



Legacy



A publication of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee, a division of the Alabama Holocaust Foundation

Volume I, Issue 1

Spring 2007

The Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee proudly presents the premier issue of *Legacy*, our semi-annual newsletter.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 28

Birmingham International Center Honors Helga Weissova-Hoskova, Terezin Survivor Reception 5:00-8:00 p.m.

April 1

Darkness Into Life Levite Jewish Community Center Opening Reception 2:00-5:00 p.m.

April 15

Yom Hashoah Commemoration *Ever Again*, a film Narrated by Kevin Costner 2:00 p.m. Birmingham Museum of Art Discussion following with Steve Brickman and Sol Kimerling

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LEARN AND REMEMBER

Phyllis G. Weinstein, Chair, Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee

Recently, a teacher told me she was shocked to learn that some of her students thought the Holocaust was just a movie! As we move farther away from the time of World War II, we have fewer Holocaust survivors to tell their stories, fewer military veterans who liberated the concentration camps to relate their experiences, and fewer people who remember this dark period in history. Thus, the mission of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee (BHEC) becomes even more important as we seek to facilitate education and understanding of the Holocaust by providing information, materials, speakers, teacher workshops, community events, and programming.

This is our challenge. You will read in this newsletter ways we seek to overcome the ignorance that is prevalent among many of our young people, and their parents as well. Each of us must LEARN in order to REMEMBER. This history must not be forgotten.

Just five years ago, a small group of people in Birmingham committed themselves to establishing an organization that would keep

information and teaching about the Holocaust in the forefront. The BHEC formed, and today we number 26 men and women. We are volunteers who feel strongly that the hope for a future free of racial hatred, intolerance, bigotry, and genocide is best achieved through education, be it through text, art, music, speakers and/or hearing the voices of our Holocaust survivors. In Birmingham, we have become a focal point for events and information related to the Shoah—the Holocaust.

There are 19 living survivors of the Shoah in Birmingham. Through the years, they, and others no longer with us, have made enormous contributions to our knowledge of the Holocaust. Their willingness to tell their stories over and over again to countless groups has inspired us to keep alive the message of the Holocaust. From those who speak, we LEARN. For all, we will REMEMBER.

It is our hope you will join our efforts through your financial support. Enclosed is an envelope for your convenience. Please become a Friend, enabling us to pursue our goals of LEARNING and REMEMBERING.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Karen Allen, Fund Development

The story of those murdered and those who survived the Holocaust is not only “their” story, it is our story, too. We now shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that the legacy and lessons of the Holocaust are taught, learned, and never repeated.

We must learn from the past in order not to repeat it. Our most viable and important assets for the future are our children and grandchildren. In order for them to live in a secure and stable society, they must be educated and knowledgeable. Today BHEC provides training, seminars and educational materials for teachers, as well as programming for adults and the general community.

Please join us in our endeavors. Your financial support of BHEC is critical for preserving the legacy of the Holocaust victims and survivors.

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BHEC PROVIDES TEACHERS WITH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator

Recognizing that teaching the Holocaust is not required by the Alabama Course of Study, the BHEC seeks to provide teachers with learning opportunities as well as readily accessible and accurate information to assist and encourage their teaching of the Holocaust.

BHEC/Anti-Defamation League

This past December, the BHEC and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) sponsored a free, day-long workshop for over 50 teachers in the Birmingham area. This workshop introduced Echoes and Reflections, the new Holocaust curriculum, created by ADL, Yad Vashem, and the USC Shoah Foundation. Materials were provided for a one-stop curriculum including maps, photos, timeline, glossary, primary resource, activities, questions for discussion and recorded survivor testimony. Subsequently, the ADL has invited one Birmingham teacher to study at Yad

Vashem for a week this summer.

Targeting Teachers

Targeting those teachers with little background in Holocaust Education, the BHEC has been developing its own teacher support materials over the past year. We have been working in coordination with Lisa Byrd (Mortimer Jordan High School) and Randy Hubbard (Springville High School), both of whom have the unique experience of teaching semester courses on the Holocaust at the high school level. These materials, in the form of PowerPoint presentations, will be available at no charge on our website, www.Bhamholocausteducation.org. The working titles are: *The Holocaust, A History of Anti-Semitism*, and *Who are the Jews?* Our rollout date is projected for July 1, 2007. We have been invited to present our materials at Samford University Beeson School of Education's Summer Institute for

Teaching Excellence, a workshop for teachers, counselors, and administrators in K-12 schools. The BHEC Teacher Cadre, a devoted group of teachers interested in furthering Holocaust Education, is currently reviewing and critiquing these materials.

Birmingham Opportunities

Although offering many opportunities in Birmingham, the BHEC recognizes that the studying with noted national Holocaust scholars is an aspiration few classroom teachers will attain. We feel it is vital to provide that opportunity to classroom teachers, to excite their sense of discovery, and to bring that excitement back to the classroom. Through our Teacher Scholarship Program, funded in past years in part by the Birmingham Jewish Foundation, we have sent an average of four teachers a year to nationally known Holocaust education conferences. This year we will be sending teachers to the

Belfer Conference at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Lerner Fellowship Program of the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, the Holocaust and Human Behavior program sponsored by Facing History and Ourselves, and the Holocaust Conference sponsored by Appalachian State University.

Teacher Enthusiasm

Teachers' enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge is the drive for our efforts. The BHEC continues to explore funding, as well as learning opportunities, to enhance Holocaust education today and in the future.



Max Herzel speaks to teachers at a recent workshop where a new Holocaust curriculum was introduced.

Five Points Production Produces Survivor Documentary

Jenny Katz & Dorian McDougal

Five Points Productions, Inc. is producing a documentary on the Birmingham Holocaust survivors. The filmmakers feel that these survivors "are the voices that recount the truth of our past, the voices that remind

us to never forget. Their lives are a gift and their memories a legacy."

The documentary is entitled "Children of the Holocaust" and is expected to be completed by the fall

of 2007. At this time, it has not been decided where it will first be presented. However, the end product will be available for the Alabama Jewish and non-Jewish community at large.



... voices that remind us never to forget ...

Darkness Life

The Birmingham Area Holocaust Survivors Through Photography & Art

From the terrible darkness of the Holocaust to successful lives in Alabama, 19 Holocaust survivors are living in Birmingham. Nine of these amazing people have agreed to let their stories be told in a new photography and art exhibit.

Photographer Becky Seitel and artist Mitzi Levin will open the exhibit "Darkness into Life: The Birmingham Area Holocaust Survivors through Photography and Art" during Holocaust Remembrance Month in April

2007. The exhibit will be at the Levite Jewish Community Center in Birmingham, opening April 1, 2007, with a reception from 2:00-5:00 p.m. The exhibit is free and open to the public. Docent-guided field trips for school groups can be scheduled by contacting Becky Seitel at 205.563.4244.

After the initial showing, the exhibit will be donated to the Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee for use in schools and community events. It will be used to edu-

cate Alabama students and adults about the atrocities of the Holocaust so that such a tragedy will *never again* take place.

The exhibit will feature photographs and artworks of each survivor. Mitzi's paintings focus on life before and during imprisonment or in hiding, as well as escape or liberation. Becky's photographs tell stories about the survivors in a photo-journalistic style.

The exhibit is presented by:

L'Chaim Presenters—Brenda and Fred Friedman; Mitzvah Presenters—Gail and Jeffrey Bayer; The Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee, a Regional Division of the Alabama Holocaust Commission; Ronne and Donald Hess Foundation; and Sterne Agee.

For more information, contact Becky Seitel at 205.563.4244, bseitel@bellsouth.net or Mitzi Levin at 205.969.2257.

SURVIVORS/SECOND GENERATION

Helena Lubel, Survivor Coordinator

The Second Generation

An important interest of our Committee is the Survivors in our area. As we realize the aging of this group, it seems natural to focus on their children—the Second Generation. We have a list of almost 50 men and women who have, or had, one or both parents who survived the Holocaust.

Our first meeting was held in March 2006. There have been three meetings since then. Various programs dealing with Survivors' histories and genealogies have been presented. The enthusiasm of the attendees has indicated the importance of this group to our community.

We welcome hearing from anyone who is currently not on our list and whose parents were displaced from

their native country by the Holocaust.

For further information, contact Helena Lubel at 205.871.4073.

Survivors' Speaking Group

A dedicated group of Survivors share their stories of the Holocaust to school and community groups.

Some of their recent speaking engagements include: Berry Middle School, Oak Mountain High School, Alabama School of Fine Arts, Mortimer Jordan High School, Cullman Middle/High School, Hewitt-Trussville High School, McAdory Middle School, Rotary Clubs of Homewood and Jasper, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and Medical Association of Alabama.



Birmingham Survivors Pictured Above:

Front row from left: Ruth Siegler, Ilse Nathan, Aisic Hirsch, Riva Hirsch. Back row from left: Max Herzel, Jack Bass, Henry Aizenman, Martin Aaron, and Max Steinmetz.

Holocaust Survivors Speak

March Brown Bag Lunch Series Programs

Birmingham Public Library

Esther Levy

March 7

Esther Levy, daughter of Tobi Komornik Gerson, speaks on behalf of her recently departed mother. Tobi Komornik Gerson was born in Poland in 1925. She was fourteen years old when the Germans invaded Poland. She became part of the German labor force, working in the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz and at a munitions factory. She was evacuated by the Swedish Red Cross from the Ravensbruck Concentration Camp and was brought to Sweden. She and one brother survived.

Jack Bass

March 14

Jack Bass was born in Berncastel, Germany, and after the death of his father in 1932, he and his mother moved to Cologne, Germany, where they were arrested. He was put in a railroad cattle car for the torturous ride to Auschwitz. There he worked in the "fields of human hair." He was liberated by American troops on May 8, 1945. He weighed 60 pounds.

Henry Aizenman

March 21

Henry Aizenman was born in

Warsaw, Poland, in 1931.

Between the ages of nine and 14, Aizenman spent time in the Jedlinsk Ghetto in the work force and was imprisoned with his family in at least a dozen Nazi camps, including Auschwitz. He was liberated by American troops on May 2, 1945.

Riva Hirsch

March 28

Riva Hirsch was seven years old in 1942 when the Germans occupied her village in Bessarabia. She was arrested and sent to several work camps, including Luchinetz and Tolchin, in

the Ukraine. From Tolchin she was rescued by partisan troops and was cared for by nuns in a convent, hidden in bunkers from 1943-1945. She was liberated by Russian troops.

The Brown Bag Lunch Series is held each Wednesday at noon in the Arrington Auditorium of the Linn-Henley Research Library. There is no charge to attend. The Library provides beverages.

For additional information, call 205.226.3604.



BHEC MISSION STATEMENT: *The Committee seeks to facilitate education and understanding of the Holocaust by providing information, materials, speakers, teachers' workshops, community events, and programming. The Holocaust, the most significant event in recent world history, revealed both the peaks of heroism and the depths of cruelty and depravity that humans can experience. The Committee hopes that, by learning from the past, students will fortify their knowledge and will be leaders in preventing such evil from recurring.*

Alabama Holocaust Foundation
Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee

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