TIME AND SPACE:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF HOLOCAUST MEMORY IN AMERICA

BRYAN STEPHEN ZIVE

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Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
School of Rabbinic Studies
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Adviser: Dr. Sharon Gillerman

Abstract

Memory is the mention of the impact the past has made and continues to make on the present.[1] As Holocaust education transitioned to the center of American consciousness in the 1960s, the ownership of its victimization affected the way organizations and cities memorialized it, especially within museums. While Holocaust survivors established the desire for the development of the earliest models of Holocaust museums, recent exhibits transform their lens from teaching the Holocaust as a primarily Jewish event to one whose lessons pose a universal danger to society, thus shifting the scope of American Holocaust memory.

Established in 1993, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, provides an excellent example of educating its visitors and memorializing the Holocaust as a Jewish event, as well as an American event, presenting the dichotomy between American freedom and democracy, and Nazi fascism. In Dallas, Texas, Holocaust survivors came together to establish a memorial space for their families who died at the hands of the Nazis. But in 2005, museum officials noticed an opportunity to present the city's civil rights struggles, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and its self-identification as the "city of hate" through the lens of the Holocaust. This thesis presents these two examples of how American museums present the Holocaust through a national and local lens, and society's response within the landscape of American Holocaust memorialization.

[1] Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory,* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966), 1.

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Introduction

My passion for Holocaust study began during my middle school years. My seventh grade Judaic Studies teacher at Stephen S. Wise Temple, Robert French, taught our class the facts, figures, and discriminatory laws instituted by Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Like many who initially studied the Holocaust, I felt stunned by the horror and constantly asked myself, "How could something like this ever happen in our world, because this is not the world I live in." I felt uncomfortable and scared. I felt helpless because I did not know how to react to the frightening visuals displayed in class. During my day school's annual eighth grade trip to Washington, DC, we visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I recollect its architectural grandeur, the green steel beams inside the main foyer, and the long lines to enter the building. I recall dozens of classes, just like mine, from across the country, people of all races and creeds, walking through the exhibit and memorial room, reading text and watching videos of the Holocaust. However, I mostly *remember* the silence, the deafening silence of stunned visitors who, individually and collectively, took in arguably humanity's greatest genocide.

Seven years later as a sophomore at The Ohio State University, I revisited Washington's Holocaust museum. I had just watched the recently released movie *The Pianist* and became especially disgusted during the scene where Nazi S.S. officers killed a disabled Jewish man in a wheelchair by throwing him off a building's high balcony. I reacted differently than I had as a seventh grader. I did not feel helpless. Rather, I felt determined to engrain the Holocaust's lessons in society. I needed to do all that I could to prevent these

events from happening again. For me, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum accomplished its mission of advancing and disseminating knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy. I felt that all Americans needed to learn about the Holocaust, why I, a Jewish person, reacted so strongly to it, and why these events matter to our greater population.

As I continued to study the Holocaust, I began to recognize that while the numbers, information, and artifacts explained certain aspects of Holocaust history, the telling of that story, visitor reaction, and how that impacts our future transfers the story into memory. I have dedicated a large part of my Jewish professional life to teaching Holocaust history, but have struggled to teach through an American memorial framework. I could not answer my own question: "Why should Americans learn, care about, and memorialize the Holocaust?" Thus, I took advantage of the prime opportunity of dedicating my thesis research to answering this question.

Memorializing the Holocaust for individuals means turning the physical past into a mental, personal experience to establish an emotional connection to the Holocaust's events. Since 1945, the Holocaust has increasingly been represented in a variety of public forums. Scholars and artists have memorialized it in movies, television documentaries, artistic statues and memorials, first account interviews, music, and museums; it has entered the mainstream media and become the subject of profitable and high-profile film and television projects.[2] Steven Spielberg directed the 1993 Oscar Award Winner for Best Motion Picture *Schindler's List*, assuming, as New York Times reviewer Janet Maslin foresaw, a permanent place in

[2] Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 4.

public memory.[3] Networks like The History Channel and Military TV incorporate many of the historical documentaries into their programmatic schedules. Parks are home to Holocaust memorials, such as Babi Yar Memorial Park in Denver, Colorado, whose memorial structures create a "symbol of conscience" along with a "quiet space to contemplate and reflect upon crimes against humanity and genocide."[4] Along with myriad other memorials across the country, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the National Mall in Washington stands out as a site in the American national landscape, which helps create individual and collective memories of the Holocaust.

In this thesis, I will first discuss the definition of memory and the history of American Holocaust memory. I argue that while initial Holocaust memorialization in American museums employed a more particular approach of the Holocaust as a Jewish event, recent museum designers have ventured toward addressing past, present, and future genocide, injustice, and civil rights struggles through a Holocaust framework. I include Alan Mintz's theories of exceptionalism and constructivism, looking at the Holocaust as the murder of six million Jews and incomparable to any other genocidal event versus the inclusion of the Holocaust as a major American event that affects society as a whole. Further, I will demonstrate that museum designers attempt to memorialize the Holocaust by turning physical artifacts and information into a mental and personal experience to help establish an emotional connection to the Holocaust's events. I conclude my first chapter with a history of American Holocaust museums and support my argument by retracing their development.

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[3] Janet Maslin, "Imagining the Holocaust to Remember it," *New York Times*, December 15, 1993, https://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/15/movies/review-film-schindler-s-list-imagining-the-holocaust-to-remember-it.html.

[4] "Babi Yar Park: A Living Holocaust Memorial," Mizel Museum, accessed January 22, 2019, https://mizelmuseum.org/exhibit/babi-yar-park-a-living-holocaust-memorial/.

My second and third chapters provide examples of two museums, Washington, DC's United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Dallas Holocaust Museum, to compare and contrast their methods of Holocaust education and memorialization, identifying, in both cases, the intersection between the particular and the universal. While a Jewish museum can be universal, with its information applicable to a variety of audiences, some are particular and only offer a Jewish perspective, thus reaching a primarily Jewish audience. Museums, which offer a more universal lens for engaging with Holocaust history, can incorporate particular aspects, but are designed to attract broader audiences. My description of the two examples will include each museum's history and establishment, how they frame the Holocaust to reach their respective audiences, and argue how each are prime examples of the shifting lenses of memory in American Holocaust museums.

Chapter 1: The History of American Holocaust Memory

What is Memory?

Memory is the mention of the impact the past has made and continues to make on the present.[5] As the scholar Henry Glassie put it, "History is not the past, but a map of the past drawn from a particular point of view to be useful to the modern traveler."[6] People create memory either individually, from personal experiences, or collectively, where a group of people who share similar memories come together function in society. Maurice Halbwachs, the French philosopher who developed the concept of collective memory, addresses the question of who remembers, how that occurs, and how it affects society at large.

In his book *On Collective Memory,* Halbwachs discusses the origin of individual memory, stating, "No memory is possible outside frameworks of people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections."[7] He identifies a construct which dictates that in a relationship between memory and history, the social setting—the specific time and space—when something occurs dies with the generation that lived it.[8] Once it dies, the current generation as a group is able to reconstruct what occurred through their own societal norms. These groups can include families, institutions, or countries. Halbwachs claims that individuals remember as a group, and it is impossible to separate the two within the human

[5] Stier, *Committed to Memory*, 1.
[6] Henry Glassie, "Tradition," *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol 108, No. 430 (Autumn 1995), 397, doi:10.2307/541653.
[7] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* translated by Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.
[8] Ibid.

mind, thus individuals remember only when they think in social frameworks. Historian Oren Baruch Stier adopts Halbwachs theory, in which collective frameworks are precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past that is in accord with the predominant values of the society.[9]

Collective memory, however, is not static. As Halbwachs, Stier, and others have shown, collective memory changes over time. In the case of the Holocaust, scholars have sought to reconstruct stages of American and Jewish narratives since World War II. Stier argues, "Memory matters. It matters to an ever diverse array of groups and individuals for whom it functions as a reference point. It matters to the generation that was 'there': survivors, liberators, perpetrators, bystanders. It matters to generations who were not there: children of survivors and others who had direct contact with and involvement in Holocaust events, others who trace their relationship to the past through communal and religious identification and for those for whom the Holocaust bears no distinct legacy at all."[10]

Through movies, documentaries, literature, classroom study, ritual, museums, and memorials, Americans have developed collective narratives of the Holocaust that make an overseas event relevant through the lessons they expound. This opening chapter will address the following questions: what did those collective narratives look like, in what context did they emerge, and what were some of the catalysts for those changes over time?

[9] Stier, *Committed to Memory,* 4.
[10] Ibid., 1.

Tracing an Evolving Jewish Holocaust Memory

Shortly after the end of World War II, it would have been hard to imagine that the events now subsumed under the term "Holocaust" would occupy such an important place in American culture. An event thousands of miles from American shores, the United States Military did not officially enter the war until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, nor did they engage militarily with the Nazis in Europe until they aligned with the British in 1942. Proclaiming themselves as a beacon of freedom and democracy, nevertheless, they did not devote resources to rescuing European Jews.

During the war, in contrast to official United States policy and military actions, Jewish agencies in America loudly commented about Nazi inhumanity against Jews and, later, the catastrophic events of the Holocaust. Leaders of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, *B'nai Brith*, and other American Jewish organizations protested with statements of rebuke against American governmental indifference at the Evian and Bermuda Conferences led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. While Jewish concerns were made public, the government did very little in response and, at times, covered it up. Further, press coverage did not emphasize Holocaust events and often reporting them in small corners or the back pages of newspapers. Only when Americans involved themselves in the war did reports of starvation, deportation and extermination enter American homes through written publications.

Many scholars believe that Jews and non-Jews remained mostly silent about the Holocaust for the first decades following the war. They make the point that there was little

attention paid to the Holocaust in pop culture and scholarship in the 1950s and the American Jewish community was not engaged in incorporating the Holocaust into the public sphere. Professor Alvin Rosenfeld stated, "For years after the end of World War II, Jews in America were unwilling to face up to the horrors of the Holocaust."[11] Rosenfeld argued that this avoidance has caused society to remember the Holocaust in feeble ways uninformed by historical awareness and moral indignation. In his book *The End of the Holocaust*, Rosenfeld states, "one can imagine a time when… the immense historical and moral weight of the Nazi crimes [will be] whittled down into the familiar categories of a Sunday school sermon or conventional box-office spectacle… we are already in such a time."[12] This is not to say that Rosenfeld believed Jewish silence placed Jews in immediate danger of another attempted genocide nor that Jews will forget the Holocaust's devastation. Rather, society's past silence in Holocaust dialogue and education through a Jewish lens affected how it has been transmitted to today's generations, diminishing its historical and moral lessons.

Recently however, historian Hasia Diner refutes the conventional idea that Jews were silent in the years after the Holocaust, calling this "the myth of silence" in her book *We Remember with Reverence and Love*.[13] Diner suggests that Jews were in fact engaged in memorializing the Holocaust through liturgy, pedagogy, staged ceremonies, school programs, camps, and the like.[14] She claims that many Jewish organizations used the Holocaust as framework for their educational programming and agenda for social service.[15]

[11] Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love,* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 5.
[12] Alvin Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 9.
[13] Ibid., 2.
[14] Ibid., 8.
[15] Ibid., 12.

However, despite her refutations, most scholars believe that the increase in Holocaust discussion and scholarship began in the early 1960s.

Beginning in the early part of the decade, Holocaust scholarship and recognition was low in America. Authors did not write much regarding Holocaust, and what was written received only small circulation,[16] revealing an ignorance to the subject matter. While *Diary of a Young Girl*, the diary of Anne Frank, became the most widely published book on the Holocaust, the particular aspects of the Holocaust did not appear in circulation until the 1961 trial of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann and Americans witnessed the personal testimony of Nazi atrocities against European Jews and other minorities. Eichmann's trial and its impact on the Jewish community proved to be a major event that introduced the Holocaust into mainstream American memory. It placed the Nazi plans on full display for Americans to see, including the Nuremberg Laws, the ghettos, the Final Solution, the death camps, and the entire idea of systematic genocide. The public nature of the trial offered an incredible amount of information and helped find a place for these horrors in American collective memory. According to reports, 87 percent of the American public became aware of the Holocaust through the trial,[17] which brought them face to face with the awful images and descriptions of Nazi devastation.

At about the same time, the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising brought the Holocaust into the consciousness of American Jewish educators. The 1963 National Council of Jewish Education Conference discussed the subject with some explaining their avoidance of the Holocaust due to parental concerns of children's emotions, while others believed that

[16] Ibid., 7.
[17] Ibid., 8.

Judaism should be an enjoyable experience for students.[18] The anxiety of parents and educators that their children may fear that they too could become victims nevertheless led to them to develop new Holocaust education curricula, emphasizing the event's emotional meaning.[19] They ultimately attempted to use Holocaust education to use its lessons to strengthen Jewish identity.

Throughout the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War catalyzed a shift which complicated America far more than before. Whereas the Eichmann trial and Warsaw Ghetto uprising put the Holocaust at the center of the Jewish agenda in the early 1960s, historian Arthur Herzberg noted in his memoirs that the dominant issue in American society involved racial matters: "For the first time in American history, Jews were not a problem; they were not the object of racial hatred. On the contrary, they were now among the problem solvers."[20] Jews began to correlate the injustice and hatred of the Holocaust with events occuring in their American communities.

More Jews, along with many Americans, grew aware of the consequences of "man's inhumanity to man," as African American communities sent their youth to die overseas serving a country that disregarded their rights as citizens, and the pictures of decapitated Vietnamese residents began to appear, which Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel deemed "the ultimate act of dehumanization."[21] Within this context, the Holocaust began to serve as an

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[18] Elly Dlin and Sharon Gillerman, "Education on the Holocaust: The United States and Israel, Vol. 2," in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust,* ed. Israel Gutman (New York and London: Macmillan Publishing Company and Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1990), 422.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Arthur Hertzberg, *A Jew in America: My Life and a People's Struggle for Identity,* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 2002), 267.
[21] Bob Abernathy, "Abraham Joshua Heschel," accessed January 22, 2018, https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2008/01/18/january-18-2008-abraham-joshua-heschel/1789/.

analogy for reflecting upon the afflictions prevalent in 1960s America.. Low income, urban centers were called ghettos, a strong nation attempting to destroy a minority within its midst was called genocide, and the idea of using nuclear weapons was called a "holocaust" of sorts. [22] This marked the beginning of a shift through which Americans, concerned with racial inequality and the war, made connections between their present concerns and the Holocaust.

Another turning point in public awareness was a nine-hour mini-series that aired on NBC on April 16–19, 1978, entitled *The Holocaust*. The network aired *The Holocaust* just months after ABC's successful release of the mini-series *Roots*, portraying the immense cruelties of slavery in the United States. While some critics attacked *The Holocaust* as an obscene trivialization of the Holocaust because it contained commercial advertisements and used the formula of the American soap opera, many scholars have argued that it was responsible for the "awakening interest in the Holocaust, especially among the ignorant."[23] The mini-series represented an important moment in the framing of the Holocaust being perceived through an American lens. By the early 1980s, the Holocaust began to reach different sectors of American society, including formal education in public and private schools, film and literature, and public commemoration of historical dates such as *Kristallnacht* and Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"Exceptionalist" vs. "Constructivist" Models of Holocaust Memory

[22] Mintz, *Popular Culture,* 10-11.
[23] Ibid.

Alan Mintz, in his study of how the Holocaust has become a part of American popular culture, characterized the shift from a more narrow Jewish relationship to the history to the multiplication of meanings as more parts of American society begin to engage with the topic. Two models describe the struggle over how America memorializes the Holocaust: the exceptionalist model, which was in place primarily from liberation to the early 1970s; and the constructivist model, in place from the 1970s on. Mintz defines the exceptionalist model as "rooted in the conviction of the Holocaust as a radical rupture in human history that goes well beyond notions of uniqueness…When it comes to cultural refractions of the Holocaust, however, the norm is, sadly, vulgarization, especially in the works of popular culture. Most disturbing and most prevalent, moreover, is the way the Holocaust is traduced by being appropriated to service purposes—national interests, universal ethics, personal identity—that are not only unrelated to the Holocaust but are often antithetical to its memory."[24] An exceptionalist feels that the Holocaust should be objectively depicted, refusing to give the Holocaust any meaning outside the horror and tragedy of the murder of six million Jews, removing any comparison to any other event.[25]

An exceptionalist would also agree that the Holocaust is a lens through which to view modern Jewish identity in America. During World War II and post-liberation, American Jewish responses to the Holocaust were founded upon their connection to identity.[26] Just as synagogue life, ritual, and theological aspects of Jewish life helped formulate their religious foundation, the integration of the Holocaust as part of that identity occurred with shifting

[24] Mintz, *Popular Culture,* 39.
[25] Shaul Magid, "The Holocaust and Jewish Identity in America: Memory, the Unique and the Universal," *Jewish Social Studies* Vol. 18, No 2 (Winter 2012), 101.
[26] Ibid., 115.

social and cultural circumstances.[27] Elie Wiesel stood at the forefront of the conversation, claiming that Jews were the only true victims of the Holocaust, while other minorities killed were victims of Nazi persecution. He formulated the idea that the Holocaust is part of both Jewish and American history, which results in exclusive Jewish ownership within contemporary American narrative. He demonstrated this agenda when influencing the design of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's main exhibit.

Alternatively, Mintz defines the constructivist model as "the assumption that beyond the factual core, historical events, even the Holocaust, possess no inscribed meaning; meaning is constructed by communities of interpretation—differently by different communities—out of their own motives and needs."[28] Adopting this model means that an event holds different meanings for different worldviews, meaning that Americans interpret the Holocaust according to American values, such as the dichotomy between democracy and fascism, and an agenda of fighting injustice and prejudice. Museums such as the Dallas Holocaust Museum offer such constructivist messages that reflect the views of contemporary American society.

By the 1980s, the push to shift the way Jewish and non-Jewish Americans reflect upon the Holocaust in a diversifying ethnic culture became evident. For some Jews, through text and holiday practice, memory evoked a level of trauma and catastrophe, which was depicted in its Holocaust responses. Stier argues, "Memory is often a strategy for reconstruction fed on the experience of destruction, while loss becomes the 'precondition for renewal' and becomes the major piece of covenantal connectivity."[29] Jews use biblical words

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 40.
[29] Stier, *Committed to Memory,* 17.

to invoke memories of the recent past and ancient history. The *Tanakh* uses the word *zakhor*, "to remember," over 150 times; combined with its negative form, "never forget," Deuteronomy 25:17–19 admonishes the Israelites to remember and never forget the cruelty of the Amalekite towards them. Jewish educators use these two phrases when teaching Holocaust history, providing a religious correlation to the subject.

For other Jews, the Holocaust's particular force stems from the belief that it is the initial event in contemporary Jewish history.[30] According to Erica Brown, the Holocaust created a sense of Jewish community at a time of such assimilation that formal religious practice could no longer be assumed to be a unifying factor.[31] She claims the Holocaust became the very "cement of the Jewish community, and commemorating it has created national connections and secular traditions."[32]

However, there was a strong attempt to break the particularist view of the Holocaust held by Jews. Throughout the early 1980s, many teachers argued that curricula needed to reflect universal values if it were to have an impact in public school education.[33] Some scholars supported this approach, recognizing that communities are always making and remaking their interpretation of historical events. Historian Peter Novick believes the Holocaust to be a devastating event in Jewish history, but challenges the uniqueness of the overall event remarking, "Insistence on its uniqueness is an intellectually empty enterprise for reasons having nothing to do with the Holocaust itself and everything to do with 'uniqueness.' A moment's reflection makes clear that the notion of uniqueness is quite

[30] Erica Brown, "Turning All the Past to Pain: Current Trends in Memorialization of the Holocaust," *The Torah U-Madda Journal*, Vol. 9 (2000), 121.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Dlin and Gillerman, "Education on the Holocaust," 422.

vacuous."[34] While Novick's claim stresses the emptiness of the uniqueness argument, it would be irresponsible to completely remove the unique Jewish nature of the Holocaust itself from its education.

Further, Novick stresses that people choose to focus on the events that help a group collectively feel something about itself that it likes to feel. In this case, he feels that contemporary Jews like to believe they are victims and ignore events that challenge their prefered way of thinking of themselves. He recognizes struggles surrounding Jewish identity, allowing us to question why Jews choose to give the Holocaust so much attention. Novick argues, "For a memory to take hold, it has to resonate with how we understand ourselves: how we see our present circumstances, how we think about our future… We embrace a memory because it speaks to our condition; to that extent, we embrace it, we establish a framework for interpreting that condition."[35] From this constructivist perspective, one can use the Holocaust to teach about injustices and the dangers of being a bystander to a broader audience. However, the challenge remains that one cannot teach it without expressly discussing the attempted genocide of an entire religion and people within Europe. This historical fact keeps Judaism essential in Holocaust memorialization without closing the door of a universal message.

Neither Mintz's exceptionalist nor the constructivist models proves right or wrong. However, there remains a conflict between believing that the Holocaust only has facts to teach us versus believing that it has lessons to teach us. This debate still emerges when determining how to appropriately memorialize the Holocaust, especially within Holocaust

[34] Magid, "Holocaust and Jewish Identity," 102.
[35] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 170.

museums across the United States. A history of American museum memorialization shows the process through which scholars, curators, politicians, and visitors each shaped the interpretation and growing collective memory of the Holocaust.

Museums as Reflections of Changing Holocaust Memory

The idea of Holocaust museums in America came about through the desire of survivors who wished to memorialize the victims and educate the public about the Nazi atrocities of World War II. The memorial museum is a part of a recent, broader interest by citizens in reacting and relating to the past, which gained momentum in the second half of the twentieth century.[36] According to Stier, any museum constructs its narrative with a purpose: to communicate information; to teach.[37] Yet each museum presents a different agenda and perspective, with some reflecting one of many particularly Jewish perspectives, such as Jewish identity, biblical connections, or grieving for lost communities. Others advance an American and universalist message, and many combining the two.

In his book *Change and Challenge*, George MacDonald argues the value of preserving various types of information within museums:

[36] Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 13.
[37] Stier, *Committed to Memory,* 116.

> All museums are, at the most fundamental level, concerned with information: its generation, its perpetuation, its organization, and its dissemination. Implicit in this premise is the idea that museums' principle resource—their collection of material remnants of the past—are of value, are worth preserving, primarily for the information embodied in them. The information may be intellectual, aesthetic, sensory, or emotional in nature (or more likely some combination), depending on the object of its associations. The same value is also applicable to the newer, non-material resource collections museums are building, such as oral histories, photographs, audiovisual materials, replicas and reenacted processes.[38]

Holocaust museums in particular are designed to create intellectual and emotional connections with their visitors while reflecting the sociopolitical agenda with which each museum was created.

Most of the early Holocaust museum exhibits reflected an exceptionalist perspective, focusing on the idea that the Holocaust was unlike any other event in history and combining that belief with Jewish particularism. The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust was the first Holocaust museum in America, founded in 1961 by a group of survivors who met in an English as a Second Language course in Hollywood.[39] They discovered that each of them had a photograph, a concentration camp uniform, or other precious object from the era.[40] Instead of keeping the objects in their homes, they decided together to display the objects in perpetuity. The local Jewish Federation found space in its twelfth floor offices to mount the initial exhibit in 1978 and, together with survivors, hosted thousands of Los Angeles County public school students in an effort to show "what was lost."[41] In 1991, rather than survivors telling their story on the road to death, museum designers began with positive descriptions of

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[38] George MacDonald, *Change and Challenges*: *Museum in Informational Society* (Washington: Smithsonian Information Press, 1991), 160.
[39] "History," LA Museum of the Holocaust, accessed January 22, 2019, http://www.lamoth.org/the-museum/history/.
[40] Ibid.
[41] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 304.

Jewish culture and European life leading up to the 1930s and 1940s. The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust opened its new, permanent facility on October 14, 2010, featuring award winning architecture which complements an exhibit that educates about the Holocaust from a Jewish lens.

In 1984, a small group of South Florida Holocaust survivors recognized a need for a memorial in honor of the six million Jewish victims of Nazi terror.[42] A year later, they established a non-profit organization, the Holocaust Memorial Committee, to dedicate a memorial in Miami Beach, which houses the largest population of survivors in the region with over 20,000. The committee was met with public dissent, as a large group of citizens objected to the memorial, citing their opposition to the "gloom on the sunny beaches of Miami."[43] Others believed that by memorializing Jews on the city-owned land of Miami the memorial violated laws of separation of church and state. Following weeks of deliberation and city council meetings, the city agreed to dedicate several city blocks to the new memorial cite. They used the particular site as an educational piece, with its physical address as 1933–1945 Meridian Avenue, reflecting the years of the Holocaust.[44]

In the same year, the Dallas Holocaust Museum also created a place for survivors to memorialize the family members they had lost in the Holocaust in the basement of the city's Jewish Community Center. However, it took the form of a museum with artifacts and a boxcar which transported Holocaust prisoners, obtained from the Belgium government in 1984. Initially, the Dallas Holocaust Museum represented a Jewish perspective and agenda of

[42] "History of the Holocaust Memorial," Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, accessed January 23, 2019, https://holocaustmemorialmiamibeach.org/about/history/.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

Jewish memorialization; when it moved locations years later, as we will see, it transformed its message to a greater universalism.

By the late 1980s, a shift in perspective had begun within American Holocaust museums. Florida introduced its first Holocaust museum in 1992 in the St. Petersburg/Tampa area and began the shift from a particular Jewish perspective to a combination reflecting some universalist aspects of Holocaust memorialization. The museum originally aimed to educate with the Jewish aim of *zakhor* and began, as in Dallas, in the local Jewish Community Center. By 1999, however, it had moved into its own building, officially changed its name to the Florida Holocaust Museum, and wrote a new, more universalist mission statement of preventing mass genocide in any community and challenging anyone who promotes injustice and hatred.[45]

The struggle of the particular versus universal in Holocaust memorialization reached the national level in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the establishment of two of the larger Holocaust museums in America, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. Extreme discussion went into the formation and development of the USHMM not only as a museum, but a national memorial representing how America relates to the Holocaust. The Memorial Museum's committee, through the guidance of Wiesel and Michael Berenbaum, established a national definition of the Holocaust, determining it a Jewish event.[46] Museum designers thoughtfully contrasted the museum's location on the National Mall with its architecture reflecting the German industrial style, highlighting the dichotomy between America's

[45] "The Florida Holocaust Museum History," Florida Holocaust Museum, accessed January 22, 2019, https://www.flholocaustmuseum.org/about/fhm-history/.
[46] See Chapter 2

democratic values and those of Nazi fascism. At the museum's dedication in 1993, the president and vice president's presence, along with other world leaders, signified that the Holocaust was not only a crucial memory for survivors or members of the American public, but also that it might help those entrusted with affairs of the state to navigate through troubled waters.[47] Inside the museum, the main exhibit leaned towards the Holocaust as a Jewish story, but other exhibits expanded to include the crimes against people of other victimized groups.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center's *Beit HaShoah*—Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles chose a vastly different perspective from the start. Responding to the Rodney King Riots of 1991, racial tolerance became the center of discussion in Southern California. With South Central Los Angeles in flames, city councilpersons and board members of the museum concluded that a tolerance center was necessary to promote action against hatred.[48] According to the Museum's website, the museum's board planned the Museum of Tolerance as a "human rights laboratory and educational center, dedicated to challenging visitors to understand the Holocaust in both historic and contemporary contexts and contront all forms of prejudice and discrimination in the world today."[49] To this end, they created dual main exhibits, one focusing on the Holocaust and the other addressing universal tolerance. The two exhibits depicted the correlation between particular Holocaust education and universal tolerance education, but the separation of the two also allowed visitors to confront each subject on its own terms.

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[47] Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 2.
[48] "Our History and Vision," Museum of Tolerance, accessed January 23, 2019, http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.4866027/k.88E8/Our_History_and_Vision.htm.
[49] Ibid.

Two more recent museums reflected the shift towards a greater universal interpretation of Holocaust in Houston, TX, and Skokie, IL. Like many of the preceding museums, Holocaust survivors initiated the founding of the Houston museum, but with a different angle: using the Holocaust as a backdrop to promote awareness of the dangers of prejudice, hatred, and violence.[50] They claim that fostering Holocaust remembrance, understanding, and education will educate students about the overall uniqueness of the event and its ongoing lesson: that humankind must learn to live together in peace and harmony.[51] The main exhibit presents a Danish rescue boat from 1943 when Danes risked their lives to save more than 7,200 people, Jews and non-Jews alike. They also placed an exhibit on display showing the atrocities of the Darfur genocide through photography, including graphic images of torture, starvation, and death, similar themes to the Holocaust. While Judaism plays a role in Holocaust education, the Houston Holocaust Museum, like Dallas, attempts to frame the Holocaust through a universal lens rather than one of sole Jewish victimization.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie uses advanced interactive technology to educate visitors about the Holocaust. A neo-Nazi threat to march in Skokie in the late 1970s created outrage among Holocaust survivors and the desire to create a Holocaust education center. After nearly 30 years of local advocacy and education, a 27,000 square foot facility opened in April 2009 to memorialize all people murdered in the Holocaust, but also to teach the young population of the dangers of hatred and prejudice.[52] The museum's leadership also ensured the passage of the Illinois Holocaust Education Mandate in 1990, making Illinois the

[50] "History of Holocaust Museum Houston," Houston Holocaust Museum, accessed January 22, 2019, https://hmh.org/au_history.shtml.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "History," Illinois Holocaust Museum, accessed January 23, 2019, https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/pages/about/history/.

first state to require Holocaust Education in public schools.[53] Their exhibits include the genocides of Armenia, Cambodia, Guatemala, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur through the lens of the Holocaust, expressing its universal dangers. Additionally, they created the Take a Stand Center, which features hologrammed interviews with survivors with the help of the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. They allow visitors to engage and interact with actual survivors, even after their death, keeping alive the first hand accounts of survivors. The four interactive galleries guide visitors through social justice issues, empowering them to stand up against hatred.

An In-Depth Look into Two American Holocaust Memorial Museums

From the 1960s to the present, particular and universal museums help visitors of all ages understand the horrors and history of the Holocaust and the dangers of injustice and intolerance in context with our changing world. Now, museums like Dallas and Skokie use or plan to use interactive technology to establish emotional connections with the visitor to explain how the Holocaust affects Americans locally and nationally. The next two chapters will take a close, in-depth look into the history of two different Holocaust Museums, the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, and the Dallas Holocaust Museum. Each provides a different experience and allows visitors to engage with Holocaust education through both particular and universal lenses, bringing to life the ongoing debate on the national and local levels. The politics behind each of their creations, their messages, and

[53] Ibid.

effect on present and future societal norms will also be discussed, addressing the current relevance and necessity, yet variance, of American Holocaust memorialization in museums.

Chapter 2: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC

Introduction to the USHMM

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, proudly standing steps away from the National Mall, placed the Holocaust at the center of the American landscape upon its official opening on April 22, 1993.[54] While some might immediately think that a national museum designed to educate visitors about the events of World War II and the Holocaust and combat anti-Semitism appropriately belongs in a geographical location that stresses the importance of democracy and freedom. Another might ask, "why in our nation's capital and why on the Mall? Why should we fund and create a national memorial for an event that occurred overseas and was not inherently American?" These questions reflect the foundational controversy and discussion regarding the establishment, physical design, and designer's intentional agenda. The Memorial Museum attempts to induce an emotional response by educating its visitors about American reactions to the Holocaust from a historical context within American society as an institution aimed at reflecting our national values and enhancing our collective memory through events that contrasted those ideals. By doing so, the USHMM established a changing perspective in Holocaust museums from particularly Jewish to the universal dangers of genocide through a Holocaust framework.

In response to troubling events of injustice and war during the late 1960s and early 1970s, American and Jewish community leaders began emphasizing the importance of remembering the Holocaust only twenty years after American liberation of the Jews in

[54] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 1.

Nazi-occupied lands. In addition to the Eichmann trial and anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, many scholars also see the Six-Day War between Israel and neighboring Arab countries as a turning point in an American-Jewish relationship to the Holocaust. On June 5, 1967, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser joined forces with Jordan, Syria, and Iraq and ordered the mobilization of their military to attack Israel, who preemptively assaulted over 90 percent of Egypt's aircraft on the tarmac, leaving them vulnerable to future attacks.[55] Three days later, Israel had captured the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and the Golan Heights, expanding its territory by more than double. As Israel was threatened with annihilation, Westerners, both Jewish and gentile, responded by recognizing a continued worldwide Jewish fragility. Jews who had attempted to assimilate into American society post-Holocaust began re-engaging with their cultural Jewish identity.

Jewish theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel saw the Six-Day War as the beginning of a new revolution as "complacency collapsed when Jewish history, past, present and future, were at stake."[56] The Jewish Defense League coined the term "Never Again" regarding Jewish genocide, as well as to refer to Vietnam War and American national politics. Universities professors infused Holocaust study into their curricula, correlating the inhumane, violent acts of World War II with the Vietnam War. Following these events, Holocaust trends within American society transitioned from reflecting a sense of detachment to awareness and education.

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[55] *Encyclopedia Britannica Online,* s.v. "Six-Day-War," accessed January 23, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/event/Six-Day-War.

[56] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973), 196-198.

The Initial Tension Between Particularism and Universalism

As memory and consciousness shifted, Americans advanced their desire to place Holocaust research and education as a priority as opposed to an afterthought. United States President Jimmy Carter responded to the call and created an initial "Presidential Commission on the Holocaust" in 1978, he claimed these lessons were "too valuable to let go".[57]

The political climate also contributed to Carter's insistence on the commission's formation. In fact, Carter held little interest in Holocaust memory, but rather in domestic policy appealing to Jewish interests.[58] Following extreme anger within the Jewish community regarding military aircraft sales to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which were initially promised to Israel, Carter appointed his deputy assistant, Mark Siegel, to be his liaison to the Jewish community. Feeling betrayed for political gain, Jewish American groups powerfully divided themselves from the Carter administration.

The official Jewish community continued to feel a strain with President Carter's policies, particularly those involving Israel relations, in the late 1970s. Recognizing the need to repair the relationship after the military aircraft sale to Arab countries and the recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization at the 1977 Geneva Peace Talks, President Carter honored the American-Israeli relationship and Israel's 30th anniversary by suggesting the construction of a national memorial for the Holocaust's fallen victims.[59] This gesture proves Carter's understanding of Jewish political importance and, perhaps most importantly, the

[57] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 12.
[58] Ibid., 17.
[59] Ibid., 18.

ability for Jewish groups to possess an influential new voice within the American political scene.

Was the administration's relationship with Israel and the Jewish community so greatly strained as to necessitate creating a committee to build a national memorial to the Holocaust to teach lessons about this horrific time in history or did Carter really attempt to express the dichotomy between American values and those presented in World War II Europe? Perhaps one could argue for both reasons.

The creation of the Presidential Commision on the Holocaust may also have been a response to troubling American societal human rights policies and developments. Segregation and racial insensitivity, particularly in the southern United States, inspired progressive Americans to fight for the civil rights of the country's black citizens, as well as other minorities. Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, they continued to find myriad reasons to protest the government's policies, especially the war itself and the newly recognizable integration of black and white soldiers, attempting to create and sustain an equal society across the country. While black soldiers were nothing new in the military, some Americans expressed concern regarding their service, risking their lives for a country that struggled to value their equality.

In light of these social issues, the Holocaust became a major academic and social discussion point as people began comparing its inhumanity to that of the Vietnam War and the American Civil Rights struggle. As the Vietnam War came to an end, a large number of Americans not only questioned the necessity of the war, but also how the country's values aligned with those which were instilled within its national identity. From a Jewish

perspective, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel identified the Vietnam War in a PBS interview with Anchor Peter Geffen as an "ultimate act of dehumanization—to no longer even see that there was an enemy on the other side who was a human being. And Heschel was convinced that if I act with a disregard for the humanity of my fellow human beings, I am really ultimately attacking God."[60] Essentially, many felt disoriented by the war, its results, and dehumanization, and academic leaders felt the need to teach Jews and non-Jews about the horrors of war, and the difference between good and evil.[61]

However, while teaching both wars, professors and lecturers illumined the true horrors of the Holocaust, thus emphasizing the genocide of the Jews and other minorities. Additionally, educators struggled to compare Nazi actions to any other act of war.[62] The United States engaged in World War II and Vietnam to preserve their democratic values, which represented the "good," while communism and fascism stood for the "evil." President Carter saw the opportunity to present the Holocaust within those terms, and challenged his newly formed Presidential Commission to find a way to depict that narrative.

Carter formally announced the commission of 34 members on May 1, 1978 with a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden, and charged it with the responsibility to file a report "with respect to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust."[63] He stressed the correlation between the memorial commission and the United States/Israel support relationship, proclaiming that Americans

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[60] Bob Abernathy, "Abraham Joshua Heschel" (includes an interview with Heschel) 9:37, accessed January 18, 2008, https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2008/01/18/january-18-2008-abraham-joshua-heschel/1789/.
[61] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 11.
[62] Ibid.
[63] "The President's Commission on the Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed December 5, 2018, https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/presidents-commission.

shall never forget both relationships (that of Americans to the Holocaust and that of the Americans and Israelis). He charged the commission to report within six months, referring to the six million perished Jews.[64]

Carter's final charge during the Rose Garden ceremony created the controversy which would face the commission during and following the report and memorial planning stages: Who were Holocaust victims? Were the six million Jews the only victims, or should American memorialization include the more than five million other minorities, including, but not limited to, gypsies, those with mental and physical disabilities, and non-Aryan "races"? Did Americans care enough about the Jewish cause, or would a universal memorialization become necessary to place it on the broader society's radar?

Historian Peter Novick suggests that while Holocaust history became a part academic scholarship in the 1970s, non-Jewish Americans still felt indifference toward Israel and the overall well-being of American Jews.[65] Yet, while most American white Christians gained an interest in learning about Holocaust studies, other minorities became offended by what they saw as Jewish insistence on making the Holocaust "unique," as opposed to other genocides as "ordinary."[66] Some members of United States Congress also supported this concern, including Minnesota Senator Wendell Anderson, cueing a commission which focused on the eleven million victims rather than only perished Jews. These suggestions led the commission to believe that a Holocaust memorial should be more than a large, marble slab, but an institution that offers strong educational value.[67]

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[64] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 19-20.
[65] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life,* 188.
[66] Ibid., 192
[67] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 21.

Survivor and Holocaust education activist Elie Wiesel, along with Dr. Michael Berenbaum, led the commission through a wide debate preparing for their report's final submission to Carter in 1979, primarily defining the Holocaust. Wiesel, an exceptionalist according to Mintz's terminology, stressed the recognition of a distinctive Jewish dimension of the Holocaust, crucial to Holocaust memory, much of which they felt the President never recognized. Wiesel believed visitors to such a memorial museum would lack the understanding of the Holocaust's impact if they did not view it foremost through a unique, Jewish lens. Following a commision trip to Europe and stepping foot in Holocaust spaces, they felt that museum visitors would have to experience such a trip within the space of the museum in order to confront the events viscerally..[68]

On September 27, 1979, Berenbaum presented the commission's Report to the President in the White House's Rose Garden. The presentation emphasized the burden, challenge, and potential of memory, noting that failure to remember the victims would mean becoming accomplices to their murderers.[69] It insisted on the Jewish core of the Holocaust while stressing the remembrance of millions of innocent non-Jewish civilians, calling the event "essentially Jewish, yet its interpretation is universal."[70] Additionally, the commission took a monumental step in supporting the Holocaust as Jewish by defining the Holocaust, something never officially done by American representatives. Based on Wiesel and Berenbaum's leadership, the report concretely defined the Holocaust as the "systematic, bureaucratic extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a

[68] Ibid., 35.
[69] Richard Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* (New York. Harper and Row, 1975), 36.
[70] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 36.

central act of state during the Second World War…As night descended, millions of other people were swept into this net of death… Never before in human history had genocide been an all-pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral constraints."[71] Their definition laid the emotional, architectural, and educational groundwork for what they envisioned for a future Holocaust memorial museum and how a national Holocaust museum would create Holocaust memory.

The commission recommended the creation of a "living memorial", which would include memorial and museum space, an educational foundation, and a committee on conscience, the latter to consist of "distinguished moral leaders in America," who would call governmental and public attention to global genocide; they proposed that "Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust" should be added to the national calendar; they called for recommended governmental actions that were appropriate forms of remembering, calling for the ratification of the Genocide Treaty, asking that Nazi war criminals living in the United States be sought out and prosecuted.[72]

In addition to Wiesel's exceptionalist perspective, the commission also adopted a constructivist lens and deemed it necessary to place such an important event in world history within a distinctly American frame. The national memorial museum needed to reflect the commission's mission and goals, while placing it in a high profile city that helped visitors connect to an essentially non-American event. In addition to content and Holocaust definition, the museum's geographic location became central to the debate to discover its place on the American scope of memorialization. The commision needed to decide the most

[71] "Report to the President: President's Commission on the Holocaust," accessed December 13, 2018. https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20050707-presidents-commission-holocaust.pdf.
[72] Ibid.

appropriate city for the memorial museum: New York (which featured the country's largest and oldest Jewish population) or Washington, the nation's capital. Why should a national museum with its primary focus on Nazi genocide in Europe reside in Washington, DC, along the National Mall, next to other memorial sites and museums featuring various aspects of American history?

The committee appointed a council, made up of many of the same previous committee members, to begin the Memorial Museum's planning stages. Council members such as Hyman Bookbinder, Washington representative for the American Jewish Committee, believed that the nation's capital was the perfect location because it was to be a "national" memorial.[73] Irving Bernstein, executive vice-chairman of the United Jewish Appeal agreed, saying "a Washington site would give this institution a unique character and special opportunity to contribute to national life. It would make clear that the commemoration of the Holocaust is a concern of the entire American population."[74] While many agreed with the likes of Bookbinder and Bernstein, others argued against an American site altogether. Dissenters stated that a vulgar tragedy would be memorialized as another tourist attraction.[75] This argument should not be overlooked, as, at times, visitors to other Washington memorial monuments, such as the Lincoln, World War II, and Vietnam Memorials have in fact acted disrespectfully. Further, many tourists who are educationally ignorant to these events act with correlating behavior at the sites, including loud noises, running, throwing balls off walls, and other similar inappropriate actions. It can be argued that Washington location dissenters held similar concerns for a Holocaust memorial site. Additionally, they also worried about

[73] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 58.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

community resentment over the project's funding, especially if Americans viewed the Holocaust as a particular Jewish event.

Upon hearing the location arguments, the council, with more than half of its members being Jewish, decided to locate the Memorial Museum in Washington. The decision appealed to most involved parties: Memory of the Holocaust would remain the province of American Jews, while representatives of non-Jewish victim groups felt empowered to claim what was also their place in an institution of national Holocaust memory.[76] Once they reached a consensus, they chose a site along the Washington National Mall, directly adjacent to the Washington Monument and next to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. They chose this location to remind Americans of the dangers of being bystanders, to teach Americans about where Christian anti-semitism could lead, and impress upon Americans the fragile relationship between technology and human values.[77] It belonged at the center of American life because as a democratic civilization, America is the enemy of racism and its ultimate expression, genocide.[78] Focus group members believed that the Mall location could impress upon visitors the need to take personal responsibility for issues usually deemed affairs of the state.[79] In other words, it would help Americans see that genocide did not end with the Holocaust, but can be present if society remains complacent. It could prove cautionary for society, warning of the consequences of not appreciating the lessons.[80] Recent plans for the National Museum of the American Indian and the recently opened National African American Museum now join the Holocaust museum in transforming American identity of the

[76] Ibid., 59.
[77] Ibid., 66.
[78] Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 337.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 67.

mall. It would not just be art, natural history, and space exploration museums, but museums that collected language, literature, and various cultural experiences. Despite focusing on broader cultures, the three museums show cultural hardships and what progressive Americans can identify as the fight against inhumanity. Not only would it remind visitors of the crimes of another people in another land, but would help Americans to recall their nation's own idealized reason for being, along with its own atrocities committed in the past.[81]

While the exhibits were planned to act as the primary method for Holocaust education, the Memorial Museum's internal and external architecture needed to reflect the validity for its placement on the Mall. The council challenged architects to design an institute which told the Holocaust's story, the American relationship to the events, and to blend into surrounding Washington buildings. Within a report titled "The Red Book," committee members attempted to create an environment which removed visitors from the core values of American society (democracy, freedom, etc.) and placed them within central European, cold spaces filled with iron and brick. According to historian James E. Young, this proved significant to Americans for three main reasons: to educate visitors that American troops were the first to liberate many of the death camps and helped expose the horrible truth of what had been done, along with becoming a haven for survivors;[82] to engage Americans to share the responsibility for not being willing to acknowledge a short time prior that this horrible event was occuring; and to remind society of its humanity while being concerned with the human rights of all peoples, which should "lead us to study the systematic

[81] Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 337.
[82] Ibid., 336.

destruction of the Jews so that we may seek to learn how to prevent it from happening again in the future".[83]

The USHMM Building and Exhibit Design

Museum designers attempted to create a chronological flow so that each space acts not only as a physical location to learn about the objects and events within the walls, but as a historical arc providing the trajectory of human emotional and physical senses in World War II Europe.[84] They took into account being in small crowded spaces and dark rooms and the inability to avoid them wish is a key component in experiencing the event. Not only would the museum illustrate the loss of life, but it would also emphasize the chasm between the Holocaust events and the everyday freedoms that Americans might take for granted.[85]

"The Red Book" suggested that "every space in the museum's interior must be used to bear witness to the awesome realities of the Holocaust, to evoke in visitors empathy and reverence for the six million Jews and millions of others who suffered and perished, and to provoke in people of all ages and backgrounds questions that engender more questions."[86] They identified three major components to the Memorial Museum, each of which could create a sense of immediate engagement for visiting Americans: The Hall of Witnesses, the Hall of Remembrance, and the Hall of Learning, which constituted the museum's main exhibit and educational areas.

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Michael Bernard-Donals, *Figures of Memory: The Rhetoric of Displacement at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 24.
[85] Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 336.
[86] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* 68.

Twenty five years following its opening, it remains clear that James Ingo Freed, the lead museum architect, succeeded in presenting a museum exterior which joined Washington's urban character while creating an interior that metaphorically removes visitors from Washington. Within seconds, an American visitor is transported from democratic, capitalist Washington to the suddenly dark, industrial feel of German- occupied Europe. The four-story atrium, known as the Hall of Witness, contains red brick walls and dark gray steel structures, reminiscent of a prison building. The roof is a grand skylight with skewed glass and steel, hinting at the unstable state of the world during the war.[87] A wide stairway goes up to the second floor, which leads into a gate with an Auschwitz-like brick arched wall.

Each visitor receives an identity card of a Holocaust victim, which Berenbaum described as an immediate "personal leap of identity."[88] At the end of the exhibit, visitors insert the card into a computer to see pictures and the personal story of the victim. The exhibit begins in powerful and shocking fashion with America's first direct Holocaust experience: an on-screen video of the American soldiers who liberated Nazi camps Buchenwald and Dachau. Rather than portraying a photo of charred human remains, which was previously suggested and could prove initially overwhelming to visitors, these film shows the shock and awe of the soldier's faces, causing visitors to feel what the soldiers felt in that moment.

The USHMM exhibit tells a story unlike other Holocaust museums primarily in Europe and Israel,[89] which leads to a story that directly affects Americans. The museum is

[87] Jeshajahu Weinberg and Rena Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington* (New York: Rizzoli Publication Inc., 1995), 25.
[88] Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 342.
[89] Ibid., 345.

considered a narrative historical museum, meaning it tells a historical story rather than being just a collection of artifacts and random stories. Instead of beginning and ending with the destruction of the European Jews or a dying European diaspora, the USHMM reflects an essential exilic bias, showing the richness of Jewish life lost in the Holocaust.[90] The museum does not only portray this through large monitors and small exhibit explanations to read. The museum includes individual places to sit with monitors and headphones to help visitors see the ignorance of many Americans, including government and military officials, and the debate among those who knew of rumors but remained ambivalent. One could listen to the debate on whether Americans should participate in the 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin based on reports of Nazi minority prohibition in the Games. The museum provides audio recordings of American Olympic Committee President Avery Brundage stating, "The very foundation of the modern Olympic revival will be undermined if individual countries are allowed to restrict participation based on religion, race, or creed." Another audio clip presents President Roosevelt's distance from the issue, explaining the 40-year tradition of American Olympic Organization independence from governmental influence.[91] While American athletes ultimately traveled to Berlin, the brief videos allow listeners to place themselves within the discussion, to become a part of the debate. Through this lens, visitors can feel what it was like to be American during those days and begin to pose questions as to America's lack of involvement when times became dire for European Jews.

[90] Ibid.
[91] "The Movement to Boycott the Berlin Olympics of 1936," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 2, 2019, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-movement-to-boycott-the-berlin-olympics-of-1936.

Bearing witness to 1930s America, visitors are transformed from Americans to European Jews to emphasize the dichotomy between themselves and Holocaust prisoners as the chronology progresses. They cross a narrow bridge to reach a section on ghetto life, walking on cobblestone that once paved Chlodna Street inside of the Ghetto, viewing artifacts that help visitors understand the scope of ghetto life.[92] This section of the museum prepares them to enter a world of mass murder and shows how quickly one can go from freedom to imprisonment to death. Immediately following viewers see a section about the *Einsatzgruppen*, Nazi mobile killing units, images of actual mass murder. A picture of a member of the *Einsatzgruppen* holding a gun to a prisoner's head at the top of a large grave is displayed next to information describing the "millions of Jews" and "countless non-Jews" murdered by this group, including the events of Babi Yar, where 33,771 Jews perished outside of Kiev, Ukraine. Two large pieces of text help contextualize the quick nature of the mobile killing squads, including a notice to Kiev Jewish residents and a quote from a Russian soldier: "On September 29, 1941, all Jews of the city of Kiev and its outskirts must appear by 8AM…. Take along your documents, currency, and valuables, as well as warm clothing, underwear, etc. Any Jew who fails to appear as ordered and found elsewhere will be shot dead." Russian Soldier and poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko writes, "The wild grasses rustle over Babi Yar, the trees look ominous. Here, all things scream silently. And baring my head, slowly I feel myself feeling gray. And I myself, am one massive, soundless scream above the thousand thousand buried here."[93]

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[92] Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 346.
[93] Yevgeny Yevtushenko, "Babi Yar," accessed February 6, 2019, https://www-tc.pbs.org/auschwitz/learning/guides/reading1.4.pdf.

The shocking Babi Yar imagery leads the visitor into Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps, focusing on the mass annihilation of Jews and featuring actual barracks imported from Poland. Visitors can see models of the gas chambers and crematoriums, canisters of the lethal Zyklon-B gas used in the chambers, and actual striped uniforms worn by the camp's prisoners and a replica of the iconic "*Arbeit Macht Frei*" sign at the entryway to Auschwitz—"work will set you free." A quote from Auschwitz survivor Wiesel's book *Night* sits in stone next to the red brick and black iron crematorium oven replicas:

> Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times curses and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.

The section ends with two features meant to have an emotional impact, slowly returning the visitor from victimhood into American conscience: a room full of victim's shoes and luggage, along with visuals of human hair that was extracted from victims at Auschwitz; and a question of why the American military and government failed to bomb Auschwitz when presented with the proposal. Above the shoes reads a quote from Yiddish Poet Moses Schulstein, "We are the shoes, we are the last witnesses. We are shoes from grandchildren and grandfathers, from Prague, Paris, and Amsterdam, and because we are only made of fabric and leather and not of blood and flesh, each one of us avoided the hellfire." While the shoes doesn't emphasize Jewish ownership, the overwhelming smell and sight of these shoes along with the quote suggest the fragility of life and how Nazis

disregarded the humanity of victims, the antithesis of the American ideal of "We the People." A small, yet powerful, section regarding the debate over an American attack on Auschwitz brings the visitor back to an American framework and poses the question in response to the suggested American ambivalence, "What would you do?"

Following the emotional section about the Final Solution and mass murder, visitors begin the journey to American liberation, while still keeping the painful and emotional nature of their previous experience close to mind. Videos present the stories of ghetto fighters, survivors, and righteous gentiles, and begin "the return to life."[94] According to Young, as America sees itself as a land of refuge and freedom,[95] the immigration story and the gradual integration of Holocaust memory into American civic culture present itself within the exhibit. He describes a walk-through with Michael Berenbaum as they approach the final part of the exhibit: "When people leave the USHMM, the monuments to democracy that surround it—the Lincoln and Jefferson and Washington—will take on new meaning."[96]

Before leaving the building, visitors walk through the Hall of Remembrance, a large, hexagonal shaped room lined with biblical verses depicting remembrance, with candles and the names of the Nazi camps, complete with one large flame to recall all of the Holocaust victims. Albeit a small section of the larger museum, the Hall of Remembrance transforms the USHMM into a "Memorial Museum." Elie Wiesel called the Hall of Remembrance a "visual symbol which will emphasize the countless names of Holocaust victims in a stark, yet sacred atmosphere… for contemplation and personal commemoration."[97] This culminates the

[94] Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 347.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Michael Berenbaum, in James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 347.
[97] Bernard-Donals, *Figures of Memory,* 31.

visitor's journey through the Memorial Museum's five functions: a memorial function (The Hall of Remembrance), a historical function (the main permanent exhibit), an interactive educational function (temporary exhibits and audio-visual learning centers), a traditional educational function (lectures and conferences), and an archival function (an archive library). Each of these five functions provide Americans an opportunity for connection to past events and present concerns.

Personal Observations and Opinions

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum became an unquestionably appropriate centerpiece of national collective Holocaust memory and has continued to be one for the past twenty-six years. The architecture and internal exhibits represent our values and who we are as Americans, and the absolute dichotomy between freedom and fascism, not through facts and figures but through an anxious, emotional connection to the experience. A museum might have been enough to educate visitors of the Holocaust's devastating inhumanity; however, the memorial aspect brings the death of Holocaust and Nazi persecution victims and the danger of losing freedoms to the forefront of American minds.

Walking through Washington, one can become enamoured with the impressive monuments, beautiful fountains, and powerful national history. Any visitor can enter the Smithsonian's National Archives, Air and Space Museum, or art museums and realize his or her distinct place along the Mall and place within American society. Experiencing famous memorials that directly affected us and our families (e.g., the World War II, Vietnam, and

Lincoln Memorials) can help any American relate. As a Jewish person, I could easily connect to the museum's architecture while approaching the USHMM during my June 2018 visit, first noticing a clocktower and red brick exterior on the sides, mimicking the brick walls of the Auschwitz crematorium. I spent years studying World War II history and knew of the unthinkable Nazi actions. However, how might less educated Americans feel before entering the museum? What about non-Jews who may have not had the opportunity or interest to study Holocaust history? Why visit in the first place?

Standing in line to enter, I posed these questions to a nice Iowan couple visiting the museum for the third time. They choose to visit the USHMM because, "as a Christian, I recognize that the Jewish people are the chosen people. My concern for America makes me wonder whether something like this could happen again? We see a world of hate right in front of us. We've been to Dachau and have seen the evidence and want to pass this historical information down to our grandchildren."[98] They defined the Holocaust as "brutal… the worst thing anyone could imagine."[99] The couple viewed the Holocaust as a Jewish event of victimhood. While others "appeared out of the box, the Nazis clearly tried to destroy the Jews and that should be the focus of this museum."[100] We concluded our conversation with their opinion of the USHMM placement on the National Mall, explaining that "the close placement to other famous landmarks helps progress the history, but nothing overtly political comes to mind."

This couple felt a connection to the Jewish aspect of the Holocaust, and shared the particular and exceptionalist perspective, adopting much of Elie Wiesel's vision for the

[98] Random Interview (No Name Given) in discussion in line in front of USHMM, June 8, 2018.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

Institute. A large percentage of the museum's visitors are students, so the way teachers educate about the Holocaust can help paint the war's picture, and prepare them for what they'll experience. However, as the USHMM explicitly suggests, facts and figures don't create a connection to the Holocaust for the visitor. The USHMM seeks to evoke an anxious, nervous emotion and clearly present the attempted destruction of humanity to elicit a connection between American visitors and the Holocaust.

Walking into the Hall of Witness did not evoke my own personal emotion or the dichotomy from the Washington streets just twenty feet away, as museum designers had hoped. But stepping foot into the elevator transformed that emotion from nervous to stressful. A visitor might not expect to see the horror on the faces of American liberators right away, but they are breathtaking and shocking, and begin the immediate exclusion from the democratic freedoms Americans cherish. He or she relates to the first sight of American liberators, as described with a presented quote from General Dwight Eisenhower in a letter to George Marshall: "The things I saw beggar description… The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and beastiality were… overpowering… I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give first hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.'"

As visitors see the contrasts between Nazi and American values, they might begin to question what American leaders felt about Hitler and a rising dictatorship and loss of Jewish rights in the 1930s. The section regarding President Roosevelt's response at the 1938 Evian Conference teaches that limiting immigration into the United States doesn't show the American government in a sympathetic light.

The USHMM needed to present the Holocaust first and foremost as a Jewish event, while other minorities were presented as victimized by the Nazis upon Wiesel and other leaders' insistence. This relates back to the Commission's initial debate about a Jewish lens or one of universal victimhood. Only after the exhibit showed the decline of Jewish life under Nazi leadership and the initial American response did they incorporate other enemies of the Nazi state. Americans immediately see the written language as they continue the exhibit, with Jews being "victims of the Holocaust," while other minorities (homosexuals, gypsies, those with disabilities, etc.) are defined as "victims of Nazi persecution." Almost as an afterthought, the exhibit brings you back into the Jewish narrative.

By this point, any visitor can feel sympathy with Jewish Europeans during World War II. However, the exhibit frames much of the information and presentation through how Americans reacted to the Holocaust, in the past, present, and future, which seems to be a main aspect of the curator's agenda for contemporary Americans. From the "Emergency Visitors Program" allowing only the famous Jewish European artists to immigrate to the United States as opposed to "normal Jewish refugees," to the Nazi ideology of *Lebensraum*, living space between Germans and minorities, visitors could clearly question American responsibility for the decline of Jewish life under Nazi leadership.

The exhibit places the debates between Jewish groups regarding immigration and the disapproval of Nazi acts on full display, engaging visitors with the same debate officials may have had decades prior. Immediately after finishing this second section of the main exhibit, I noticed teachers answering student questions and parents engaging with their children. It seemed clear that they were asking many of those similar questions, wondering about the

"writing on the wall" and realizing the difference between their lives and those in Nazi Germany.

The section of the Warsaw Ghetto wall brought forth powerful emotions for myself and visitors, especially with the border wall conversations occurring in America today. A large section of the brick wall with a darkly lit atmosphere in the room brought to life the feeling of being enclosed. As visitors stood in front of the wall, they watched a video that depicted Nazi S.S. (police) officers humiliate and dehumanize Jewish residents, as well as the physical differences of Ghetto life compared the residents' to prior living conditions. Beginning to comprehend the separation between Jews and Germans, power and minority, the exhibit emphasizes the leap from uncertain imprisonment to impending death. Pictures of the *Einsatzgruppen* mass murders and victim portraits allow guests to stare into the eyes of Holocaust victims and listen to their voices, humanizing the dehumanized. As I observed, it became more clear that the American visitors cared more about the people of the exhibit than the Holocaust's numeric facts and figures such as most textbooks and museums offer. The exhibit is designed to touch humans through a commitment to historical and emotional truth. The building size, surrounding atmosphere, and geographical location place the Holocaust on a grand and comparable scale to other historical events in American history. This separates the USHMM from other smaller institutions, and brings the American narrative of freedom and preservation of humanity to life and creates the divide between our society and Nazi Germany. The planning team adopted the task to present the Holocaust as an unprecedented breakdown of civilization that emphasizes victim memory, and not in a Jewish museum that

teaches about the Holocaust, but one that presents events that address inclusivity and contemporary issues of genocide and racism.

While the Auschwitz section of the exhibit places recreations of concentration camp barracks, models of crematoria, and other artifacts on display, eliciting powerful and emotional responses from visitors, the section which housed the largest group of people at one time was titled "Why the Americans never bombed Auschwitz." Visitors scrolled through readings and videos while walking through the exhibits, but I noticed all the visitors stopped to read this information, for they might have wondered the same thing. With only a short section of the main exhibit remaining, museum designers enabled visitors to engage with this part of the debate. I heard one visitor ask his father, "Why didn't they do it anyways? I would have. Yes, others might die, but they could have saved thousands more by stopping it from happening more."[101]

The final stop of the main exhibit, the Hall of Remembrance, presents the largest difference for visitors between this memorial and others located in Washington. The story and narrative, along with sympathy and in some cases, empathy, helped prepare visitors to memorialize Holocaust victims. Unlike other national memorials in the Washington area, the hexagonal hall is small, private, and mostly silent. Visitors have the option of lighting memorial candles next to the names of each Nazi Concentration or Death Camp, reestablishing the personal connection to victims. Standing in the middle of the room, one can see a memorial eternal flame juxtaposed with a black backdrop with two windows, sharing glimpses of the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial, two pillars of

[101] Conversation between father and son (no name given) in exhibit during USHMM visit, June 8, 2018.

American freedom and democracy. Interestingly, while people stand at other memorials like the Jefferson and Washington, taking pictures, laughing, running, and playing games, the Hall of Remembrance offers visitors a memorializing atmosphere, challenging Americans to remember so that these events cannot happen again, and we can play a preventative role by being aware. As Americans, that is our responsibility.

Upon leaving the USHMM, one truly recognizes that proposed dichotomy between inside the museum and on the Washington streets. If visitors look at the Holocaust through an American lens, they can own and ensure humanity's sanctity. The museum's presentation of American liberation teaches visitors that prior to the liberation our citizens were bystanders and did not do enough to stop the Nazi propaganda and genocidal operation. This provides even more reason for the USHMM to geographically stand in its current location, and as the main national educational institute and memorial. Americans need to be involved in the preservation of society, and the USHMM represents when we were not, capturing the difference between what America "is" and what Nazi Germany "was." Although the story weaves in the Jewish perspective, it is certainly not a Jewish heritage museum. While infusing the European Jewish story, the museum shows how Americans reacted to the most horrific genocide during and after the war. The human emotion and connection that results from a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is what makes it not only a museum, but a national memorial. It creates a collective American memory and allows visitors to use their senses to create our national story. The human story is intrinsically American and helps display our national values.

USHMM Conclusions

The museum's main exhibit has remained mostly the same since its opening twenty-six years ago. It has become one of Washington's most visited attractions, at 1.6 million visitors annually and over 35 million since it opened. Additionally, visitors include over nine million students and over 90 heads of state.[102] It provides the opportunity for Americans and foreign visitors to visualize the American perspective of the Holocaust, ask questions of American involvement, and contemplate why the Holocaust needs to be ingrained within the scope of American memorialization. The museum stands at center of that discussion and at the peak of the national conversation.

While each visitor walks into the USHMM with a different background and story and has a personalized experience of general events, the museum offers the ability to see the particular and universal dangers of inhumanity while primarily focusing thematically on the Jewish experience. A current exhibit portrays the story of a young Syrian student attempting to survive throughout the onslaught of war. While this doesn't have much to do with the Holocaust, the exhibit attempts to bring Americans closer to the idea of current genocidal events throughout the world and to create a connection with other victims and the dangers of being bystanders. Washington Post columnist Tara Bahrampour describes the main exhibit, surrounding temporary exhibits, and educational centers as "providing visitors with the sense

[102] Lonnae O'Neal Parker, "The Holocaust Museum at 20," *Washington Post*, April 26, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/the-holocaust-museum-at-20/2013/04/25/0b02f3d8-ac2c-11e2-a8b9-2a63d75b5459_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.553dc1fec29d.

that the Holocaust is not only about memorizing facts and figures, but a mystery that one must solve for themselves."[103]

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum tells the journey of Americans before, during, and after World War II. It helps visitors connect to a European event on a national level and leads us to see the dangers of being bystanders. Discussed and developed in the 1980s and opened in the 1990s, the museum is still extremely relevant in American culture, both technologically and educationally. With extensive funding and a geographic advantage, any national memorial museum can remain strong and vibrant. As long as the museum continues to teach the universal dangers of genocide along with the particular Jewish perspective as Holocaust victims, the USHMM can and should be the memorial museum that Americans of all ages visit to learn how Holocaust memory correlates to their American identity.

Many local museums attempt to teach similar values. For example, the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, the Holocaust Museum in Skokie, and the New England Museum of the Holocaust all provide a different part of the whole story told by the USHMM. Moving through the 21st century, it is becoming more important for museum designers and Holocaust educators to continue developing methods of teaching a sensitive and important subject as the final survivors reach their life's end. The Dallas Holocaust Museum presents a truly exceptional example of the engagement and innovation necessary as we progress to the next chapter in Holocaust remembrance and education.

[103]Ibid.

Chapter 3: The Dallas Holocaust Museum, Dallas Texas

Introduction to The Dallas Holocaust Museum

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum sought to present the Holocaust from a national perspective while establishing one of the first Holocaust museums not strictly founded by survivors solely for memorial purposes. The Dallas Holocaust Museum continued the ongoing transformation from a particular to universal lens by addressing the dangers of being a bystander to prejudice and hatred. This chapter will trace how what began as a memorial founded by survivors became an important example of how a Holocaust museum can integrate its city's history of civil rights problems, racial discrimination, and national tragedy and shape the way the Holocaust can be taught and remembered.

The Holocaust Museum presents its exhibit and its upstander message through the uniqueness of two main historical events in Dallas history: the city's peaceful desegregation and the assassination of President John. F. Kennedy. Historically, Dallas was a politically conservative city against the Civil Rights movement, participated in the segregation of its black and white citizens that defined the southern United States, and was deemed by many as the "City of Hate."[104] Black schools and communities often had inferior facilities and supplies, restaurants and water fountains were completely separate, and society resembled that of other major segregated southern cities like Selma and Birmingham in the 1940s and 1950s. Yet its path to desegregation differs from the popular violent narrative of Civil Rights

[104] Mary Pat Higgins (Chief Executive Officer of the Dallas Holocaust Museum) in Personal Interview, June 18, 2018.

protests in the South, which include the use of water hoses and dog attacks upon peaceful protesters.

Between 1960 and 1965 through the efforts of Dallas Mayor Earle Cabell, local NAACP chair Juanita Craft, and department store owner Stanley Marcus, the city peacefully desegregated. Upon entering office, Cabell called for the integration of Dallas Public Schools and other public spaces, overturned the law banning blacks from city council seats, and convinced local white business owners to desegregate their stores.[105] Craft played a major role in organizing other young black citizens to stand up to segregation laws and run for City Council, together with the mayor, to foster permanent change.[106] Marcus, the founder of the Neiman-Marcus Department Store and one of the wealthiest business owners in the city, led the charge against racial discrimination in his stores, convincing other shop owners, including grocery stores, to overturn separation rules.[107] With their help as upstanders, after nearly a century of civil rights struggles the city peacefully desegregated, claiming this method as "the Dallas Way," a vast change from its previous negative identity.

In addition to the Civil Rights problems, Dallas citizens live in the painful shadow of November 22, 1963, the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dealey Plaza. Many considered Dallas to be "the only city where a president could be shot," according to Writer Lawrence Wright.[108] He continued, "Dallas may always be remembered as the "City of Hate after killing Kennedy,"[109] as its local and national negativity and social justice

[105] "Dallas Mayor, Earle Cabell, receives death threats following the Assassination Weekend," YouTube video, 2:56, posted by "HelmerReenger," Nov 28, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okGNb78YUEo.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Harvey J. Graff, *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 17.
[109] Ibid.

concerns overshadowed any positive nature regarding the city. The Kennedy assassination still brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to Dealey Plaza to stand on the two "X"s in the roadway where shots struck the President's motorcade and remains at the peak of Dallas' historical memory.

Fourteen years following Kennedy's assassination, the city's 125 Holocaust survivors recognized many of the correlations between their city's history and the themes associated with the Holocaust. Upon moving to Dallas after the war, they saw similarities between segregated Dallas and what they witnessed in Europe years earlier.[110] They feared society's "further decline into the valley of darkness and needed to bring forth light through education."[111] Despite being a small number of survivors compared to other large American metropolitan centers like New York and Los Angeles, they identified themselves as forward thinkers, similar to progressive minded leaders like Cabell, Craft, and Marcus, who needed to "tell the story" of the Holocaust.[112] Some of them belonged to a Conservative Synagogue in Dallas, and gathered together outside the sanctuary on *Yom Kippur* in 1977. The group, led by one of its members, Mike Jacobs, dreamed of "having a place where [we] Holocaust survivors could gather and memorialize [our] loved ones." According to Jacobs, its members had no place to grieve those whom they had lost. The members proposed building a memorial center for Holocaust studies, which would include a memorial room wherein they could place memorial stones on the wall.[113]

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[110] Mike Jacobs, *Holocaust Survivor: Mike Jacobs' Triumph over Tragedy,* (Dallas, Mike and Ginger Jacobs, 2012), 183.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Mary Pat Higgins (Chief Executive Officer of the Dallas Holocaust Museum) in Personal Interview, June 18, 2018.
[113] Jacobs, *Holocaust Survivor,* 185.

Together with other survivors, Jacobs formed the Dallas Holocaust Memorial Center in 1984 in the basement of the Dallas Jewish Community Center, at a cost of $350,000, mostly raised by the Jewish Federation and other local supporters.[114] They created a memorial room, along with a small exhibit room, featuring an acquired Nazi railcar used to transport prisoners from Belgium. The boxcar was shortened by one-third to fit into the building and placed at the bottom of the center's stairs as an entry call to the museum to give visitors the "sense of having been there."[115] Some survivors felt discomfort because they "had been there" and felt that once was enough. As a result of their discomfort, museum designers created a separate door for survivors, while the boxcar remained as the main entry for the general public. This made it clear that the initial design emphasized survivor experience and memorializing family members.

Between 1984–2005, the museum's board reflected upon the original geographical placement and exhibit, and questioned whether or not it conflicted with their values of Holocaust education that helped prevent racism and prejudice.The board pushed their goal upon donors, emphasized by their desire to show residents and visitors how far the city has come in 50 years.[116] However, this next stage of development did not promote great enthusiasm due to a struggling economy and the museum's lack of connection with the city's residents.[117] The board had hoped to educate students and their parents about the museum's existence and a basic understanding of prejudice, which current Dallas Holocaust Museum Chief Executive Officer Mary Pat Higgins described as "the only thing the exhibit gave off."

[114] Ibid.
[115] Young, *Textures of Memory*, 298.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.

Existence was not enough. Determining that the museum could achieve two missions, memorializing Holocaust victims and emphasizing the universal dangers of injustice, the board chose to relocate the museum away from Dallas' "Jewish" neighborhood to downtown, to catch the eye of North Texas' general citizens.[118]

The year 2005 proved to be a crucial one in the museum's history. They obtained a building through the landmark commission at the corner of Record Avenue and Elm Street, in the heart of Dallas' Historic West End District, within one block of the Kennedy Assassination Site and the Sixth Floor Museum in the old Dallas School Book Depository Building. The Sixth Floor Museum welcomes 400,000 visitors annually, while the Kennedy assassination site brings thousands of additional people, and the Holocaust Museum's board took advantage of a strategic opportunity to draw broader public attention, not only because of its close proximity, but because of the "danger of hatred" message. According to Higgins, they chose this location specifically for the importance of being across the street from the site that earned Dallas the title of "City of Hate" and to reflect its historical struggles alongside how the community came together to reshape their values from hate to coexistence.[119]

With a new mission of using the Holocaust as a lesson in universal tolerance and a fight against prejudice in Dallas and across the region, 2005 brought a new "upstander" message to the community along with the new location. Despite the new location, over fifty percent of Dallas residents still did not know the museum existed.[120] The marketing campaign failed and the walk-in strategy was not working. As a result, the board hired Alice

[118]Mary Pat Higgins (Chief Executive Officer of the Dallas Holocaust Museum) in Personal Interview, June 18, 2018.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.

Murray as Chief Executive Officer in 2009 to help solidify their mission and emphasize their literal and figurative place in Dallas.

Murray's appointment brought more instability to the institution. Instead of focusing on her assigned responsibilities and missions, she and the board could not decide on whether or not to purchase the current downtown building from a German conglomerate.[121] Murray and the museum board proved to be an ineffective partnership, so the board recruited Mary Pat Higgins to be their new CEO in 2013. Higgins led the board to crucial decisions for the museum's future, including addressing necessary parking issues, the safety of building a Holocaust Museum after New York City's World Trade Center fell in 2001, and the long stated vision of placing the museum on Dallas' historical and educational map.

Following Higgins' hire, she brought on former USHMM Project Director and Presidential Commission on the Holocaust Deputy Director Michael Berenbaum. Together, they formed an eight member steering committee and conducted a week of focus group meetings, imagining the museum's future vision and how to support their mission statement of inclusivity and being upstanders. Berenbaum suggested building from the inside out,[122] and what emerged was a new type of exhibit in the West End District site, still adjacent to the Sixth Floor Museum and Dealey Plaza, starting with the Holocaust and addressing Texas' civil rights struggles and the danger of being a bystander to injustice and prejudice. This shift, while teaching about objects and stories within the Holocaust, brought forth a universal exhibit idea and upstander mission which transformed Holocaust and tolerance education in

[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

North Central Texas and introduced an innovative exhibit that emphasizes universal tolerance within a Holocaust framework.

The Dallas Holocaust Museum Experience

The architecture of the building that houses the Dallas Holocaust Museum is not very distinct. Blending into surrounding West End building architecture, its red brick exterior does not make a statement to bring visitors into the museum. Unlike the USHMM in Washington, anyone could walk by the entrance and not know it existed. However, a powerful statement is made when you walk up the stairs and through the front doors.

As visitors enters the foyer, they are greeted by wood and steel beams, exposed vents, and an industrial feel, a similar feature to the USHMM. A large black sign hangs from the ceiling with a quote in white block letters from famous German-Jewish scientist Albert Einstein, "The world is too dangerous to live in, not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen." Next to the front desk, less than five feet from the overhead sign, they offer a stunning mixture of visual and historical evidence of Nazi atrocities. Museum designers chose to show the picture the USHMM designers eliminated of American soldiers standing upon piles of dead bodies at Buchenwald concentration camp showing the correlation between horror, terror and murder. The foyer also features stone pillars with the number of people murdered each year of World War II accompanied by a sign that says "How do you let democracy die?" With no distinct answer given, the question forces visitors to evaluate their role within the democracy, as well as the

dangers of complacency. Museum designers immediately encourage visitors to think about the dangers of being a bystander.

The entire exhibit fits in two rooms and takes a different approach to Holocaust memorialization than the USHMM. Instead of a chronological and narrative history of the Holocaust, the Dallas Holocaust Museum focuses on the various ways one can react to the Holocaust on a single day, April 19, 1943, featuring the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the rescue of the twentieth train car from Belgium, and the Bermuda Conference. While each of these events took place on the same day, the exhibit describes the different events from a personal, relational lens, and complements them with the story of Texans involved in each event. To further infuse the personal aspect of the museum, visitors learn about Texan Holocaust survivors and their families through a personal audio-guided tour with numbers next to each picture or artifact, providing an extensive amount of information rather than large exhibitional text.

Although one could visit any of the three events from the April 1943 day in any order due to the room's open concept, the Twentieth Train Car from Belgium is the closest feature to the entrance, suggesting, perhaps, how one can be an upstander regardless of race, religion, or nationality. The Twentieth Train Car refers to a train carrying 1,631 Jews set off from a Nazi detention camp in Belgium for the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. Upon departure, three non-Jewish resistance fighters stopped the train and prevented it from reaching its destination.[123] The three resistance fighters, Youra Livchitz, Jean Franklemon, and Robert Maistriau, are introduced through a picture and a plaque that asks, "What can be

[123] Althea Williams and Sarah Ehrlich, "Escaping the Train to Auschwitz," *BBC Online*, last modified April 20, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22188075.

done to stand up in the most challenging of circumstances?" These three men represent another valuable and less-often discussed group within Holocaust history: righteous gentiles, or non-Jews who risked their lives to protect Jews throughout World War II. Their introduction strives to enhance the visitor's awareness that anyone can be an upstander, as well as indifferent, at any time.

Alongside the righteous gentiles, glass cases display pictures and artifacts of four Jewish Texas families. The cases are all at eye level and introduce the survivors, their stories, and their personal items to the visitor to describe the preciousness of life, establishing a relationship between the survivor and the visitor. To enhance the visitor's relationship to humanity, they display their medals, jewelry, and special papers to show an example of what was lost through Nazi persecution. The section concludes with a quote in large letters from Youra Livchitz: "The finest of all human struggles is against what we are and who we should become." The section continues the exhibit's overarching message, stressing the universal value of equality and humanity while introducing the visitor to how standing idly by can lead to loss of human equality, dignity, and life itself. Without the righteous gentiles, almost 2000 people could have died.

Between the exhibit sections featuring the Twentieth Train Car and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, designers engage visitors in another direct aspect of the Holocaust inhumanity. Unlike the USHMM's deliberate distinction between Jews and others murdered by the Nazis, Dallas' exhibit strives for a universal fuse between each group. While a large glass case portrays no victim pictures, it displays numbers that were tattooed upon the arms of prisoners to dehumanize them—in this case, at Auschwitz. Two specific numbers are

emphasized towards the list's bottom right corner: Z-7730 and Z-3124, both of which were gypsies, one burned in front of the other, and the other murdered directly afterwards. Their names were crossed off the list. The case also holds two canisters that once held the poisonous Zyklon-B gas used by Nazis to exterminate victims within the death camp's gas chambers. The Dallas Museum pays special attention to all victims, regardless of race or religion, emphasizing the universal nature of the Holocaust, and in contrast to the USHMM. Visitors gain similar information through an alternative perspective not necessarily on display in the Washington museum.

The section on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, is bookended by two quotes, from Max Glauben and Yizhak Katznelson respectively, that enable the visitor's understandings of a bystander's effect on the present and future generation. Glauben's quote begins the section, "There are times where you must take chances in order to survive." The section focuses on the Jewish resistance, and while it presents certain Jewish ritual items owned by Texan survivors of the Ghetto as talking points, it challenges a visitor to experience the dichotomy between life in and outside of the walls. Unlike the USHMM, which displays a large section of the Ghetto wall, and intensifies the experience by dimming the lights, the Dallas Holocaust Museum compares pictures of what people looked before and during ghetto life, with basic graphs of information describing the difference between those two time periods. By showing an average daily calorie count, a visitor can easily see the drastic difference between the 300 consumed calories of a Ghetto resident and a visitor who might eat that amount in a side dish at a restaurant near from the museum. After comparing oneself to a Ghetto resident, which might be the designer's intent, one can then begin to connect to the importance of standing

up to inhumanity. The final quote of the section from Katznelson reads, "Though it be to die, we will fight… we will fight not for ourselves, but for future generations… Although we will not survive to see it, our murderers will pay for their crimes after we are gone. And our deeds will live forever." The message of the section insists that resistance against inhumanity affects generations into the future.

The exhibit's final section focuses on the Bermuda Conference, which presents the question of what Americans should do with European Jews. Led by the United States and Great Britain, the conference's original purpose was to address the growing number of Europe's refugees. However, as numerous Jewish agencies protested about the ongoing genocidal atrocities without any solution from national governments,[124] the conference's main purpose became to appease to the Jewish communities and non-Jewish organizations by attempting to discuss how to help the refugees. Some historians view the Bermuda Conference as a public relations exercise that, while seemingly sincere, helped little. Authors Deborah Dwork and Robert van Pelt state that "delegates to the Conference came armed with horrible knowledge—and yet, did nothing."[125] A quote from the Jewish Agency depicts the delegate's failure to act on the Holocaust prisoner's behalf, "What good are words when people need real help?" Similar to the 1938 Evian Conference mentioned in the USHMM exhibit, it showed how indifference results in devastation. Unlike the Washington Museum, Dallas displays quotes, signs, and program headlines that address the growing problem with all minorities and how the indifference caused a moral loss. Alongside the Jewish Agency's quote, the exhibit presents an angle about the American moral loss, including a statement of

[124] "Bermuda Conference," Yad Vashem, accessed January 17, 2019, https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206001.pdf.
[125] Deborah Dwork and Robert van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 324.

Civil Rights importance from the NAACP to the Jewish Agency, which proclaimed solidarity against racial injustice and offers a connection back to Dallas' civil rights problems, and a quote from California Congressman Will Rogers Jr., "The Jews were being kicked around in Europe… The United States should do something about it, and other people should do something about it, whether the victims were Jews or Cherokees or whatever it was."[126] Rogers' statement supports idea that all people can learn from the Holocaust, as it sets up a small section describing other genocidal events around the world, such as Bosnia and Darfur. Although a lack of space leaves this section small in size, the posted articles describe the world's indifference and lack of action to stop the genocide. The message enhances importance of moral leaders, such as Americans, to prevent and stop massacre, as it could be the death of a civilization.

The museum's final section offers insight into how the media affected Texans' reactions to injustice during the Holocaust. They portray over 10 front and inner pages of the *Dallas Morning News* and *Fort Worth Star Telegram* from the week of April 1943, showing what the media thought to be important to Texans, very few paying attention to the Holocaust's devastating events. Some of the headlines read: "Dallas Officer Convicted of Inhumanities" (*Dallas Morning News*, April 22, 1943); "Negro Pinches White Woman; serves 200 days" (*Fort Worth Telegram*, April 28, 1943); "Jews Claim Nazis Starve People to Maintain Position" (*Dallas Morning News*, April 28, 1943); and "General Says 'It Can Happen Here in Dallas'" (*Fort Worth Telegram*, April 28, 1943). Three of the headlines address racial prejudice and the other acts as a direct warning from a high ranking American

[126] Ibid.

military officer who might hold a reader's moral authority. While the headlines and article content speak volumes about injustice, their placement in small, tucked away corners of the newspaper tell more of the story of media indifference. A visitor might ask the question, "Why is this event important when the newspaper refuses to prioritize it as a story?"

The museum's designers strive to prove that little or no mention of injustice in the media results in society's indifference oversight and is as equal to being a bystander.[127] This presents a visitor with the final understanding of what can happen when the community, large or small, does not address injustice. Based on how the media did not stress these problems, the museum uses Holocaust events to show how Dallas' indifference led to their self-infused identity as a "City of Hate."

Finally, the originally designed Memorial Room sits at the end of the exhibit, in a separate room, complete with memorial rocks and the names of each camp and the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. While the original designers incorporated this section as a place for survivors to memorialize their families, this sole Jewish memorialization does veer away from the museum's message that the Holocaust and its lessons are not only Jewish but affect the greater world.

The "New" Holocaust Museum and Human Rights Center

Directly across the street from the current museum site in the Historic West End of Dallas, a new, larger museum, The Dallas Holocaust Museum and Human Rights Center,

[127] Mary Pat Higgins (Chief Executive Officer of the Dallas Holocaust Museum) in personal interview, June 18, 2018.

plans to open in the summer of 2019. With more physical space and added funds, the new museum hopes to incorporate an expanded section about human rights issues within Texas, the United States, and throughout the world, while keeping most of the same messages and features of the current exhibit. It will nearly quadruple the square footage at 51,000 ft² and will interactively explore slavery, LGBTQ rights, and the Native American experience.[128] With over $61 million raised from investors, community members, and foundations, the new museum hopes to meet the expanding demand of Holocaust education, the dangers of injustice, and inspiring people of all ages to be upstanders against these issues.[129] In an interview with the *Dallas Observer*, Former Texas State Senator and Chairperson of the museum's Board of Director Florence Shapiro said that "the new museum shall continue to educate students and their parents on how to process and confront messages of hate in our society. By showing the worst that humanity has to offer, we hope to to bring out the best in later generations."[130]

While enhancing their goals to create a human experience through the lens of injustice and the power of justice, the new museum will also foster new technology to engage visitors in innovative, interactive exhibits. Just as the museum planners recognize the importance of being an upstander and how it directly affects future generations, they also are aware of the reality that Holocaust education will soon be without first hand survivor

[128] Dallas Morning News Editorial Staff, "The New Dallas Holocaust Museum Could be Just the Balm That This City Needs," *Dallas Morning News*, last modified October 6, 2017, https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/editorials/2017/10/06/new-dallas-holocaust-museum-just-balm-ails-city.
[129] Mary Pat Higgins (Chief Executive Officer of the Dallas Holocaust Museum) in Personal Interview, June 18, 2018.
[130] Nicholas Bostick, "Holocaust Survivors Attend Groundbreaking for $61 Million New Human Rights Museum," *Dallas Observer*, October 11, 2017, https://www.dallasobserver.com/arts/construction-begins-tomorrow-on-61-million-dallas-holocaust-and-human-rights-museum-9959420.

experience. As a result, museum designers enlisted an interactive hologram experience so visitors can engage in conversation with actual survivors following their death. The University of Southern California Shoah Foundation, created by film director Steven Spielberg, plans to share survivor interviews with the Dallas Holocaust Museum and Human Rights Center so first hand testimony can continue to be a central piece in Holocaust education and memorialization. Further, visitors can ask hologrammed survivors questions in English, Spanish, and Hebrew to expand the available participant pool,[131] also created by the Shoah Foundation.

Conclusions about the Dallas Holocaust Museum

Without a doubt, the current Dallas Holocaust Museum addresses many of the past and current concerns regarding Holocaust education and the dangers of genocide by incorporating three major events of April 19, 1943 and the lack of media coverage, which equals being a bystander. Yet the exhibit also contributes to a growing approach to conquering injustice, prejudice, and hatred and the dangers if society chooses to ignore it. From an original Jewish memorial room and exhibit located in the basement of the Jewish Community Center to a central, geographic location, the museum helps visitors to come to terms with local history, civil rights challenges, assassinations, and how the same actions and beliefs can negatively impact the city's future. While it portrays the Jewish nature of the Holocaust, it foundationally addresses the Nazis' greater universal prejudice toward other

[131] Jamie Stengle, "Technology Brings Images of Holocaust Survivors to Life," *Associated Press*, January 12, 2019, http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2019/jan/12/technology-brings-images-of-holocaust-survivors-to/.

minority groups, and why Texans, along with the larger American population, chose indifference rather than striving for justice. Since many museum visitors enter via foot traffic from the nearby Sixth Floor Museum, the Holocaust Museum has become a part of Dallas local history. The emphasis on local Dallas survivors, their stories, and humanity helps establish the connection to visitors to grasp the importance of how the Holocaust still affects or can educate North Central Texas.

It is easy to appreciate the three different events occuring on the one day in the Holocaust, a different approach to the usual chronological presentation. The pictures, the audio tour, and the various personal artifacts attached to Texans' names produce the feeling that "humans live, not facts." The essential message is twofold: injustice and racial discrimination can happen again in Dallas if society is not careful, as the city is not immune to these civil rights problems, and the community must embrace being upstanders to injustice. Their hashtag, #inspiringupstanders is placed in countless locations throughout the building and has become their motto to further their mission.

Local Holocaust museums often become one of the educational stops on a city tour for students. When defining the Holocaust, if Judaism remains the foundation for these centers, Jewish groups, perhaps along with other religious groups, would visit. But, Dallas invests in the local and universal model. Any Holocaust and Human Rights Center with innovative, progressive exhibits can become a central piece of society's fundamental growth from injustice.

While this museum remains one of the smaller exhibits in the country, it is accessible, informative, personal, and emotional. Compared to the USHMM, Dallas presents information

in a more concise, relational way, reflecting more of Mintz's constructivist model in relating the Holocaust to local events and generating new messages of the Holocaust that speak to the present moment. With the opening of the new Holocaust Museum and Human Rights Center, the new technology, especially the interactive holograms, should continue to provide the personal experience for visitors that may be lacking in less funded, more traditional museums. When the new museum opens, Dallas will join the Illinois Holocaust Museum as the only two main Holocaust Memorial Museums to use this revolutionary technology that will keep the conversations and first-hand accounts alive long after the last survivor leaves our earth, thus keeping the Center on the cutting edge of particular and universal American Holocaust memorialization.

Conclusions

While Americans are unable to visit European Holocaust sites without extensive overseas travel, they are able to gain a different experience and formulate their own ideas and emotional responses by encountering memorials and museums within our own country's borders. Today, American cities offer museums and other sites which educate visitors and honor victims of the Nazi atrocities in the 1930s and 1940s.

As the subject of how communities remember is something that scholars have only recently begun to explore during the past twenty years or so, the large corresponding shift of how museums memorialize the Holocaust from exceptionalist to constructivist is not coincidental. The study of collective memory focuses on how communities shape public sites, spaces, and commemorations in ways that reflect the concerns, even identities, of those within these particular communities. This scholarship traces the evolution of memory through changing temporal and geographic frameworks and investigates the new lenses that emerge through which to view this period of history anew. By looking at memorial museums, this field of inquiry explores how the curators of these museums present information and design exhibits in ways that shape a collective memory and ideology for its visitors.

I viewed the shift from exceptionalist to constructivist memorialization during my visits to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Dallas Holocaust Museum. While studying the same material, the two museums presented vastly different approaches to defining the Holocaust and educating visitors about the dangers of genocide and indifference. In a time where Jews claimed ownership of Holocaust victimhood, the Eichmann trial and Vietnam War brought the horrors of inhumanity to the forefront of American conversation,

which proved to be the turning point in the country's Holocaust memorialization. Those events offered the American public permission to question, challenge, and fight national and global injustice, and in turn, enabled them to develop an ownership to the same victimhood once monopolized by Jews.

The USHMM introduced a progressive Holocaust exhibit in 1993 while still describing the Holocaust as Jewish event, but also introducing the universal dangers of intolerance. By combining these two facets of Holocaust education, the USHMM's establishment represented the overall shift that set up the next twenty five years of museums teaching the dangers of intolerance through Holocaust framework. In an increasingly divisive modern political landscape, I can envision future Holocaust memorialization through the constructivist model, presenting the horrific events to audiences that can relate through their own empathy. Jews only represent a small percentage of American population, but the vast majority of Americans can relate to injustice, and thus the need for a universal understanding of the Holocaust. In addition to the Holocaust, the younger generations of Americans studied the Civil Rights movement in school, read about and watched racially problematic events such as Ferguson, MO, Charlottesville, VA, and reactions to the anti-Muslim travel ban of 2017. Injustice has proven to be ingrained in American culture, and since citizens have begun to understand its challenges, they can relate to and educate about the dangers presented in the Holocaust. With over six million Jews murdered, the Holocaust will always be a staple of Jewish history, but it should not be the only lens through which we adopt its lessons. The trend of current Holocaust museums present the necessary questions that help Americans formulate an emotional response to global injustice, "How can our society individually and

collectively become more tolerant to hate-filled rhetoric and behavior?" I believe that the museum exhibits that encourage visitors to embrace and address this question will enable them as Americans to become upstanders against prejudice and create an active response that supports the question. By doing so, we can ensure that we will *zakhor*, remember, the dangers of arguably the worst genocide in world history and ensure that Americans will stand up against the human characteristics leading to such societal devastation.

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