the Allies.

But the formal end of Nazi rule did not mean an end to the torment that Jewish victims experienced. Even after “liberation,” many Jews continued to die from disease and lack of nutrition. Even those who survived had to face the ordeal of refugee camps. Many survivors fled to Germany, ironically one of the safest places for Jews in postwar Europe as pogroms flared up in Poland. In anguish, they awaited knowledge of what had happened to their relatives; many found that their entire families had been destroyed. Most eventually left Europe, primarily for the U.S. and Palestine—from May 1948, the State of Israel—but others for Canada, Australia, and Latin America.

Carola remarks at the end of the film how fortunate she was to escape Europe with her life. More than superior planning or strategy, her survival was largely a matter of luck. This is a crucial point that underscores how Jews experienced the Holocaust across Nazi-occupied Europe. The line between life and death was always thin. Carola's boat was not sunk by a German warship on its voyage across the Atlantic; but it would be sunk on the way back, killing hundreds. For other Jews, the element of chance was being hidden by a sympathetic Gentile family, avoiding discovery while seeking refuge in the forest, or narrowly escaping a "selection" for murder at Auschwitz. Legality and morality were destroyed, with millions killed for no other reason than being Jewish.

Popular books and movies about the Holocaust, like Steven Spielberg's 1993 film *Schindler's List*, often tell redemptive stories of heroic individuals who rescued Jews or successfully resisted the Nazis. Yet Carola's experience reveals a more complex reality. Her escape from Europe was by chance; she did not have a heroic savior; her brother tragically perished, even as other members of her family survived. Carola's story reminds us of the need to look beyond simplistic accounts of heroes and villains, and to examine more broadly how and why the Holocaust unfolded. Only by studying the causes of genocide, and the lives of individual victims like Carola, can we prevent these terrible events from occurring in our own time.

## Key Events in the History of Nazi Germany

- Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi Party, is appointed Chancellor of Germany.
- The Nazis organize a boycott of Jewish stores.
- The "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" goes into effect, excluding "non-Aryans" from civil service jobs.
- The Nuremberg Laws are instituted, depriving Jews of their German citizenship.
- Kristallnacht*, the night of attacks on the German-Jewish community organized by the Nazi state, results in the destruction of 267 synagogues and 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses. 30,000 Jewish men are arrested and sent to concentration camps, and 91 Jews are killed.
- Germany invades Poland, beginning World War II.
- Germany defeats and occupies France.
- Germany invades the Soviet Union, marking the beginning of the mass killings of Jews.
- Jewish emigration from Germany is prohibited in anticipation of the "Final Solution."
- The first Jews from Germany are deported to occupied Poland for extermination.
- The first killing center to murder Jews with poison gas opens in Chelmno, Poland.
- "Transports" of Jews to Auschwitz begins. Auschwitz is the deadliest of the killing centers.
- 75-80% of the 6 million Jews who would die in the Holocaust have been killed.
- The Allies land at Normandy Beach, France.
- Soviet Red Army troops liberate Auschwitz.
- The defeat of Nazi Germany and end of WWII.

## Key Events in Carola's Life

- DEC 1919
- 1928
- JAN 30 1933
- APR 1 1933
- APR 7 1933
- MID 1930s
- SEPT 15 1935
- 1935
- 1937
- NOV 9-10 1938
- NOV 8 1938
- DEC 9 1938
- 1939
- SEPT 1 1939
- JUNE 25 1940
- JUNE 1940
- JUNE 22 1941
- EARLY 1940s
- AUG 1941
- OCT 15 1941
- DEC 1941
- FEB 1942
- 1942
- FEB 1943
- JUNE 6 1944
- JAN 27 1945
- MAY 8 1945
- LATE 1950s
- 1992
- 2004
- Carola is born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.
- Around this time, Carola joins the Jewish scouting movement.
- Carola is forced to stay home from school for being Jewish during Boycott Day. Her sister drops out of school.
- Sometime shortly after Boycott Day, Carola's brother and sister leave the country.
- Carola is expelled from her school for being Jewish.
- Carola enrolls in Gross Breesen, a Jewish agricultural training camp.
- Carola returns to Frankfurt for her parents' anniversary. Shortly after her arrival, her father is arrested and sent to Buchenwald, a concentration camp.
- Carola's father is released from Buchenwald.
- Carola leaves Germany for England.
- Carola sails to America. While en route, France is defeated. The ship narrowly escapes German air raids. She arrives in Montreal and travels to Hyde Farmlands, Virginia via New York City.
- Carola leaves Hyde Farmlands to attend George Washington University. There, she meets her future husband. Her parents join her in the United States.
- Carola's brother dies of untreated tuberculosis while held prisoner in Italy.
- The Domar family moves to Conantum.
- Carola visits Germany and gives talks, at the invitation of the Frankfurt mayor.
- Shortly before she dies in September, Carola returns to Germany to be honored by her school.



*Carola Domar; at about age 11.  
Courtesy of Alice Domar.*

## SECTION 2: CAROLA'S LIFE

Carola's experience aligns with the daily life of many Jewish children living in Germany between 1933, when Hitler came to power, and the late 1930s, when Carola emigrated. Well before the genocide of the Holocaust began in 1941, Jewish children's daily life and sense of community were drastically altered, and their futures became uncertain. Their educations were disrupted, and they lost the normal experiences and carefree joys of childhood.

*Teachers: In considering Carola's life, students will gain a greater awareness of the period through the lens of a young person targeted by Hitler's policies. Students can begin by taking a moment to reflect independently on the film and to journal about their impressions.*

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY FOR BOTH MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

**Assignment:** As you watch the film, or immediately after the screening, write down your initial thoughts about what you saw. What did you find surprising or interesting? What did you find troubling?

**Purpose:** To allow students a moment to process what they have just seen, and to consider their own personal responses prior to group discussion.

*Teachers: The following discussion prompts can be used in a variety of ways depending on the needs and structure of the classroom. Teachers might consider using online discussion tools such as [Padlet](#), [Formative](#), or [Poll Everywhere](#) to develop conversations in a virtual environment. Some of the questions would also lend themselves well to a silent discussion in which students write their responses and react to others on big paper within the classroom.*

## MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1) *Questions about fairness and bullying:*

- Have you ever been bullied or witnessed bullying? How was Carola's experience similar, and how was it different?
- What did Carola's classmates do in response to the way she was being treated? How did they demonstrate courage?
- Describe a time when you saw or experienced something you felt was wrong or unfair. What did you do? What did you feel you couldn't do in response? What else could you have done?

2) *Questions about community:*

- Define community. Does a community have to be located in a physical space? Do its members have to live together?
- There are many different kinds of community. What communities do you belong to?
- What kind of community was Carola looking for in her scout activity, at Gross Breesen, and elsewhere?
- What role did nature play in the communities Carola belonged to? What role do you think nature played in her life? How was the role of nature in Carola's life similar or different from your life?
- In what ways did Carola's life revolve around working with others? (This question invites discussion of the German-Jewish scouting movement, the Gross Breesen school in Germany, Hyde Farmlands in Virginia, and the community of Conantum, in Concord, MA.)
- Why were Carola's visits to Frankfurt in 1992 and 2004 so difficult for her? The students at Carola's old school may have had grandparents who went to school with Carola. How do you think the students at Carola's old school felt about her visit? In what way do you think Carola's visit made them feel differently about their school and perhaps their family history, as well?
- How has the film changed the way you think about community? About the Holocaust?

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:

**Assignment:** Write a brief description about a time when you felt a part of a community and a time when you felt excluded from a group. What made you feel included or excluded? Explain how it felt to be inside and outside “community.” How can communities affect an individual’s behavior and their sense of belonging or exclusion?

**Purpose:** To analyze the impact of community-driven behaviors. Reflecting on their own experiences will allow students to develop a stronger appreciation of Carola’s situation and help them better understand positive and negative group behaviors more generally.

*Teachers: After students have written their individual responses to this assignment, students can share their experiences in small groups or with the entire class.*

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- In what ways did Carola’s experience go beyond bullying? How was Carola’s daily student life affected by systematic social exclusion?
- What role did community play in Carola’s life? Where did she find community? How did community help support Carola throughout her life?
- Why was Carola’s return to Frankfurt so important for her? Why was it important for people in Frankfurt and for the students in her former school?
- In later years, Carola simultaneously belonged to a synagogue, a church, and a mosque. What do you think motivated her? How is this choice to participate in varied religious institutions in keeping with her character?

## **BACKGROUND MATERIAL:**

### **I. EXCLUSION AND EXILE: What was it like to be of school age in Hitler's Germany?**

*"It was my school, it was my class, they were my friends, and I was completely cut off from them."*  
—Carola Domar<sup>1</sup>

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Carola was thirteen years old when the Nazis came to power in 1933. At that time, there were about 117,000 Jewish children and youth between the ages of six to twenty-five living in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

In the early 1930s, most German Jewish children came from middle-class homes. Many Jewish families were integrated into German culture and took pride in this fact. The children raised in these families grew up thinking of themselves as German. With Hitler's rise to power, Jewish children generally became more aware of politics, even at an early age. They also typically became more engaged in Judaism. Many young Jews turned to Zionism, the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine, pinning their hopes on emigration to the historic land of Israel.<sup>3</sup>



*Elementary school class on "Empire-Founding Day,"*

*Berlin, January 1934.*

*Courtesy of the German Federal Archives.*

The majority of Jewish schoolchildren attended German schools. However, even most of the Jewish schools were not particularly religious in their general curriculum and orientation before the Nazi period. Most Jewish children had non-Jewish friends with whom they shared interests and activities, especially sports. All this began to change in 1933. For although antisemitism certainly existed before 1933, the broken friendships, widespread discrimination, and isolation of the years following Hitler's rise had a significant impact on Jewish schoolchildren.<sup>4</sup>

#### ***Policies, laws, and their impact:***

Under Hitler, Jewish students experienced a drastic change in how they were treated.<sup>5</sup> Antisemitic attitudes became pervasive, as the State and schools instituted discriminatory policies. Social interactions with non-Jewish peers grew difficult.

In 1938, a national decree expelled all Jews from public schools. Before that, between 1933 and 1938, school policies varied, though they all tended to limit Jewish students from participating in certain activities and to separate them from their peers.<sup>6</sup> It was not unusual for Jewish schoolchildren to be

banned from swimming pools and school hostels, and excluded from some standard school assessments. In some schools, Jews sat on separate benches from non-Jews or were placed in separate classes. They might be barred from school events, denied sports awards, and forbidden from working on Nazi-related assignments. In some places, teachers were pressured to withhold good grades from “non-Aryans.” The Nazi salute was problematic for Jewish students—some schools banned them from making the salute, others required it.<sup>7</sup>

Early on, German classmates started wearing Hitler youth uniforms to school, and teachers began each lesson with the greeting, “Heil Hitler.” Nazi doctrine influenced how German history and literature were taught. “Racial science” became part of the curriculum.<sup>8</sup>

Although mothers were at times in contact with teachers, it was hard for parents to know exactly what was going on in school. Young children frequently shared their experiences at home, but older ones were less likely to do so. Nonetheless, parents could often deduce what was going on in a general way, when, for example, a child’s German school friends no longer came by to visit.<sup>9</sup>

Well-meaning parents sometimes gave unrealistic advice or directives based on ignorance, contributing to students’ stress. Some instructed their children not to make the Nazi salute at school, for example. Fathers often urged their children to tough it out, not fully appreciating what this meant.<sup>10</sup>

Numerous anecdotes from across Germany underscore the systematic and, at times, arbitrary forms of discrimination, humiliation, and social ostracism imposed on Jewish schoolchildren in the classroom and on the playground during this period. Jewish children could not always anticipate when they would encounter mistreatment. The unpredictability of abuse led to constant watchfulness. Both in school and on the street, Jewish children led a guarded existence and tried to be inconspicuous. The effect was traumatic and socially isolating.<sup>11</sup> The mother of a shunned Jewish-Protestant girl stated, “Loneliness enveloped us more and more each day.”<sup>12</sup> Carola herself declared: “Being pointed out you are different just touched me wherever I went.”<sup>13</sup>



*Children on train (Kinderlandverschickung), no date.*

*Courtesy of the German Federal Archives.*

### ***The quandary of teachers and non-Jewish students:***

Teachers and students who sympathized with Jewish schoolchildren were pressured to conform to Nazi protocol and attitudes. Like many other Germans, some teachers who initially showed kindness toward their Jewish students reluctantly withdrew their backing as the situation worsened. They worried that support for their Jewish students would put themselves in jeopardy. One such teacher wrote the following to the mother of a young Jewish girl:

Today we were informed at a teachers' meeting that Jews or *Mischlinge* [those of mixed parentage] could no longer receive prizes for their achievements. Because your little daughter is the best pupil in the class, she will be affected by these measures. I'm informing you in order that you can tell Irene, so that she won't be surprised and too hurt during tomorrow's awards ceremony. You know how close your little daughter and I are, but, unfortunately, there is no way that I can counter this hurtful and unjust policy.<sup>14</sup>

There is other anecdotal evidence that not everyone agreed or readily complied with the expected discrimination, particularly in the early years of this period. Werner T. Angress, for example, describes how a young boy rushed to defend his Jewish schoolmate from a teacher's abuse during recess. This brave act led to a physical confrontation between the non-Jewish boy and the teacher, who was dressed in a Nazi uniform and taught "racial theory."<sup>15</sup> This sort of defiance meshes with Carola's account of how her classmates defended her from discrimination.

### ***A new sense of identity:***

Like Carola, many young students could not easily identify themselves as Jewish or non-Jewish. This confusion was particularly true if they came from religiously mixed families or from families that had deliberately suppressed their Jewish background. These children were forced to redefine their sense of self and to re-evaluate their German identity and sense of belonging, once they were pointed out as Jews. Carola's response was to cling to her German-ness. Like many German Jews, her family's efforts to assimilate initially blinded them to the enduring dangers the Nazis presented. They simply did not believe that Hitler would last.<sup>16</sup>

Predictably, many Jewish students dropped out of school before legislation forced expulsion. Some left for apprenticeships or switched over to private Jewish schools during this period.<sup>17</sup> When Jewish students left public schools for Jewish ones, they often came to believe more strongly in Judaism and Zionism, sometimes more than their parents did. As a



Nazi propaganda, Berlin, April 24, 1932.

Courtesy of the German Federal Archives.

result, they could grow apart from their parents' way of thinking. It was not unusual for children to be the ones in their families who most wanted to leave Germany. They tended to be the family members least tied to German culture, having suffered daily discrimination in the public schools during formative years or grown more aware of their Jewish identity and ideas about emigration in the Jewish schools. Unlike their parents, the young felt less connected to the past.<sup>18</sup>

***An exodus of Jewish youth and children:***

When parents decided to send their children to safety, it was often a heartbreakng decision that divided families. A great many Jewish children left Germany, sometimes with their families, but often alone, as was the case for Carola and her siblings. Between 1934 and 1939, at least eighteen thousand children left Germany unaccompanied.<sup>19</sup> Families were devastated. The phrase, *aus Kindern wurden Briefe*—“children turned into letters”—underscores the despair. By 1939, 82 percent of Jewish children fifteen years old and younger and 83 percent of Jewish youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four had fled Germany.<sup>20</sup> Those remaining lived in cultural isolation and mortal danger.<sup>21</sup>

***How Carola's account relates to that of others:***

Carola's experience generally conforms to what we know about Jewish children living in Germany at the time. However, her experience was less horrific than that of many of her peers. Some factors help explain the difference: Jewish children who lived in big cities enjoyed a degree of anonymity, and urban schools were often less oppressive than rural ones. Carola did not “look Jewish” and was assimilated. She thought of herself as German and acted with the freedom that entailed. Carola was even able to hitchhike home from Gross Breesen for her parents’ anniversary, just before *Kristallnacht*, pocketing the money each parent had sent her for the train. Finally, children from affluent, well-educated families had resources. Carola’s parents, for example, were able to get the entire family out of Germany. Unfortunately, they could not foresee the problem with sending her brother to Italy.<sup>22</sup>

## II. COMMUNITY:

Like many Germans of her generation, the type of community Carola consistently sought was collaborative, tied to nature, and idealistic. The scouting movement, Gross Breesen, Hyde Farmlands, and Conantum each displayed these traits.

Until 1938, Jews continued to enjoy a range of social activities. They could travel, go to the movies, and eat in restaurants. However, there were an increasing number of places off-limits to Jews. Carola describes signs stating, “Jews Not Wanted Here” or “Forbidden to Jews.” In searching for a sense of belonging and refuge, Jewish youth often turned to the Jewish scouting movement.<sup>23</sup>



*The Jewish scout group Schwarzes Fähnlein (Black Flag) from a photo album, Frankfurt/Oder, Magdeburg, Gross Besten 1933-1934. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum Berlin, Inv.-Nr. 2007/24/2, gift of Vonny Klaesi, photo: Roman März.*

## THE JEWISH SCOUTING MOVEMENT:

The Jewish scouting movement grew out of a German one and shared many characteristics with it. Before they were banned in 1938, Jewish scouting groups became extremely popular.<sup>24</sup> This expansion of the Jewish scouting movement indicates that with Hitler’s rise to power and growing antisemitism, Jewish kids needed to find a community outside the German mainstream. In 1932, roughly twenty-six thousand kids—25 to 30 percent of all Jewish youth—belonged to a Jewish youth group. By 1936, that number went up to about fifty thousand individuals, or roughly 60 percent of Jewish youth.<sup>25</sup>

### ***What German and Jewish scouting groups shared in common:***

German and Jewish scouting groups shared many ideals, which is not surprising given that one grew out of the other. Both types of groups believed in a kind of community that valued solidarity and allegiance to the group. Much importance was placed on leadership, an almost militaristic discipline, and a resolve to be both principled and capable. Both groups rebelled against the bourgeois culture of their parents and older generations, creating a generational rift. Many youth perceived their parents' culture to be lacking in both ideals and relevance. In rebelling against the idea of a comfortable bourgeois life, the youth movements emphasized the importance of toughening up and rejecting alcohol, as Carola describes in the film.<sup>26</sup>

The German youth movement evolved from hiking associations, and both the German and Jewish scouts embraced nature. However, this passion for the outdoors was not simply about hiking. It originated from a reverence for the German landscape and a quest for a simpler, purer life. Urban life was seen as decadent, and peasant life was romanticized.<sup>27</sup>



*The Jewish scout group Schwarzes Fähnlein (Black Flag) from a photo album, Frankfurt/Oder, Magdeburg, Gross Besten 1933-1934. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum Berlin, Inv.-Nr. 2007/24/2, gift of Vonny Klaesi, photo: Roman März.*

Both the German and Jewish scouting groups grew out of a male-oriented culture of communal, outdoor activities. It is striking that women and girls belonged to these scouting groups, given the social expectations of the time. During the first thirty years of the twentieth century, girls and women did not generally take part in physically challenging and independent endeavors, but they did do so as scouts. They spent time on their own in the woods, slept in tents, and even hitchhiked. Joining male teenagers on unchaperoned trips was also fairly remarkable at the time. In this context, Carola's participation in the scouting movement was both modern and daring.<sup>28</sup>

***More about the Jewish scouting groups:***

The German youth movement anticipated the so-called “blood and soil romanticism” associated with the Nazis—the idea of a racially defined nation, tied to the land. This concept, of course, excluded Jews from all aspects of German society. One of its lesser effects was to force Jews out of the German scouting groups, though by 1933 only a small minority of Jews belonged to these groups. Antisemitism had already seeped into the German scouting groups, well before Hitler came to power.<sup>29</sup>

As antisemitism grew, the Jewish scouting movement expanded and evolved into groups with diverging views. The majority of these groups focused on Jewish identity. A small subset of the Jewish youth movement clung to German culture and values, and this was the group that attracted Carola. She belonged, consecutively, to two such Jewish scouting groups: the Kameraden (Comrades), and the Schwarzes Fähnlein (Black Flag).<sup>30</sup>



*Gross Breesen. Courtesy of Steve Strauss.*

#### GROSS BREESEN, Silesia:

When Carola started school at Gross Breesen, her daily life was guided by an ideology in keeping with that of the scouting movement. The school valued a simple, disciplined life, the importance of nature, and group collaboration. It was a tough life that rejected bourgeois materialism for a set of goals and ideals. This consistency of outlook between the scouting movement and Gross Breesen is not surprising. Curt Bondy, the director of Gross Breesen, and a number of the students came from the youth movement. In fact, Gross Breesen can be considered part of the Jewish youth movement.<sup>31</sup>

Gross Breesen opened in 1936 and initially accepted 120 students.<sup>32</sup> The school was located considerably southeast of Berlin, and about 450 miles from Carola's home in Frankfurt am Main. It represented another world. Gross Breesen was established by the Central Organization of Jews in Germany (RV) as a means of helping Jewish youth leave Germany on agricultural visas. Carola described how students trained in agriculture and Portuguese to prepare them for a life in Brazil. Eventually, those visas dried up, and the school had to find alternative countries.<sup>33</sup>

#### *The role of girls:*

Carola's decision to attend Gross Breesen was unusual for her gender. In its first year, Gross Breesen turned down four hundred boys, but could not attract enough girls.<sup>34</sup> When Carola joined the school, there were one hundred boys and thirty girls.<sup>35</sup>

Why were so few girls enrolled? For one thing, the parents of daughters were reluctant to have them train as farmers. They preferred their daughters to apprentice as seamstresses or work in the home. Furthermore, the girls themselves generally preferred office work or the opportunity to work with children.<sup>36</sup>

As was typical of the period, female students at Gross Breesen were considered secondary in importance to the males. During morning formation, they stood in the second row, on the far left, an indicator of their lesser status. In addition to other duties, they did the “women’s work.”<sup>37</sup>



*Boys and girls putting up hay at Gross Breesen. Courtesy of Steve Strauss.*

#### **Gross Breesen's context:**

Gross Breesen was unique in some ways, but it was not the only German-Jewish agricultural school of this period. Gross Breesen was part of a larger effort to teach Jewish youth various practical skills—in agriculture, crafts, and housekeeping—and help them emigrate. Some of these schools sought to dispel racist stereotypes and demonstrate to the Nazis that Jews were capable of all kinds of useful work. Most of these institutions were run by Zionists, to prepare young people for a life in Palestine. Gross Breesen was the only non-Zionist training center that lasted more than two years.<sup>38</sup>

#### **The school's mission:**

Gross Breesen attracted elite, motivated youth, mostly from cities, who were well educated and assimilated into German culture. The priority of the school was to teach these students agricultural skills to help them get visas and leave the country. The school also strove to build character and instill spiritual and cultural values, in preparing them to emigrate. This effort was considered critical to helping young people establish themselves in a new and alien environment, without the support of their family, teachers, and the greater community. They would be leaving all they knew and loved behind.<sup>39</sup>

Although much effort was made to establish a “New Gross Breesen” abroad, to which all the students could relocate, this plan largely failed. Gross Breeseners ended up dispersing to a number of locations. They nonetheless maintained a collective identity and a strong sense of community, remaining in touch for life.<sup>40</sup>

***A disrupted education and childhood:***

Carola’s chance to attend college once she arrived in the States was her “big break.” A full scholarship is wonderful for any young person. But for a young Jewish refugee from Hitler’s Germany, the scholarship represented a unique opportunity. It allowed Carola to continue her disrupted education. While Gross Breesen encouraged a culture of music, literature, and learning, these aspects of an education were limited by the demands of farmwork and the need to prepare for emigration. Like many other Jewish students of the period, the Gross Breeseners missed out on a traditional education.<sup>41</sup>

What the Gross Breeseners did learn was the importance of community to survival. As Werner T. Angress, a historian and former Gross Breesener, poignantly writes:

What they [the Gross Breeseners] took away with them from Germany and what no laws and no orders could take away from them were the communal bonds and the character stamp resulting from a short but intensive period of education that was to be decisive for them for decades to come. They also took with them a rootedness in the German cultural tradition that in the end not even Hitler was able to call into question. . . The generation that had hardly put away their toys in 1933 matured quickly. Circumstances forced them to bear the cares and duties of adults; on their shoulders rested the responsibility for their own survival and that of others, and they had to prove themselves equal to it. Thus a whole generation missed an important state of development: their youth.<sup>42</sup>



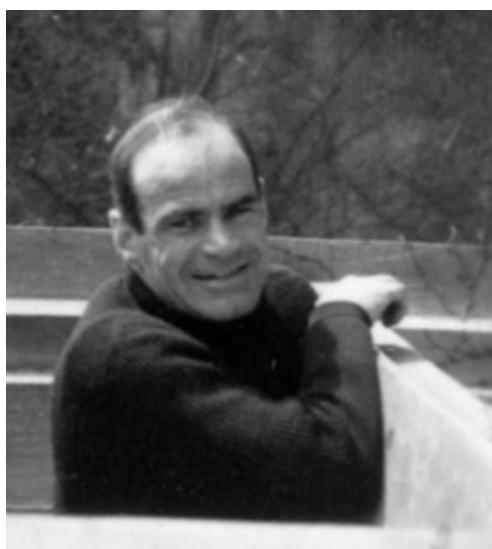
*Boys using a tractor at Gross Breesen.*  
*Courtesy of Herbert (“Herko”) Cohn.*

### ***The impact of the November 1938 Pogrom on the school and on Gross Breeseners:***

When *Kristallnacht* occurred, SS men, along with some locals, destroyed school property and cut the telephone line.<sup>43</sup> As was the case with Carola and her family, it was unclear to the Gross Breeseners that the intrusion was part of a larger effort to target Jews. No one was physically hurt during this incident. However, all the Jewish men, aged eighteen years and older, were rounded up and deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp. This group was composed of Curt Bondy, the older male students, and those staff members who were Jewish.<sup>44</sup>

Curt Bondy and the Gross Breeseners remained at Buchenwald under dire circumstances for roughly a month. In December 1938, international groups negotiated their release, and the men were freed and directed to emigrate. During their time in Buchenwald, they supported each other and the other prisoners, contributing to morale, as Carola describes.<sup>45</sup> Their sense of community had developed under the influence of the scouting movement and their time at Gross Breesen. As a group, they were uniquely equipped to support individuals in the camp and to organize efforts to survive.<sup>46</sup>

In the period after *Kristallnacht*, the school continued to exist, though in an altered state and under increasingly stressful conditions. Students and staff were periodically rounded up and sent into forced, agricultural labor. Some of these individuals ended up in concentration camps. In 1943, the remaining twenty-five Gross Breeseners were removed from the farm by the Nazis. Only one of these twenty-five boys survived the genocide.<sup>47</sup>



*Curt Bondy at Gross Breesen.*

*Courtesy of Steve Strauss.*

### ***What happened to Curt Bondy?***

After being released from the Buchenwald concentration camp, Bondy left Germany and spent some time in Holland and England before emigrating to the United States. He arrived at Hyde Farmlands in 1939, accompanied by several Gross Breesen students. Bondy became a professor at the College of William and Mary, Virginia, then returned to Germany in the 1950s to teach at the University of Hamburg and the University of Göttingen.<sup>48</sup>

## HYDE FARMLANDS, Burkeville, VA:

Carola escaped Germany in her teens and eventually made her way, on her own, to Hyde Farmlands, Virginia.

Hyde Farmlands was purchased by a Richmond, Virginia department store owner, William B. Thalhimer, in 1938, to create a welcoming community for Gross Breeseners. Curt Bondy worked with the Thalhimers to realize this plan, and the Thalhimers helped Gross Breeseners with the immigration process.<sup>49</sup> Formerly a 1,600-acre tobacco plantation, the farm focused on dairy and poultry production. Between 1938 and its closing in early 1941, Hyde Farmlands hosted about thirty Gross Breeseners. Most of the young men who came to Hyde Farmlands ended up enlisting in the U.S. military.<sup>50</sup>

### *Werner T. Angress: Profile of a fellow Gross Breesener and U.S. Master Sergeant:*

Angress was one of the Gross Breesen men who came to Hyde Farmlands and joined the United States military. He appears in the film. Angress was Carola's age, and knew her well. He grew up in Berlin, participated in the scouting movement, and attended Gross Breesen. Angress came to Hyde Farmlands, Virginia in 1939. During the war, he served as an interrogator for the U.S. Army, parachuting into France with the 82nd Airborne Division on D-Day. It was his first jump. Nine days later, he was captured behind enemy lines and became a prisoner of war, all the while concealing his German-Jewish background. He was freed by U.S. forces, and then helped liberate a concentration camp. Angress was ultimately promoted to Master Sergeant, and was awarded both the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. He became a history professor, teaching at U.C. Berkeley and then SUNY at Stonybrook. Much of the information included in this section is based on his writings.<sup>51</sup>



*Werner T. Angress,  
Broadway, England, 1944.  
Courtesy of Robert H. Gillette.*



*Conantum, Concord, MA.  
Courtesy of Lois Anne Logemann Whitney and Alan Whitney.*

#### CONANTUM, Concord, MA:

After attending college, Carola eventually moved to the Boston area, where her husband had been offered a teaching position. They happily settled and raised their family in the unique community of Conantum, in Concord, MA, which continues to exist today. Much like the scouting movement, Conantum's guiding ideas were forward-thinking and idealistic. It was designed to provide a simple and collaborative way of life that embraced nature. One can see how this vision appealed to Carola.

Conantum was conceived and sponsored by an MIT economics professor, Rupert Maclaurin, whose vision was to create an affordable community, particularly for MIT and Harvard faculty.<sup>52</sup> It was founded in 1951, in part "to promote the civic and educational betterment and welfare" of its members.<sup>53</sup>

The architect of this new community was Carl Koch. His overall plan and siting of structures accommodated the community's natural setting. There were 190 acres, roughly sixty of which were preserved as communal land.<sup>54</sup> The homes themselves were designed to integrate daily life with nature using a modern aesthetic that featured floor-to-ceiling windows. These were modest, basic homes that were meant to be added onto as needed.<sup>55</sup>

Conantum was socially and physically structured to encourage collaboration, with the goal of creating a thriving community set in nature. The common land was maintained by residents through work parties, and included a community garden, walking trails, a natural meadow, and a boat landing.<sup>56</sup>



*Common Land, Conantum, Concord, MA.*  
*Courtesy of Lois Anne Logemann Whitney and Alan Whitney.*

***Local resistance to Conantum and its perceived foreignness:***

Some townspeople resisted the establishment of Conantum, regarding its construction as potentially destructive to the land, and its new occupants as uncomfortably different from the existing community—both politically and culturally. In the beginning, Conantum residents were generally liberal academics, often European intellectuals, with a radical idea of creating what was fundamentally a utopian community based on common purpose and shared property. To many, their houses looked nontraditional and strange.<sup>57</sup> Also, there was a whiff of antisemitism. Carola's family was one of a handful of Jewish families moving into the neighborhood; there were virtually no Jews in the greater Concord community at that time.<sup>58</sup> Based on perceived practice rather than stated policy, and in keeping with more general attitudes of the period, Conantum residents were unwelcome at the Concord garden club, and the Jewish families, at least, could not gain entry to the country club.<sup>59</sup> Some locals considered these newcomers Beatniks, Bohemians, or even Communists.<sup>60</sup>

## MORE ABOUT CAROLA'S FAMILY:

Many viewers of the film have further questions about the fate of Carola's brother, sister, and parents. This section concludes with a brief summary of their experiences upon leaving Germany, based on the limited information available from Carola and her family.

Carola's brother Arnold died while imprisoned in an Italian camp.<sup>61</sup>

When the Nazis invaded France, Carola's sister Gerda, who had been living in Paris, sought safety in Megève in the southeastern part of the country. By that time, her husband had already been killed in the war. She fled Paris with her two young children, pregnant with her third. According to Carola, Gerda survived by converting to Catholicism, although it was unusual to escape persecution from the Nazis in this way. Over time, Gerda remarried and became a professional photographer; some of her photos appear in the film.<sup>62</sup>

Both Carola's parents, Siegfried and Bette, fled Germany for France. There, Siegfried was interned once again, this time by the French, as a German. (In the film, we learned that Siegfried was initially interned for a month in 1938 in the Buchenwald camp, having been rounded up during *Kristallnacht*.) Bette joined her daughter, Gerda, in Paris. Once the Germans occupied France and Gerda had left for Megève, Bette departed Paris with an incapacitated neighbor, planning to join Carola in the States. Because this neighbor could not

drive her own car, Carola's mother did so, though she had never driven before. They made their way to the Spanish border, taking cover under the car when strafed by the Germans. Bette then traveled to the United States via Portugal, unsure of her husband's fate. Siegfried escaped sometime later, walking to the Spanish border after the Germans freed everyone in the French camp where he had been interned. He was almost sixty years old. Once in Spain, friends in Portugal were able to send him money. In order to support themselves in their new life in the United States, Carola's father became an accountant, and her mother a masseuse.<sup>63</sup>

Carola had two daughters, and four granddaughters.



*Domar family outing. Courtesy of Alice Domar.*

## NOTES

1. Susan Orleans Rieder, *Exile and Community: The Life of Carola Domar* video, 17:45, 2016.
2. Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 94. Much of the material presented in the following paragraphs on Jewish children's lives during Hitler's rule is closely drawn from Kaplan's writings.
3. Walter Laqueur, *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001), 1-2.
4. Laqueur, *Generation Exodus*, 1-3.
5. Antisemitism existed prior to 1933, and was in fact fairly prevalent towards the end of the Weimar Republic; with Hitler, it became institutionalized and pervasive. Trude Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency: Jews in Weimar and Nazi Germany," trans. Allison Brown, in *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 291-99.
6. In April 1933, Nazis legislated the "Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools," which limited Jewish enrollment to a quota of 1.5 percent. Where Jews made up more than 5 percent of the population, the quota was raised to 5 percent. There were numerous exemptions to this rule, but the hostile message was clear. This law marked the beginning of systematic exclusion of Jewish youth from all educational state institutions. Jewish schools were founded in response but couldn't compete, quality- or quantity-wise. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 94-95, 103; Werner T. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope: Jewish Youth in the Third Reich*, trans. Werner T. Angress and Christine Granger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 8.
7. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 9; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 95-96; Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 296-97.
8. Laqueur, *Generation Exodus*, 12.
9. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 99-101.
10. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 99-103.
11. By 1934, the Central Organization of German Jews reported that many Jewish children showed evidence of psychological stress. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 95-96, 101-2; Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 9ff; Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 296-98.
12. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 101.
13. Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 15:03.
14. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 99-100.
15. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 11-12.
16. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 98-99; Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 4-5; Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 347.
17. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 98. Beginning at age fourteen, children were allowed to withdraw from school. The proportion of children attending Jewish schools grew over time from 14 percent in 1932 to 60 percent in 1937, though there weren't enough Jewish schools to accommodate all that wanted to attend. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 101, 103; Marion A. Kaplan, email to Susan Orleans Rieder, June 27, 2019; Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 299.
18. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 111.
19. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 116.
20. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 117, 118. Kaplan's numbers indicate that, in addition to the eighteen thousand unaccompanied Jewish children, many more Jewish children left Germany by 1939.
21. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 118. An estimated twenty-five thousand Jewish children and youth, under age twenty-five, lived within the borders of pre-1938 Germany in 1941. All Jewish schools were ordered to close in July 1942, further dissolving any sense of community and hope. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 118; Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 304, 360.
22. The fact that Carola hitchhiked home for her parents' anniversary is not in the film (Alice Domar, email

- to Susan Orleans Rieder, August 23, 2020); Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 95-96; Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 3ff.
23. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 17-18; for Carola's statement, see Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 12:50.
  24. Michael Brenner, "Turning Inward: Jewish Youth in Weimar Germany," in *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918-1933*, eds. Michael Brenner and Derek J. Penslar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 58-59; Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 18. Although Jewish scout groups were not banned until 1938, they lost some of their freedoms before then. By 1934, in various parts of Germany, Jewish scouts could not wear uniforms, appear in public in formation, hike, or camp in groups. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 19.
  25. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 20.
  26. Brenner, "Turning Inward," 56, 60-61; for Carola's statement, see Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 7:19.
  27. Brenner, "Turning Inward," 62.
  28. Lieven Wölk, correspondence with Susan Orleans Rieder, January 13, 2020.
  29. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 21; Laqueur, *Generation Exodus*, 5. Antisemitism began to discourage Jews from participating in the German scouting groups by 1914. Brenner, "Turning Inward," 59.
  30. Brenner, "Turning Inward," 61; Carl J. Rheins, "The Schwarzes Fähnlein, Jungenschaft, 1932-34," in *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 23, no. 1 (January 1978): 173. Carola joined a third Jewish scouting group during a brief stay in Berlin, but this is not in the film. The Kameraden split into three groups in 1932, one of which was the Schwarzes Fähnlein. Werner T. Angress, *Witness to the Storm: A Jewish Journey from Nazi Berlin to the 82nd Airborne, 1920-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 97-98; Lieven Wölk, correspondence with Susan Orleans Rieder, January 13, 2020.
  31. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 75.
  32. "September 1941, Jews in the Gross Breesen Training Farm, Germany," Yad Vashem, accessed March 14, 2020, <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/this-month/september/1941.html>. The school was located on an old estate near Breslau. That part of Germany became annexed to Poland after the War and is now known as Wrocław. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 45.
  33. Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 321; for Carola's statement, see Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 22:01.
  34. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 116.
  35. Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 20:50.
  36. The preferences of girls is based on a 1935 school survey. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 115.
  37. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 52, 55; Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 20:50.
  38. "September 1941, Jews in the Gross Breesen Training Farm, Germany," Yad Vashem; Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 321. Angress states twice that Gross Breesen was the *only* non-Zionist center for youth. By the end of 1935, there were reportedly over 2,587 Jewish boys and girls involved in training centers. And by September 30, 1938 that number had grown to 5,520, with ninety-four centers across Germany. These numbers began to drop sharply with the November pogrom. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 24-25, 28.
  39. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 28, 47ff, 60, 71; Werner T. Angress, "Auswandererlehrbuch Gross-Breesen," *Leo Baeck Journal* 10, no. 1 (January, 1965): 169, 174, 182; Laqueur, *Generation Exodus*, 11. Gross Breesen also sought to foster a sense of Judaism in Gross Breeseners, but the effort largely failed. Like Carola, the majority of Gross Breesen students were not particularly religious and tended to identify themselves foremost as Germans. In opting for Gross Breesen, these students had sought a non-Zionist school. Gross Breesen was non-Kosher, and even raised pigs. Although Curt Bondy tried to create a sense of Jewish community, he himself had grown up in a nonreligious household. Generally speaking, Gross Breeseners embraced Judaism to the extent they did, as a means of reinforcing their sense of community; it was less about religion, per se. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 55, 57, 58.
  40. Gross Breeseners ended up in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, England, the Netherlands, Sweden,

Palestine, the Dutch Indies, Belgium, France, Kenya, Australia, and the United States. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 60, 71. After *Kristallnacht*, Carola realized she had to leave Germany and considered attending a Jewish agricultural school in Holland. She was likely referring to the Werkdorp Nieuwesluis, to which many Gross Breeseners fled. Werkdorp Nieuwesluis was founded in Holland in 1934. By 1936, there were Jewish training centers for young people in a number of European countries. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 116.

41. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 56-57.
42. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 76.
43. Angress, “Auswandererlehrgrut Gross-Breesen,” 182. These locals were non-Jewish, Gross Breesen farmworkers. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 61-63.
44. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 61-64.
45. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 68-69, 72; Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 31:02. Two of the Gross Breeseners were not released from Buchenwald until January 1939. A small group of those men who had fled to the agricultural school Werkdorp Nieuwesluis in the Netherlands ended up dying in concentration camps after Holland was invaded. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 70, 72.
46. Lieven Wölk, correspondence with Susan Orleans Rieder, January 13, 2020.
47. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 63, 72-75.
48. “Curt Bondy Family Papers,” Virginia Holocaust Museum, accessed March 14, 2020, <https://vaholocaust.pastperfectonline.com/archive/474C6C3E-4CF2-45AA-AF0E-284610793051>; Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 71; “Bondy, Curt,” *Encyclopedia.com*, updated August 11, 2020, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/bondy-curt>.
49. “067-0040 Hyde Park,” Virginia Department of Historic Resources, updated April 4, 2018, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/067-0040/>. Curt Bondy set up a partnership with the Thalhimer family. The Thalhimers got around existing immigration policy by becoming landowners and signing affidavits for the Gross Breeseners that arrived, gaining entry permits through a special agricultural quota. “VHM Artifact Highlight: Hyde Farmland,” Virginia Holocaust Museum, May 25, 2017, <https://www.vaholocaust.org/vhm-artifact-highlight-hyde-farmland/>; Angress, “Auswandererlehrgrut Gross-Breesen,” 181-82.
50. “067-0040 Hyde Park,” “VHM Artifact Highlight: Hyde Farmland.”
51. Angress belonged to the Schwarzes Fähnlein. For his appearance in the film, see Rieder, *Exile and Community*, 41:01; Alice Domar, email to Susan Orleans Rieder, November 10, 2019; “*Witness to the Storm* by Werner Angress, Description,” Indiana University Press, accessed April 23, 2020, <https://iupress.org/9780253039125/witness-to-the-storm/>; Angress, *Witness to the Storm*, 227-329; James J. Sheehan, “In Memoriam: Werner Thomas Angress, (1920-2010),” *AHA Perspectives on History*, December 1, 2010, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2010/in-memoriam-werner-thomas-angress>.
52. “In the Beginning,” Conantum: A Neighborhood in Concord, Massachusetts, 2019, <https://www.conantum.org/history>. A forward-thinking clause specified that there could be no restrictions to purchasing a Conantum home on the basis of race, national origin, creed, or color. Renee Garellick, “Conantum Neighborhood: Interviews by Renee Garellick,” Concord Free Public Library, written Fall 1986, mounted March 24, 2012, <https://concordlibrary.org/special-collections/oral-history/conantum>.
53. “In the Beginning,” Conantum. Thoreau referred to this land as Conantum.
54. “In the Beginning,” Conantum.
55. “Mid-Century Modern,” Conantum: A Neighborhood in Concord, Massachusetts, 2019, <https://www.conantum.org/architecture>; “Prices of the homes generally ranged from \$10,000 to \$18,000 and for each buyer, the cost of land, roads, water, and a share in the common land averaged \$2900.” Bill Janovitz, “Our Tour of Conantum,” Modern Mass, 2019, <http://modernmass.com/our-tour-of-conantum/>.
56. “Common Land: Shared by All,” Conantum: A Neighborhood in Concord, Massachusetts, 2019, <https://www.conantum.org/common-land>; anonymous Concord resident in discussion with Susan Orleans

Rieder, October 5, 2010. There were also tennis courts and a baseball diamond, which encouraged further social opportunities.

57. Some townspeople perceived Conantum residents to be unconventional and immodest: their houses lacked a respectable sense of privacy with their large, and often uncurtained windows. Of course, many of these windows were hard to provide screening for given Koch's tendency to use triangular-shaped glass as a design element. Anonymous Concord resident, October 5, 2010.
58. There had been a few Jews living in Concord, employed in tailoring and dry goods, at the beginning of the century. Garellick, "Conantum Neighborhood"; anonymous Concord resident, October 5, 2010; anonymous Concord resident in discussion with Susan Orleans Rieder, November 19, 2020.
59. Garellick, "Conantum Neighborhood." As Pat Sterling declared in her interview with Garellick: "Within the town, we were sometimes seen as the radicals, the intruders. Suddenly in this heavily Republican town there was a Democrats for Stevenson headquarters set up. Our community of new PhDs definitely were [sic] not the country club set."
60. Garellick, "Conantum Neighborhood"; anonymous Concord resident, October 5, 2010.
61. The details of Arnold's death are unclear. According to the family, Carola's brother Arnold died in a concentration camp. Carola states her brother was exterminated. (Carola Domar, interview by Renee Garellick, May 4, 1998, transcript and recording, Concord Oral History Program, Concord Free Public Library, <https://concordlibrary.org/special-collections/oral-history/Domar>.) Based on family documents, Alice Domar believes Arnold died of untreated tuberculosis on February 23, 1942. (Alice Domar, email to Susan Orleans Rieder, February 24, 2020, June 4, 2020.) Concentration camps, as we typically think of them, did not exist in Italy in 1942, but Arnold may have been held in a camp for foreign-born Jews (Philip Balma, email to Sebastian Wogenstein, June 8, 2020).
62. This is Carola's account of her sister's experience as related to Renee Garellick. James E. Young, email to Susan Orleans Rieder, March 26, 2020, regarding the point about Catholicism; Carola Domar, interview by Renee Garellick.
63. Carola Domar, interview by Renee Garellick. It was not unusual for the Holocaust to separate surviving family members in this way. Maurer, "From Everyday Life to a State of Emergency," 359.

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*Angress T. Werner was a friend of Carola's and fellow Gross Breesener. He, too, was a member of the Schwarzes Fähnlein and spent time at Hyde Farmlands before joining the U.S. military, as described in the guide. He wrote this book as a professor of history, but his personal experience informs this highly detailed work. One can also refer to his memoir, Witness to the Storm.*

Brenner, Michael. "Turning Inward: Jewish Youth in Weimar Germany." In *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918-1933*. Edited by Michael Brenner and Derek J. Penslar, 56-73. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

*Although this book covers an earlier period, Brenner's chapter provides useful information about the genesis and characteristics of the Jewish youth movement.*

Kaplan, Marion A. *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

*An accessible book that covers a range of important topics. For the purposes of this guide, Kaplan's chapters on the daily life of Jewish children, her emphasis on the day to day existence of families, and her attention to the particular situation of women and girls is invaluable. She references memoirs, diaries, interviews, and letters.*

Laqueur, Walter. *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001.

*Contains a very readable chapter on children's daily life in Germany during the period.*

*STUDENTS CAN ALSO REFER TO THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES for more information on Carola Domar, Conantum, Gross Breesen, Hyde Farmlands, and the Jewish scouting movement. (These websites, and all others referenced in this section, were last accessed March 2020.)*

Carola Domar. Interview by Renee Garellick. May 4, 1998. Transcript and recording. Concord Oral History Program. Concord Free Public Library. <https://concordlibrary.org/special-collections/oral-history/Domar>. (DOMAR)

*Garellick was an oral historian affiliated with the Concord Free Public Library. Her interviews are rich in information.*

Conantum: A Neighborhood in Concord, Massachusetts. 2019. <https://www.conantum.org/>. (CONANTUM)

*The Conantum website, which includes a history and description of the community.*

Garellick, Renee. "Conantum Neighborhood: Interviews by Renee Garellick." Concord Free Public Library. Fall 1986. Mounted March 24, 2012. <https://concordlibrary.org/special-collections/oral-history/conantum>. (CONANTUM)

*See above description of Garellick's work.*

Janovitz, Bill. "Our Tour of Conantum." Modern Mass. 2019. <http://modernmass.com/our-tour-of-conantum/>. (CONANTUM)

*A website devoted to mid-century modern housing in Massachusetts that contains a history of Conantum.*

"067-0040 Hyde Park." Virginia Department of Historic Resources. April 4, 2018. <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/067-0040/>. (HYDE FARMLANDS)

"VHM Artifact Highlight: Hyde Farmland." Virginia Holocaust Museum. May 25, 2017. <https://www.vaholocaust.org/vhm-artifact-highlight-hyde-farmland/>. (HYDE FARMLANDS)

Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center. 2020. <https://www.yadvashem.org/>. (GROSS BREESEN, THE JEWISH SCOUTING MOVEMENT)



*Syrian and Iraqi refugees arrive in Greece, 2015.*

*Courtesy of Ggia, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.*

### **SECTION 3: CAROLA'S STORY IN TODAY'S WORLD**

Carola's story represents an episode in our past that should never be repeated. Yet, antisemitism continues to be a deeply concerning problem, and, more generally, ongoing discrimination against racial and religious minorities highlights the relevance of Carola's story as well. What happened to Carola Domar continues to happen today, in one form or another.

Carola's experience shares aspects of social exclusion and exile with current stories of mass migration—accounts of individuals hoping to find safe haven from terrifying conditions, and too often refused refuge. This section examines Germany's humanitarian response to the plight of Syrian refugees as an example of how we can address social needs and injustice. There are related topics that can be considered here, such as the denial of unfolding or historic events, collective guilt, individual responsibility, and the concept of forgiveness.

*Teachers: The discussion questions below address high-interest topics for students and can be adapted to individual journaling, small group discussion, or full class conversation. Teachers can choose which issue(s) to focus on, as they broaden the conversation about Carola's experience. The background material provides context and can be shared directly with students, depending on their level.*

## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- **Current Events:** Which events in the news today have similarities to Carola's experiences? How are these current events similar and different from those in Carola's life? How did people in Carola's time help her? What could people have done differently that would have helped Carola? What can Carola's experience teach us as we consider current issues, such as the plight of refugees? How can each of us help?
- **Forgiveness:** Carola offered forgiveness to bystanders and perpetrators of the Holocaust, and met with their descendants, through her work with *One by One*.<sup>1</sup> What do you think of Carola's choice? When do you think it is okay to offer unqualified forgiveness? Are there times when offering forgiveness could undermine social justice? To what degree should we expect victims of oppression to forgive?
- **Collective Guilt and Responsibility:** What is the responsibility of the average citizen to speak out against oppression? Should bystanders be held responsible for the actions of a repressive government? Why or why not? In our history, when have the government and the citizens of our country oppressed minorities? What is our responsibility to the victims of oppression in our society?
- **Holocaust Denial:** Some people claim that the Holocaust never happened. This denial may be a result of ignorance, antisemitism, or political convenience. As a society, how should we respond to Holocaust denial? If Holocaust denial is based on lies and hate, is censorship an appropriate response? Why or why not? How do we balance the value of free speech with the need for truth? How should government agencies, social media companies, and individuals respond to "fake news"?

## **BACKGROUND MATERIAL:**

“Never again.” This slogan has become the rallying cry of Holocaust memory throughout the world. In the words of the late Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, “‘Never again’ becomes more than a slogan: It’s a prayer, a promise, a vow. There will never again be hatred, people say. Never again jail and torture. Never again the suffering of innocent people, or the shooting of starving, frightened, terrified children. And never again the glorification of base, ugly, dark violence. It’s a prayer.”<sup>2</sup> The tragedy is that “it” has happened again, and continues to happen. The decades after the Holocaust witnessed genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur. In our own time, governments in Syria, Myanmar, Sudan, and China engage in mass crimes against religious and ethnic minorities. In March 2020, the nonprofit, Genocide Watch, listed ten ongoing “genocide emergencies,” situations in which “the genocidal process had reached the stage of genocidal massacres and other acts of genocide.”<sup>3</sup> The legacy of the Holocaust, therefore, involves not only remembrance of the past. It also includes the obligation to learn about ongoing atrocities against civilians and to take action. It is too easy to confront genocide and ethnic cleansing in faraway countries with indifference or despair. What could we possibly do to stop it? In fact, there are many things that we, as Americans, can do.

Carola’s story gives us inspiration to act in our own world. Most immediately, her story alerts us to the plight of refugees seeking a haven from religious or ethnic persecution. Like many Jews living in Nazi Germany, Carola and her family recognized the dangers they faced, especially after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom. But where could they go? Just as the gravity of the threat increased, countries closed their borders. In July 1938, representatives of thirty-two countries from around the world met at Évian, France “to discuss the ‘problem’ of Jewish refugees” from Nazi Germany. But despite many expressions of sympathy for German Jews, only the Dominican Republic, of all the countries in attendance, agreed to raise its refugee quota.<sup>4</sup> In 1939 and 1940, the U.S. refugee quota for immigration from Germany and Austria stood at just 27,370, while 300,000 men, women, and children remained on the waiting list. When she arrived in 1940, Carola was one of the lucky few to gain entry.<sup>5</sup> A year later, it would have been too late.

### ***The current plight of refugees:***

Sadly, the problem of refugees remains today. According to the United Nations, as of the end of 2018, “an unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from home by conflict and persecution,” including “nearly 30 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.”<sup>6</sup> These fifteen million child refugees are like Carola: threatened by persecution and violence, often separated from their families, and forced to grow up faster than they should have to.

### ***An example of intervention, with Germany leading the way:***

Among the largest of these crises is that caused by the civil war in Syria. According to the United Nations, over 5.6 million Syrians have sought refuge abroad since the war began in 2011. In 2015 alone, the number seeking asylum in Europe peaked at over one million.<sup>7</sup> The German government, headed by Chancellor Angela Merkel, led the world in opening its borders, its homes, and its schools to Syrian refugees. In an extraordinary gesture, demonstrating how her country has changed since—and learned from—the Holocaust, Merkel rallied Germans around the bold slogan: “We can do this [*wir schaffen das!*]!” As Merkel pointed out, the German constitution,

written in the aftermath of the Holocaust, guarantees the dignity of all human beings and the right of asylum. Many German communities opened their doors to the new arrivals. But the challenges of integrating so many refugees, who numbered over 1 percent of the population, created a political backlash. By late 2016, Merkel had rolled back refugee admissions. Still, Germany led the world in addressing the largest global humanitarian crisis, while the United States lagged far behind. In 2015, the U.S. government resolved to expand the admission of Syrian refugees and resettled over 12,587—the largest number since the civil war began, though still far behind Germany.<sup>8</sup> By 2018, that number dropped to just sixty-two, part of a decision by the federal government to end refugee resettlements.<sup>9</sup> While Nazi Germany presents an example of horrific criminality and the failure of the world to respond, Germany’s more recent history offers an example of how nations can learn from their tragic pasts, and how governments and citizens can work together to protect those fleeing violence.

#### ***What we can do:***

There are many actions we can take today to ensure that children like Carola find a safe home. We may not always be able to stop the causes of genocide and ethnic persecution, but we can ensure that children and families will not flee their homes in fear, only to find the doors of the world closed to them. Websites of organizations such as the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), the International Refugee Commission, and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants suggest ways for all of us to get involved. We can stay informed about ongoing refugee crises and post links on social media. We can donate money or organize fundraisers to help refugees settle in the United States and other safe havens around the world. We can volunteer to aid refugees in our own communities, by teaching English, collecting food and clothing, and providing training on integration into American life and basic job skills. Moreover, as citizens of the world’s most powerful country, we can petition our elected representatives to take action, both to increase the number of refugees allowed into the U.S. and to call out governments that oppress ethnic or religious minorities. Genocide Watch, which identifies ongoing genocides and humanitarian crises, organizes petitions to Congress and explains how to contact your Congressperson or Senator to inform them of your concerns.

At the same time that we act to aid refugees and stop genocide in our world today, it is also critically important to continue teaching and learning about the Holocaust. A survey of 1,350 American adults commissioned by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany in 2018 found striking gaps in Americans’ knowledge of this history. According to the survey, “Thirty-one percent of Americans, and 41 percent of millennials [ages eighteen to thirty-four], believe that two million or fewer Jews were killed in the Holocaust,” while “[f]orty-one percent of Americans, and 66 percent of millennials, cannot say what Auschwitz was.” While the Nazis constructed over forty thousand camps and ghettos throughout Europe during World War II, 45 percent of the survey respondents, including 49 percent of millennials, could not name a single one. On the other hand, the survey does point to more hopeful findings: 96 percent of respondents believe that the Holocaust occurred, while 93 percent believe that it is important for students to learn about the Holocaust in school.<sup>10</sup> Denial of the Holocaust remains a serious problem, and in America, unlike most European countries, free speech laws mean that publicly denying the Holocaust is not illegal. But the survey results suggest that more than outright denial: we are confronted with the decay of memory as we become further removed from the events. This is all the more concerning

because 58 percent of the survey respondents believe that “something like the Holocaust could happen again.” In the future, recorded survivor testimony like Carola’s will become even more important for teaching and learning about the Holocaust, as fewer and fewer survivors are with us to share their stories. We are fortunate that the Visual History Archive at the University of Southern California, created by the director Steven Spielberg following the production of *Schindler’s List* (1994), has collected nearly fifty-five thousand such testimonies, of which Carola’s is just one.<sup>11</sup>

We must also be careful against drawing overhasty comparisons between the Holocaust and events of our own time. The events of the Holocaust are so horrific that they could set an excessive threshold for activism. But this hardly means that we need not take action on behalf of victims of political violence. Instead, Carola’s story shows that we must always speak out against injustice, whether committed against a single person or an entire group, because every individual has their own dignity and worth. Carola reminds us that the victims of the Holocaust, and of other genocides, were not a faceless mass but individual human beings, each with unique perspectives and experiences. Each victim sought to resist, and to survive, in their own way. From Frankfurt, to Gross Breesen, to Britain and the U.S., and ultimately to return to Germany, Carola persevered in the face of incredible adversity. She reminds us of how many others’ lives were lost and inspires us to take action on behalf of others like her in our own world. It is in this sense that Carola’s story is most important today.

## NOTES

1. One by One, accessed June 25, 2020, <http://one-by-one.org/>.
2. Elie Wiesel, *Hostage: A Novel*, trans. Catherine Temerson (New York: Knopf, 2012), 77.
3. “Genocide Alerts,” Genocide Watch, accessed March 8, 2020, <https://www.genocidewatch.com/countries-at-risk>.
4. “Emigration and the Evian Conference,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 8, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/emigration-and-the-evian-conference>.
5. “Franklin Delano Roosevelt,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 8, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/franklin-delano-roosevelt>.
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*The following sources can be used for learning about genocide and what we can do:*

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*According to its website, Genocide Watch “exists to predict, prevent, stop, and punish genocide and other forms of mass murder.” It seeks to build an international movement to raise awareness and influence public policy about genocide.*

“Governing Body: Committee on Conscience.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed August 27, 2020. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/simon-skjodt-center/committee-on-conscience>.

*The Committee on Conscience was established under Jimmy Carter’s presidency. Its mission is to ensure that nothing remotely like the Holocaust ever happens again. You can go to the above link to learn more about how this organization works to fulfill its mandate to halt acts of genocide and related crimes against humanity.*

United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Accessed March 8, 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/>.

*This U.N. agency works to make sure “that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge.” It is “dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.”*

International Rescue Committee. Accessed March 8, 2020. <https://www.rescue.org/>.

*The International Rescue Committee helps people whose lives and financial well-being have been devastated by conflict and disaster; in countries that don’t have the means to support them. Their mission is to help those affected “survive, recover, and regain control of their future.” Part of their work involves resettling refugees.*

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Accessed March 8, 2020. <https://refugees.org/>.

*This organization provides a support system for refugees and immigrants in communities across the United States. It serves in a number of ways, such as assisting with housing, uniting families, and protecting children. It aims to help refugees and immigrants rebuild livelihoods and achieve financial independence.*



*Stolpersteine. Courtesy of Karin Richert.*

## SECTION 4: THE POWER OF COMMEMORATIVE ART

Throughout Germany and elsewhere, an artist named Gunter Demnig and his supporters are busy placing thousands of small brass plaques in the sidewalk. Inscribed on these cobblestone-like cubes is essential information about individual Holocaust victims. These memorials are called *Stolpersteine*, which means “stumbling stones.” *Stolperstein* is the singular, *Stolpersteine* the plural. Each one marks the spot where victims’ daily lives intersected with Nazi policy. They are often placed in groupings in the sidewalk, in front of homes and apartment buildings where victims of the Holocaust once lived. The plaques implicitly reference the Nazi practice of repurposing Jewish gravestones as sidewalk pavers. In parts of Frankfurt, Carola’s birthplace, it is hard to go to the grocery store or walk to school without encountering these plaques. They are part of the urban landscape and daily life, and one must decide whether it is okay to walk on them or if it’s more appropriate to respectfully avoid doing so—literally a stumbling moment!

As we know, Carola's Stolperstein is placed in front of her old school. The ceremony she attended to honor this event was a powerful moment in her life. But it must have also been a moving occasion for the teachers and students who bore witness to and participated in this ceremony, knowing that their very own school had expelled her for being Jewish, years ago. The ceremony itself, as well as the plaque, is a way of acknowledging the unconscionable treatment of Carola in particular, and Jews in general, under Hitler's rule. Both the event and the object are a way of remembering, reconciling, and memorializing. They are examples of commemoration.



*Ceremony for Carola Domar, Elisabethenschule, Frankfurt am Main, 2004.  
Courtesy of the City of Frankfurt am Main.*

This section is related to a number of images in the film. It contains a discussion of Stolpersteine and explores the power of commemorative art more generally. In discussing this kind of art, we will necessarily talk about how we remember and memorialize the past. In doing so, we will consider the following questions: *Who decides what we commemorate through art? Who is the intended audience? Whose voice and story is represented? Who is left out? In other words, how does art shape memory?* These questions are particularly relevant here and now as we re-evaluate our own history and its markers. Recent attacks on monuments honoring figures such as Christopher Columbus, Andrew Jackson, and Confederate leaders demonstrate that creating commemorative art—and destroying it—sends a powerful political message.

*Teachers: This section helps teach students that Stolpersteine are more complicated than they first seem, and are but one type of a powerful genre.*

#### IMAGES TO DISCUSS AND COMPARE:

[Nathan Rapoport, Warsaw Ghetto Monument, Warsaw, Poland, 1948](#)

[Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C., 1982](#)

[Gunter Demnig, Stolpersteine, an ongoing project begun in Germany in the early 1990s](#)

[Peter Eisenman, Denkmal or Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin, 2005](#)

[Michal Gabriel, Holocaust Memorial, Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic, 2005](#)

[Can Togay and Gyula Pauer, Shoes on the Danube Promenade, Budapest, Hungary, 2005](#)

[Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, Nkyinkyim Installation, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, Alabama, 2018](#)

[Memorial Corridor, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, Alabama, 2018](#)

Please note: Illustrations of the above monuments appear in this section in small format throughout the body of this unit, and in large format in the appendix at the end of this section.

#### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

**Assignment:** Create a small museum display. Select three related items that evoke an important memory for you about an event or a person. For example, these things could be photographs from when you were younger, or even small objects that prompt a particular memory. Imagine that what you have selected will be exhibited in a museum. Decide how to order these items and write a label for the display. What happens to the way you think about these items when you change the order in which they're presented? How might your decisions regarding presentation affect viewers?

**Purpose:** To convey the subjectiveness of display, how it affects narrative, memory, and our interpretation of the past. This activity will introduce the subject of commemorative art to students, using the familiar and personal.

*Teachers: To implement this assignment, students could put the exhibit in a [PowerPoint](#) or [Google Slides](#) presentation or bring the display to class. Once students have had the opportunity to share their work in small groups, have a discussion about the choices they made and the displays they created.*

## CLASS EXERCISE FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

*Teachers: The following lesson serves as an introduction to commemorative art. It provides students with a means of actively exploring the subject. We have included an extension activity and some more challenging prompts at the end of this exercise in case teachers wish to explore the topic further with their students.*

- 1) Ask students to think of a memorial they have seen, perhaps one from their hometown or Washington, D.C. Students can write their thoughts in a journal or online, share their thoughts with a partner, and then present their ideas and examples to the entire class, either individually or in pairs. If useful, teachers can model this activity for the class beforehand.
  - What do you remember about this memorial? In what ways was it powerful?
  - Why do we build memorials, for what sorts of things?
  - Why are memorials important?
  - What are other ways that we try to remember and honor important events, ideas, and people? Can a museum serve this purpose? A parade? Stamps? What about a hole in the ground, like the one left by 9/11? Could that serve as a form of commemoration, too?
  - Who decides what to commemorate, and how?
  - Do you remember any of the commemorative imagery that appears in the film, besides Carola's Stolperstein? What additional meaning does this use of commemorative art contribute to Carola's story?
- 2) Provide small groups of students with the images of memorials included at the back of this section. No explanation is needed yet. Ask students to examine and compare these images/monuments. This step can be done as an informal conversation in small groups, or each group can write their observations on a poster or in a shared digital format such as [Padlet](#) or [Google Slides](#).
  - What do you notice?
  - What symbolism is used?
  - Without having any background on these individual memorials, what do you think the underlying messages of each memorial are?
  - What strikes you as powerful?
- 3) After students have had a chance to examine the images in small groups, share reactions with the whole class. Discuss the differences between representational and abstract monuments. (For our purposes, we can make a sharp distinction here, though in fact there's a spectrum.)
  - What do we mean by the terms representational and abstract?
  - What makes a memorial, like Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument, look traditional, or "old school"?
  - Rapoport states that only a realistic approach could begin to convey the horrors that occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto. What do you think of this statement, having now looked at a number of memorials? Is one approach more powerful than another? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

How is Kwame Akoto-Bamfo's treatment of slavery similar to Rapoport's approach to the Holocaust?

4) *Share the background and purpose of Stolpersteine with students. Discuss:*

- In what ways is this an effective memorial?
- In what ways might it be controversial?
- In what ways is a memorial like this important in today's society?

*Additional questions that can be asked:*

- How are Stolpersteine at once both personal and universal? How are they both intimate and public? Are Stolpersteine one monument or many?
- Do Stolpersteine make a political statement? If so, what is the message?
- Chancellor Angela Merkel has stated that “people growing up today must know what people were capable of in the past, and we must work proactively to ensure that it is never repeated.”<sup>1</sup> What issues are Angela Merkel and others in Germany referring to when they suggest Stolpersteine are relevant to current events? Can you imagine memorials similar to Stolpersteine in this country? What would they be commemorating?

5) *Give each group of students one of the included monuments to examine, as well as the information on that monument. You can even ask students to do further online research on their memorial if time allows, referring to the included bibliography. Ask each group to discuss and be able to share the following:*

- What, specifically, is the memorial representing and commemorating?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What messages are there? How are they conveyed? What might be left out or unstated?
- What materials did the artist use?
- How might visitors feel when they visit this memorial? What might they experience?
- In what ways, if any, does the memorial connect to current events and issues that we continue to face today?
- In what ways does the monument seem to be effective? In what ways might it fall short?

6) *After students have had the chance to examine one of the memorials in-depth, they can share their thoughts with each other in the form of a whole class presentation or in a jigsaw structure. As students share and learn about the various memorials, ask them to consider and discuss the following:*

- What makes a memorial effective?
- Why is commemorative art important to our understanding of the past?
- How might commemorative art help us understand and interpret the present?

#### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

**Assignment:** Using the ideas we have discussed in class, design a commemorative piece for a historic or current event of your choosing, one that impacts human rights. Be sure to explain why you have chosen this topic. Explain your design choices, including the siting, the materials used, how individuals are meant to interact with the monument, how symbolism is used, and, of course, the overall purpose.

**Purpose:** To consider the social effects of a historic or current event, create a message about that event and a symbolic way of conveying the message. This assignment is an extension of the class exercise. Students can work on this project individually or in small groups.

*Teachers: The following questions can be used to extend class discussion and challenge students. Alternatively, these prompts can be used strictly during lesson prep, as a means for educators to become better acquainted with the issues surrounding commemorative art.*

#### MORE ADVANCED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) How are the goals of commemorative art impacted by context?**
  - Commemorative stamps are a common form of remembrance. What do you see as the value of commemorative stamps, Stolpersteine, and other ways of memorializing that become a part of day-to-day life? What drawbacks, if any, do you see in this form of commemoration?
  - What is the potential difference, in motive and message, between State-directed memorials and ones erected by individuals?
  - In what way does the siting of a memorial help achieve its goals and impact how it is interpreted? For example, what additional meaning does Maya Lin's memorial gain from its placement on the National Mall? How is this different from Stolpersteine?
  - How does our perception of a memorial change over time? We've already considered the new meaning Stolpersteine have acquired in light of contemporary events, but there are other ways to consider this question. For example, what happens when a monument becomes part of our cultural identity, or becomes a popular tourist destination? Does its meaning change in the process? Describe how the current controversy surrounding the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin has affected how we regard this monument. (To answer this question, you may need to refer to the discussion of this monument on pages 56-57.) How do you think the behavior of visitors, and Shahak Shapira's widely-followed online response to such activity, affects our impression of this monument? Do you think the abstract nature of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe makes it more likely that visitors will behave in ways that are generally considered disrespectful?
- 2) How does the choice of a representational or abstract style impact a monument's message?**
  - There is a spectrum of commemorative art that extends from "realistic," or representational, to abstract. What happens when you mix the two forms, as in the new memorial complex in Montgomery, Alabama? For example, what happens when you consider Akoto-Bamfo's work and the lynching memorial as related pieces? How does one work add meaning to the other?
  - How and why do you think the ways in which artists commemorate events has changed over time? Why do many contemporary artists choose a more abstract approach than Rapoport's? What, for example, does Maya Lin say about her intent and approach? Could she have achieved her goals for the

Vietnam Veterans Memorial using a representational style? Can you think of historical reasons why there is ambivalent and open-ended messaging in this memorial?

- Do you think the abstract works we've examined are more or less assertive than representative art in their interpretation of the past? Use specific examples to explain your answer. What is the value and what are the limits of abstract commemorations like the Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe? What role should personal experience and interpretation play in a memorial?
- Some types of commemorative art rely heavily on symbolism to project their message. Explain why this might be effective. Describe the different ways in which symbolism is used in the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, the Holocaust Memorial in Ústí nad Labem, and Shoes on the Danube Promenade. Is some of this symbolism more literal than others? Do some of these monuments rely more heavily on our ability to reference an established visual language or “iconography”? Be specific. (The term iconography refers to the conventional images and symbols used in art to provide meaning. Two such examples, in this case religious, are the image of Christ on the Cross and the Star of David.)

## BACKGROUND MATERIAL:

### ***How do we define commemorative?***

Defined broadly, memorials are “sites of memory.” Such commemorations can be accidental or deliberate. They can range from ruins and moments of silence to memorial gardens and resistance monuments. Other examples include lighting a candle in remembrance of someone, museums about historic events, and holidays, such as Veterans Day.<sup>2</sup>

Memorials are laden with cultural meaning, even accidental ones, such as a bomb site. Both deliberate and circumstantial messages affect our interpretation of the past. Understandably, there is much debate over how to memorialize the Holocaust—over who controls the message, and what should be commemorated.<sup>3</sup>

### ***STOLPERSTEINE OR “STUMBLING STONES”***

*“You may not intend to visit the memorial, yet this one will visit you!”—Anders Høg Hansen<sup>4</sup>*

*“Look, this individual lived—lived right here at this actual address. He or she looked out this window or stepped out that door every day. This was someone just like you or me. Not just an anonymous victim of history.”—Gunter Demnig<sup>5</sup>*

*You don’t trip on a Stolperstein, you stumble with your head and your heart.”—Schoolchild<sup>6</sup>*

Stolpersteine were conceived by the Berlin artist Gunter Demnig, who was born a couple of years after World War II ended, in 1947. Most Stolpersteine commemorate Jews impacted by the Holocaust, but other victims are honored, too. The plaques are made out of brass and are about 4” square. Stolpersteine are usually placed in front of the last place an individual freely chose to live. Sometimes they are placed in front of a victim’s workplace or school. Most begin with, “Here lived...” Carola’s reads: “Here studied Karola Domar, née [birth name] Rosenthal, from 1930-1935. Born 1919. Fled 1939. England-USA.” A Stolperstein always represents only one individual and typically includes that victim’s name and dates of birth, deportation, and death. Referring to the power in a name, Demnig declares on his website: “A person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten.”<sup>7</sup>

Stolpersteine are designed by an individual, for individuals. They serve as a personal and political statement by the artist in a public arena. Although Stolpersteine are not sponsored by the State, their placement in civic spaces is an implicit endorsement by local governments and communities and involves an approval process.<sup>8</sup>



*Carola Domar’s Stolperstein.*

*Courtesy of the city of  
Frankfurt am Main.*

These “stones” have prompted strong positive and negative reactions. While many communities welcome Stolpersteine, they have occasionally been vandalized, and Demnig has been threatened for installing them. Some Jews find Stolpersteine to be an inappropriate way of memorializing the past. They believe these plaques invite disrespect since people can walk on them.<sup>9</sup>

Each stone is unique and serves as an independent monument, complete unto itself. But the multiplicity and uniformity of Stolpersteine have a wide impact. They represent a decentralized, standardized form of memorial.

As in English, the German verb “to stumble upon” can mean to find something by accident. Because there are so many of these stones in German towns and cities, they have become part of the urban landscape and daily life. They serve as often unexpected reminders of the past, more typically stumbled upon than deliberately sought out. Stolpersteine prompt us to recognize that the Nazi’s victims were individuals, and that these people once occupied the same neighborhoods and perhaps had the same daily routines as we do today.<sup>10</sup> These stones are disturbing. They frequently have a startling and intrusive effect, unlike monuments that are less integrated into city life, such as the Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, which appears in the film. The stones confront pedestrians with a choice that challenges their own sense of respect and human decency: accommodate the memorial in their path, or step on it.

The process of creating a Stolperstein begins with research about the individual, typically undertaken by local school children and their teachers, the victim’s relatives, or local history organizations. School classes sometimes cover the cost of the Stolperstein.<sup>11</sup> In Carola’s hometown of Frankfurt, taxpayers bear the cost, unlike other places where the victims’ relatives often do so.<sup>12</sup>

***When students look at Stolpersteine, what do they see? This form of memorial is full of brilliant contradictions:***

- 1) Stolpersteine are modest in size and statement, yet grand in ambition: there are currently over seventy thousand of them, in over 1,200 places. They are mostly found in Germany but also exist in other parts of Europe, including Scandinavia and Russia.<sup>13</sup>
- 2) Due to their small scale and subtle design, Stolpersteine create intimate moments in public spaces. Unlike the Washington Monument, for example, Stolpersteine only accommodate viewings by individuals or small groups at a time. In this way, they require personal interaction. They emphasize individual response, and even personal responsibility.
- 3) Stolpersteine are democratic: for an exceedingly modest fee, anyone can commission one from the artist.<sup>14</sup> Yet despite their great number and consistency, Stolpersteine are handmade, not mass-produced.
- 4) Stolpersteine represent individuals, but their standard format de-emphasizes the uniqueness of each narrative. Every Stolperstein appears the same as the next, which creates a sense of uniformity that underscores the reality of mass genocide. As suggested earlier, they are both personal and political statements.
- 5) The process of reading a Stolperstein requires a humble bowing to the victim.<sup>15</sup> At the same time,

by alluding to the Nazi practice of repurposing Jewish gravestones as sidewalks, Stolpersteine evoke a history of disrespect, hatred, and destruction.<sup>16</sup> This painful history and negativity create a tension with the plaques' intent to honor and memorialize. The reference to Nazi cruelty helps explain why the stones are controversial.

6) Stolpersteine commemorate the past but also warn of the future. German officials, such as Angela Merkel, embrace Stolpersteine as a means of promoting social tolerance in the context of current mass migration. This interpretation of Stolpersteine has been taken up by others, including individuals in the German immigrant community. Stolpersteine encourage conversation about personal responsibility toward those threatened by bigotry and hatred.<sup>17</sup> Demnig hopes Stolpersteine will help make people aware of human rights violations, and remind us of the importance of an open, broad-minded society.<sup>18</sup>

7) Stolpersteine are literal—each stone references an individual with specific dates and other personal information—but they are also abstract. Installing brass plates will never truly represent the millions affected by the Holocaust. Demnig recognizes that this act is a symbolic gesture.<sup>19</sup> Stolpersteine represent the unrepresentable.<sup>20</sup> The plaques metaphorically bring victims back to the places they rightfully belong. They are factual and present something about a victim's history, but ultimately reveal very little. They pique our interest and emphasize how little we can truly grasp the past. Despite their apparent effort to explain, they are enigmatic. We can think of them almost as haikus, or telegrams from the past.

*Teachers: Students can briefly compare Stolpersteine to Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument to widen their understanding of the different types of commemorative art.*

### **WARSAW GHETTO MONUMENT**



*Seventieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, April 19, 2013. Courtesy of Adrian Grycuk.  
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#### **Rapoport's vision:**

Nathan Rapoport completed his monument in 1948, at a time when many artists were embracing an abstract style. Yet, in depicting the uprising, Rapoport felt compelled to take a more traditional approach:

Could I have made a stone with a hole in it and said, “Voilà! The heroism of the Jews”? No, I needed to show the heroism, to illustrate it literally in figures everyone, not just artists, would respond to. This was to be a public monument, after all. And what do human beings respond to? Faces, figures, the human form. I did not want to represent resistance in the abstract: it was not an abstract uprising. It was real.<sup>21</sup>



Nathan Rapoport, Warsaw Ghetto Monument, Uprising  
(frontal view), 1948. Courtesy of Yair Haklai.

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Alike 4.0 International License.

**Design and function:**

Rapoport uses an expressive style to convey a sense of heroism and engage the viewer's emotions. The Warsaw Ghetto Monument is thirty-six feet tall and was meant to dominate the square in which it stands.<sup>22</sup> It is composed of two sculptures placed on either side of a supporting, granite wall. These sculptures are very different from one another, both in content and in style.

The front of the monument faces the square and now shares that space with a new museum dedicated to the history of Polish Jews. This side of Rapoport's work is in bronze and employs a heroic style to depict the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943—it is a tribute to the Jews who rose up against the Nazis. A text below the monument states in three languages: "To the Jewish People—Its Heroes and Its Martyrs."<sup>23</sup>

The reverse side of the monument depicts Jews being deported to death camps and memorializes the loss of Jewish lives in terms of universal suffering. The figures are shallowly carved in stone and appear in a processional format, reminiscent of Greek art, as seen in the detail below.



*Nathan Rapoport, Warsaw Ghetto Monument, Processional (reverse side), 1948.  
Courtesy of James E. Young.*

Although well received at the time, many people find this monument heavy handed today. This lack of subtlety can be explained, at least in part, by Rapoport's experience with Stalinist, propaganda art. He served as a state artist in the Soviet Union during the war.<sup>24</sup>

We can appreciate how this work derives much power through earlier art, even without understanding its complex symbolism and influences.<sup>25</sup> The Warsaw Ghetto Monument has an "old school" appearance, leading us to view the monument as part of a tradition and validating both the art and its subject. The monument generally resembles a large gravestone, which is in keeping with earlier forms of commemoration.<sup>26</sup> The Soviet style of art that Rapoport uses makes the monument even more of a political statement, and was in keeping with the socialist sentiments of many people in the ghetto. References to Classical art help establish the uprising as a significant and tragic moment in Western civilization. In these ways, Rapoport uses well-known art historical imagery and symbols to create a Jewish "icon of resistance and martyrdom."<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising:***

Jews had long been part of Warsaw life when the Germans decided to barricade a section of the city in 1940, imprisoning the city's Jews within this ghetto.<sup>28</sup> The area became a densely-populated, Jewish slum, with unbearable conditions.<sup>29</sup> The Germans used the site as a kind of "city-scaled concentration camp and transit center," from which Jews from the ghetto and those brought in from surrounding areas were deported to almost certain death.<sup>30</sup> An estimated 550,000 Jews were imprisoned in the ghetto.<sup>31</sup> Almost all died brutally at the hands of the Nazis: disease and starvation

took their toll, and in 1942, the Nazis began mass deportations. Most of the ghetto's occupants were sent to the Treblinka death camp, but many Jews were murdered within the ghetto itself. By the spring of 1943, only about fifty-six thousand Jews remained in the Warsaw Ghetto, at which point a group made up largely of young men initiated an uprising.<sup>32</sup> James Young states, "Apart from Yugoslavia's national uprising, the Warsaw Ghetto revolt was the largest and longest armed resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II."<sup>33</sup> The uprising was ill-fated from the beginning, but allowed those resisting to pick the time and place of their death, according to one of the rebellion's leaders, Marek Edelman.<sup>34</sup>

#### *A comparison of Stolpersteine to Rapoport's monument:*

Over time, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument has come to be embraced by politicians and the Polish people as a general symbol of resistance; the square where it is located is a popular meeting place for political events.<sup>35</sup> Like Stolpersteine, the monument has gained new meaning and contemporary relevance, though Demnig's work differs greatly from Rapoport's in both appearance and purpose. Stolpersteine continue to encourage private reflection, even as they evolve in function, as related to current mass migration. The Warsaw Ghetto Monument remains a site of public prominence as Rapoport had intended, though the work acquires new meaning in the context of contemporary political gatherings.

Both Stolpersteine and the Warsaw Ghetto Monument are literal in their reliance on specific historic events, but differ drastically in other respects. Stolpersteine allude to life stories, but do not fully tell them. They suggest a multitude of narratives, shrouded in mystery and sadness. In contrast, Rapoport presents the varied experiences of the Warsaw occupants as two related, idealized representations. His figures are archetypes that portray stylized characters, not individuals. Even the "portrait" of Anielewicz, the uprising's leader, has little to do with his actual likeness. Instead, he is represented more generally as a worker and as the brave, proletarian leader of a desperate cause.<sup>36</sup>

We might find Rapoport's approach more obvious than Demnig's, yet both artists have an agenda. Both artists direct how we view the past. In his interview with James Young, Rapoport states that he'd set out to make "a clearly national monument for the Jews, not a Polish monument . . . to show the Polish people who we really were."<sup>37</sup> His mission was to create a memory of the Warsaw Ghetto that highlighted the dire suffering of the Jewish people, bound with the heroism of resistance. The Nazis are secondary here. They appear as armed but faceless figures in the background of the processional.<sup>38</sup> What we are slammed with is a monumental sense of affliction and courage that is positively biblical.

As we move on from Rapoport's monument, we will see how Stolpersteine fit into a contemporary aesthetic.



*Photograph of Mordechai Anielewicz,  
1938. Source: Yad Vashem.*

*Teachers: A brief discussion of the other monuments used in the class exercise follows.*

**VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL, WASHINGTON D.C., 1982**



*Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, Washington D.C.  
Courtesy of the Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.*

With her Vietnam Memorial, Maya Lin envisioned “taking a knife and cutting into the earth, opening it up, an initial violence and pain that in time would heal.”<sup>39</sup> Unlike more traditional forms, such as the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, Lin’s sculpture is a less direct and more subtle statement about a war that lacked popular support. The use of polished black granite was an unusual and controversial choice. It creates a somber, highly reflective surface on which to present the names of the dead. Lin conceived the monument as a peaceful site of remembrance, largely directed to veterans. Like Stolpersteine, the names themselves are meant to be the memorial. The intimate process of seeking out and reading a loved one’s name is countered by the memorial’s public nature. The monument conforms to the landscape and is oriented toward both the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. There is no righteousness in this commemoration, simply sadness, and ambivalence about a conflict so many Americans gave their lives for, for complicated and at times unclear reasons. Lin conveys this complexity using a minimalist form that allows for multiple interpretations and individual memory. Visitors are invited to actively engage—we can touch the inscribed stones and see our own reflection in the monument. We travel,

chronologically, through this memorial, descending into the earth.<sup>40</sup> Lin states that she intended the memorial to be apolitical. Nevertheless, this monument has attracted controversy due to its laser-focus on the dead, its open-ended meaning, and lack of glorification—as evident in its design, choice of materials, and unobtrusive siting.



*Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, Washington D.C.*

*Courtesy of HistoryGal610.*

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## **MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE, BERLIN, 2005**



*Peter Eisenman, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2005, Berlin.*

*Courtesy of Pim Zeekoers.*

*Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.*

This monument to commemorate Jewish victims of the Holocaust appears in the film. It is also referred to as the Berlin *Denkmal*, which in English simply means “monument.” Although there are many monuments in Berlin, everyone knows that Denkmal refers to this one, which says much about its prominence. Designed by New York architect Peter Eisenman, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe shares similarities with Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial in its abstract and interactive qualities, but contains no text. Situated in the heart of Berlin, it is composed of roughly five acres of concrete slabs, or stellae, which one can wander through. There are 2,711 of these stellae, and they vary in size. Most range in height from about three feet to ten feet. They therefore do not completely overwhelm visitors, despite their vast number. These stellae are set at a slight angle, to align with the topography of the site. They create a vast, rolling field, in which one feels both alone and yet part of the city. Below the stellae is a recessed museum known as the Place of Information. It provides visitors with carefully presented historical material that complements the abstract quality of Eisenman’s memorial, marrying history with memory.<sup>41</sup> On the western side of the monument, groups of trees form a transition to Berlin’s Tiergarten—one of Germany’s largest urban gardens.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike Stolpersteine, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a large, centralized monument. Yet despite their marked differences, both memorials influence the urban landscape they occupy in a similar, understated way. Like Stolpersteine, Eisenman's work represents an effort to commemorate the Holocaust without sensationalizing, sentimentalizing, or reinterpreting it. It offers no explanation of the past, and it does not presume we all have the same, collective memory of former events. Eisenman avoids the traditional grandeur we typically find in other state-sponsored memorials, such as Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument. In doing so, Eisenman rejects what may be considered an authoritarian style and instead uses a more neutral design that has none of the explicit messages we typically find in state art.<sup>43</sup> This monument does not tell you what to do or feel. In contrast to monuments that create a more directed experience, the viewer is free to wander through Eisenman's Berlin memorial, engaging in his or her own memories and perspective.



*Peter Eisenman, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2005, Berlin.*

*Courtesy of Dietmar Rabich. Licensed under the Creative Commons*

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It is worth noting that the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, has generated controversy. Some people believe Eisenman's monument is so abstract and unspecific that it fails to adequately commemorate the Holocaust, and that visitors are not always even sure what the structure is supposed to be about.<sup>44</sup> In recent years, the monument, and the way some people behave at it, has gained online attention through the Jewish artist Shahak Shapira's public shaming of those who engage in discourteous behavior at the site. To make his point, Shapira uses the selfies posted by disrespectful visitors, and photoshops them into Holocaust scenes. In this way, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe has become a meme, attracting a kind of publicity that could not have been anticipated when it was first built. The actions of both visitors and the artist Shapira change the way we think about the monument itself.<sup>45</sup>

What follows are two examples of Holocaust memorials that use overt symbolism:

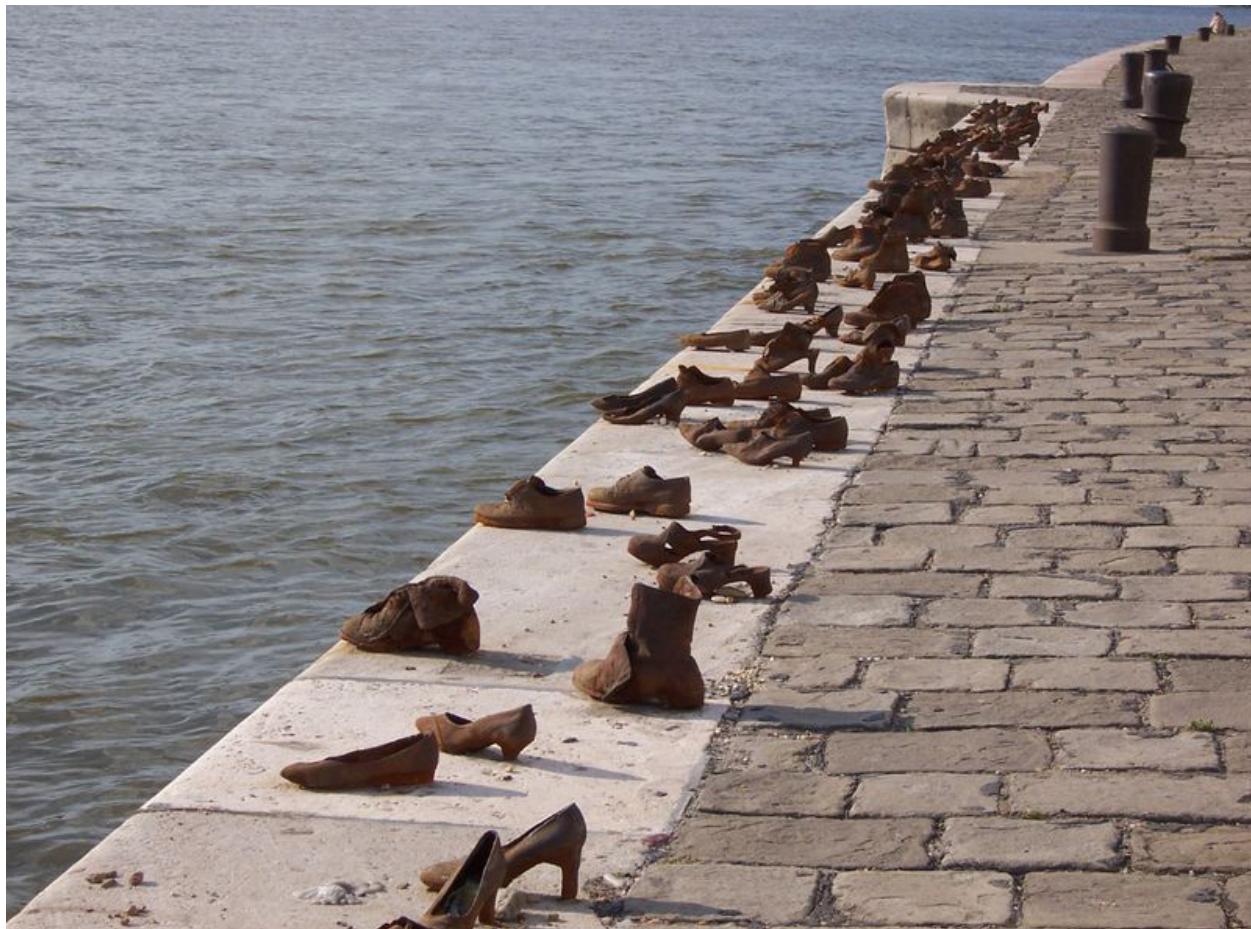
***HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL, ÚSTÍ NAD LABEM, CZECH REPUBLIC, 2005***



*Michal Gabriel, Holocaust Memorial, 2005, Ústí nad Labem. Courtesy of Ladislav Faigl.  
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Installed in 2005, this memorial by Michal Gabriel commemorates the more than one thousand Jewish residents of Ústí nad Labem who perished in the Holocaust. Jews contributed to the economic and cultural development of this industrial town, and at the memorial's unveiling, the town's mayor remarked upon this fact. The memorial appears in the film. Using the Star of David as a symbol of Judaism, this commemoration conveys a simple and direct message about the Holocaust's impact, and also perhaps refers to the burning of Ústí nad Labem's synagogue during the War.<sup>46</sup>

**SHOES ON THE DANUBE PROMENADE, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, 2005**



*Can Togay and Gyula Pauer, Shoes on the Danube Promenade, 2005, Budapest.*

*Courtesy of Csörföly D.*

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Shoes on the Danube Promenade uses a literal kind of symbolism. The monument refers to the killing of as many as twenty thousand Jews, who were shot along the banks of the Danube after being ordered to remove their shoes, which were a valuable commodity.<sup>47</sup> Designed by Can Togay and Gyula Pauer, the monument consists of sixty pairs of life-size, 1940s-style, worn shoes, sculpted of iron. The shoes represent those who were murdered and include workmen's boots, women's heels, and children's shoes. During the winter of 1944-45, some people began calling the Danube "the Jewish cemetery." In addition to this mass killing on the Danube, more than seventy thousand Jews were expelled from Hungary in a death march to the Austrian border.<sup>48</sup>

**NATIONAL MEMORIAL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE, MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, 2018**



*Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, Nkyinkyim Installation (detail), 2018,  
The National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Montgomery, Alabama.*

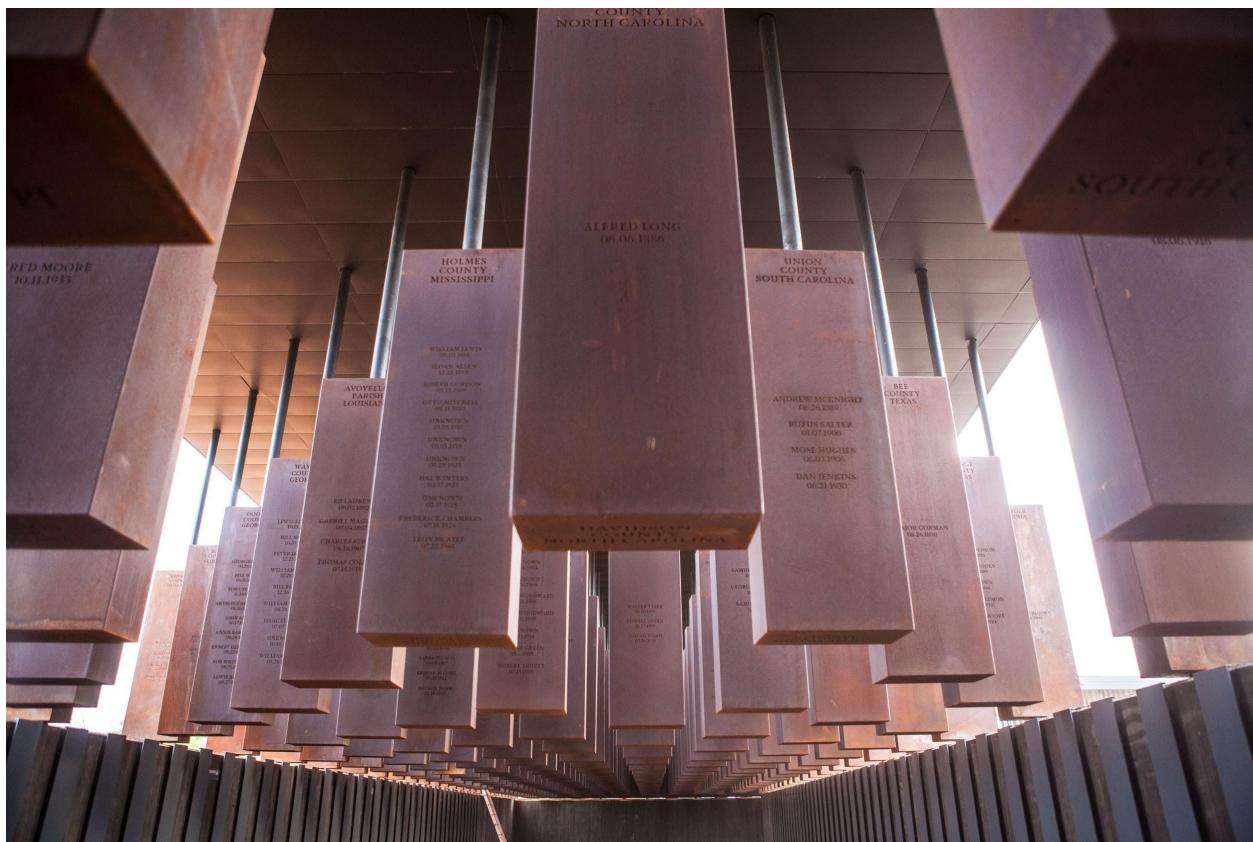
*Courtesy of Soniakapadia.*

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The National Memorial for Peace and Justice was inspired by both the Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa.<sup>49</sup> According to its website, this memorial is “dedicated to the legacy of enslaved black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence.”<sup>50</sup> (The term Jim Crow refers to the laws that enforced racial segregation in the South.) Situated on six acres, the memorial has a mix of abstract and figurative sculptures, and incorporates written materials.

Although individual works are meant to be appreciated within the memorial’s greater context, we can briefly examine two pieces, beginning with Kwame Akoto-Bamfo’s sculpture, *Nkyinkyim Installation*, about the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. Akoto-Bamfo’s sculptural group uses dramatic gesture, chains, and high emotion to emphasize the cruelty of slavery. His work contrasts strongly with the abstract memorials we have examined.

The Montgomery memorial complex also includes a set of identical-looking columns, hung in a walkway known as the Memorial Corridor, that marks the history of lynching. There is one for every county where such lynchings occurred. Each piece has the names and dates of the victims lynched in a particular county written on it. A duplicate set of these corten steel columns has already been constructed. These duplicate pieces lie in a field on the Montgomery site, challenging the individual counties to claim ownership of their history and install their memorial column. Like Stolpersteine, the intent is to have dispersed monuments, standardized in format, but unique in their particular information, whose relevance and power lies in their geographic placement. In this case, however, there is the added meaning of having the individual monuments in each county correspond with those in the Montgomery complex.<sup>51</sup>



*Memorial Corridor, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, 2018, Montgomery, Alabama.  
Courtesy of Soniakapadia.*

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## APPENDIX OF IMAGES



*Carola Domar's Stolperstein.  
Courtesy of the city of Frankfurt am Main.*

[\*Return to page 41\*](#)



*Seventieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, April 19, 2013.*

*Courtesy of Adrian Grycuk.*

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[\*Return to page 41\*](#)



Nathan Rapoport, Warsaw Ghetto Monument, Uprising (frontal view), 1948.

Courtesy of Yair Haklai.

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[Return to page 41](#)



*Nathan Rapoport, Warsaw Ghetto Monument, Processional (reverse side), 1948.*

*Courtesy of James E. Young.*



*Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, Washington D.C.*  
*Courtesy of the Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.*

[Return to page 41](#)



*Peter Eisenman, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2005, Berlin.*

*Courtesy of Pim Zeekoers.*

*Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.*

[Return to page 41](#)



*Michal Gabriel, Holocaust Memorial, 2005, Ústí nad Labem.*

*Courtesy of Ladislav Faigl.*

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[Return to page 41](#)



*Can Togay and Gyula Pauer, Shoes on the Danube Promenade, 2005, Budapest.*

*Courtesy of Csörföl D.*

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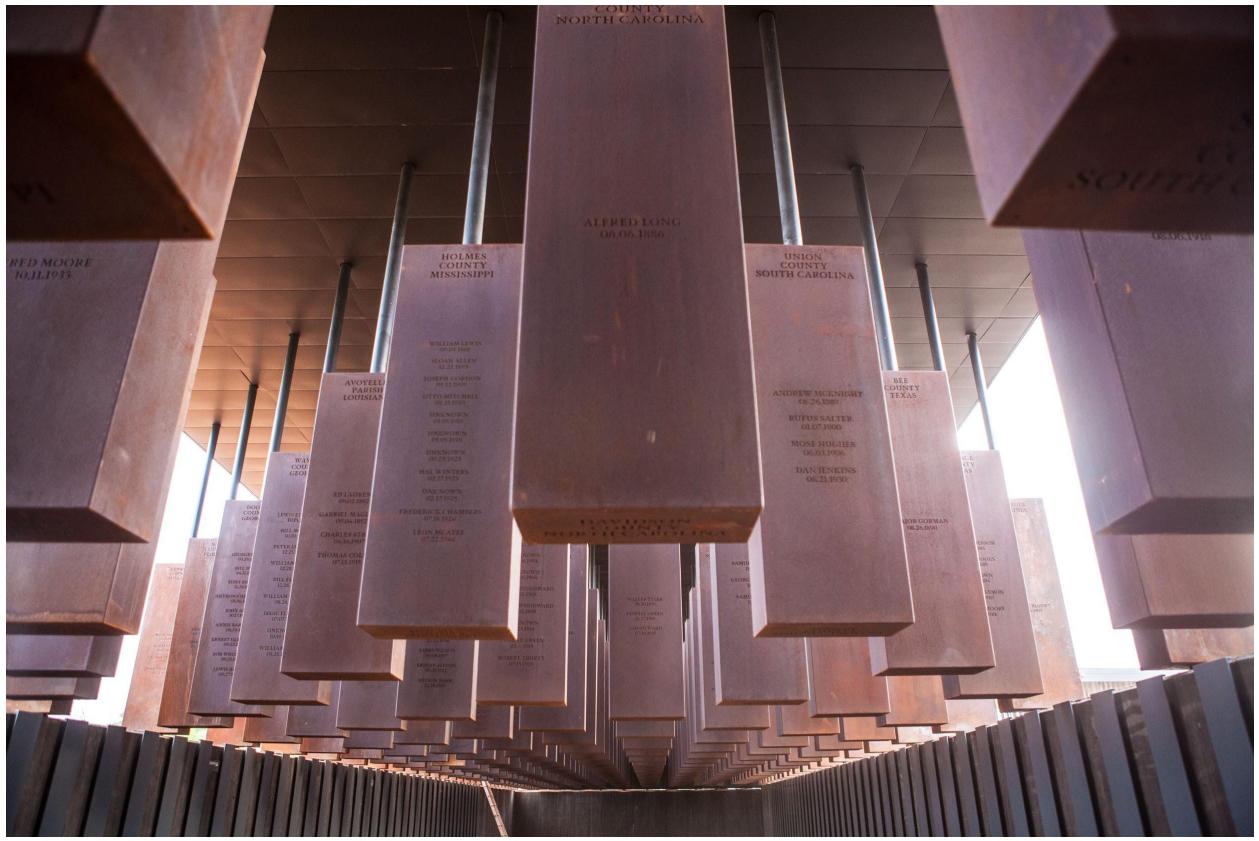
[Return to page 41](#)



*Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, Nkyinkyim Installation (detail), 2018,  
The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, Alabama.*

*Courtesy of Soniakapadia.*

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*Memorial Corridor, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, 2018, Montgomery, Alabama.  
Courtesy of Soniakapadia.*

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[Return to page 41](#)

## NOTES

1. “Angela Merkel: ‘Zero tolerance’ of anti-Semitism in Germany,” *DW*, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-zero-tolerance-of-anti-semitism-in-germany/a-47249046>.
2. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), viii. Much of the material presented in this section relies on James E. Young’s analyses of commemorative art.
3. For more on this debate, see Matthew Cook and Derek H. Alderman, “Public Memory and Empathy in Gunter Demnig’s Stolpersteine Project,” in *Global Perspectives on the Holocaust: History, Identity, Legacy*, eds. Nancy E. Rupprecht and Wendy Koenig (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 321-23.
4. Anders Høg Hansen, “Memorials and Memory Politics in Hamburg and Haifa,” in *Power and Culture: New Perspectives on Spatiality in European History*, eds. Pieter François, Taina Syrjämaa and Henri Terho (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2008/2009), 173.
5. Colin Nickerson, “Artist lays down plaques for victims of the Nazis-Europe-International Herald Tribune,” *New York Times*, January 14, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/world/europe/14iht-web.0114victims.4198978.html>.
6. Gunter Demnig, “FAQ,” Stolpersteine, accessed April 17, 2020, <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/faq/>.
7. Demnig, “Home.” Demnig credits the Talmud for this quote, but the statement does not appear to be drawn from any of the Talmudic literature. Sebastian Wogenstein, correspondence with Susan Orleans Rieder, June 2020. Information in this paragraph is also drawn from the following sources: Demnig, “FAQ”; Laura Katzman and Gabriella Paulix with contributions by Sonja Longolius, “The Fine Art of Memorialization: A Conversation with Gunter Demnig,” in *Entangled Memories: Remembering the Holocaust in a Global Age*, eds. Marius Henderson and Julia Lange (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017), 41; Tom Gross, “Honouring the dead one stone at a time,” *Standpoint*, April 25, 2019, <https://standpointmag.co.uk/issues/may-2019/honouring-the-dead-one-stone-at-a-time/>.
8. Demnig, “FAQ.”
9. Munich has banned Stolpersteine for this reason, whereas other places, such as Berlin, coordinate with Demnig and provide funding for his effort. Katzman and Paulix with contributions by Longolius, “The Fine Art of Memorialization,” 44; “Munich to Continue Ban of Stumbling Stone Holocaust Memorials,” *Newsweek*, July 29, 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/munich-continue-ban-stumbling-stone-holocaust-memorials-358176>; “Munich bans ‘disrespectful’ Holocaust memorials on ground,” *BBC*, July 27, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44979359>. In regard to vandalism and threats, see Katzman and Paulix with contributions by Longolius, “The Fine Art of Memorialization,” 42, 52-53; Rachel Loxton, “Stolpersteine: Standing defiantly in communities amid rising tensions,” *Local DE*, November 9, 2018, <https://www.thelocal.de/20181109/stolpersteine>.
10. Multiple Stolpersteine in the pavement outside apartment buildings and homes in Germany are an eloquent testimony to how whole families and communities were impacted by the Holocaust. Catherine Slessor, “When marking the Holocaust, architecture can rarely equal the poignancy of a memorial stone,” *Architects’ Journal*, November 7, 2017, <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/opinion/when-marking-the-holocaust-architecture-can-rarely-equal-the-poignancy-of-a-memorial-stone/10024771.article>.
11. Katzman and Paulix with contributions by Longolius, “The Fine Art of Memorialization,” 43; Kirsten Grieshaber, “Plaques for Nazi Victims Offer a Personal Impact,” *New York Times*, November 29, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/29/arts/plaques-for-nazi-victims-offer-a-personal-impact.html>.
12. Hans Riebsamen, “1000 stumbling blocks shine in Frankfurt,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, May 17, 2015, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/rhein-main/in-frankfurt-glaenzen-jetzt-1000-stolpersteine-von-gunter-demnig-13594999.html>.
13. Stolpersteine are considered the largest decentralized Holocaust memorial in Europe. Katzman and

- Paulix with contributions by Longolius, “The Fine Art of Memorialization,” 43; Demnig, “Home”; “‘Stumbling stones’: a different vision of Holocaust remembrance,” *Guardian*, accessed April 26, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance>.
14. According to Demnig’s Stolpersteine website, the price of a Stolpersteine as of April 2020 was 120 euros. Demnig, “Home.”
  15. “‘Stumbling stones,’” *Guardian*.
  16. The term, “Stolpersteine,” has negative and derogatory associations: an antisemitic saying in Nazi Germany suggested that when one stumbled over a stone it meant a Jew was buried there. Also, the German verb, “to stumble upon,” can suggest a potential problem. “Munich Minutes of the City Council Meeting,” June 16, 2004, <http://alt.stolpersteine-muenchen.de/Archiv/Docu/docu-040616-sitzg.htm>; “Jude” als Schimpfwort”; Raid.Rush, accessed April 26, 2020, <https://raidrush.net/threads/jude-als-schimpfwort.205646/>.
  17. Berlin uses their Stolpersteine project to address both antisemitism and anti-Muslim views. Katzman and Paulix with contributions by Longolius, “The Fine Art of Memorialization,” 55, 61-62; Gloria Tessler, Footprints of the past,” *JC*, April 3, 2016, <https://www.thejc.com/lifestyle/features/footprints-of-the-past-1.63118>.
  18. Regarding Demnig’s intent for Stolpersteine to inspire conversations about ongoing discrimination, see Demnig, “FAQ.”
  19. Demnig, “FAQ.”
  20. Katzman and Paulix with contributions by Longolius, “The Fine Art of Memorialization,” 43.
  21. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 168.
  22. The monument is now surrounded by apartment buildings, which lessens its impact. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 172; “Monument to the Ghetto Heroes,” Virtual Shtetl, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/towns/w/18-warszawa/116-sites-of-martyrdom/52110-monument-ghetto-heroes-911-zamenhofa-street>.
  23. The granite used for this commemoration was originally designated for a Nazi monument, lending additional meaning. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 168, 174.
  24. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 158-59.
  25. The symbols within this monument amplify its meaning, as do its allusions to earlier art. There are references to Judaic subject matter, and the woman with a bared breast echoes Delacroix’s figure of Liberty, evoking the French Revolution and insurrection; Rapoport’s varied influences also include Rodin. The monument’s granite wall represents both the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and the walls the Germans built to contain the Ghetto. In alluding to one of Jerusalem’s holiest sites, Rapoport seeks to frame our memory of the Warsaw Ghetto events in biblical terms. Rapoport also refers to Maccabee rebels with his use of menorahs, a symbol of Chanukah. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 157, 170-71, 174.
  26. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 170. “The earliest memorials after the war were put up by survivors to remember their own families, friends, and communities. They necessarily relied on traditional forms of commemoration, such as tombstones, statuary and plaques,” James E. Young, email to Susan Orleans Rieder, January, 13, 2020.
  27. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 161-62, 182. Rapoport’s project is particularly poignant, given that he was born to working-class Jews in Warsaw and fled the city in 1939; the monument is about his hometown. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 158.
  28. When the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, many Jews fled to Warsaw and joined an existing population there. Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S.L. Shneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2006), 2-3.
  29. The Warsaw Ghetto population reached a density of 120,000 people per square kilometer. “The Warsaw Ghetto,” Virtual Shtetl, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20161220150956/>.

30. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 160; “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/warsaw-ghetto-uprising>.
31. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 160. (Numbers vary across sources and it is not clear how each is calculated.)
32. “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” Holocaust Encyclopedia. The Holocaust Encyclopedia appears to have based this estimate on a report from SS General Juergen Stroop, who oversaw the final destruction of the ghetto. For further information about the uprising see also “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” Yad Vashem, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/combat-resistance/warsaw-ghetto.html>.
33. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 163.
34. Edelman poignantly writes: “We knew perfectly well that we had no chance of winning. We fought simply not to allow the Germans alone to pick the time and place of our deaths. We knew we were going to die. Just like all the others who were sent to Treblinka.” “Marek Edelman,” *Telegraph*, October 4, 2009, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/politics-obituaries/6259900/Marek-Edelman.html>.
35. The meaning of Rapoport’s Warsaw Ghetto Monument is tied to the history of Polish resistance during World War II and to more contemporary political agendas. There is now a version of the monument in Israel, and in this context, the work takes on added significance. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 175-84; “Warsaw: Monument to the Ghetto Heroes” Washington University in St. Louis, May 25, 2018, <https://pages.wustl.edu/historyandmemory/articles/38695>.
36. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 174.
37. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 168.
38. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 174.
39. Maya Lin, “Making the Memorial,” *New York Review of Books*, November 2, 2000, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2000/11/02/making-the-memorial/>.
40. Lin, “Making the Memorial.”
41. This exhibit includes a timeline and four rooms dedicated to individuals’ experiences of the Holocaust, including archival images, diaries, letters, and the recording of victims’ names. “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/memorials/memorial-to-the-murdered-jews-of-europe/?lang=en>.
42. The information in this paragraph is drawn from the following sources: James E. Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 10-12; “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” Stiftung Denkmal; James E. Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 210-11.
43. Young, *The Stages of Memory*, 15-16. Young discusses how, in rejecting traditional forms, contemporary artists in Germany hope to avoid any of memorial art’s fascist associations.
44. For a discussion of the monument’s failure to serve as an adequate Holocaust memorial, see Richard Brody, “The Inadequacy of Berlin’s ‘Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,’” *New Yorker*, July 12, 2012, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-inadequacy-of-berlins-memorial-to-the-murdered-jews-of-europe>; Alex Cocotas, “Blow Up the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” *Tablet*, April 21, 2017, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/memorials-yom-hashoah>.
45. Joel Gunter, “‘Yolocaust’: How should you behave at a Holocaust memorial?” *BBC*, January 20, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38675835>; “Artist Shames Tourists Taking Inappropriate Selfies at the Holocaust Memorial Site in Berlin,” *deMilked*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.demilked.com/holocaust-memorial-selfies-yolocaust-shahak-shapira/>; Shahak Shapira, *Yolocaust*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://yolocaust.de/>.
46. “Ústí nad Labem unveils Holocaust Memorial,” Czech Radio, October 11, 2005, <https://www.radio.cz/>

- [en/section/curraffrs/usti-nad-labem-unveils-holocaust-memorial](#); “Around the Jewish World Holocaust Memorial in Czech Town Underlines a Tangled Ethnic History,” JTA, October 12, 2005, <https://www.jta.org/2005/10/12/archive/around-the-jewish-world-holocaust-memorial-in-czech-town-underlines-a-tangled-ethnic-history>.
47. The Hungarian Arrow Cross Party was responsible for the shooting. Sheryl Silver Ochayon, “The Shoes on the Danube Promenade-Commemoration of the Tragedy,” Yad Vashem, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/shoes-on-the-danube-promenade.html>; “Budapest,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed October 9, 2019, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/budapest>.
48. Ochayon, “Shoes on the Danube Promenade”; “Shoes on the Danube Promenade,” Atlas Obscura, accessed October 8, 2019, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/shoes-on-the-danube-promenade>; “Budapest.”
49. Campbell Robertson, “A Lynching Memorial Is Opening. The Country Has Never Seen Anything Like It,” *New York Times*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/25/us/lynching-memorial-alabama.html>.
50. “The National Memorial for Peace and Justice,” Equal Justice Initiative, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial>.
51. “Community Remembrance Project,” Equal Justice Initiative, accessed October 8, 2019, <https://eji.org/projects/community-remembrance-project/>.

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*Demnig describes his project here in straightforward terms. The website includes information about his process, goals, and how to commission a Stolperstein.*

Gunter, Joel. "'Yolocaust': How should you behave at a Holocaust memorial?" BBC. January 20, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38675835>.

*There are a number of articles about the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and Shahak Shapira, some of which contain graphic images. This source is one of the more interesting pieces. It considers how a new generation approaches Holocaust art, contains a response to Shapira's project by Eisenman, and a critique of the monument by a member of the German far right.*

Lin, Maya. "Making the Memorial." New York Review of Books. November 2, 2000. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2000/11/02/making-the-memorial/>.

*A personal statement by the artist.*

"The National Memorial for Peace and Justice." Equal Justice Initiative. Accessed April 28, 2020. <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial>.

*This official website describes the monument and its goals.*

Robertson, Campbell. "A Lynching Memorial is Opening. The Country Has Never Seen Anything Like It." New York Times. April 25, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/25/us/lynching-memorial-alabama.html>.

*An informative article.*

Shapira, Shahak. Yolocaust. Accessed April 13, 2020. <https://yolocaust.de/>.

*Includes a statement by the artist and posts from the public, including one from a selfie-taker at the monument, but no graphic images.*

Ochayon, Sheryl Silver. "The Shoes on the Danube Promenade – Commemoration of the Tragedy." Yad Vashem. Accessed April 28, 2020. <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/shoes-on-the-danube-promenade.html>.

*Provides some essential information about this monument.*

Young, James E. *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.

*Young is an authority on commemorative art. He writes on an advanced level. (University level)*

Young, James E. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

*Another sophisticated text by Young, on commemorative art and the Holocaust. (University level)*

*This section provides teachers with background material and can also be used to challenge more advanced students. While we have tried to present the material in accessible terms, some of the concepts are inherently sophisticated. Here we pull back the curtain, providing an opportunity to critically examine the film's sources.*



*Carola Domar with her daughter Erica. Photo courtesy of Alice Domar.*

## **SECTION 5: THE STUDENT AS HISTORIAN**

*“One death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“What I have written strains to be true but nevertheless is not true enough. Truth is anecdotes, narrative, the snug opaque quotidian.”*

— John Updike<sup>2</sup>

*“Subjectivity is as much the business of history as are the more visible ‘facts.’”*

— Alessandro Portelli<sup>3</sup>

Our understanding of major upheavals and crimes against humanity is broadened by personal accounts in the form of diaries, memoirs, and oral histories. These sources allow ordinary people—often victims—to shape and interpret their own experience, enriching us in the process.<sup>4</sup> These narrators often “weave their life stories into broader cultural and social contexts.”<sup>5</sup> They give voice to the marginalized, offering a personal sense of the historical moment, which both complicates and enriches the history provided by more conventional sources. Imagine how diminished our understanding of history would be without *The Diary of Anne Frank!* As useful as these sources are, however, they must be approached with critical awareness.

In this section we explore the advantages and drawbacks of using an oral history or a documentary film as a historical source.

*Teachers: Please note that this film and the interviews it draws from are best absorbed within a greater historical context (see Sections 1 and 2). When used in this manner, Carola's story provides students with a way to more fully appreciate what it meant to be a young person immersed in daily life during the Nazi era.*

#### OPTIONAL WARM-UP EXERCISE:

**Assignment:** Write a brief description of an experience you shared with your classmates earlier in the year. (Your teacher will select this event.) For example, it could be about the first day of school or a class trip. Compare your versions of this experience with one another, either in small groups, or as a class. (Your teacher will decide.) How does your account compare with others? How is it different? Does everyone have the same memories and perspective of that event? Did everyone share an identical experience? What conclusions can you draw from this exercise about memory and perspective, and how we should approach historical sources?

**Purpose:** To gain a better understanding of how memory works and the importance of perspective. This exercise demonstrates that individuals each have their own particular frame of reference and do not share the same memory of an event or even “collective memory.” Every individual’s recollection is colored by their personal experiences, emotions, and capacity to remember. This exercise will help students understand that historical sources reflect a point of view.

*Teachers: Using an online sharing program such as [Padlet](#) for this activity would help students share their recollections and access other students’ memories.*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

*Teachers may want to revisit the Gross Breesen chapter of the film to help students grasp the advantages and disadvantages of using an oral history. (This section begins at 18:54.) It is important to note that some of the happiness Carola remembers from Gross Breesen might have been relief at having found a welcoming and relatively safe place. Gross Breesen was a respite between her expulsion from school and the events during and after Kristallnacht. The following prompts are divided by category. Essential questions are in bold. Follow-up questions appear in regular font.*

- 1) In what ways can we use Carola's account to help us better understand what happened in Nazi Germany? What are the limits to what Carola's account can tell us?**
  - Why did Carola end up on the farm? Why did that farm exist in the first place?
  - How did life on the farm contrast with the urban lifestyle to which Carola was accustomed?
  - What three words would you use to describe how Carola recalls her time at Gross Breesen? Carola looks back on Gross Breesen as a happy time in her life, but do you think what she remembers is in keeping with how other Jews experienced the rise of the Nazis? How might her “happiness” have been affected by memory and hindsight? In what ways was Gross Breesen hard work? Physically uncomfortable? Inherently stressful? Can you think of any personal experiences that were challenging at the time, but that you now look back on fondly?
  - How does Carola’s description of Gross Breesen help us better understand what this school was like? What are some of the details she provides that tell us more about this training center? Are there some things she clearly remembers from a young person’s perspective, e.g., *Bondy’s inspections*? In what way does this part of the film provide useful information about Jewish youth in Nazi Germany, more generally?

*Teachers: In discussing the specifics of Gross Breesen, we are asking the following broader, more abstract questions, bearing in mind that Carola leaves Germany before the genocide begins. Her account of Nazi Germany is both anecdotal and truncated.*

- 2) Are the interviews primary sources? Is the documentary film a primary source? From whose perspective is the story told? Why does the point of view matter? How does the point of view shape the story? How is this perspective both useful and problematic?**
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages of relying on an individual’s recollections of historical events?
  - Given Carola’s age and her emotional involvement in the events she relates,

how should we use Carola's account as a historical source? Is Carola a witness?

- Do you think it reasonable to use an account from someone remembering events that happened much earlier in their life? Explain your answer. In what way do Carola's emotions and her young age allow us a unique perspective on events? How does Carola's young age at the time of the events she describes affect her reliability in recounting her experience?
- How are we supposed to assess and interpret the "truth" in Carola's account? Can we assume everything Carola says is accurate?
- To what extent is her experience representative of what happened in Nazi Germany? What makes her situation unique? At what point in the timeline of the Holocaust did Carola leave Germany?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a documentary film to educate? How is this film different from a primary source?

### **3) In what ways did the director influence the telling of Carola's story?**

*Teachers: Consider the emphasis on certain events, the selection of images, the music, the moments of silence in the film. Note the effect of having two people tell the same story, how it reinforces the account and contributes to its apparent trustworthiness, despite the fact that Alice Domar is not a first-hand source. In responding to this discussion topic, students should come to appreciate the importance of the original interviews as a kind of primary source from which we can determine, among other things, some of the director's choices in telling this story.*

- What might be missing from the story? What sources would we need to examine to figure out what is missing?
- What is Alice Domar's role in this film? How does the inclusion of Alice Domar affect how we respond to her mother's story? What are the advantages and drawbacks of Alice Domar's testimony?
- In what ways might the director have shaped and modified Carola's story? How do filmmakers create moods? What tools do they use to help tell a story? What messages do you think the filmmaker intends to convey in this film?
- What connections can you make between using this film as an historical source and the ongoing debate about media coverage and truthfulness?

### **4) Consider what analyzing this documentary film can tell us about evaluating other sources. When we read a news article, what questions should we ask? How are the questions we would ask about a current event similar or different from those we might pose about historical sources?**

- What can we determine about the author of a news article? Is this journalist reporting from the site of the event or from some distance? Does he/she have

an apparent bias? Where is the article published? Does this publication have a stated purpose? What is its political orientation?

- How might we figure out what is missing from a source, and what has been emphasized?
- How can we adapt this approach to all types of historical sources, including letters, maps, and photographs? Can you think of an instance where this approach might not be useful?

#### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:

**Assignment:** Have students access two or three online news articles from different sources, covering the same current event. Have them consider how these accounts are similar and how they differ—which may be only in emphasis rather than facts.

OR

Working with hard copy or online, have students analyze the first page/homepage layout and content of several, pre-selected news publications, preferably same-day, morning editions of national newspapers from across the political spectrum. Students should focus on how layout and headlines affect the way content comes across in each publication.

**Purpose:** To help students understand how news can be presented to accommodate a particular agenda or perspective. Sometimes this manipulation is subtle rather than overt, having to do with the use of an image, a lead paragraph, and placement.

## **BACKGROUND MATERIAL:**

This section examines oral histories and documentary films as historical tools, using the film and its sources as specific examples. We begin with oral histories.

### ***So, what is an oral history?***

Linda Shope defines an oral history as “a self-conscious, disciplined conversation between two people about some aspect of the past considered by them to be of historical significance and intentionally recorded for the record.”<sup>6</sup> The USC Shoah Foundation interviewed Carola expressly about her experience in Germany and the impact that experience had on her life. The interview with Alice Domar focused on her mother’s experience and employed Library of Congress oral history procedures and techniques.<sup>7</sup>

### ***How are oral histories useful in looking at the past? What should we look out for?***

Carola is generally able to recollect historic events with remarkable clarity and faithfulness to dates. Her account allows us to connect with the past in a personal way. Nevertheless, we cannot presume that every statement she makes is historically accurate or provides appropriate emphasis. Carola’s interview is valuable in and of itself. However, historians can gain a better sense of trends and common experiences by comparing multiple oral histories to one another, and by analyzing specific narratives in the context of other primary sources.<sup>8</sup> To better understand and assess the value of an oral history, students must ask: “Who is saying what, to whom, for what purpose, and under what circumstances?”<sup>9</sup> Equally important as what is said, is what is left out.<sup>10</sup>

### **HANDLE WITH CARE—ORAL HISTORIES ARE COMPLEX SOURCES!**

We must be aware that Carola is recounting events that occurred decades earlier. Her memories reflect her present state of mind, the directives of the interviewer, and her perspective on the past.

Oral histories are principally about personal experience, though they are sometimes used to gather data, and they provide useful information. Oral histories are always an act of memory and are inherently subjective. They are conversations, containing repetition, broken chronology, false starts, interruptions, and attempts to create or find meaning. Interviewees will—often unknowingly—select, condense, and interpret experiences to create an orderly narrative. These “bothersome” aspects of the interview can be useful, telling us something about the subject’s viewpoint. We must always be aware that the way a story is told shapes how we understand and interpret it. An individual’s perspective and understanding of events can be useful to a historian, but a critical approach is essential.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, our impression of the interview is influenced by elements that extend beyond the content. The setting, the manner and dress of the subject, lighting, camera angles, and general production values all affect the viewer. Ironically, the dated and low-quality production values of the USC Shoah Foundation film may bolster its credibility, conveying a sense of journalistic fieldwork from another time.<sup>12</sup> We inevitably approach historical sources with our own biases. In a filmed interview, we also rely on valuable cues to enhance our understanding of content, often without realizing it. Facial expressions, hand gestures, inflection, pauses, etc. all contribute to

meaning.<sup>13</sup>

As discussed earlier in the guide, Carola's account is not representative of those who experienced the worst of the Holocaust. She was spared a great deal because she came from a privileged urban family and departed Germany in the late 1930s. Her narrative does not go beyond her personal experience. This is a story laden with emotion; Carola is not a historian. Her account lacks both context and critical interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, like other oral history interviewees, Carola speaks of her experience with hindsight, knowing how history unfolded. A prime example of the sort of fallacy this may lead to can be found at 18:41 minutes into the film. Here, Carola states in reference to her brother: "At this time they were exterminating people with handicaps." This statement is generally correct, regarding the Holocaust, but historically inaccurate. The Nazi extermination policy did not begin until September 1939, by which time Carola was already in England. She is seemingly referring to a period several years earlier, conflating the 1933 "Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases" that forced sterilizations of the handicapped, with the later T4 Program, which implemented mass exterminations. Carola's statement is inaccurate but captures the brutality of the Nazi regime.<sup>15</sup> It is therefore useful in its sentiment and rightly identifies the growing bias against people with disabilities in the mid-1930s. It communicates the fear that prompted Carola's parents to send their son out of the country at this time. The statement, and all first-person testimony, must be handled with care.

Finally, Carola experienced the events she recounts in German, but relays them to us in English. This change in language has the subtle effect of further removing Carola's experience from its recounting. She narrates the story from another time, place, and culture, and is in many ways a different person.<sup>16</sup> Even her name has changed, from Karola Rosenthal to Carola Domar.

Regarding Alice Domar's interview, we must assume that all her comments are drawn from her mother's version of the past. Certainly they are second-hand. Incorporating Alice's statements into the video allows Carola's story to be reinforced and repeated. Narrative repetition is used here as an effective teaching device, and as a way of combining footage. The result, however, might be misleading. The viewer tends to regard Alice Domar's narrative as corroboration, though her statements do not independently substantiate Carola's account.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF ORAL HISTORIES

As suggested above, oral histories are more about meaning than facts.<sup>17</sup> If we understand this fundamental aspect of the genre, it becomes a useful tool in better understanding the past. Carola's personal perspective on school life in Nazi Germany provides us with material unavailable in other types of primary sources, such as newspapers from the period or Nazi government documents.<sup>18</sup>

Because Carola's account *is* emotional, it is relatable. Because it is a compelling story, like so many other oral histories, we are engaged. Carola's narrative of social exclusion allows students to access hard truths about the period.

Oral histories prompt us to consider the relationship between memory and history. In considering

both commemorative art and oral history, students will come to appreciate distinctions between different kinds of memory—the official, public memories promoted by governments and institutions, and the personal. While we need to inform ourselves of historical facts—such as Hitler’s chancellorship or the T4 Program—it is the multiple and varied voices of individuals that allow us a larger picture of events and their impact. Moreover, the female perspective is often missing in historical records and the plight of children overlooked. We are fortunate to have Carola’s account.

## ABOUT THE FILM

### ***Why the film is not a primary source:***

*Exile and Community: The Life of Carola Domar* does not present an intact oral history. Instead, it is a synthesis of extracts from two interviews that has been enhanced, using sound design and images. Students will perhaps easily grasp that a documentary film is not a primary source but rather a mix of various materials. Yet, there are more complex ideas that we can consider here.

Making this kind of film involves building a story—selecting and ordering materials. At the same time, it is about paring down a narrative to its essentials. This dual process of constructing and condensing is driven by the director’s point of view. The primary sources used in a documentary appear in a new context and with a different emphasis once drafted into this product. Using a photograph from a personal album in a film alters its meaning, for example. Editing and cropping, juxtaposition, the director’s perspective, and the objective to create a compelling narrative all affect the historic integrity of an archival photograph or interview and how we perceive it.<sup>19</sup> A documentary film is not a textbook, but in many ways it shares more in common with that medium than with its sources. Both documentary film directors and textbook writers incorporate selected sources into their work with the intent to instruct. This work involves interpreting facts, and is driven by an often unstated point of view.

In producing this film, both women’s interviews have been significantly cut down and some lesser events omitted—there were many hours of original footage. Great effort has been made to preserve the context and meaning of Carola and Alice Domar’s statements, but this endeavor was inevitably tempered by the attempt to create an accessible, instructive piece. To support Carola’s account, images, music, and even a few sound effects have been incorporated into the film, further separating it from its primary source. Subtle sound design and the reliance on abstract images help support the story in relatively neutral terms, but nonetheless color it. There is a paradoxical effect when you illustrate personal experience with historical images: the particular is generalized, even as the personal becomes more graphic.

### ***Technology and truth—the power of video:***

Documentaries are a powerful educational tool, but like all historical sources, they should be approached with critical awareness. The medium of video is both easy for editors to manipulate and persuasive in its effect on viewers. Documentary films engage our senses, using images and sound. In this way they are seductive—we are inclined to believe they are presenting reality. As with other historical materials, viewers should consider the filmmaker’s motives, the sources selected, and how they have been used.

Both Carola and Alice Domar's interviews were low-budget endeavors, undertaken with a single camera. To avoid the abruptness of edits, known as "jump cuts," images were incorporated in post-production that support the narrative and smooth transitions. The viewer will never know, without referencing the primary sources, if something is missing or changed—just as we cannot tell what, if anything, is altered or missing when two cameras are used to smooth edits via camera angles. These editing techniques help create a seamless narrative and immersive experience for the viewer. One can contrast this approach with the raw edits used in *Fog of War*, a documentary in which Robert McNamara shares his observations on war. In this film, we still don't know *what* has been deleted, but we know for sure where each cut was made. It is important that the full and intact interviews of Carola and Alice Domar are made available to the public, just as it is important to be able to access the primary sources used in any textbook.<sup>20</sup>

There are many common and potentially truth-defying techniques in videography that help suspend disbelief. "Morph edits" seamlessly marry edits. Footage is color adjusted, sound is filtered, images selected and, at times, desaturated and cropped—all to present a point of view. Just removing an "um" or an "ah," adding a moment of silence, changes inflection and possibly meaning. These aspects of documentary filmmaking are tied to ongoing debates regarding mass media and truth; teachers may wish to pursue this line of discussion in class.

## NOTES

1. This quote is often attributed to Stalin, though the derivation is unclear.
2. John Updike, *Self-Consciousness: Memoirs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 234.
3. Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed., eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2016), 52.
4. Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 160.
5. Marion A. Kaplan, “Revealing and Concealing: Using Memoirs to Write German-Jewish History,” in *Text and Context: Essays in Modern Jewish History and Historiography in Honor of Ismar Schorsch*, eds. Eli Lenderhendler and Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2005), 384. Much of Kaplan’s thoughts on memoirs apply to oral histories, and some of the ideas in this paragraph are based on her discussion of this genre.
6. Linda Shope, *What is Oral History?*, PDF file, February 2002, 2, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/oral.pdf>.
7. This interview was undertaken after Carola’s death.
8. Kaplan, “Revealing and Concealing,” 390, 392.
9. Shope, *What is Oral History?*, 7.
10. Shope, *What is Oral History?*, 10.
11. This paragraph is closely drawn from the following sources: Ronald J. Grele, “On Using Oral History Collections: An Introduction,” *Journal of American History*, 74, no. 2 (September 1987): 570-73. Kaplan, “Revealing and Concealing,” 388; Megan Webster and Noelia Gravotta, “Co-Creating Our Story: Making a Documentary Film,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed., eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2016), 523.
12. Much as a black and white photograph is associated with documenting truth. The effect reinforces our sense of the taping’s integrity, underscoring the intent to record, not entertain.
13. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 157ff; Webster and Gravotta, “Co-Creating Our Story,” 524. See these authors regarding the subjective “gaze” of the camera lens and how testimony is inevitably transformed through film.
14. Shope, *What is Oral History?*, 5. As Shope puts it: “Although narrators speak for themselves, what they have to say does not.”
15. Historians, like Grele and Portelli, have argued for the value of this kind of testimony, which is inaccurate in detail, but useful in its generalities. Ronald J. Grele, “On Using Oral History Collections,” 572-73; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, ed. Michael Frisch (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 2; Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 54; Shope, *What is Oral History?*, 5-7; Kaplan, “Revealing and Concealing,” 400.
16. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 159-60.
17. Shope, *What is Oral History?*, 7; Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 164; Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 52.
18. Kaplan, “Revealing and Concealing,” 385. Oral histories cover areas neglected by traditional historical sources, such as domestic work and family life. They give voice to the illiterate and unempowered, and constructively challenge more conventional historians and sources. “Introduction,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed., eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2016), xiii-xviii.
19. Regarding the constructed nature of all historical evidence, and the observation that implicit in the lateral motion of film or video is a sense of sequence, see: James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 157-58, 164.
20. These interviews are archived at the Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA.

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*This link contains information about the interview but does not provide access to the video itself.*

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*A seminal book on oral histories, which considers the connection between the practice of oral history and the politics of public memory. (University level)*

\*Grele, Ronald J. "On Using Oral History Collections: An Introduction." *Journal of American History* 74, no. 2 (September 1987): 570-78.

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*An accessible discussion of the use of memoirs to write German-Jewish history. Much of what Kaplan writes on this subject applies to memoirs and oral histories more generally.*

\*Perks, Robert and Alastair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd edition. London: Routledge, 2016.

*An up-to-date, well-rounded collection of essays on the subject. Teachers who are considering having their students conduct oral histories might refer to the chapter, "Co-Creating Our Story: making a Documentary Film." This piece, written by a teacher and one of her students, describes the ambitions, processes, obstacles, and rewards of having a class of eleventh graders interview victims of the Cambodian genocide and make a documentary film on the subject.*

\*Shopes, Linda. *What is Oral History?* PDF file. February 2002. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/oral.pdf>.

*An excellent online resource for teachers and students. Shopes discusses the use of oral histories as historical evidence in simple, clear terms, and includes an annotated bibliography.*

Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

*A sophisticated, nuanced study of Holocaust narratives that includes the chapter, "Holocaust Video and Cinemagraphic Testimony: Documenting the Witness," as well as a chapter on Holocaust memorials. (University level)*

Note: Students can visit the USC Shoah Foundation website to access short excerpts from interviews with Holocaust survivors: <https://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/>.

\* References most appropriate for middle and high school students.